



Youth Pathways Central America

Final Performance Evaluation of the Youth Pathways

Central America (YPCA) Project

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ACRONYMS

CCICH	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Choloma (<i>Cámara de Comercio e Industria de Choloma</i>)
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CMEP	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
CONAMYPE	National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprise (<i>Comisión Nacional de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa</i>)
CONMIGRANTES	National Council for the Protection and Development of Migrants and Their Families (<i>Consejo Nacional para la Protección y Desarrollo de la Persona Migrante y su Familia</i>)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DBMS	Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System
DGME	Government Office on Immigration and Aliens (<i>Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería</i>)
DINAF	National Directorate for Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (<i>Dirección Nacional de la Niñez, Adolescencia, y Familia</i>)
DQA	Data quality assessment
EPHPM	Permanent Multipurpose Household Survey (<i>Encuesta Permanente de Hogares y Propósitos Múltiples</i>)
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FUNADEH	National Foundation for the Development of Honduras (<i>Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo de Honduras</i>)
FUNDEMAS	Entrepreneurial Foundation for Social Action (<i>Fundación Empresarial para la Acción Social</i>)
FUSADES	Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (<i>Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo Económico y Social</i>)
GDP	Gross domestic product
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICT4D	Information Communication Technology/for Development
ILAB	Bureau International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
INAMI	National Institute for Young Offenders (<i>Instituto Nacional para la Atención de Menores Infractores</i>)
INFOP	Institute for Professional Training (<i>Instituto de Formación Profesional</i>)

INJUVE	National Institute for Youth (<i>Instituto Nacional de la Juventud</i>)
INSAFORP	Salvadoran Institute for Professional Training (<i>Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional</i>)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISNA	Salvadoran Institute for the Integral Development of Childhood and Adolescence (El Salvador – <i>Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo Integral de la Niñez y la Adolescencia</i>)
KII	Key informant interview
LACRO	Latin America and the Caribbean regional office (CRS)
LOP	Life of Project
M&E	Monitoring & evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MoL	Ministry of Labor
NGG	Net Gender Gap
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
RedITC	Network of Community Technical Institutions (<i>Red de Institutos Técnicos Comunitarios</i>)
RGG	Relative Gender Gap
SENAEH	Honduran National Service for Employment (<i>Servicio Nacional de Empleo de Honduras</i>)
SGI	Small group interview
TOC	Theory of change
TPR	Technical Progress Report
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCRI	U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WFCL	Worst forms of child labor
WHO	World Health Organization
YB	YouthBuild component
YPCA	Youth Pathways Central America

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Labor’s (USDOL) Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) funded the Youth Pathways Central America (YPCA) project with the ultimate goal to reduce the prevalence of child labor, hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras. The project period of performance was July 29, 2015 to September 30, 2020 and, was implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partners *Fe y Alegría*, Glasswing International, and the National Foundation for the Development of Honduras (FUNADEH). To reach the project’s goal, YPCA supported children and youth 12–25 years of age (as approved by USDOL) at risk of being engaged in child labor or hazardous work, not working, with a relative engaged in child labor, or those at risk of being recruited into gangs or engaging in illicit activities, depending upon the age group. DevTech Systems, Inc. was contracted by USDOL to conduct the YPCA final performance evaluation. The overall purpose of this evaluation was to provide USDOL and implementing partners with an independent assessment of the project’s performance and experience, focusing on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation team (the Team) interviewed 91 project participants and stakeholders through individual and small group interviews and focus groups, using qualitative data collection instruments, a master list of 15 evaluation questions and a combination of qualitative data analysis techniques. The Team also used project M&E data and the external longitudinal study contracted by YPCA to provide quantitative information on all key output and outcome indicators, as well as other quantitative secondary data from sources such as ILO and World Bank to compare relevant project results with the national context. The main findings are presented below and are further analyzed and explained in section IV of this report.

Relevance

YPCA, comprising three interrelated components targeting in school children, out of school and unemployed youth, and their families (Career Connect Clubs, YouthBuild, and Community Youth Connect), differs from similar programs in both countries. The YPCA theory of change (TOC) aimed to motivate children to stay in school—or, for those who have dropped out, help them to return—and help youth to obtain and maintain employment or start self-employment. The Career Connect Clubs (Clubs) component did indeed motivate students to stay in school, with an overall dropout rate of 5.7 percent, which is similar (in El Salvador) or better (in Honduras) than the 6.1 percent dropout national averages of both countries. Program data indicates that motivation was not the main cause of desertion. Migration was the main reason for dropouts, representing 1 of every 5 dropouts. Migration is related to the lack of economic opportunities and insecurity factors, which are outside the projects’ control.

The YouthBuild (YB) component provides vocational training, supports job searches, contact with companies, interviews, and feedback from companies. YB focuses on life and job skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational training and internships, school re-entry, and job placement services for out-of-school and unemployed at-risk youth ages 16 to 20, and in special cases up to 25 if they meet additional criteria. In some cases, labor intermediation facilitated access to internships, which helped young people access work experience and then obtain employment or the ability to start their own business. This is considered relevant to help targeted youth to access the labor market, as it allows them to develop the basic technical skills to get a job. YPCA placed great emphasis on developing *soft skills* and job values such as respect, punctuality, readiness for work, and maintaining a professional attitude. Most interviews confirmed that the promotion of soft skills by YPCA was

more relevant than vocational training to enter the labor market in both countries. Soft skills are considered a comparative advantage over other youth employability programs.

The project identified three critical assumptions, of which the Team considers that two were met; one was only met in El Salvador but not met in Honduras, where post–2017 election riots and teacher strikes in 2019 severely affected the project's implementation. These were related to security, natural disasters, and economic growth (see Section IV.A for full discussion). YPCA did not address some potential risks in its design. One important risk that should have been addressed is the difficulty in accessing and recruiting children and youths that meet the activity's selection criteria, considering the territorial boundaries of gangs. The project did, however, address security risks in the field implementation strategy. Security-related strategies implemented were relevant and practical for the YPCA execution, promoted participation and involvement, are non-discriminatory, and helped increase project approval on the field.

Lastly, regarding the relevance of the project design to work in two countries with a similar context, the Team found that benefits aligned better with efficiency efforts. Administrative management costs at USDOL were reduced by providing administrative and technical follow-up for a single project instead of two. The reduction in administrative costs also applied to CRS, which needed proportionally fewer management personnel than if it were implemented separately.

Effectiveness

YPCA achieved most of its numeric targets, with the best performance in El Salvador. While the project as a whole achieved a high number of targets, at the country level El Salvador was more effective than Honduras. By March 2020, YPCA exceeded the participant numeric targets by 24 percent for children in clubs, and 18 percent for youth enrolled in the YB program, despite difficulties encountered. A majority of respondents in the evaluated countries, both employers and graduated youth, credit YPCA for delivering high-quality services with notable improvements in children and youth's academic, social, and work behavior.

YPCA established two project objectives and 24 outcome and output indicator targets. Of the two project objectives, one exceeded its targets and the other partially achieved it. For its Objective 2 (PO2), the project achieved 106 percent of the target, succeeding in having beneficiary children complete the school year during the life of project. The Clubs methodology implemented to achieve PO2 had great impact on children's motivation. On the other hand, it did not fully achieve PO1—obtaining acceptable work, self-employment, or formal education for youth, with only 66 percent of the target achieved. The Team considers that the lack of job opportunities for youths in general, and for youth living in high-risk locations in particular, is a major barrier to accessing decent jobs at the national and local levels in these countries. As is analyzed in Section IV of this report, the project employment rates were within the range of national averages for similar-aged youth, which is highly positive, as YPCA targets at-risk youth with a low average education level.

Overall, YPCA was effective in achieving its numeric targets, as reflected in data shared by CRS with the evaluation team and reported by YPCA in the last Technical Progress Report (TPR) of April 2020. The project reached 90 percent target execution or more in 20 of the 24 performance indicators. This finding is consistent with the perceptions of the majority of respondents in El Salvador and Honduras, who reported the project as very effective in achieving its objectives. Over-achievement in El Salvador served to offset under-achievement in Honduras on several indicators. With respect to the Strong Families support, all respondents from direct beneficiaries stated that they perceived an improvement in their relationships with family members, as well as in the support received from

the family and relatives who participated in the project. As for case-management support, most respondents from technical staff and beneficiaries considered that the referral services succeeded in achieving its target (1,298 out of 1,000). And in the case of emergency shelter assistance provision, there were fewer cases handled by YPCA against the target (eight out of 76) due to lack of demand and operational difficulties to deliver the support promptly.

To align vocational training provided to youth, YPCA carried out labor-market studies in El Salvador and Honduras in 2017, but the studies did not contain detailed indications to inform the tailoring of vocational training—namely, trainings based on enterprises' demand at the local level. Thus, CRS staff took additional steps and visited businesses, business associations and chambers of commerce to identify vocational training priorities, or how implementing partners could better align or adapt their vocational trainings with the local enterprise needs.

Regarding gender, the last update to the longitudinal study prepared by the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES) shows that YPCA has done an excellent job at increasing women access to employment; YPCA young women have a higher probability of obtaining some kind of job than young women outside YPCA. The national relative gender gap (RGG) for youth aged between 20 and 24 years old is 81 percent in Honduras and 84 percent in El Salvador. For YPCA youth participants, it is only 23 percent (RGG is 58 percentual points lower) in Honduras and 25 percent (RGG is 59 percentual points lower) in El Salvador.

