Independent Final Evaluation of the Combating Child Labor Through Education in the Dominican Republic Project

DevTech Systems
Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-3-0054

2007

MACRO INTERNATIONAL INC.

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DevTech Systems
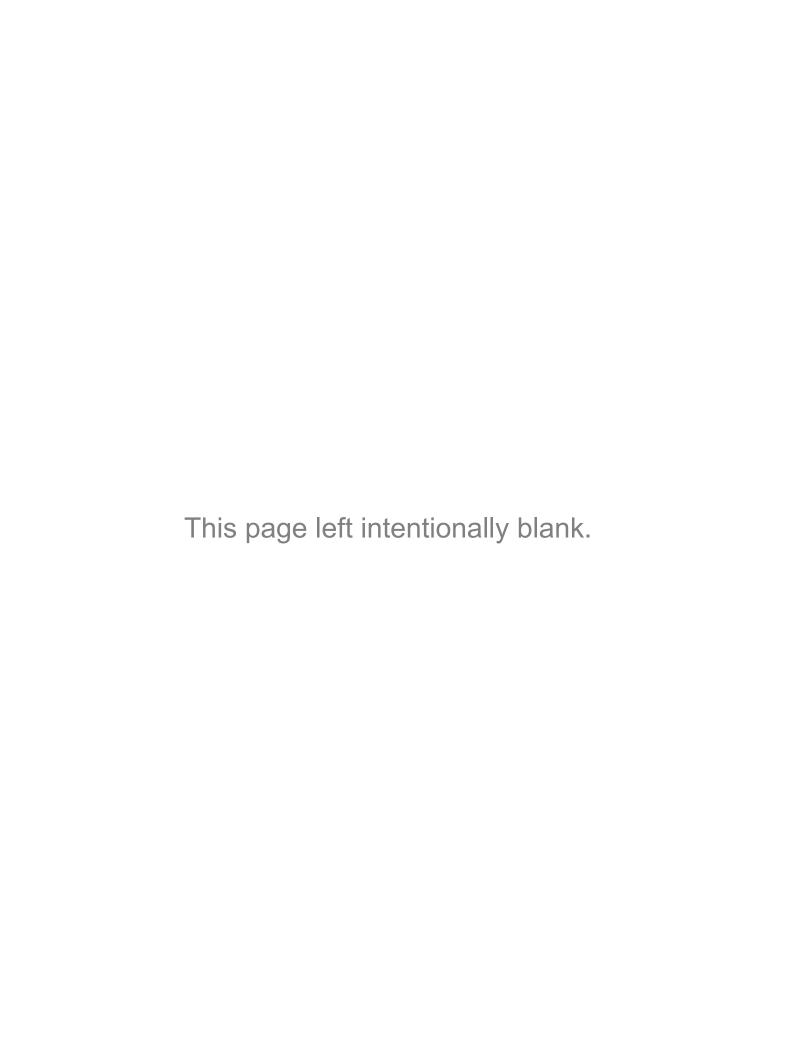Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-3-0054

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This independent final evaluation was undertaken and prepared by Noor Denkers.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

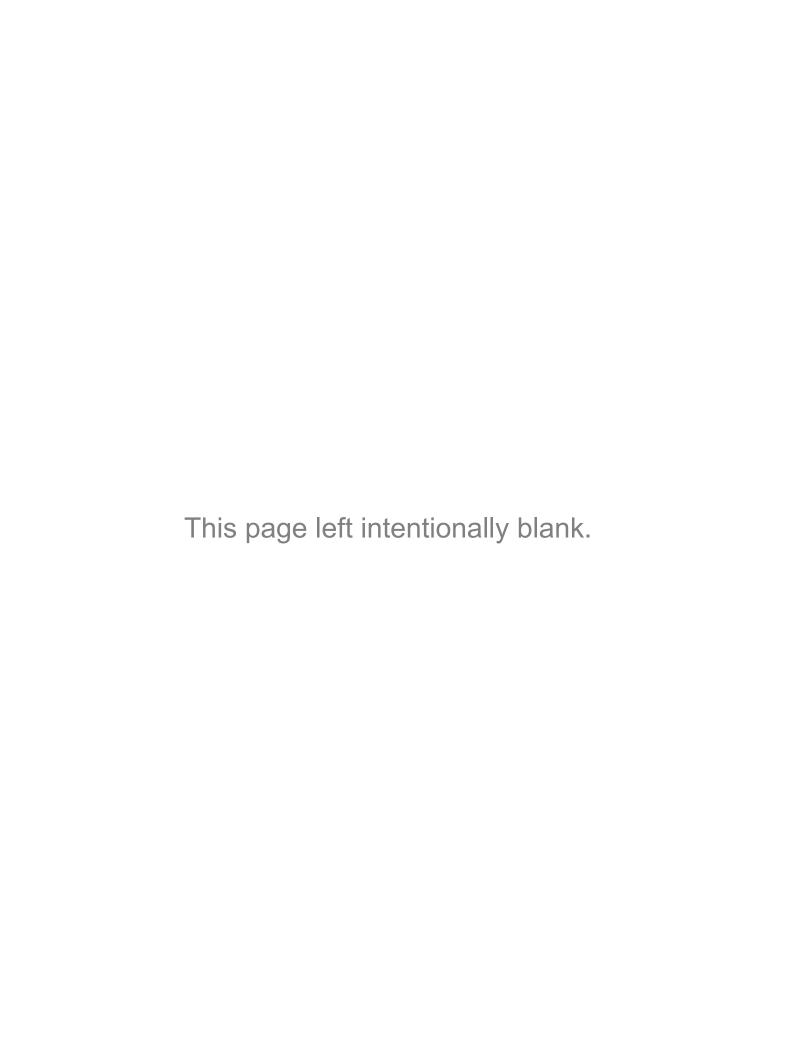|	
EDUCA	*Acción para la Educación Básica*
EI	Education Initiative
EpC	*Espacio para Crecer*
IDDI	*Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral*
INFOTEB	*Instituto Nacional de Formación Técnica y Profesional*
INTEC	*Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo*
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
QL	Quantum Learning
MAIS	*Fundación Movimiento para el Auto-Desarrollo Internacional para la Solidaridad*
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
SEE	*Secretaría del Estado de Educación*
SET	*Secretaría del Estado de Trabajo*
UCNE	*Universidad Católica Nordestana*
USDOL	U.S. Department of Labor
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labor

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project, "Combating Child Labor Through Education in the Dominican Republic" (2003–2007), addressed the country's three Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL)—dangerous agricultural labor, dangerous and unhealthy urban labor, and commercial sexual exploitation—as determined by the Secretariat of Labor (SET), in consultation with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The project has exceeded the stated purpose of 4,200 children and has withdrawn or prevented 5,043 boys and girls from WFCL and enrolled them in transitional education programs, vocational programs, or the formal education system.

The final evaluation reviewed and assessed all activities carried out under the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) Cooperative Agreement with DevTech Systems, Inc. and assessed the achievements of the project toward reaching its targets and objectives. The evaluator reviewed documents, visited six out of the seven regions of the project, and participated in two closing ceremonies in Tireo and Villas Riva, as well as in a national celebration for more than 100 facilitators from across the country. The evaluator interviewed and held focus groups with parents, children, community leaders, facilitators, government officials, teachers and school directors, and staff of local implementing organizations; and administered questionnaires.

The final evaluation revealed that the project has not only been successful in quantitative terms, but has also contributed to a greater awareness and changes in attitudes and practice in children, parents, community leaders, and teachers regarding the importance of education and the dangers and risks of child labor. Children, parents, and community leaders participated actively in project activities. The project developed and implemented a creative, innovative, and low-cost approach to provide educational opportunities to children engaged in or removed from child labor, called *Espacios para Crecer* (EpC). EpC activities are interactive; promote learning; develop personal, social, and artistic skills; and have had a positive impact on the quality of learning. Children perform better academically in school and are often promoted to the following grade, which especially helps over-age children who have sometimes repeated the same year several times. Its effectiveness has been recognized by both the Secretaries of Education (SEE) and Labor.

In terms of vocational training, the project has reached its target and has offered a wide variety of courses to parents and adolescents. Adolescent beneficiaries revealed that their participation has contributed to the development of valuable social, technical, and personal skills as an alternative to WFCL, and parents felt encouraged to find alternative ways of generating income. In order to match skills with local demands, it is desirable to conduct market research on local needs and demands and give follow-up and support to those who finish the course. The teaching methodology Quantum Learning (QL), has been highly valued and, according to teachers and SEE officials, has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching in the formal system. Teachers are more motivated and flexible to apply creative pedagogic methods. The SEE hopes to train all teachers in QL but does not have the economic resources to do so at this time.