Although the Team considered the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) in general as well as in its final version, most respondents mentioned that they had issues and limitations in using the information systems, both entering data and analyzing information to make timely decisions during implementation. The system is considered useful but somewhat complex and bureaucratic.

Efficiency

Broadly speaking, the Team considers that the financial and human resources were adequate or sufficient for the implementation of the project. However, there are opportunities to improve efficiency with respect to implementation timeliness in staffing, training, budget execution, and other issues related to information quality produced by YPCA. The first year of implementation was basically dedicated to completing and receiving approval of the CMEP and longitudinal study design between CRS and USDOL. This affected financial and technical execution in the field and the Team considers that this also affected the project's effectiveness and efficiency. The project staff were already available but under-utilized at the start of the project. Thus, although the 2017 project modification included a budget realignment, the project was unable to catch up with financial execution and suffered from constant budget lag.

The implementing partners' technical teams had difficulties completing data forms and uploading information into the online database. Given the connectivity/compatibility issues among the platforms and systems, small portions of data were getting lost while uploading which was identified as the reason why implementing partners and CRS data frequently had inconsistencies. As a result of these issues, technical teams needed to dedicate more time to find data discrepancies and re-enter data, which was highly time-consuming. This time could have been better invested in technical activities, especially at the start of the project.

Staff turnover also affected the project's efficiency. The year 2017 presented the highest staff turnover rate, at more than 20 percent in each country (one of every five staff members abandoned the project). The Team found that the reasons for the high turnover were diverse and, to some extent,

beyond project control. The turnover study found that in El Salvador 17 percent of staff got a job with a higher salary, 15 percent simply got another job, and 14 percent left because of security concerns. In Honduras, the main reasons were that staff were fired (24 percent), obtained another job (21 percent), or obtained a job with a higher salary (11 percent).

Sustainability

In July 2016, YPCA prepared a sustainability plan in a collaborative manner with various stakeholders. Evidence shows that in terms of positive behavioral changes in children and youths and knowledge gained by them through project services, YPCA outcomes are sustainable, including insertion to employment (particularly in large companies) and startup of self-employment. As for the three core project components (Clubs, YB, and Social Protection Services), YPCA transferred the methodologies among key stakeholders in line with the sustainability strategy, which has laid a strong widely-spread awareness, support and foundation for sustainability, although this varies across components and countries.

All respondents from government, schools, employers, beneficiaries and implementors responded that they consider YPCA had a great impact and that it should be replicated after the end of YPCA. A majority of implementors said they plan or are already replicating some activities similar to or a modified version of the Clubs, YB, and Social Protection Services components, dependent upon the level of financial resources. Budget constraints present the major challenge to sustainability and the Clubs component is the one with the highest probability of being sustained.

Promising practices

- YPCA provides support in job searches, which is considered an added value and a highly successful and positive aspect of the methodology when compared to other projects in the area. The promotion of soft skills is more relevant than vocational training to enter the labor market in both countries and this also differentiates YPCA from similar workforce-development projects that might offer vocational training but lack the soft-skills approach. YPCA provided a comprehensive and effective set of skills surrounding values, leadership, conflict resolution, self-esteem, communication, teamwork, and job interviewing that helped prepare youth for jobs or self-employment.
- YPCA sought alliances with or collaboration from micro and small enterprises. By the end of 2018, the project started approaching larger firms and the insertion rate to labor markets registered an important improvement. This experience indicates that working with firms of all sizes might be more effective than focusing only in micro and small enterprises.
- The project has proven that a successful way to insert youths with no work experience into local labor markets is to target jobs that do *not* fall under the category “Acceptable Work (according to project definitions)” —namely, informal jobs. The longitudinal study provides evidence that after gaining some experience and demonstrating their skills and abilities in their “first job,” project-graduated youth progressed to better, acceptable jobs.
- CRS regional office supported YPCA with higher-level staff, such as monitoring & evaluation (M&E) and security specialists, which was key for the activity’s implementation. The Team considers that it positively influenced efficiency efforts in both administrative and technical execution.
- The YPCA approach of having a municipality from Honduras implementing the YB component, side by side with a government agency in El Salvador working with young offenders, has secured

replication of such component. Both entities said to the Team that they will continue carrying out the corresponding services.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- The project correctly identified most of the causal mechanisms in its TOC, but its scope and applicability could have been more relevant and results could have been better if it had addressed more-relevant desertion causes in the Clubs component. Motivation is not the main cause of desertion, rather migration, given the economic and security concerns in both countries. For future projects in similar contexts, the Team recommends including migration issues in the critical assumptions or in the causal mechanisms of the TOC.
- When designing a binational (or multi-national) project, it should not be assumed that having teams in both countries will guarantee the exchange of experiences and learning between implementers. The Team recommends implementing a learning agenda, such as the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) approach, from the project's early stages. This approach is more relevant in binational projects than in a national one, as there are more opportunities to learn from different administrative regulations, laws, and social conditions to improve implementation.
- The project was modified to include younger children in the Clubs component, from 12 to 13 years old. This helped increase project effectiveness, so that the probability of children staying in school from earlier stages can be increased. The Team recommends incorporating this approach in future project designs.
- Development of the M&E systems and plans as main parts of the CMEP took about one year, delaying project implementation and thus affecting effectiveness and efficiency efforts. The Team recommends USDOL review M&E requirements and procedures with contractors. A shorter time for the M&E design might allow additional time for activity implementation and increase or improve actual project outputs, outcomes, and objectives.
- Regarding M&E, it also recommended to provide additional training on how to use the M&E platform and to understand indicators, targets, and responsibilities; it would be helpful to have a simpler and more user-friendly system. Indicators should have disaggregated targets, including country, sex, geographic area, etc. For such complex projects, the Team recommends carrying out an external data quality assessment in the first years of implementation.
- Once the project started providing generalized support for transportation, meals, and child care following up the midterm evaluation recommendations, desertion rates diminished. This experience shows that providing mobilization, food, child care and other items necessary to ensure participation of the beneficiary early in the project, and consistently across all implementing partners, may widen project effectiveness. The Team also recommends defining standardized procedures in this regard among implementing partners. Although CRS should not fall into micro-managing its partners, having more homogeneous processes in terms of training, role distribution, implementation schedules, support policies for participants, and others will allow for a more efficient use of both financial and human resources.
- While transferring knowledge and experience is important for sustainability, such measures alone do not ensure a holistic implementation of the project TOC and activities. Most stakeholders from El Salvador and Honduras will implement or are implementing modified and reduced versions of YPCA approach, therefore making uncertain the achievement of results as those depicted in the TOC of YPCA. The Team recommends that efforts towards sustainability

should be systematized in a detailed work plan, which can then be monitored and evaluated to measure progress and achievement of expected results.

II. PROJECT CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION

Project Context

In the world, an estimated 152 million boys and girls ages 5 to 17—more than double the entire child population of the United States—are involved in child labor and half of those are in hazardous work that endangers their safety, health, and moral development.¹ Child labor is a serious problem in the Central American region, and El Salvador and Honduras are no exception.

In Honduras and El Salvador, young people are affected by the lack of both opportunities to enter in the labor markets and resources to pay for formal education. In El Salvador, one out of four youths do not study or work, while in Honduras one out of five is in a similar situation.² For women in both countries, the situation is even worse—three out of five do not study or work. These youth are at greater risk or increased exposure than those who study or work, to drug consumption, illegal activities, irregular migration, becoming victims of human trafficking, crime and violence, and the worst forms of child labor (WFCL) or hazardous work. Those living in high-risk urban and rural areas are even more likely to be victims or part of those undesirable activities.

Low levels of family income and slow economic growth limit development of academic, social, and work skills for young people in El Salvador and Honduras. Key risks for urban youth living in high-crime neighborhoods include low academic performance, aggressive behavior, dysfunctional families, deep trauma from long-term poverty, and threats of gang violence. These risk factors limit development of social and academic skills. Moreover, employer hiring practices often exclude youth living in crime-ridden neighborhoods; businesses routinely use polygraph tests, another obstacle on an already challenging path. Gang control over many areas means that youths from one area are frequently unable to cross rival territory to access jobs or training centers without beatings or death threats. There is a high probability that youths starting a business face extortion threat.

By helping marginalized and excluded children and young people to develop their academic, technical, and social skills there is a great chance to improve their livelihood conditions and reduce the likelihood of being engaged in child labor, hazardous work, WFCL, drug consumption, crime and violence, and irregular migration.

Project Description

On July 29, 2015 the U.S. Department of Labor’s (USDOL) Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) awarded Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partners a contract for US \$13,000,000 to implement the Youth Pathways Central America (YPCA) project through a Cooperative Agreement. CRS as prime and its implementing partners Glasswing International and *Fe y Alegría* agreed to work in El Salvador and Honduras with children and youth at risk to reduce the prevalence of child labor, hazardous child labor and irregular work; the original end date for the project was August 31, 2019.

¹ U.S. Department of Labor. 2018. [2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, p.11.](#)

² International Labour Organization, *Panorama Laboral*. 2019. América Latina y El Caribe. Anexo 1, p. 145.

On September 29, 2017, CRS received a grant modification to include the following changes:

- Increase the award amount by \$3,250,000, from \$13,000,000 total federal funds to \$16,250,000.
- Include a cost-share amount of \$200,000 from CRS.
- Extend the end date from August 31, 2019 to September 30, 2020.
- Add the municipality of Tegucigalpa as a new geographic location and expand the project services in San Pedro Sula by adding a full program site in the neighborhood of Cofradia; both additions in Honduras; add the municipality of Ciudad Arce and La Libertad in El Salvador; and recognize work previously carried out in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
- Add the National Foundation for the Development of Honduras (FUNADEH) as a project sub-recipient and approve their budget for activities in Honduras to implement the YB component.
- Increase the number of direct youth beneficiaries from 5,100 to 6,380 and the number of family beneficiaries from 1,900 to 2,380.
- Reduce the target age group for youth participating in the Career Connect Clubs (Clubs) component from 14 to 12 years of age; include new curricula on reading, math and writing for employability; and create a new outcome to increase awareness among children and youth and their families about the risks of migration in Central America and to the U.S.

On September 29 and 30, 2017, through modifications 3 and 4, the grant was further modified to increase the award amount from \$13,000,000 to \$16,250,000 and to \$16,478,000, respectively. The additional funds were provided by the U.S. Department of State to increase the number of beneficiaries and services. In addition to the award amount, CRS agreed to provide a \$200,000 cost-share amount and an additional \$301,309 of leveraged funds in the extension budget.

The ultimate goal of the project was to reduce the prevalence of child labor, hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras. To contribute to the overall goal, the project developed an overarching objective, which was to increase the participation of at-risk children and youth in formal and non-formal education, acceptable employment, or self-employment. To achieve the project-level objective, the project was organized in three underlying outcomes, each including a number of sub-outcomes. Table 1 shows the project goal, objective, and outcomes.

Table 1. Project goal, objective, outcomes, and intermediate outcomes

<p>Goal: Reduce the prevalence of child labor, hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras</p>
<p>Objective: Increase the participation of at-risk children and youth in formal and non-formal education, acceptable employment, or self-employment</p>
<p>Outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivation to attend school increased among at-risk children and youth 2. Increased access by at-risk children and youth to employment and self-employment opportunities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. At-risk children and youth have acquired technical skills related to labor market demand 2.2. Strengthened life skills and workplace skills for children and youth at risk 2.3. Private sector support generated for youth training programs

- 2.4. Strengthened existing public programs and services for employment and self-employment
- 2.5. Increased access to resources that support attainment of employment or self-employment
- 3. Children, youth, and their families benefit from the network of social protection services
 - 3.1. Increased family support for children’s and youths’ educational and employment plans
 - 3.2. Supportive services for at risk children and youth increased

To achieve the project outcomes and intermediate outcomes, the project implemented several components. For “Outcome 1: Motivation to attend school increased among at risk children and youth,” the component is the Career Connect Clubs model (Clubs). For the second “Outcome 2: Increased access by at risk children and youth to employment and self-employment opportunities,” the model is YouthBuild (YB). The third “Outcome 3: Children, youth and their families benefit from the network of social protection services” applies the Strong Families model. YPCA’s three components are briefly described as follows:

- 1) **The Career Connect Clubs component** encompasses extra-curricular school clubs designed to increase students’ motivation to attend school. The clubs are based on Glasswing International’s after-school clubs that have reached 22,000 youth in four Central American countries. Clubs offer educational and recreational activities such as art, dance, soccer, leadership, debate, singing, dancing, English, robotics, and communication, selected from a list provided by the methodology. This component uses volunteers as facilitators from outside the project staff and can accept parents, teachers, family members, and college students.
- 2) **The YouthBuild component** provided life and job skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational training and internships, school re-entry, and job placement services for out-of-school and unemployed at-risk youth ages 16 to 20, extending to age 24 in special cases³. The model uses community-service projects to help youth acquire critical leadership, service, and job-preparedness skills. The methodology offers two types of training: one is vocational, with a duration of 250 hours; and the other is on life and work skills, with a duration of 250 hours. The other three elements of the YouthBuild model, namely community service, academic support, entrepreneurship and savings, take approximately 250 hours, for a total of 700–750 hours. The curriculum of soft skills was replaced by the “I am READY”⁴ methodology in late 2017 as part of the life and work skills addressed by the program.
- 3) **The Social Protection Services component** included the Strong Families methodology and Community Youth Connect services. Strong Families is a model designed to ensure that the families of vulnerable children and youth provide the support, guidance, and oversight they require to remain in school or in their jobs. The Strong Families component aims to enhance

³ To be assisted, youths aged 21-24 should meet two additional criteria out of the following: Not having completed middle school; having completed middle school and being unemployed, pregnancy or early parenthood (before they were 18 years old); having had contact with the legal system (having been arrested or having a sentence or referred by the legal system); being a youth returnee migrant in the last 12 months; imprisoned family member; and having a sibling or close relative engaged in child labor

⁴ *I am READY* is a CRS-developed, evidence-based, cognitive-behavioral curriculum that focuses on intra- and interpersonal skills. The curriculum is designed to help participants develop greater self-control, manage emotions, and master their responses to events in their lives. It was designed for use in the YouthBuild programs in Central America.

positive relationships between parents and children through a series of seven two-hour interactive participatory sessions. The seven topics of the sessions are listed in the table below. The methodology consists of delivering separated sessions for parents/guardians and youth, followed by a session which includes both youth and parents.

Table 2. Strong Families methodology

Strong Families Session Topics by Week		
Parent/Guardian	Youth	Joint session: Parent and Youth
1. Using Love and Limits 2. Making House Rules 3. Encouraging Good Behavior 4. Using Consequences 5. Building Bridges 6. Protecting against Substance Abuse 7. Using Community Resources	1. Having Goals and Dreams 2. Appreciating Parents 3. Dealing with Stress 4. Following Rules 5. Handling Peer Pressure I 6. Handling Peer Pressure II 7. Reaching Out to Others	1. Supporting Goals and Dreams 2. Appreciating Family Members 3. Using Family Meetings 4. Understanding Family Values 5. Building Family 6. Communication 7. Reaching Our Goals

Within this component, the Community Youth Connect service was implemented to provide children and youth with additional support to address problems such as use of drugs, legal problems, security treats, and absence of parental control or guidance. The services included two types of assistance under a case management approach: therapy provided by project psychosocial specialists and/or referral to other supportive services, and emergency support such as shelter to youths in imminent threat. In 2017 the component was extended to include a new activity to raise awareness among children, youth and their families of the risks of irregular migration to the U.S.

YPCA implementing partners Glasswing, *Fe y Alegría*, and FUNADEH, implemented the three components in El Salvador and Honduras as follows:

Table 3. Project components and the corresponding implementing partner

Component	Honduras	El Salvador
Career Connect Clubs	Glasswing Honduras	<i>Fe y Alegría</i> El Salvador Glasswing El Salvador
YouthBuild	<i>Fe y Alegría</i> Honduras Glasswing Honduras FUNADEH	<i>Fe y Alegría</i> El Salvador Glasswing El Salvador
Social Protection Services (Strong Families and Community Youth Connect)	<i>Fe y Alegría</i> Honduras Glasswing Honduras	<i>Fe y Alegría</i> El Salvador Glasswing El Salvador

The project was implemented in selected municipalities of El Salvador and Honduras considered high-risk areas. These sites were selected based on parameters provided by USDOL and official country priorities aimed at reducing or preventing violence. In El Salvador, the project worked in San Salvador (capital city), Soyapango, Mejicanos, Quezaltepeque, Ciudad Arce, Sacacoyo, and

Santa Ana. In Honduras, the selected municipalities included Tegucigalpa (capital city), San Pedro Sula, El Progreso, La Lima, Choloma, and Villanueva.

It should be noted that YPCA implemented a cohort approach for the Clubs and the YB components. The project recruited a random sample of children and youth participants to evaluate the duration of program impacts generated by the assistance provided under Clubs and YB components.⁵ The cohort study used a longitudinal approach as the evaluation methodology to measure key indicators, such as school attendance, employment, self-employment and education status. The primary reasons the project decided to use the cohort-study approach were, first, that the more traditional prevalence baseline and endline methodology relies on a random-sample survey that requires enumerators to travel to sample households located in high-crime neighborhoods—which would have exposed them to safety risks. Second, data obtained in that way, from non-project participants, might be unreliable or biased due to the sensitiveness of asking children and youth about their participation (or lack of participation) in gangs or illegal activities.

For M&E purposes, YPCA measures with a Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP), which contains the activities that led to the achievement of outputs, outcomes, objective, and ultimate goal of the project. The CMEP also includes the theory of change (TOC) and results framework, indicators, targets, and methodologies and instruments for data collection to measure progress towards expected results and adaptive management.

⁵ The cohort for Clubs included children randomly selected from school years 2017, 2018, and 2019. For YB, there were 6 cohorts, two cohorts for each of those three years. The cohort for YB last 5–6 months. Children and youth in the sample were interviewed approximately every six months during life of project.

III. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Purpose

The overall purpose of this YPCA final performance evaluation is to provide USDOL and CRS and its partners, *Fe y Alegría*, Glasswing, and FUNADEH with an independent assessment of the project's performance and experience. Specifically, the evaluation is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. Assess the project's effectiveness, efficiency, relevancy, and sustainability.
2. Identify actionable recommendations to inform the design of future, similar projects under similar conditions or target sectors.
3. Identify lessons learned and promising practices that can be replicated in future programs.
4. Assess which results, outcomes, or outputs can be deemed sustainable.