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The main challenge encountered in the implementation process has been the collection, processing, and reporting of data. This challenge occurred due to the lack of time and dedication of the organizations and person hired to design the tracking system, as well as to a lack of training of implementing organizations' staff in the use of the system and the importance of accurate and adequate reporting. In addition, problems beyond the control of the project such as dropouts due to economic or seasonal migration affected data collection. These problems have been recognized by DevTech and appropriate solutions to resolve these problems have been implemented. The relationship between the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) and DevTech has been of mutual respect, but coordination between DevTech and ILO-IPEC has been limited despite the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two organizations. This lack of coordination is mainly due to differing visions on the effectiveness of the EpC for working children. IPEC has not adopted the EpC in the Time Bound Programme because, according to the project official interviewed, the Salas de Tareas are more appropriate for the purpose of their project. The evaluator has not been able to support this position with data or documentation. Coordination and communication has been more frequent and effective in some regions.

The project has been managed by DevTech as the leading organization, together with five main subcontractors or implementing organizations, one of which—*Acción para la Educación Básica* (EDUCA)—heads a group of smaller organizations. Apart from day-to-day challenges related with the timely submission and the quality of reports, there have not been any significant problems in terms of management and administration. DevTech personnel are flexible and other implementing organizations consider them to be of high quality.

The project has incorporated a sustainability strategy from the beginning in making this a community-based project. The SEE has been included in every step of the process, which has resulted in a strong relationship between SEE and DevTech. SEE has supported the project in many ways and has committed itself to analyze how it can gradually incorporate the EpC through the creation of partnerships between SEE, the private sector, universities, and civil society. The project has created an EpC Consortium with implementing agencies and some new partners (Plan International, World Vision, etc.) that will perform follow up and continue the EpC activities.
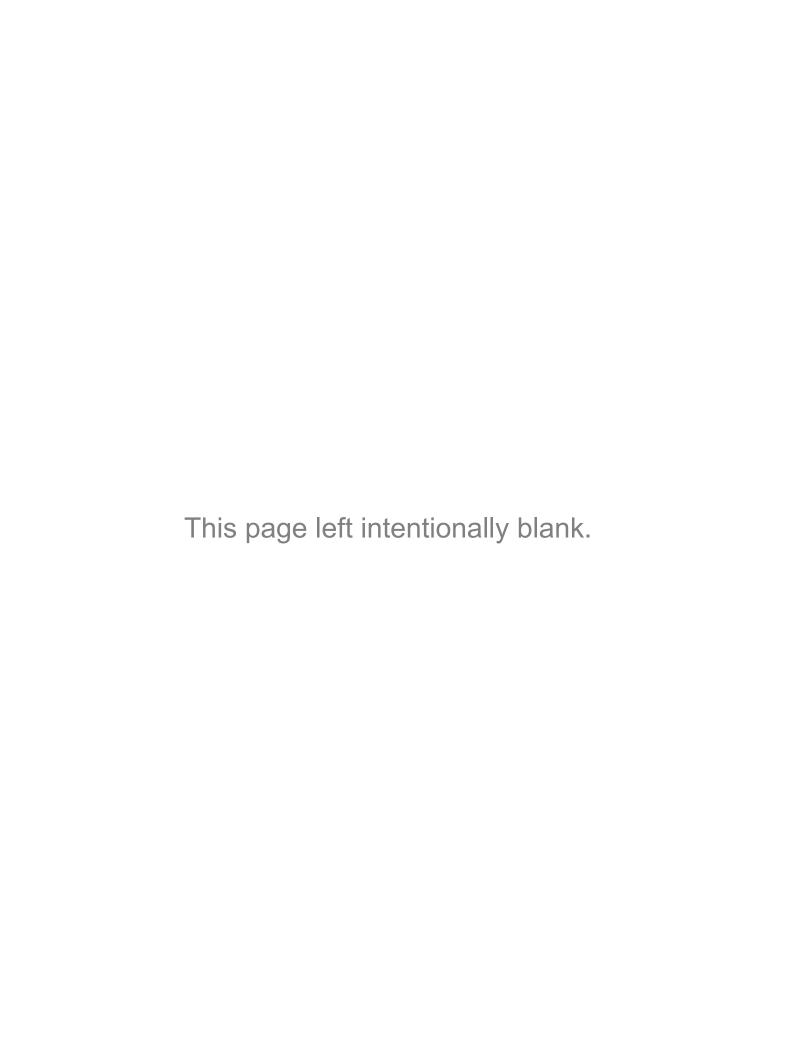
I   PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In July 2003, DevTech Systems, Inc. signed a four-year Cooperative Agreement with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) to implement an Education Initiative (EI) project in the Dominican Republic aimed at withdrawing and preventing children from exploitative child labor by expanding access to and improving the quality of basic education and supporting the four goals of the USDOL's Child Labor EI. DevTech Systems, Inc. was awarded the EI project through a competitive bid process.

As stipulated in the Cooperative Agreement, DevTech was to develop and implement creative and innovative approaches to providing educational opportunities to children engaged in or removed from child labor. The project's immediate objective was to withdraw and/or prevent 4,200 children and adolescents from three selected worst forms of child labor (WFCL)—hazardous agriculture, child commercial sexual exploitation, and urban labor—and direct them into transitional educational programs, formal schooling, or vocational skills training. Of the 4,200 children targeted, 450 were to be transitioned out of commercial sexual exploitation, 2,900 out of dangerous agriculture, and 850 out of the informal economy. The targeted regional areas were Constanza, San Francisco de Macoris, Cotui, Pimentel, Nagua, Boca Chica, Sosua, Caberete, Las Terrenas, Santiago, and Santo Domingo.

The expected project results (outputs), as outlined in the Project Document under USDOL and DevTech were as follows:

- **Output 1:** Parents, educators, and leaders in target communities were to increase their awareness of the importance of education, schooling, and the risks and dangers of child labor. Parents, educators, and leaders were to make active volunteer contributions to the educational programs.

- **Output 2:** Educational systems were to be strengthened in target areas so as to attract and maintain children and adolescents who have been involved in the worst forms of child labor.

- **Output 3:** A long-term plan for the sustainability of activities initiated by the project was to be disseminated.

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II   EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The scope of the evaluation included a review and assessment of all activities carried out under the USDOL Cooperative Agreement with DevTech. The evaluation assessed the achievements of the project toward reaching its targets and objectives as outlined in the cooperative agreement and project document. The evaluation considered all activities that had been implemented over the life of the project, addressing issues of project design, implementation, lessons learned, sustainability, and recommendations for future projects.

The goals of the evaluation were as follows:

1. Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved.

2. Assist the Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of EI projects within the broad OCFT technical cooperation program framework.

3. Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved.

4. Assess progress in terms of children's working and educational status (i.e., withdrawal and prevention from the worst forms of child labor; enrollment, retention, completion of educational programs).

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III   METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION

During the first phase of the evaluation and prior to the field visit, documents were reviewed, including the project document, cooperative agreement, technical progress and status reports, USDOL comments, project logframes and monitoring plans, management procedures and guidelines, and midterm evaluation reports. Two telephone conferences were held, facilitated by Macro International Inc.—one with staff of the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB)/OCFT and one with DevTech staff to clarify the Terms of Reference and to exchange expectations and concerns about the evaluation. In addition, the evaluator designed the instruments for data collection during this period.

Data collection in the field took place in the Dominican Republic between May 20 and June 1, 2007. The field work ended with a stakeholders' workshop with 49 participants representing national stakeholders and implementing organizations (subcontractors), and a debriefing with the project staff. During the field visits, the evaluator was accompanied by a member of DevTech Washington (Gender and Development Project Associate). During the first two days, she was also accompanied to some sites by the newly appointed backstop officer from DevTech in Washington. To guarantee confidentiality of sources and information, staff members were only present during interviews when expressly asked to do so by the evaluator.