USDOL and CRS developed a set of 15 questions to guide the evaluation. The questions address key issues in (1) relevance; (2) effectiveness; (3) efficiency; and (4) sustainability. To respond to the questions, the evaluation team (the "Team") tailored questionnaires for different sources of information, including representatives from implementing partners, school directors, beneficiary youths, employers, and government agencies. Annex A of the TOR attached to this report, presents the evaluation questions, and identifies illustrative type of informants for each evaluation question.

Besides data gathered from informants in the field between March 12 and April 20, and secondary data obtained from project documents and other external sources, the Team had access to project monitoring data and cohort study results updated through March 2020, which CRS will report in the Technical Progress Report (TPR) of April 2020.

Methodology

The nature of the final performance evaluation methodology was qualitative and based on the perceptions, opinions, attitudes and knowledge of program stakeholders. It also had a quantitative perspective and used project documents including CMEP data and longitudinal study to provide quantitative information on all key output and outcome indicators of YCPA. The evaluation team also used quantitative secondary data from other sources such as ILO and World Bank to compare some project results with national context. Data from different sources were triangulated as appropriate and as much as possible to answer the evaluation questions. A two-member team conducted the final evaluation of the YPCA project with support from a local technical expert (See details of the team members in Annex D).

Evaluation schedule

The evaluation was conducted between February 10 and April 20, 2020, with data collection starting on March 12 and ending on April 20. The evaluators contributed to the development of the terms of reference, reviewed project documents, and developed interview protocols and data collection tools prior to carrying out actual data collection. Due to the COVID-19 virus emergency and social-distancing requirements, as well as travel bans, prohibition of group meetings, and closure of schools, non-essential businesses and borders, most of the data collection was conducted remotely with interviewees located at their homes. Mr. Martínez worked from San Salvador and Mr. Núñez from Nicaragua. The first draft of the Final Evaluation Report was submitted to USDOL and CRS for revision on June 1st.

Data collection

For the collection of qualitative data obtained through individual and small group interviews, and focus groups, USDOL and CRS developed a list of evaluation questions to serve as the basis for the evaluation. The questions were used to develop tailored guides and protocols for the key informant interviews (KIIs), small group interviews (SGIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and document reviews. The evaluation questions matrix included in the evaluation terms of reference (served as the basis to tailor data collection instruments. The lead evaluator and the research associate both participated in the interviews, with the research associate acting as a silent interviewer with the capability of posing follow-up questions for additional clarifications.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected several aspects of data collection logistics. As the evaluation team was preparing to mobilize data collection efforts in the field, travel in El Salvador and Honduras came to a halt and threatened the delivery of the evaluation. The Team developed a solution to conduct fieldwork remotely. Although the evaluation methodology relied heavily on individual interviews, small group interviews, and focus group discussions, the team was able to adapt their tools to conduct these conversations online and through the phone or other platforms. Common platforms used are Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, and telephone calls. When using Zoom, the Team sent instructions to participants ahead of time so they could connect using the free version of Zoom. Most focus group discussions were conducted using this platform with five participants each, on average; this allowed for better management of the conversation and identification of who was speaking during the session.

USDOL and CRS agreed to the approach and CRS provided valuable support in reaching out to evaluation participants. The sample included youth, school principals, senior management of implementing organizations, and technical personnel who delivered project services, as well employers and government officials. During a period of four weeks, the team conducted 43 remote interviews and focus groups involving 91 YPCA participants and stakeholders in Honduras, El Salvador, and the U.S.

Among the stakeholders interviewed were 43 from Honduras and 39 from El Salvador. Most interviews were carried out remotely—only 6 out of 49 were held in person in El Salvador. Most respondents were at their home during remote interviews. The evaluation team was able to cover a good representation of respondents from the two countries, implementing partners, components, and sites. Most of the respondents (63 percent) were women.

Table 4. Interviews conducted during data collection

Category	Total	SV	HN	SV/HN/USA (a)
Interviews completed	49	18	23	8
KII	35	12	16	7
FGD	9	5	4	-
SIG	5	1	3	1
Number of respondents	91	39	43	9
Women	57	26	24	7
Men	34	13	19	2
Roles of respondents	91	41	41	9
USDOL project managers	2	-	-	2
Roles of respondents				
CRS and IP Senior Management	12	4	6	2
CRS and IP Supervisory Staff	24	11	9	4
YPCA Specialists	30	15	15	-
Beneficiaries (youths and schools)	14	7	7	-
Employers	5	3	2	-
Government/municipalities	3	1	2	-
Sub contractor Cohort Study	1	-	-	1

(a) Includes USDOL program managers and CRS YPCA staff serving in both countries (Honduras and El Salvador).

The Team identified whether project participants’ contact information was available in coordination with YPCA local implementers. Armed with that information, the Team defined a purposive sample with adequate coverage of information such as sex, age, residence, and type of benefit. Thus, a quota approach was implemented to schedule data collection with potential informants. The selection of respondents finished when the quota was reached; as shown in Table 4, the purposive sample included 57 women and 34 men. The sample was established based on whether prior contact could be established with potential interviewees and on whether they were available and willing to participate in the evaluation.

Strengths of data collection

Respondents in the field seemed very knowledgeable of the project activities and objectives and provided valuable and detailed answers to questions. All respondents were willing to provide input to the evaluation. Some made interesting, specific recommendations. There was excellent collaboration of local technical staff for planning and scheduling interviews—especially impressive in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak with its resultant social distancing and limited mobility, which included government authorities’ orders to stay at home.

It is noteworthy that the Team was able to interview beneficiaries with relevant knowledge of project implementation: youth, school principals, government offices and municipalities’ representatives, employers, and the chamber of commerce and industry of Cortes. All of them had a high amount of knowledge regarding the project.

Limitations of data collection

Due to COVID-19, travels to the field were canceled by the U.S. Embassy and the Government of El Salvador. Although data collection started on March 12, 2020, on March 18, CRS determined that

it would not be feasible to conduct in-person interviews. The Team had already made six in-person interviews in El Salvador by that time. Stakeholder meetings with local partners were canceled due to the pandemic. Direct beneficiaries of Clubs and Social Protection Services participants were not interviewed due to social distancing and quarantine situations, as they have significant time constraints and limited knowledge and use of communication technology. Nonetheless, the Team was able to draw information on relevancy, effectiveness, and efficiency of these two components from school principals and youth from the YB component. School directors and YB beneficiaries interviewed were involved in Clubs and Social Protection Services implementation. The evaluation may have been further deepened, however, by analysis from direct beneficiaries. The number of young people interviewed is considered low; the Team mitigated this by using and triangulating qualitative data gathered by the cohort study implemented by YPCA, which asked to a representative sample of beneficiary children and youth, questions related to relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of assistance received, particularly perceptions of program participants about the importance of the assistance provided to meet their needs. CRS staff supported the Team in making the arrangements with project beneficiaries, but only a small number of youths were able to participate mainly because they were working and had conflicts of schedule or could not be contacted by CRS in a timely manner, given the short notice for interviews.

It should also be noted that this evaluation is not a formal impact assessment. The findings for the evaluation were based on information collected from background documents, the project's M&E system and databases, KIIs, SGIs and FGDs. The accuracy of the evaluation findings is predicated on the integrity of information provided to the Team from these sources and the ability of the evaluators to triangulate this information. Furthermore, the sample of beneficiaries was purposive based on selection criteria and access to communication technologies necessarily limited due to the pandemic. Since the sample was non-random and not statistically significant, the results of the interviews cannot be generalized to the entire target population of beneficiaries.

Data analysis

To ensure inter-rater reliability, the evaluation team discussed interview notes, coding schemes, codification, categorization, and conclusions to ensure both had the same interpretation of the data. The evaluators used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze data. Document reviews, KIIs, SGIs, and FGDs generated a substantial volume of raw qualitative data. The Team summarized, synthesized and triangulated the significant amount of qualitative raw data captured during interviews. The evaluation questions drove the data coding and analysis presented in the Terms of Reference (Annexes A and C). The Team used Atlas.ti software to code and analyze answers from interviews and focus groups and applied several techniques to interpret findings and draw conclusions. The content, narrative, discourse, and theory analysis' techniques were used to analyze respondents' answers. Secondary quantitative data were obtained from the CMEP, direct beneficiary monitoring system (DBMS), and datasets from the Longitudinal Survey and incorporated into the analysis when relevant to answer evaluation questions. Other sources of quantitative data included ILO, World Bank and government agencies of statistics from Honduras and El Salvador.

IV. EVALUATION RESULTS

This section summarizes the evaluation results by criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Throughout each subsection, evaluation questions agreed upon between USDOL, CRS, and DevTech Systems, Inc.—the basis for this performance evaluation—are answered. Annex C presents the master list of the evaluation questions used to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence from primary and secondary sources of data and information.

Relevance

The first evaluation criterion is to determine the relevance of the project. Relevance is discussed around four main topics: the project TOC, the bi-country implementation approach, the applicability of critical assumptions and risks, and how the design and M&E procedures address security-related challenges.

As described in Section II, the ultimate goal of YPCA is to “reduce prevalence of child labor (CL), hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras.” To contribute to this goal, the project has the following objective: “Increased participation by at-risk children and youth in formal/non-formal education, acceptable employment, or self-employment.”

Theory of Change

Child labor is a serious problem in the Central American region, and El Salvador and Honduras are no exception. Data from the 2018 Permanent Multipurpose Household Survey (EPHPM) show that in Honduras,⁶ 16.1 percent of children and youth between 10 and 17 years of age work, and this percentage increases up to 24.1 percent for young people aged 15 to 17. In El Salvador, 2015 data from the ILO⁷ show that 6.2 percent of children aged 5 to 13 work, while 28.6 percent of those aged 14 to 17 do. Working from an early age limits the available time for basic or higher academic studies and has negative consequences in terms of performance. It also facilitates the abandonment of the formal education system, which increases the risk that young people fall prey to and are exploited by gangs, among other forms of WFCL. The project TOC identifies that “dropping out of school or remaining unemployed for extended periods of time increases the likelihood of engaging in child labor or irregular work, because these forms of vulnerable work represent means of livelihood for these children and youth. They also face barriers to obtaining decent work because they lack the skills that these jobs require.” For these reasons, the project aimed to motivate children to stay in school—or, for those who have dropped out, help them to return—and help youth to obtain and maintain employment or start self-employment. This helps youth to obtain and maintain employment, which is supposed to have a positive effect on educational progress, livelihoods, and reduced vulnerability.⁸ In this sense, the project objectives are highly relevant to the context of both countries.

⁶ Own calculations based on [EPHPM 2018 Data](#).

⁷ International Labour Organization. 2015. Available at: [Magnitude and characteristics of child labor in El Salvador 2015 Report](#). Note should be made that official statistics do not acknowledge child labor activities related to gangs, thus, the magnitude of child labor might be under accounted in official statistics (see http://white.lim.ilo.org/ipcc/documentos/vf_trabajo_infantil_y_pandillas_el_salvador.pdf).

⁸ According to the YPCA CMEP, including updates approved by September 2018

As the CMEP identifies, “having low interest in school activities, poor self-regulatory abilities, poor academic performance, or lack of other socio-emotional skills to cope with daily school challenges may contribute to students’ dropping out from school.” The TOC focuses on increasing child motivation to stay in school. Clubs related to dancing, singing, English, sports, and similar activities did indeed motivate students to stay in school. Honduras official dropout rate in 2017 (at the national level) was 6.7 percent for seventh to ninth grade students and 4.7 percent for middle education.⁹ El Salvador’s official dropout rate in 2018 (at the national level) was 5.6 percent for the third cycle of basic education (also seventh to ninth grades), and 6.1 percent for middle education.¹⁰ YPCA results show that Club’s dropout rate was 3.6 percent in Honduras and 7.8 percent in El Salvador (5.7 percent average for the project). Although the project dropout rate in El Salvador was higher than the national education system data, the Team considers that the results are really good for El Salvador and excellent for Honduras, as the project targeted high-risk youth with difficult implementation conditions, as is further analyzed under the critical assumptions subsection.

Box 1. Career Connect Clubs

CCC did motivate students to stay in school: The CCC drop-out rate was 3.6% in Honduras and 7.8% in El Salvador, compared to the 6.7% and 5.6% drop-out rates for similar aged students in the formal education system, respectively.

However, similar projects should be aware that the primary cause of school attrition is not the lack of motivation. For example, according to the YPCA DBMS database, the primary reason why youth dropped out of Clubs was because of migration—both outside the country or moving out to another community within the country, representing up to 20 percent of drop-outs. Other reasons for dropping out were that students started underperforming in their grades (12 percent), youth didn’t continue studying or dropped out of the school (11 percent), the students said they didn’t like Clubs (10 percent), and students had to work (6 percent) (see Graph 1).

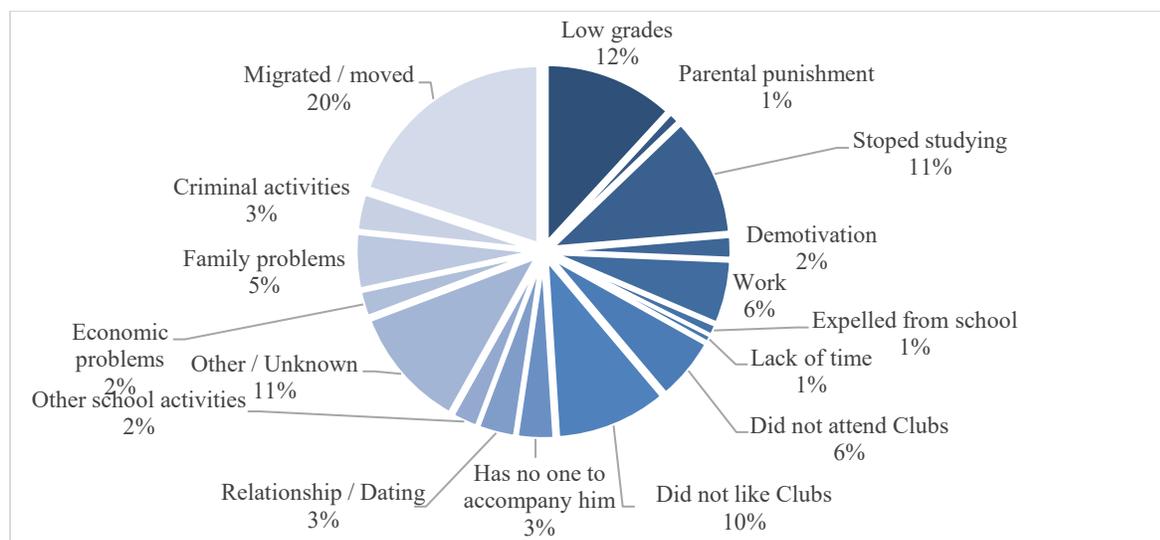
⁹ Government of Honduras, Secretary of Education. 2017. Secretaría de Educación, Informe Sistema Educativo Hondureño en Cifras Período Académico, 2017. Available at: <https://www.se.gob.hn/media/files/articles/estadisticas-educativas-de-pais-2015-2017.pdf>

¹⁰ Government of El Salvador, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. n.d. Departamento de Estadísticas Educativas.

Available at:

<https://www.mined.gob.sv/EstadisticaWeb/indicadores/1.%20POBLACI%C3%93N%20FUERA%20DEL%20SISTEMA%20EDUCATIVO/1.3%20Porcentaje%20desertores.pdf>

Graph 1. Reasons for abandoning Clubs



Source: YPCA, DBMS. Life of project data. 213 dropouts out of 3,739 eligible children and youth.

While Clubs encouraged motivation to stay or re-enter the educational system, the reasons for dropping out are driven by migration, which is highly related to the economic and insecurity context of the target population. As discussed during the fieldwork, school directors mentioned that some families decided not to send their children to school despite their high motivation, as they prioritized their immediate economic needs rather than their children’s education, which is outside of YPCA control. The Team recommends including migration issues as part of the critical assumptions of the design of similar projects, or to include specific actions to counter migration in the TOC and project design from the start of the activity, as is discussed below.

The project targeted at-risk youth with the lack of skills or formation to enter the labor market. YPCA provided two types of training:

- The type of **vocational training**, with the objective of equipping youth with technical knowledge of how to carry out certain jobs, depended on local labor-market needs in the area where the project was implemented. For example, San Pedro Sula is a largely industrialized area, with a high presence of textile companies; therefore, the implementing partners offered vocational training focused on how to operate and/or repair sewing machines. On the other hand, Tegucigalpa and San Salvador and their surroundings are areas more dedicated to the services sector, so the workshops focused more on customer service, bakery and pastry skills, cutting clothing, or other services. The Effectiveness section provides an in-depth analysis on how CRS and its partners ensured that vocational trainings were market-relevant. This type of training is relevant to help the targeted youth access the labor market, as it allows them to develop basic technical skills to get a job. However, YPCA goes further than common vocational training; it provides support in the search for a job, which is considered a significant added value and a highly successful and positive aspect of the methodology. Other donor-funded workforce-development programs are limited to providing vocational training. YPCA, through the staff in charge of labor intermediation, establishes contact with companies, schedules interviews, and requests feedback from companies on the performance of youth. In some cases, labor intermediation facilitated access to internships, which helped young people access work experience and then obtain employment.

- **Soft skills training.** In addition to vocational training, the project placed great emphasis on developing soft skills and workplace values. This included respect, punctuality, readiness for work, and maintaining a correct attitude. YPCA also prepared young people on how to carry out an interview, from how to respond to how to dress. According to the feedback received from most interviews, the promotion of soft skills is more relevant than vocational training to entering the labor market in both countries. In addition, according to some interviewees, soft skills are considered a comparative advantage over other youth employability programs.

Box 2. Soft skills

One business leader interviewed said the following regarding YPCA youth:

"Youth [...] distinguished themselves by emotional control, punctuality, employability skills."

For example, the Recruitment Manager of a company in the textile sector interviewed by the Team explained that YPCA vocational training helps youth to become familiar with the equipment. However, since the company uses modern machines, every newly hired person needs to go through a prior training process anyway. Therefore, technical knowledge is not a priority for them, but the soft skills are.

The YPCA TOC also recognizes that there are children and youth who have increased risk conditions and require special support. The CMEP identifies that increased risk conditions may include “having a single parent household, an early pregnancy, a relative who is already engaged in child labor, irregular work, or who has been convicted of participating in criminal groups, or been detained by police or who has been a victim of authority abuse.” The project used a case-management approach to help these children, youth, and their families access additional social-protection services. For this, the implementing partners reviewed the social services that the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide near the project's implementation sites. The project provided psychosocial support to youth from Clubs and YB. A social worker gave four sessions to referred boys, in some cases referred from the school. If it was determined that there were stronger needs, they were referred to the relevant institutions for professional treatment. The Team considers that this component and its support was important for youth personal development and future aspirations.