Evaluation methods in the field were as follows:

1. In-depth individual and group interviews with representatives from the Secretary of Education and Labour; ILO-IPEC representative; DevTech staff; and key staff of implementing organizations (subcontractors): *Fundación Movimiento para el Auto-Desarrollo Internacional para la Solidaridad (MAIS), Acción para la Educación Básica (EDUCA), Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (IDDI), Aide et Action, Universidad Católica del Noroeste (UCNE),* and *Fundación Azucar y Niños con Esperanza.*

2. Questionnaires with open-ended and close-ended questions were administered randomly in the communities in the six regions to—

   - Twenty-nine (29) boys and girls

   - Seventeen (17) mothers and three fathers

   - Nine (9) *Espacio Para Crecer* (EpC) facilitators

   - Four (4) teachers from formal schools

   - Five (5) community leaders

   - Seven (7) staff members from implementing organizations.

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3. Focus group sessions and interviews were held with a total of—

   - Twenty (20) boys and girls participating in the EpC

   - Four (4) large groups of boys and girls in EpC

   - Ten (10) adolescent beneficiaries of vocational training

   - Eight (8) mothers and three fathers

   - Two (2) community leaders

   - Thirteen (13) EpC facilitators

   - Five (5) directors from formal schools

   - One (1) director of *Escuela Yaque* (vocational training)

   - One (1) regional subdirector of the SEE

   - Three (3) district representatives of the SEE.

Focus group sessions were either mixed or held separately depending on the available time. The evaluator also observed human relations and classroom dynamics at the different sites she visited.

The last phase of the evaluation consisted of the stakeholder workshop. This half-day meeting was attended by 49 stakeholders (see Annex 2). The evaluator presented her preliminary conclusions and recommendations and these were discussed with all participants in plenary. This discussion allowed the evaluator to obtain additional information and clarifications. On the last day of the field visit, a debriefing took place with DevTech project staff and members of the EpC Consortium (ENTRENA, EDUCA, and SEE) to clarify doubts, obtain additional information, and discuss the results of the stakeholders' meeting.

Logistical arrangements, including transportation to the regions and organization of the stakeholder meeting, were taken care of by DevTech project staff.

IV   FINDINGS

Findings are structured following the order of the categories and questions in the Terms of Reference: Program Design/Implementation; Partnership and Coordination; Management and Budget; and Sustainability and Impact—each followed by conclusions and recommendations. The report ends with Lessons Learned.

4.1   PROGRAM DESIGN ISSUES

Response to a Specific Question

> 1. *How has the project's design fit into overall government programs to combat child labor and provide education for all?*

The project fits well into government programs and policy with regard to education, child labor, and sexual exploitation. The government has proclaimed that education is its priority and is signatory to the Education for All Initiative, as well as to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. In 2003 the Code for the Protection System of the Fundamental Rights of Children was adopted (Law 136-03) that stipulates the right to protection from labor exploitation for children. Within the strategic plan of the SEE, a priority is to improve indicators of access, dropout, repetition, and achievement. The SEE also aspires to provide a full day of education in the Dominican Republic, but recognizes it does not have the economic or human resources available nor sufficient space or materials to achieve this in the short term. The project has established a strategic alliance with the USDOL-financed regional *Primero Aprendo* project. Through the *Primero Aprendo* project, Ministers of Education of each country of the region recently signed an agreement to make the eradication of the WFCL part of educational policy. DevTech's partner, MAIS—ECPAT, is part of the Interinstitutional Commission against Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and participated in the elaboration of the National Action Plan 2002–2012. DevTech is part of the National Committee for the Eradication of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which is chaired by the Secretary of Labor and was part of the Commission that formulated the National Plan 2006–2016. SET approved and signed in 2004 Resolution No. 52/2004 on hazardous and unhealthy work for persons under 18 years of age. IPEC takes the lead in promoting national and sectoral development policy as related to labor issues.

Conclusions

The project works within a supportive political and legal framework for child rights and education and both the SEE and SET recognize the effectiveness of the EpC. However, government-provided formal education is, in the words of a regional SEE director, "boring, traditional, and rigid." The school day lasts only half a day, and public expenditure on education is very low. The EpC model responds to this since it is community-based, low-cost, complements the current half school day, strengthens educational quality, and contributes to the eradication of the WFCL by attracting working children to school and preventing them from dropping out. The SEE and SET have publicly voiced their support for the project and

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specifically for the EpC. Achieving structural financial support or policy changes requires a long-term commitment due to the centralized nature of the decision-making process in the SET and SEE.

Recommendations

Maintain good relations with SET and SEE in order to achieve long-term changes, including a whole school day provided by the SEE or though private-public partnerships.

4.2   PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Responses to Specific Questions

1. *Which of the four EI goals was the project the most successful in supporting, and why?*

The project has supported all four EI goals in one way or another. However, the project has been most successful in supporting EI Goals 1 and 2.

EI Goal 1: Raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructure.

The project developed an innovative and creative program called the EpC that requires coordination with and the involvement of the community. This program and the awareness-raising activities carried out by the project have proven effective in mobilizing different actors, including parents, children, community leaders, teachers, school directors, and local municipalities to improve and expand education infrastructures. All actors have actively contributed to the project. For details see Section 2, Question 2, Output 1.

EI Goal 2: Strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school.

The formal education system clearly benefited from the participation of children in the EpC and the Super Camps. According to children, parents, teachers, and SEE representatives, learning has become more interesting which, in combination with the changed attitudes and practices of parents, has encouraged working and at-risk children to go back to or attend school more regularly. Parents, teachers, school directors, and children expressed that academic achievement, retention, dropout, absenteeism, and repetition rates have improved as a direct result of the EpC. Many children who participated in the EpC and who were already attending formal schools were promoted to the next grade during the school year. Amongst them were over-age children who had repeated the same year several times before participating in the EpC. The teachers interviewed said that the enthusiasm and motivation to learn by children participating in the EpC inspired other children in school. Where the facilitators of the EpC have good relations and direct communication with the formal school teachers, these indicators are even better because, in these situations, teachers and facilitators coordinate and inform each other about the children's progress and needs.

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The EpC also contributed to an improvement in the quality of teaching in the formal system. Teachers who received Quantum Learning (QL) training said that they use the knowledge and methods they learned in the classroom and are far more motivated to teach. They are also more aware of the problems working and at-risk children face and are better equipped to respond to their needs. The SEE representatives spoke highly of the innovative and dynamic methods and stated that various teachers have requested QL training. About 30 percent of the project's facilitators are basic education students (70 percent are community members), and those interviewed reported feeling better prepared and qualified to teach in formal schools as a result of the experience in the EpC and QL training.

2. *Were the project purpose and outputs realistic?*

Project purpose and outputs were realistic. In quantitative terms, the project exceeded the stated purpose (4,200 children) since it has withdrawn/prevented 5,043 boys and girls from child labor and enrolled them in the EpC and vocational programs. There have been reported dropouts but, as was stated in the midterm evaluation, these are mostly due to children migrating to other parts of the country.

Output 1: Parents, educators, and leaders (PELs) in target communities increase their awareness of the importance of education, schooling, and the risks and dangers of child labor. Parents, educators, and leaders make active volunteer contributions to the educational programs.

Awareness-raising activities with parents, teachers, and community leaders have been very effective, which was evidenced in the various focus groups and interviews. Parents are more aware of the dangers and consequences of child labor and the importance of education and mothers—on some occasions, also fathers or other caregivers—are actively involved in the project activities. The main reason for the overrepresentation of women is that men usually work during the day and many families are also female-headed. The project has also contributed to an attitude change regarding commercial sexual exploitation in local target communities. This situation is now recognized as a problem whereas before, it was tolerated both by the communities and authorities and accepted as a way of making a living. According to staff of local organizations, the tolerance is also due to the tacit vested economic interest of some local businesses for this situation to persist and the fear this produces in the communities. As a result of the project's awareness campaigns, one large, local hotel in Sosúa now openly supports the project.

> "On top of eradicating child labor, the project has eradicated from people's minds that child labor is something good or a situation that should be permitted."
>
> **—Regional representative SET, Tireo**

Parents were able to verbalize their awareness and some gave examples during interviews of how they transformed their attitude changes into practice. The levels of involvement of parents in the EpC and vocational training programs vary. Almost all the parents the evaluator spoke to had participated in parents' meetings or awareness-raising sessions. All claimed to stimulate and encourage their children to study and to prioritize education over child labor. In the Constanza

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region, mothers who are members of the Local Support Committees (established by the IPEC project) monitor the smooth running of the EpC. In several regions, community-based organizations mobilized funds in their communities to pay the incentive for the EpC facilitator. Various community leaders lend their private houses for the EpC because finding adequate physical space has been a challenge. Despite these successes, there are still parents who are less involved in their children's education not because they do not want to, but because they are illiterate and are not able to help their children with their homework. In addition, parents who depended to some extent on their child's income for their daily survival claimed they now have to find other ways to compensate for the income loss. Single mothers, especially, have to juggle their time between work and the care of their children and they do not always find the time to assist them or go to school or project meetings.