The project also included a communication campaign on migration,¹¹ aimed primarily at the project's youth and families. As the communication specialists interviewed describe it, the focus of the campaign was to raise awareness of the risks of migrating, while also emphasizing the opportunities that exist in the countries to discourage migration. The Team considers that the content/topic of the campaign was relevant, but aspects such as available funds for the campaign and the ongoing migrant caravans when the campaign was planned reduced its effectiveness, as discussed more fully later in this report.

¹¹ The Migration Campaign was added with the 2017 Project Extension with Modification No. 3.

Box 3. YPCA Theory of Change

The TOC is relevant to the needs of at-risk children and youth in both countries: it adequately addressed barriers to obtaining decent work by providing the necessary vocational and soft skills required to get their first jobs; and the Career Connect Clubs component motivates students to stay in the educational system.

The Team also considers that YB adequately addressed youth barriers to obtaining decent work by providing the necessary vocational and soft skills required to get their first jobs. As explained above, similar projects should be aware that the primary cause of school attrition identified in this evaluation is migration and not the lack of motivation. Thus, the evaluation team recommends including migration issues as part of the critical assumptions of the design of similar projects, and to include specific actions to counter migration in the TOC and project design.

Critical assumptions and risks

The project identified three critical assumptions, of which the Team considers that two were met, and one was met only partially, affecting the project implementation—specifically in Honduras, as described below.

- ***The security situation does not deteriorate to the point that project service delivery/access is significantly constrained.*** This assumption was partially met. The Central America region, specially the northern triangle, suffers from high rates of violence and crime. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a homicide rate greater than 10 per 100,000 inhabitants is considered a characteristic of endemic violence and, although data show that homicides rates are being reduced in El Salvador and Honduras, they are still high at 51 and 40, respectively, for 2018.¹² In this sense, although the general security conditions have been improving in both countries, the security risks are still high and, as will be further explained later in this report, insecurity affected effectiveness and efficiency. It also affected the relevance of the TOC. As is discussed in the “Security-related challenges” subsection later in this report, CRS and implementing partners worked to respond appropriately from the beginning of YPCA to the local security concerns in specific neighborhoods with a “preventive” approach, which the Team considers was practical and necessary for project implementation and target achievements. There were, however, insecurity situations out of the project’s control that affected service delivery. Honduras faced post-electoral protests between November 2017 and 2018, which caused waves of violence, closure of schools, and limited mobilization. These conditions significantly limited YPCA’s implementation ability in Honduras during this period. For example, as reported by CRS, ongoing unrest in Honduras during 2019 affected the project’s various programs, especially in the northern part of the country. In response to a Presidential decree impacting the health and education sectors,¹³ protests broke out and, in some cases, police responded with repression. Teachers, health, and transportation workers held strikes. Schools were closed for up to three months. These events significantly delayed project activities, particularly the Clubs

¹² Rate in El Salvador in 2015 was 102.9 (50.4-percent reduction between 2015 and 2018), Honduras rate was 59 (32.2-percent reduction between 2015 and 2018). Source: USAID. 2020. PROGRES Report No. 3, available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WFZK.pdf

¹³ Presidential Decree PCM 026 2018: <https://www.tsc.gob.hn/web/leyes/PCM-26-2018.pdf> and Presidential Decree PCM 027 2018: <https://www.tsc.gob.hn/web/leyes/PCM-027-2018.pdf>; both approved April 26, 2019 by the Parliament.

component. The project was also unable to carry out Strong Families in schools, many participants were unable to reach the YB program or had to leave early, and the project had to postpone its longitudinal study data collection.¹⁴ These tensions also directly affected project participants. For example, in El Progreso, police arrested five YPCA participants and beat the facilitator that was with them. A 16-year old YouthBuild participant was murdered at this time of political crisis in the same site. CRS and *Fe y Alegría* implemented their security protocols to reduce additional risks to the beneficiaries and project staff, such as the temporary close-out of the implementing sites.

- ***The project target area is not affected by major natural disasters during or just prior to project implementation.*** El Salvador, and specially Honduras, are vastly exposed to natural adverse events and climate change, especially heavy rainfall and drought, that regularly occur and disproportionately affect the poor.¹⁵ During the implementation of YPCA, however, no major natural disasters occurred during implementation in Honduras or El Salvador. This assumption was met.
- ***Neither El Salvador nor Honduras experiences a significant decline in economic growth substantially decreasing the availability of job openings for youth.*** This assumption was met. During recent years, Honduras had registered the second-highest economic growth rate in Central America, behind only Panama. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth reached 4.8 percent in 2017, 3.7 percent in 2018, and 2.7 percent in 2019, above the average in Central America and well above the average in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁶ Despite the political crisis that started in 2017, the country's economic growth has been positive during the project's implementation period and the economy has not contracted. In the case of El Salvador, GDP growth reached 2.3 percent in 2019, but the country has been suffering from persistent low levels of growth (2.5 percent in 2016, 2.3 in 2017, 2.5 in 2018). Annual GDP growth has exceeded 3 percent only twice since 2000 and averaged just 2.3 percent in recent years. Growth variations apart, GDP per capita in El Salvador as of 2018 is 62 percent higher than Honduras, at \$4,058 and \$2,500 (current US\$), respectively.¹⁷ Economic growth has led to reduction in unemployment rates in both countries. According to World Bank data, the unemployment rate has decreased 19.9 percent in Honduras and 7 percent in El Salvador between 2016 and 2019.¹⁸

The YPCA project did not address potential risks in its design. One important risk that might have been taken into deeper consideration is that due most importantly to gang activity, there was insufficient access to children and youth that met the selection criteria. According to a YPCA staff member, the gang territorial control limited the project's access to some youth, because they could not come to the implementing sites. Additionally, during the fieldwork the Team confirmed that in some project sites in El Salvador, there were insufficient participants because other projects started to implement employment activities in the same locations. USAID, World Bank, or Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) projects started in the same neighborhoods and areas, thus competing

¹⁴ The longitudinal study is part of the CMEP; it collects data from the same group of participants every six months after graduation. Subsection Effectiveness below discusses this instrument in more detail.

¹⁵ According to The Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index (GCRI), Honduras was the second country most exposed and vulnerable to extreme events between 1998 and 2017 in the world. Available at:

https://www.germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202019_2.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview>

¹⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2018&locations=SV-HN&start=2015>

¹⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=SV-HN>

for the same youth. The project made a concerted effort to avoid this and tried repeatedly to coordinate with these other funders to avoid over saturation. This issue was ultimately overcome by relocating the program field offices, but it caused delays in activities implementation. Note should be made that USDOL prioritized certain municipalities in their RFP, based on national government priorities and conversations with other U.S. Government entities in order that efforts would not be duplicated in the same regions.

Benefits and challenges of working in two countries: El Salvador and Honduras

Under the Relevance evaluation criterion, one of the evaluation questions focuses on the benefits and challenges of working in two countries. The project is implemented in two countries because USDOL planned it this way. Both countries have important similarities in terms of conditions of insecurity and violence, geographic proximity, and similar economic sectors. Having experienced previous projects with similar components in El Salvador, it was thought that there could be a methodological transfer to Honduras and that it would facilitate experience and information exchange between teams.

The interviewees reported that this combination was meant to facilitate the exchange of experience, to improve the program implementation; for example, through periodic Directors' meetings to follow up on the YPCA progress and share implementation ideas and approaches.¹⁹ However, these meetings were mainly attended by senior or project management personnel rather than by the technical field team. If there was an exchange of experiences and practical ideas, they had few opportunities for exchange that could have affected implementation. YPCA held biannual meetings for operational planning, with spaces dedicated for the exchange of experiences and learning. At a more technical level, there were two relevant exchanges, one on employment and entrepreneurship and the other on families. Obstacles to such activities were logistical and administrative, since a high budgetary effort was required to move the members of the project to a headquarters (San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, or San Salvador). Resources could be saved by traveling by ground, but this would require more time for mobilization. At the local level (within each country), there were different exchange spaces. For example, there were very frequent meetings (almost monthly) to review results, good practices, and implementation ideas between CRS personnel and the different component teams.

If such outcome is expected to inform adaptive management and scale up project performance, then USDOL should request concrete actions within the project design to ensure information and experience exchange. This will ensure that enough funding is allocated for this purpose; YPCA's design did not include such an outcome or expected result. CRS implemented some activities for information and experience exchange, but the Team has not been able to identify a tangible or conclusive programmatic benefit of implementing the project in both countries from this standpoint.

The evaluation did, however, reveal some benefits from an administrative perspective. One benefit identified by some respondents is that by providing administrative and technical follow up on a single project instead of two, the administrative burden on USDOL is reduced. The reduction in administrative costs also included CRS, which needed proportionally fewer management personnel than if the two countries were implemented separately. Although there were cost savings in salaries

¹⁹ According to KIIs, these meetings took place every three months at the beginning of the project; frequency was increased afterward.

by working in two countries, the organizational chart distribution resulted in a high workload for senior personnel. For example, the Director, M&E Specialist, and other higher-level staff had to travel regularly between the countries. Given the high cost of air tickets, in some cases there was reportedly a balance between traveling by land and spending more travel time—or traveling by air, spending less time, but investing more resources. Upon seeing these difficulties, CRS adjusted some of its positions. For example, the project had a key position of Youth Employment Specialist which covered both El Salvador and Honduras. Seeing the amount of travel for this position and the limitations to providing support in both countries, CRS realized that it needed to adjust. It was decided to split this position into two Youth Employment and Microenterprise Specialists, one for El Salvador and one for Honduras. CRS Honduras mentions that such projects “must ensure that there is someone in both countries who has the profile of creating high-level relationships;” in the case of YPCA, it was the CRS Project Director. Although this modality will continue, it is required that the management team organizational chart includes “high-level responsibilities for more than one person.” It is notable, however, that according to the financial information provided by CRS as of the end of FY 2020 Q2, only 68 percent of the funds available in the travel budget line were expended and the total budget line equals 5.85 percent of the total budget available for CRS (excluding the budget for Grants or Cooperative Agreements with implementing partners), which shows that the project could have dedicated more resources to avoid ground travel. The Team considers this budget adequate for the design of this project.

Another factor to consider is that although there are geographical and contextual similarities between the two countries, they are still different countries with independent regulations. CRS had to manage the funds separately between countries due to administrative and financial regulations. The technical personnel reported that administrative procedures were faster in El Salvador than in Honduras, so it was necessary to work with different administrative times and processes, and—especially for the personnel involved in both countries—this was an additional challenge. This may have resulted in the lower achievement of targets observed in Honduras in comparison to El Salvador, as mentioned in the Effectiveness subsection.

Box 4. Working in two countries

Providing administrative and technical follow up on a single project instead of two reduced the administrative burden on USDOL, and reduced CRS administrative costs.

The Team also considers another possible advantage; dividing the execution between partners/countries helped meet the targets, even if the implementation context was difficult for one of the countries/implementors. As mentioned by a CRS staff member, “the performance of the project in El Salvador allowed them to achieve the goals” despite the difficulties of implementation in Honduras due to the political context since 2017.

Security-related challenges considered in the design and M&E procedures

As described in the CMEP, the DBMS requirements were met by combining the semi-annual work and status checks with the data collection points of the longitudinal or cohort study. “Instead of checking all child beneficiaries who have received services from the project, a representative sample of all project beneficiaries (both children and youth)” was drawn and their educational and work status was tracked every six months. This helped the project monitor outcomes among different types of beneficiaries, not only children, and it also reduced the risk to CRS staff and partners by reducing visits to beneficiaries in high-crime neighborhoods. The CMEP indicates that USDOL and CRS decided that this strategy was appropriate given this security environment. In this sense, it can be

confirmed that the project defined relevant strategies for the context of insecurity where it operated, with the aim of minimizing personnel risks.

A greater range of security strategies is observed for day-to-day implementation, which was not necessarily defined in the M&E procedures but relevant for implementation success. For example, CRS conducted workshops to devise risk analyses divided into three categories: green, yellow, and red (lowest risk to highest)—to identify which risks there were and where they were most at risk. Partners developed risk-mitigation plans at each deployment site, which were fed back to CRS. CRS also created a security protocol which was shared with the implementing partners.

CRS and Glasswing International held a security workshop during the second year of implementation (November 2016), where risks were analyzed, and prevention and mitigation measures were addressed. A follow up workshop was developed in June 2017, which included *Fe y Alegría*, Glasswing and CRS Honduras. Security measures were defined in conjunction with partners for each identified risk. Systematic YPCA security trainings and protocols development were carried out only in the third or fourth year of implementation, depending on the country. The Team suggests that these activities should be prioritized to be implemented systematically sooner with all partners—during the first year of implementation—with inputs from the pilot implementation.

At the local level, the partners took practical steps on an individual basis to overcome security challenges. For example, some implementers, such as FUNADEH, made a first approach with local organizations already present in the intervention areas. This approach was relevant to have a “partner” to make themselves known in the communities and have social approval. The partners also held “Community Assemblies” to present the project and its objectives. *Fe y Alegría* already had a physical presence in the communities before the YPCA implementation began and were well known among their implementation sites, which facilitated planning, coordination and implementation on its sites.

Among other security measures taken up by the implementing partners at the field level, the following rules stand out:

- That Clubs and YB sessions ended early if they were implemented in the afternoon, to limit the exposure of participants returning home too late.
- If budgeted, the participants arrived with their project t-shirts. This facilitated the recognition of young people, especially in areas with territorial conflict.
- Project staff used the project vehicle, properly labeled and with its windows open. This allowed them to be recognized and identified by the locals, who knew what the staff was doing in the project sites, thus facilitating activities’ implementation.
- The staff also used ID cards to identify to which center they were going and used different routes and schedules to attend the implementation centers.
- Contrary to what might be expected, the project did not approach the police, as this may create mistrust among participants and demotivate enrollment of children and youth in the

Box 5. Security

YPCA did not address potential Security risks in its initial design. However, security-related strategies implemented on a day-by-day basis were relevant and practical for the YPCA execution, promoted participation and involvement, were not discriminatory, and helped increase the project’s approval in the field.

program. Youth participants that may have had problems with the law would not have enrolled to the project activities if CRS or its partners reached to the police.

Implementors also applied the three golden rules for YB components, expressed in a positive way to help youth understand that everyone is welcome to participate in the project regardless of where they came from, but that they should behave appropriately:

- If you bring a weapon to the YB implementing site, you indicate that you do not want to participate with us.
- If you bring or consume drugs, you indicate that you do not want to participate with us.
- If you bring any form of violence, you indicate that you do not want to participate with us.

As explained by CRS staff, the manner in which staff and youth understood the purpose behind each of these “golden rules” was critical. The purpose was to guarantee the physical safety of project participants, implementors, and beneficiaries. Thus, project staff were trained to focus on the purpose of each rule and involve participants in a discussion of how they understand it.

The Team assessed that security-related strategies approved or implemented by CRS and implementing partners were relevant and practical for the YPCA execution, promoted participation and involvement, were not discriminatory, and helped increase the project’s approval in the field. These strategies and measures did not prevent CRS staff, implementing partners, or some young people from being victims of any type of danger; these risks were outside of the project’s control.

Effectiveness

The purpose of this section is to provide evidence on the extent to which the program’s expected results were achieved and the reasons for that success or lack of success, including challenges encountered during implementation. This section presents the findings from the seven evaluation questions related to YPCA effectiveness.²⁰

Overall effectiveness

YPCA established two project objectives and 24 outcome and output indicator targets. The beneficiary population are children of ages ranging from 12–17 and youths of 18–24 years living in high-risk municipalities. It should be noted that the project objectives PO1 and PO2 were measured using a random sample of children and youths under the cohort study while the other 24 performance indicators were measured using data from all participants.

Box 6. Acceptable work challenge

YPCA faced notable lack of formal job demand in the implementing sites. This prevented full achievement of the acceptable work project objective.

Out of the two project objectives targets only one was fully achieved, as shown in Table 5 below. The program succeeded in Objective 2 (PO2) and had beneficiary children completing the school year during the life of project. The Clubs methodology implemented to achieve PO2 had great impact on children’s motivation, even though there were some challenges (discussed below). On the other hand, it did not fully achieve the target of getting acceptable work, self-employment, or formal education for youths (PO1). The Team considers that the lack of job opportunities for youths in general, and in particular for youth living in high-risk locations, was a major barrier to accessing

²⁰ See Annex A, Terms of Reference, Evaluation Matrix. Targets and actual values of performance indicators are those of YPCA.

“decent” jobs at the national and local levels in El Salvador and Honduras. This partial success and the reasons for it are discussed later in this section. It should be noted that PO1 is comprised of 3 “sub-indicators” with no disaggregated targets nor actual values. Data from the cohort study for youths (18-24 years old) indicates that the actual value for acceptable employment was 25 percent, for acceptable self-employment 2 percent and those studying were 19 percent for a total execution of 46 percent. The Team strongly recommends for future similar programs break these sub-indicators down into single indicators for better monitoring and evaluation of the project performance.

Table 5. Achievement of project objectives

Project Objective Indicators	Target	Actual	% Achieved
PO1: % of beneficiaries that obtain acceptable work, self-employment, or reintegrate into the formal educational system	70	46	66
PO2: % of Career Connect Club beneficiaries who complete the Club and finish the school year	85	90	106

Source: CRS, YPCA data to be included in the TPR, April 2020, Annex A.

To achieve the two project objectives, the project was organized in three components: Clubs, YB, and Social Protection Services, as described in more detail under the Project Context section. The first component was aimed at motivating participants to stay at school; the second component to increase access to employment, self-employment, and formal education; and the third one to benefit children, youths, and their families with social services from social protection networks.

Overall, YPCA was effective in achieving the 24 numeric targets as reflected by data provided by CRS to the evaluation team in April and May 2020, which will be included in the TPR of April 2020. As shown in Table 5, YPCA achieved 87 percent of the performance indicators targets with over 90 percent of execution. This finding is consistent with the perceptions of the majority of respondents in El Salvador and Honduras, who reported viewing the project as very effective in achieving its objectives. Out of 24 performance (outcome and output) indicators, 70 percent were met or exceeded the target, 17 percent were achieved with 90-99 percent of execution, and 13 percent were below 90 percent of execution.²¹

Table 6. YPCA achievement of general indicators

Status	Number of Indicators	Percentage
Achievement of 100% or higher	17	70%
Achievement of 90–99%	4	17%
Achievement below 90% (a)	3	13%

²¹ Out of the three indicators below 90 percent of execution, two refer to the percent of participants in Clubs and YB components (indicators 1.2 and 2.2.1 in Table 6) who report improvements in their social, work, and life skills. The scale selected to measure these indicators does not produce a single number to assess progress in achieving the targets. Therefore, the Team was not able to establish whether these two indicators were met or not. Without those two indicators, the level of achievement would be 95 percent instead of 87 percent (70 plus 17). CRS requested USDOL to change the method of measuring those two indicators, but this was not done. The Team was not able to identify the reasons why there was no change.