The teachers interviewed by the project who had been trained in QL were more motivated to teach and more concerned about the overall well-being of their students, which was reflected in their home visits and the establishment of closer coordination with EpC facilitators to monitor progress of their students. They also indicated they have a better understanding of children's rights and the consequences of child labor. Many facilitators, parents, community leaders, and teachers expressed their concern that if/when the EpC closes down, children will fall back into their "old routine" and go back to work and/or drop out of school.

Output 2: Educational system strengthened in target areas so as to attract and maintain children and adolescents who have been involved in the worst forms of child labor.

Children who are, or who have been involved in WFCL, are often not in school or attend irregularly. School is often not considered an attractive option by their parents as they depend on their child's income for survival, or they believe work presents a more useful way to learn life skills than school. In this respect, one of the main achievements of the EpC mentioned by various representatives of the SEE is that it motivates students to learn and convinces parents to send their children to school. The enthusiasm displayed by children in the EpC has proven "contagious" and "spills over" to other children in formal schools. Interviews with various stakeholders confirm that children who attend EpC are more likely to attend school regularly, achieve better, and develop social and personal skills they do not develop in their homes or schools. Other changes perceived in the children mentioned in the interviews were higher self-esteem; less violent behavior; improved interpersonal and familial relations; more respect for other children, teachers, and parents; and improved leadership skills.

> "For example, now when I have the white paint, and she has the black paint, and I need the black paint, I say 'can I use your paint, I will lend you mine,' Before, we would just take it from each other and fight over it.
>
> ***—Girl participant in EpC in Sosúa***

> "My daughter comes home from school and tells me enthusiastically about what she has learned that day. She never used to do that."
>
> ***—Mother of participant in EpC in La Berma***

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Children also improved reading and writing skills, were more disciplined in terms of homework, and, in some cases, had even started teaching their illiterate parents how to read and write. One school director stated that she motivates her students to participate in the EpC because all children at her school benefit directly or indirectly from the experience. In terms of teaching quality, the QL methodology was praised by the SEE representatives at all levels for having improved their teaching abilities and their flexibility to use creative methods.

Output 3: Long-Term Plan for the sustainability of activities initiated by the project disseminated.

The long-term plan for the sustainability of the activities will be detailed in part five (sustainability). This long-term plan consists of the creation of an EpC Consortium in which different organizations participate. This plan has been disseminated to all stakeholders.

> 3. *In terms of project purpose, is the project able to accurately measure results in terms of USDOL common indicators (withdrawal and prevention)? If not, why not?*

As was pointed out in the midterm evaluation, project staff members are collecting and reporting these data as accurately as possible. However, from the onset of the project there have been problems in terms of data collection, processing, and reporting that are mainly due to the fact that DevTech relies on partners since it does not have the staff to verify the working and educational status of each child.

Several factors contributed to the difficulties in obtaining accurate data:

- Problems in data collection: many children lack birth certificates and some are known by more than one name. In addition, many children migrate and their whereabouts are difficult to track once they leave. Sometimes children change from the morning to the afternoon session of the EpC and this is not communicated between facilitators.

- Project staff indicated they encountered difficulties and got confused when the requests for information from USDOL changed during the implementation of the project (indicator name change).

- Problems with the database: (a) For the person, as well as the organization contracted to design the database (UCNE), this was never considered a priority. (b) The tracking database had, from the very beginning, some design flaws that made processing data difficult (for example, the variable "locality" and "shift" are missing). (c) DevTech staff lacked the technical knowledge to make suggestions to the technician on how to improve the database and make it more user-friendly. (d) At the beginning of the project, subcontractors were not sufficiently trained and had difficulties using the database. (e) There is no centralized database—every implementing agency has a different person in charge of entering the data in the database and processing them. They are then sent to DevTech.

- Lack of human and financial resources for adequate and frequent monitoring—one person in DevTech is in charge of monitoring and this person has a contract for only 30 days a year. She does not have sufficient time to regularly monitor the field.

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- Several interviewees pointed out that there is no "reporting culture" in the Dominican Republic and that decisions are usually not made on the basis of data and information. For this reason, and also due to a lack of clear instructions provided at the start of the project, the coordinators of the subcontractors never understood that the tracking system is more than a donor requirement, but is also a useful administrative tool for their organization. Moreover, facilitators, who play an important role in collecting data because they are in direct contact with the children on a daily basis, have not always been apprised of the importance of and the reasons for data tracking and some considered the sheets and data formats a nuisance more than a helpful instrument.

4. *According to the results of the midterm evaluation the implementing agency was not getting adequate and accurate field reports. What actions has DevTech Systems, Inc. taken to address these issues, and how effective have these been?*

The first important step DevTech took to resolve the problems regarding the accuracy and adequacy of the field reports was to identify the main critical issues in this area and to develop strategies to tackle them accordingly. The project staff has taken several actions to address these issues:

- More frequent visits have been made to subcontractors to assist and train coordinators and staff in tracking data and elaborating field reports.

- Training sessions have been held with implementing agencies on the use of the database and on how to report data.

- The importance of tracking data and reporting has been discussed in coordination meetings, and user-friendly monitoring plans and clearer reporting formats that include submission dates have been developed for the coordinators.

- The DevTech staff has become more knowledgeable about the technical aspects of the tracking system and is now more capable of giving specific instructions to the technician on how to make it more user-friendly so it responds better to their needs. At the same time, the technician has been trained on the indicators of the project, which allows him to match the database with the requirements of the project.

- Project staff has dedicated more time to go through all the EpC attendance lists to verify which children have dropped out, which ones have changed shifts, which ones are attending regularly, and which ones are not.

These actions have effectively changed the attitude of the subcontractors' staff responsible for collecting, processing, and reporting data. Additionally, these actions have been observed by the DevTech project staff and led to submission of more accurate reports. All implementing organizations' staff expressed their satisfaction with the support they received from DevTech in improving their capacity in this respect. They are now also more aware why it is important to track data and to report accurately, and understand that it is not only a requirement from the funding agency but also valuable information on which decisions can be based and corrective

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actions taken in their organization. The database is now more user-friendly, as both the technician and project staff members are more aware and capable of explaining their needs to each other. There are still some flaws in the database, and a persisting problem is that there is no fulltime database technician available. The technician responsible for the database no longer works with UCNE but volunteers his services to the project on Saturdays and Sundays, which means the monitoring officer has to accommodate her time to the technician's schedule.

5. *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 (withdrawal and prevention)?*

As was pointed out above, the project has contributed to improvements in the quality of both learning and teaching. Although no official data are available to measure the impact on educational quality because no baseline study was carried out in the beginning of the project, anecdotal evidence and information obtained from interviews and questionnaires with DevTech staff, representatives from SEE, facilitators, teachers, parents, and children suggests that indicators such as promotion, persistence, completion rates, and academic achievement are higher for children who have participated in EpC than children who have not.

6. *One of the suggestions made by USDOL to DevTech Systems, Inc. in 2005 was that, given the economic limitations resulting from the devaluation of the currency, a greater focus should be placed on vocational education and alternative income development. Was DevTech able to follow up on this suggestion? If so, how was this in accordance with the four EI principles?*

The project achieved its target in terms of the number of beneficiaries who received vocational training. However, it has been a conscious decision of the project not to place more emphasis on vocational training and alternative income-generating activities. The main reason is the high transportation costs involved with these activities due to a lack of existing vocational training courses being offered in, or near, the communities where the beneficiaries live. In addition, follow-up and support of students once they complete the courses is difficult. For these reasons, it was decided to concentrate on the EpC (6–13 year olds).

The vocational training courses were successful in supporting the personal development of adolescents and taught them useful technical and life skills that may help them identify more dignified forms of labor as an alternative to the worst forms of child labor. The courses for parents encouraged and empowered them to find alternative sources of income. Moreover, for fathers and especially mothers, who in some communities stated they rarely get out of the house, the courses have presented an opportunity to exchange general concerns and experiences with other members of the community and, in the words of one participant, "teaches us how to defend ourselves." Another result of the vocational education has been that DevTech has strengthened relations with the National Institute for Technical and Professional Training (INFOTEP) and the Escuela Yaque (School for Vocational Education).

In general terms, the vocational training component has been limited to isolated short-term courses as opposed to taking a more consolidated, structured approach. When planning the courses, the dynamics and needs of the local labor market have not always been taken into

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account. As a result, the courses offered and the skills acquired do not necessarily match the demand in the community. In addition, many participants said that they lack the resources to invest in material and equipment to create their own micro-enterprise so they do not have the opportunity to apply the acquired skills and to generate resources. Adolescents who participated in vocational education said that not enough support was provided after they finished the course in how and where to find a job that matches their skills.

7. *What policies has the grantee put in place to limit any inherently religious activities?*

As a result of the observations in the audit report, DevTech staff has addressed this issue and done all within its power to limit any inherently religious activities. Implementing agencies have been repeatedly informed and reminded by e-mail and during coordination meetings to monitor the situation closely in the communities of intervention. Through the implementing agencies and in training workshops, EpC facilitators have been informed that no inherently religious activities are allowed to take place during the USDOL-funded activities of the project. All interviewed implementing agency staff members told the evaluator they were aware of this policy. However, they also said that they were not clear about what does and does not constitute "inherently religious activities." They also indicated difficulty understanding why this rule was enforced because religion is an intrinsic part of culture and society in the Dominican Republic and is included as one of the main values of the mission and vision of the SEE. Staff also said that in practice, it is difficult to monitor every EpC session to see if facilitators stick to the rules. However, they said that religious activities are never encouraged and that if religious activities still take place, it happens in isolated cases. They stated that if they find out, they inform the person responsible for this situation that it should not happen again.

8. *Did the grantee address all issues brought up from the midterm Evaluation?*

More emphasis on vocational training and alternative income-generating activities. (See Section 4.2, Question 6.)

Increase in monthly salaries of facilitators to maintain and attract new competent staff. Monthly incentives have been increased slightly as the cost of living has become higher. It is important to point out that facilitators do not receive salaries. Facilitators receive a small incentive that is meant to attract motivated community members, education students, and other competent and interested people to become a facilitator. This assignment contributes to the sustainability of the project as only people who are truly interested in the experience apply. Moreover, it makes it more viable for communities to cover the costs for the incentives themselves once the project ends.

Recruit a higher percentage of qualified male facilitators. The evaluator agrees with the midterm evaluator that in order to achieve more gender balance, a conscious effort should be made to recruit more male facilitators. According to the facilitators interviewed, this is not an easy task as the male/female proportion reflects the situation in the formal education sector where women outnumber men. According to some female facilitators, there are more female facilitators because "women have more time."

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However, the evaluator has found no evidence that male facilitators are considered more qualified or more capable to be a role model for children and parents than female facilitators. The majority of male and female facilitators makes house visits, know the communities, and develop a level of confidence with the families.

Train all schoolteachers in the first three grades in Basic Education in Quantum Learning. The project has trained 976 teachers in QL to date. School directors and SEE representatives at the regional and district levels expressed their wish to train all teachers in QL. However, they did not consider this a viable option in the short-term due to time and resource limitations (there are over 20,000 teachers in the Dominican Republic).

Continued capacity-building of implementing partners on financial and administrative reporting. DevTech staff has continued to support and train implementing staff on financial and administrative reporting, specifically on the use of the tracking system, and on how to elaborate accurate and adequate reports. See Section 4.2, Question 4 for details.

Project directors should have prior in-country experience. Both project directors (current and previous) have extensive prior in-country experience so this has never been an issue. The current project director is Dominican with vast experience in the education sector, and with excellent relations with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, governmental entities, and other stakeholders. Equally, the previous project director, who is a United States citizen, had many years of in-country experience and excellent relations with all stakeholders.

Coordination between IPEC and EI project especially to adapt academic aspects. IPEC is now in the second phase of TBP. To what extent has IPEC adopted EPC models? IPEC and DevTech signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Based on an interview with a project official from IPEC and interviews with staff from DevTech, it was found that the relationship between IPEC and DevTech has been one of mutual respect, but that coordination between the two organizations has been limited to the participation of both organizations in conferences and committee meetings. At the regional level, for example in Tireo/Constanza, the coordination has been better and communication more frequent.

According to the IPEC project official interviewed, IPEC has not adopted the EpC model. Instead, IPEC uses the so-called *Salas de Tarea* where children are assisted with their homework before and after school hours. The person interviewed gave several reasons for this:

- *Salas de Tareas* better adjusted to the needs of working children because the approach adapts to their day-to-day educational needs instead of a predesigned format or model. *Salas de Tarea* is therefore more successful in reinserting working children, especially over-age children, in the formal educational system and in ensuring their retention. The project official said that although EpC "has done a great job," she thnks that EpC activities alone are not enough to keep children in school and that in regions where both IPEC and DevTech implement projects, IPEC has complemented the EpC with *Salas de Tarea*.

- Since the mandate of ILO-IPEC is to provide technical assistance to the government and to monitor if the government fulfills its responsibilities, IPEC's focus is on strengthening

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the formal educational system and not "to replace it by supporting activities outside the formal school system."

- Education is one of many actions IPEC carries out in order to combat WFCL—in addition, they address health and legal issues—and the *Salas de Tarea* activities fit better in this holistic approach than the EpC.

It is important to note that the evaluator has not been able to support this position with data or documentation, which means that the information outlined here is strictly based on the information provided by the interviewed project official.

Considerable additional funds much be provided to the project. The project has been very successful in leveraging nonproject funds. See Section 4.4, Question 3 for details.

9. *What other major design/implementation issues should be brought to the attention of the grantee and USDOL?*

There exists no clarity among many stakeholders of all levels of responsibility about the difference between IPEC's Time Bound Programme and the DevTech's EI project. Many people do not know these are two different projects implemented by two different organizations. This is a positive aspect, as it shows that the two projects complement each other as they were set out to do. On a more practical level for the purpose of the evaluation, it made it sometimes difficult for the evaluator to distinguish if interviewees were talking about the DevTech or the IPEC project.

Conclusions

The project clearly has been successful in withdrawing and preventing children from the WFCL and enrolling them in educational programs as the number exceeded the purpose stated in the project document. The project followed up on practically all recommendations of the midterm evaluation, except the strengthening of vocational training and alternative income-generating activities due to limitations in resources. The project also gave follow up to the request of USDOL to inform all implementing organizations and facilitators of the limitations with regard to inherently religious activities. Parents and children who participated in vocational training courses acquired technical abilities, as well as social and personal skills that encouraged and motivated them to explore dignified alternative ways of making a living. A limitation observed by participants in this respect is that the skills they learned did not necessarily match the local labor needs and that they lack the equipment and material to start their own microenterprise. Parents, teachers, and children are more aware of the dangers and negative consequences of child labor and, in general, parents prioritize education over work. Children who have participated in the EpC are more motivated to learn, develop important social and personal skills, and perform better academically. Teachers who received QL training are more motivated and feel better qualified to use innovative pedagogic methodologies in the classroom. The main challenge in terms of the design and the implementation of the project has been the accurate tracking of data. The project has constantly worked on this situation and reports improvements. Coordination between IPEC and DevTech is limited and IPEC has so far not adapted the EpC in their Time

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Bound Programme, mainly because they do not consider the model an effective tool to reinsert working children in the formal educational system.

Recommendations

- Refine project-monitoring systems by (a) allowing grantees to hire more people to carry out control visits, cross-check data, and track dropouts; (b) centralizing the database (i.e., one organization—leading—is responsible for entering and processing data as opposed to each subcontractor); (c) contracting an organization that has sufficient time and expertise in the design and development of databases; and (d) training staff from implementing organizations as well as facilitators on not only how to collect data on the working and educational status of beneficiaries, but also the *importance* of doing this accurately and why it must be done.

- Promote more coordination between EpC facilitators and formal school teachers since experience has shown that children, facilitators, and teachers benefit more from the EpC process and achieve better in school when communication and coordination between the EpC and the schools exists.

- Have the 976 teachers trained in QL train other teachers (around 20 each) in order to reach all teachers. This training will require the development of a Teachers of Teachers Training Manual and short training sessions for trained teachers.

- Strengthen the vocational education program by including a baseline study on needs and demand in the communities. Adapt the courses to this reality and support beneficiaries in finding employment once they finish the course. Moreover, in order to reduce transport costs, coordinate with Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC) and INFOTEP about the possibility of bringing the vocational courses to the community.

- Strengthen alternative income-generation programs for parents. Two of the most important contributing factors to child labor are cultural and social beliefs ("work is good for a child and prevents him/her from becoming a criminal") and poverty. The project has achieved much in terms of changing attitudes and practices, but parents also need to be supported in finding ways of replacing the income they lose once their children stop working or else they may continue to prioritize child labor over education.

- Find other creative ways to raise the awareness of parents by introducing other attractive opportunities for them such as Schools for Parents.

- Translate contracts with implementing agencies into Spanish.

- Disseminate the document *"Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government"*[1] (sent to DevTech by USDOL after award) amongst partner organizations.

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[1] See http://www.dol.gov/cfbci/legalguidance.htm for this guide and other information regarding this issue and http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidancedoc.es.html for a Spanish version.

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4.3   PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Responses to Specific Questions

1. *Describe the achievements in terms of partnerships created by the project. Evaluate the contributing factors to these achievements.*

The project has created partnerships with various civil society organizations and governmental institutions. More recently, private partnerships have been established, for example, with the American Chamber of Commerce (see Section 4.4, Question 3 for details). The project has been implemented by a group of nine organizations, which has resulted in a partnership that has been formalized through the creation of the EpC Consortium that will give follow-up to the EpCs (see Section 5). The project has a very good relationship with the SEE. Factors that have contributed to this partnership include the excellent and longstanding personal connections of the project director, the education consultant, and other staff members with high-ranking representatives from the SEE, as well as the concerted effort the project has made to include the SEE in all steps of the process.

2. *What were the factors that enabled the project to develop the Espacio Para Crecer (EpC)? How could this model be expanded and/or reproduced?*

Factors that enabled development of the EpC were—

- The existence of the *Salas de Tarea*, which has been validated by IPEC. The EpC built on this experience.

- The vision and expertise of the project team that designed and developed an innovative and dynamic pedagogic methodology that responds to the educational needs of working children and complements the half-day children are in formal school.

- A sense of ownership and pride because the EpC is a national product developed in the Dominican Republic.

- The flexibility and capability of the project team during the implementation period to update and adapt the modules according to identified needs (for example, development of *Astros* I and II modules).

The link between child labor and poor-quality education has been recognized in most developing countries. The EpC model is an effective and flexible tool in the eradication of child labor. An unexpected result of the EpC is that the methodology does not only work for working children, but has a positive effect on all children. Moreover, the EpC is a low-cost, community-based model that can easily be adapted to different cultures and translated into other languages. It is desirable to carry out a prior study on the socioeconomic reality and educational situation of the geographical area before its implementation. At the Central American level, the EpCs are already being reproduced in the *Primero Aprendo* project in Nicaragua.

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3. *What have been the major challenges and opportunities, if any, of implementing coordination with the host country government, particularly the Ministries of Education and Labor, as well as other government agencies active in addressing related children's issues?*

No significant challenges have been found in the coordination with SET and SEE. Both SEE and SET speak highly of DevTech and the EpC model. In the words of the SET Sub-Secretary, "DevTech is an important partner in the fight against the worst forms of child labor." He also stated that through DevTech, the SET has found new alliances. DevTech is member of the National Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which is chaired by SET. The level of coordination between SET and the project depends on the region of intervention, as well as on the type of child labor. For example, in the informal sector in Santo Domingo, labor inspectors are practically nonexistent, while in Constanza, the coordination between the project and SET is, according to the regional representative of SET and EDUCA, of good quality.

The relationship between SEE and DevTech is strong, mainly due to the long-standing personal relationship of the current and former project director with the Secretary. Although no structural financial support or policy changes have been achieved in the SEE, which requires a long-term process, SEE has supported the project in many ways by providing physical space for the EpC, financial support for QL for teachers, incentives for some facilitators, and donations of backpacks and snacks. SEE also transferred two SEE staff members to the EpC Consortium and built a school in Barrio la Mosca near the garbage dump in Santiago. Importantly, during the stakeholders' meeting, the Sub-Secretary of Education confirmed SEE institutional approval and support of the EpC and verbally committed to further explore possibilities to guarantee continuity of the EpC in the form of public-private partnerships.

4. *What have been some of the challenges and issues in working with local NGOs and other local organizations?*

No major challenges or issues came to light in working with local NGOs beyond the day-to-day administrative issues that can be expected in a project that is implemented by a group of nine partner organizations, each with their own philosophy and work style covering a wide geographical area. An example of a day-to-day issue is timely and accurate reporting. This was particularly an issue in the beginning of the project with MAIS, as was pointed out in the midterm evaluation, but coordination in this respect has improved as a result of more frequent and closer monitoring and more support provided by DevTech staff. Most of these issues are due to the fact that local organizations often implement various projects at the same time with a limited numbers of staff, which means they often have many things going at the same time. Some of them therefore have problems fulfilling all donor requirements in a timely fashion. The project staff has provided continuous support to local organizations, especially to MAIS in the elaboration and timely submission of accurate and adequate field reports.

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5. *Given that the project did not explicitly work on policy, was this a strength or weakness? Did the project have any unanticipated impact on policy?*

> "In Quantum Learning, I learned that being a teacher not only means teaching to read and write. I learned to appreciate and value every child. In the classroom, we are mothers, psychologists, doctors and teachers all at the same time."

> "It is not only a Space for Growth for children, but also for us."

> *—Testimonies of teachers/facilitators*
> *in national facilitator celebration in Santo Domingo*

The project has had unanticipated impacts on policy in several ways. First, several high-ranking SEE representatives indicated that they believe the EpC should be institutionalized and the sub-Secretary of the SEE stated in the stakeholders' meeting that she wants to explore possibilities to gradually support the EpC through the SEE. In other words, public entities have publicly recognized the EpC as an effective method to improve educational indicators and eradicate child labor. As a member of the National Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor, DevTech has been actively involved in the formulation of the National Plan.

6. *What appears to be the project's anticipated or unanticipated effects, if any, on—*

    a. *Individual beneficiaries (children, parents, teachers, etc.)?*

Children developed social, personal, and artistic skills in the EpC that improved their behavior, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, discipline, and motivation to learn, which manifested in better educational achievements, higher enrollment, retention, and completion rates. As one beneficiary put it, "the way I am talking to you now here, I would not have been able to do that before I participated in the project." Young people in some communities who participated in the EpC (e.g., la Berma and San Francisco de Macoris) got organized in a Local Youth Network responsible for keeping the community clean and motivating children to go to school. Some of these children are now part of the Red Cross and have become true leaders within their communities. In Las Terrenas, young girls, beneficiaries of vocational courses, actively participated in awareness-raising sessions about commercial sexual exploitation with peers. In some cases, older children told the evaluator they tutored smaller children and helped them with their homework.

Parents have become more aware of the importance of education and found new ways to get involved in their children's education through parents' meetings and as active members of local committees. Some illiterate parents have even become motivated to start learning to write and read themselves. They also understand the risks and dangers of child labor and most parents have withdrawn their children from work completely, prioritizing school. Some indicated that this is also due to the fact that when children go to EpC in the morning and to school in the afternoon (or the other way around) there is simply no time to send them to work.

Teachers have become more motivated to apply new teaching methods even when resources are limited. Interviews with school directors revealed that teachers who would only complain about the lack of material, have now learned that by using creative methods and existing resources,

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they can still make teaching fun and enjoyable. Facilitators, both community members and students of basic education, feel more self-confident and equipped to teach. They also claimed to apply personal experience and the methods they learned. During the national celebration for facilitators, participants who were no longer working in the EpC said that because they are community members, children still come to them for personal advice or to ask assistance in educational matters. Anticipated and unanticipated effects have been outlined in Section 2, Questions 1 and 2.

> *b. Partner organizations (local NGOs, community groups, schools, etc.)?*

Partner organizations have been strengthened by the experience. Staff of these organizations said that, due to their participation in the project and their specialization in education and child labor, their organizations are now better positioned in their respective regions. They are recognized as experts in the subject area and a reference point for community members and local and national authorities. The relationship with the regional and national SEE has improved, as well as with other local organizations working in the area of child labor and education. In addition, the experience has strengthened their administrative capacities and their ability to systematize and give account of their progress and results achieved. In some cases, the experience has attracted new or additional funds from other donors for follow-on projects.

> *3. Local government and policy structures in terms of systemwide change on education and child labor issues?*

In general, local municipalities have been supportive of the project and some have contributed to the project in the form of financial donations. In other cases, they have provided transport for children to and from EpC, or contributed to the incentives for the facilitators. In Barrio La Mosca in Santiago, the municipality played a vital role negotiating the construction of a new school with SEE. In Las Terrenas, *Fundación Azucar* successfully pressured the local government to earmark a certain percentage of the local budget for the protection of children as stipulated by law. Although this does not necessarily point to systemwide change, they are important steps, as they imply the recognition of the local governments that they have responsibilities in providing education for all and eradicating child labor.

Conclusions

The project has been successful in creating partnerships and facilitating coordination with all types of stakeholders at all levels and has created an effective, innovative, creative Dominican product that can be easily reproduced in other countries. Depending on the context, it can be adopted by the formal education system, or private-public partnerships can be created where the administration and implementation is shared between civil society organizations and SEE with financial support from the private sector. Community organizations have been involved from the onset in the project and, in some cases, have assumed responsibilities in terms of the sustainability and continuity of the EpC. Individual beneficiaries such as children, parents, and teachers have undergone important personal changes and have been empowered through their participation. Coordination with partner-implementing organizations has been effective and these organizations have been strengthened through their participation. Local and regional government

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structures, as well as national governmental institutions, have been supportive of the project, which has been demonstrated through their contributions of material donations and financial support, amongst others. Translating their support and these partnerships into systemwide structural policy change is a long-term process. In alliance with the regional *Primero Aprendo* project, the project has worked on influencing policymaking.

Recommendations

- According to various high-level representatives of the SEE, the implementing organizations, and the DevTech education specialists, the EpC should be expanded to all regions of the country.

- Give follow-up to the leadership potential in children created by the EpC. Once children finish the EpC, they have developed important leadership skills. It is important to develop strategies so they can make themselves useful or get organized in their communities.

4.4   MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Responses to Specific Questions

1. *What are the management strengths of this project?*

A management strength of this project is the good relationship and effective coordination that has been established between DevTech and the subcontractors. As was mentioned earlier, there have been some administrative challenges in terms of the timely submission of reports to DevTech, but these are problems that any project of this size with a large number of partner organizations may face. Interviews revealed that implementing agency staff and representatives from SEE and SET consider the DevTech staff to be of high quality and very competent. According to them, the flexibility of DevTech staff to adapt to new or unexpected situations is very good, and the communication channels are smooth and of good quality. They all expressed satisfaction with the support provided by DevTech in all aspects of the project and especially in terms of the collection, processing, and reporting of data.

The success in this respect is mainly due to the solid, motivated, professional project team and to the physical presence and experience of implementing organizations in their respective regions of intervention. All staff members of the organizations DevTech works with, as well as the facilitators, have a good knowledge of the main problems and challenges facing their communities and are highly respected within the communities by children, parents, and community leaders.

2. *What management areas, including technical and financial, could be improved?*

As mentioned above, the design of the tracking system, data processing, and elaboration of reports would have been less challenging and time-consuming if there was one centralized database and if implementing staff had been trained from the beginning on the importance of and reasons for data tracking.

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3. How successful has the project been in leveraging nonproject resources?

The project has been very successful in leveraging nonproject resources. It has received material contributions and economic resources from three major sectors: public institutions, NGOs, and the private corporate sector. Some examples illustrate the achievements of the project:

- SEE continues to support the project and the EpC network that has been set up with project partners and some new partners, with two technical staff members.

- Various NGOs, such as Plan International and World Vision, have received technical assistance from DevTech and ENTRENA and are running EpCs (World Vision is running 11 at this moment) for children at risk in their intervention areas.

- San Diego Padres, in collaboration with AmCham and ENTRENA, will open four EpCs in an area around the new Padres training facility west of San Cristobal. The *Sur Futuro Foundation* will manage the program.

- The Consortium has received small funds from the Peace Corps, AmCham, and USAID.

- IDDI has opened four new EpC with the support of USAID, AmCham, and IMCA (a Dominican Company).

- EDUCA received funds from the Vicini Foundation to open 16 new EpCs and IDDI received funds for 30 EpCs in 46 schools they work with on sugar plantations.

- UCNE has received two grants from SEE (IADB loan) to enable continuance and expansion of the EpC program and is also exploring funding possibilities with the corporate sector in San Francisco de Macorís. Of the 84 EpCs UCNE is running in 2007, DevTech/UCNE/USDOL is financing 51 and SEE/IADB 33.

- The regional network for the eradication of child labor in Tireo/Constanza is also negotiating the opening and continuation of EpCs with the private sector.

- The owners of New Horizons School (bilingual school in Santo Domingo owned by a former Peace Corps Volunteer) have offered to pay for the operation of two EpCs in *Sabana de la Mar* if the EpC Network will manage it.

Conclusions

The project has been implemented by a highly skilled and motivated DevTech team in coordination with a large group of partner organizations. Each individual organization has been successful in mobilizing additional funds for the implementation of EpC activities and the consortium is also in the process of consolidating and has already received some funds. The EpC has attracted the interest of many NGOs, and has also been successfully adopted by the *Primero Aprendo* project in Nicaragua. It is particularly interesting and important that private-public partnerships have been created to give continuity to the project.

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4.5 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT

Responses to Specific Questions

1. *What steps have been taken to promote sustainability of the project objectives?*

The overall approach of the project has been to involve local and community organizations in activities to eradicate the WFCL and to promote the importance of education. A community-based model leads to more ownership and responsibility by community members to continue project efforts. This is illustrated by the fact that some community organizations have mobilized funds to pay for the incentives of facilitators or have provided physical space for the EpC activities. Moreover, many subcontractors have already made successful efforts to continue the EpC beyond the duration of the project by attracting new donors to fund the EpC.

In addition, an EpC consortium has been formed consisting of all implementing organizations as well as some new organizations including INTEC, World Vision, and Plan International. EDUCA is the leader of the consortium. Although no official legal document has been signed yet, each organization has committed to guarantee the continuity and the quality of the EpC and to use the existing EpC modules and training model. How this will be done depends on the individual capacity of each organization. The SEE will support the Consortium with material and physical space and with two staff members who have already been transferred to the Consortium.

Regarding the adoption of the EpC model by the SEE, it is important to note there exists political will to gradually incorporate the EpC into the formal education system. The Sub-Secretary of Education confirmed in the stakeholders meeting that the SEE does not, at this moment, have the human capacity, economic resources, physical space, or materials to extend the half day of schooling to a full day. However, she stated that the educational public policy formulated for the next three years identified as a priority improving access, drop-out, and repetition rates as well as academic achievement and that the EpC model fits perfectly in this strategy. She reiterated that SEE is committed to exploring the possibility of creating structures and partnerships with the private sector, universities, and civil society to assume the administration and implementation of EpC activities. She proposed that the SEE representatives in charge of the Planning and International Cooperation Departments assume the task to analyze what form this partnership should take.

2. *Assess the extent to which the various partners with which the project has worked can act as agents for the initiative's sustainability. Assess the extent to which the local governments and education authorities will continue the project's efforts. Has the capacity of local organizations been increased by the project?*

The project has increased the capacity of local organizations. Many local organizations have found additional funds for the continuation of the EpC in the communities and are now more capable of efficiently administering funds. Moreover, they have developed an area of expertise on child labor and education. The facilitators are, in most cases, community members and, in their words, "even if the project ends, the teaching methods they learned will stay in their heads." See Section 3, Question 6 for more details on the empowerment of local organizations.

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3. *What has been the impact of the project on formal and vocational teaching and learning in terms of—*

   a. *The quality of teaching (according to the teachers trained)?*

As has been mentioned earlier, teachers who received QL training said that they are more motivated to teach and feel more qualified as they learn new, creative methodologies based on participation, recreation, motivation, and artistic expression that make teaching more fun and interesting. They apply these methods in formal schools. Basic Education Students are gaining valuable teaching experience in the EpC they can use when they start teaching in the formal system.

   b. *The quality of learning (according to children, parents, teachers, and leaders)?*

Children, parents, teachers, school directors, and leaders confirm that the quality of learning has increased. Children advanced in reading, writing, and mathematics and learned creative, fun ways to, for example, memorize a lists of items ("when I go to the store, I remember what to buy thinking of my body parts; spaghetti is my hair, yucca is my nose…"). All children interviewed claimed their grades have gone up since they participated in the EpC and many were promoted during the year. Children are also taught about responsibilities and discipline in terms of homework, as well as national history and culture and what it means to be Dominican. Children were particularly keen to talk to the evaluator about the importance of protecting natural resources, an issue that needs to be tackled in many poor neighborhoods where the EpC activities are being implemented.

> "I used to think that because we are poor, we should find ways to get out of this country and find new opportunities. But now I am proud to be a Dominican and I think we should stay and improve the situation in our community."
>
> ***—13-year-old girl who participated in EpC in la Berma***

Through recreational activities, artistic expression, reading children's literature, and physical education, children work on their self-esteem and develop social and personal skills. In all EpCs, the evaluator was welcomed with a song or play and children of all ages seemed to enjoy participating. Children interviewed who participated in vocational courses said that their participation encouraged them to keep studying and, in the words of the director of the *Escuela Yaque* who managed the vocational training courses for children who worked at the garbage dump, "they have understood the meaning of life again."

   c. *The overall quality of new curricula and teaching methodologies?*

Teachers who have had QL training claim to incorporate new teaching methodologies in formal schools. One teacher illustrated how she uses disposable cups to form letters on the floor in order to teach children the alphabet, something she would have never thought of before. Other teachers teach about computers without having any equipment in the schools. They paint computers on carton boards and explain to children with limited, yet creative resources about the use of computers. Others incorporated art, painting, drawing, and songs in the classroom. Regional SEE

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representatives observed that teachers have, in this sense, become more flexible and creative in making methodological changes in the official curriculum.

>   4. *What are some lessons learned to date in terms of the project's accomplishments and weaknesses in terms of sustainability of interventions?*

The project is community based and parents, children, and community leaders have been actively involved in project activities. Parents understand the importance of education and are aware of the dangers and risks of child labor. However, poverty remains one of the main contributing factors to the persistence of child labor in the communities of intervention. Various staff members and parents expressed the need to complement educational activities with funding for alternative income-generation programs for parents or other attractive options, such as School for Parents, which support and encourage parents to find alternative sources of income.

>   5. *Have lessons learned by the project been shared with appropriate stakeholders?*

The project holds evaluation and coordination meetings with all implementing agencies on a regular basis. During these meetings, all lessons learned, challenges, issues, and problems are discussed.

>   6. *Failure to terminate with three subcontractors.*

The contracts with three subcontractors (*Fundación Azucar, MAIS* and *Muchachos Don Bosco*) were not terminated in March 2007. This nontermination was based on a misunderstanding that has been clarified in the progress report of March 2007. The EpC sessions were terminated, but follow-up of beneficiaries in schools and meetings with parents continue to take place. A no-cost extension of the project until August 31 has been approved, as well as an extension of ENTRENA and EDUCA to August 15 and all other subcontractors until July 31. Summer camps will be run in various regions and a study of the EpC program will be carried out, and the results published and disseminated. Two big closing events of the project will be held at the end of July.
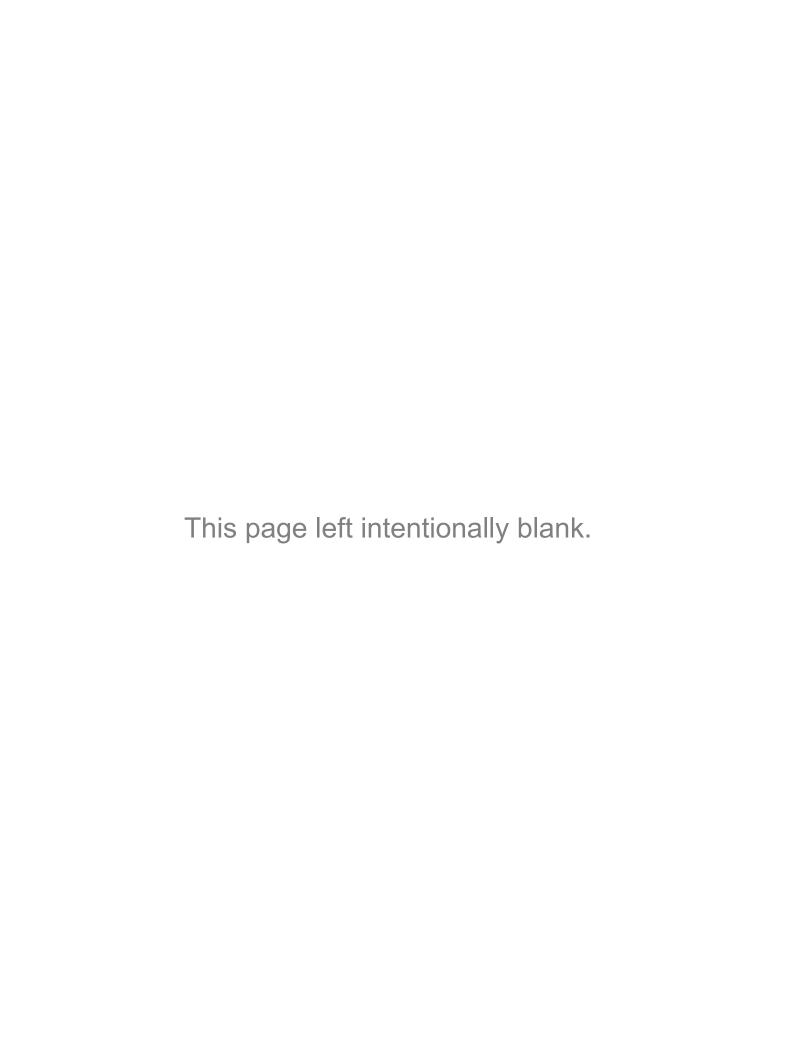
Conclusions

The fact that the project is a community-based program contributes to the sustainability of its activities. Communities and local organizations feel a sense of ownership about the EpC model and have gone to great lengths to continue the EpC in their communities. The SEE and SET have been included in every step of the process and they have supported the project from the beginning. The project has not only depended on USDOL funds, but has also been very successful in leveraging nonproject funds from public institutions, the private sector, and NGOs.

Recommendations

-   Strengthen public-private partnerships and corporate-sector involvement and make sure their contributions go beyond funding relations, as structural support from private business allows for sustainable long- term results.

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- Consolidate the consortium and define roles and responsibilities. At this moment, it is unclear when an organization is supposed to act on behalf of the consortium and when as an individual organization.

- Mobilize funds for the consortium that allow for more EpCs to be opened and to expand geographical areas.

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V   LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

- The EpC model has been very effective as a transitional activity and contributed to an improvement of educational indicators such as enrollment, persistence, completion, repetition, dropout, and academic performance. The EpC is a dynamic, innovative, low-cost model and is an effective tool for the eradication of child labor. It can be easily adapted and implemented according to the realities of other countries and applied to all children at risk.

- It is desirable to carry out a baseline study at the beginning of the project to facilitate data comparison during the process and allow for quantifying the impact the project had on educational quality.

- The project has been very successful in raising awareness about the importance of education and the risks and dangers of child labor. For poor families, the income loss suffered when their child is withdrawn from child labor often has an impact on the total family income and parents need to find other ways to compensate for the income loss. Alternative income-generating programs that respond to local needs and labor markets will support and encourage them to make up for lost income in different ways.

- Vocational training programs provide parents and working or at-risk youth with valuable skills and alternatives to WFCL. In order for these programs to be effective, it is desirable to conduct market research identifying the needs and demands of the labor market. Courses can then be adapted to this reality and to the desires and interests of the beneficiaries.

- Training on data collection and reporting must be carried out from the beginning of the project with all people involved in this activity (facilitators, teachers, coordinators, staff of implementing organizations, etc.) and not only concentrate on technical aspects, but also on the reasons why adequate and accurate data collection and reporting is important. When people do not understand the reason for or the importance of a given activity, they are less likely to be concerned about the quality of their involvement.

- SEE has been involved from the very beginning in all steps of the project, which has resulted in their institutional support for the EpC model and their commitment during the stakeholders' meeting to explore possibilities to gradually integrate the EpC in the formal education system through a partnership between SEE, the private sector, and universities.

- The involvement of community organizations and local NGOs contributes to the sustainability of the project activities. Many community groups have assumed the costs and provided the physical space for the EpCs to continue. Local NGOs have mobilized additional funds to open new EpCs or to continue the ones started by the project.