Source: CRS, YPCA, data to be included in the TPR April 2020, Annex A. (a) Two indicators have no monitoring data.

It is notable that the TPR does not report progress for two of the three indicators which achievement was below 90 percent of execution (see Table 7). These indicators are “1.2 – Percent of Career Connect Club beneficiaries who report improving their social skills by the end of the school year” and “2.2.1 – Percent of beneficiaries of YB component who report an increment in their life and work skills assessment after completing the program.” Due to the lack of evidence the Team cannot consider these two indicators and targets as “achieved” nor as “not achieved.” The methodology to measure those indicators does not provide a single estimated number to be compared to the targets, but instead three figures (on resilience, depression, and the ability to solve problems). This makes it difficult to track progress toward an intended result. In addition, the methodology of calculation is also not closely related to what it is intended to measure: the perception of the participants regarding the improvement in their social, life, and work skills. This issue is discussed in more detail under the subsection on strengths and weaknesses of the CMEP and DBMS. The other target that was partially achieved is “3.2.2 – # of children and youth provided with emergency shelter assistance by the project”, which achieved only 11 percent of the target. Under sub section “Case management support” below, we discuss the main reasons of this low performance.

Table 7. YPCA achievements against indicators

Indicators	Target	Actual	% Achieved	Status
Outcome 1: Motivation to attend school increased among at risk children and youth.				
E.1 # of children engaged in (CL) or at high-risk of entering CL (CAHR) provided education or vocational training services.	3,240	4,031	124%	Met
1.1 % of school Career Connect Club beneficiaries who attend at least 80% of school classes by the end of the school year.	85%	83%	98%	Almost Met
1.2 % of Career Connect Club beneficiaries who report improving their social skills by the end of the school year	85%	NA		Not Met
1.4 % of Career Connect Club beneficiaries who are enrolled in Career Connect Clubs and complete 60% of the school club program	85%	86%	101%	Met
Outcome 2: Increased access by at-risk children and youth to employment and self-employment opportunities.				
L.1 Number of households receiving livelihood services	2,826	4,304	152%	Met
2.1 # of youth beneficiaries involved in a job selection process	1,801	1,726	96%	Almost Met
2.2 % of youth beneficiaries who obtain employment through project intermediation services	25%	29%	116%	Met
2.3 % of youth beneficiaries who have a business plan through project support	20%	50%	250%	Met

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Indicators	Target	Actual	% Achieved	Status
2.4 % of participants of the YouthBuild program who start a self-employment.	10%	12%	120%	Met
2.5 % of participants who enroll in formal education	35%	34%	97%	Almost Met
Outcome 2.1: At-risk children and youth have acquired technical skills related to labor market demands				
2.1.1 % of participants who graduate from the YouthBuild Program.	80%	74%	93%	Almost Met
2.1.2 # of vocational training courses opened to beneficiaries adjusted to labor market needs	4	4	100%	Met
Outcome 2.2: Strengthened life skills and workplace skills for children and youth at risk				
2.2.1 % of beneficiaries of YouthBuild program who report and increment in their life and work skills assessment after completing the program	80%	NA		Not Met
2.2.2 # of participants who start the YouthBuild program	3,610	4,272	118%	Met
Outcome 2.3: Private sector support generated for youth training programs				
2.3.1 # of businesses that have contributed to the program (a)	150	108 (453)	72% (302%)	Met
Outcome 2.4: Strengthened existing public program and services for employment and self-employment				
2.4.1 # Number of public institutions that have expanded their employment and self-employment services to at risk children and youth	2	3	150%	Met
Outcome 2.5: Increased access to resources that support attainment of employment or self-employment				
2.5.1 # of youth that benefit from programs that offer employment and self-employment resources	1,300	2,277	175%	Met
2.5.3 # of beneficiaries who participate in a saving group	3,610	4,290	119%	Met
Outcome 3: Children, youth and their families benefit from the network of social protection services.				
3.1 # of households benefitting from the project that have received at least one service from the social protection network	600	1,049	175%	Met
Outcome 3.1: Increased family support for children's and youth's educational and employment plan				
3.1.1 # of households that start the family strengthening program	1,000	2,206	221%	Met
3.1.2 % of beneficiaries whose family completed the family strengthening program and report an increased level of support from their families	80%	95%	119%	Met
Outcome 3.2: Supportive services for at-risk children and youth increased				
3.2.1 # of beneficiaries who are referred to complementary services by program staff	1,000	1,298	130%	Met

Indicators	Target	Actual	% Achieved	Status
3.2.2 # of children and youth provided with emergency shelter assistance by the project	76	8	11%	Not Met
3.2.3 # of returned migrants who have been provided with YPCA Services.	50	106	212%	Met

Source: CRS, YPCA, data to be included in the TPR April 2020, Annex A. NA = Not Available. (a) The final value for the life of project performance is 453 contributor firms.

Access to employment, self-employment, and reinsertion in formal education

As mentioned previously, the majority of respondents from El Salvador and Honduras reportedly considered YPCA effective in achieving its expected results. The Team confirmed that this generalized perception is in line with the information provided by CRS to the evaluation team and that will be reported in the TPR April 2020. Table 8 below shows that all targets for participants—children and youth—regarding finding a job, helping them to start a new business, or getting them back to school were nearly met, met, or exceeded. Effectiveness was better in El Salvador than in Honduras; over-achieving in El Salvador served to balance any under-achievement in Honduras in two of the three targets. Reasons which might explain the differences in performance in the two countries are discussed under Efficiency below. These include the political environment in Honduras, the number of technical personnel and their experience and training, the accuracy of monitoring data, and administrative issues. It should be noted that CRS does not report targets by individual country, which is a potential area of improvement for M&E.

Table 8. YPCA achievements in employment, self-employment, and reinsertion in formal education, by country

Indicators	Target	Actual (Apr.20)	% Achieved
2.2 % of youth beneficiaries who obtain employment through project intermediation services (1)	25	29	116%
El Salvador		35	
Honduras		24	
2.5 % of participants who enroll in formal education	35	34	97%
El Salvador		40	
Honduras		30	
2.4 % of participants of the YouthBuild program who started a business	10	12	120%
El Salvador		13	
Honduras		11	

Source: CRS, YPCA, data to be included in the TPR April 2020, Annex A. The CMEP does not establish targets per country nor per implementing partner. Table 7 presents the list of all approved indicators and targets of YPCA. (1) Total number of “graduated youths who obtained a job” was 1,046 as of April 2020 (29 percent of total graduated).

Access to acceptable or informal employment

The original indicator, “2.2 – Percent of youth beneficiaries who obtain employment through project intermediation services” was initially meant to count *acceptable* job according to the definition of the Project Objective “PO1: Percent of beneficiaries that obtain acceptable work, self-employment, or reintegrate into the formal educational system”, and *informal* job as defined in the PMP/CMEP²². Acceptable employment entailed meeting at least two of the following four criteria²³: 1) employees have social protection, such as health services and pension; 2) employees work a full work week; 3) employees have a formal contract; and 4) the employee’s salary is equal to or greater than the official minimum wage. Informal jobs are counted if the participant worked continuously for at least a period of 1 month, has gotten a payment, and the occupation is for at least 20 hours weekly.

Box 7. Informal employment

Nearly half of youth that accessed jobs through project intermediation were in the informal sector as found by the YPCA cohort study. A number of them accessed jobs by their own means and were counted as a project result. These situations could have helped YPCA to achieve indicator 2.2

YPCA project staff realized that participants were accessing jobs by their own means and that by counting only qualifying jobs, through project intermediation services, and excluding self-accessed jobs, the data were not adequately reflecting the project outcomes considering the labor market realities in Honduras and El Salvador. CRS proposed and received USDOL approval to include jobs accessed by youths using their own means under indicator 2.2.

Using this modified definition, the project was able to meet the life-of-project target for access to employment under indicator 2.2. CRS reported that 1,046 youth (out of 3,606 graduated youth) had access to a job. The change in the indicator definition might have helped the project to achieve its goal of inserting 25 percent of youth graduating from the YB component into the labor market. The Team did not have data disaggregated by acceptable and informal jobs to confirm this, except the fact that the PO1, which counts only acceptable employment, was partially achieved (66 percent of execution, see Table 4). The longitudinal study’s survey of 2020 found that 52 percent of 1,054 youths and children interviewed and assisted under YouthBuild component had an acceptable job; the rest (48 percent) had other type of jobs .

Reinsertion to formal education

The target of having participants enrolled in formal education was achieved by 97 percent. According to most respondents (including technical staff of implementing partners, YB participants and employers), most beneficiaries had a low-level academic background; a majority did not have a high school diploma, or even finish grades 7 to 9. This proved to be an important limitation to moving into the labor market, as most firms require at least high school to hire a youth.

The employment specialist of implementing partners worked to help youth understand the importance and value of continuing their education while they attended vocational and soft skills development training. By country, El Salvador exceeded the target (40 percent against a target of 35 percent), which compensated the under-achievement in Honduras (30 percent). This result might be

²² See pages 54 and 60 of the CMEP.

²³ After the mid-term evaluation dated July 16, 2018, the criteria to be met were three instead of two.

explained because there are more flexible and free educational programs in El Salvador than in Honduras.

Working with the ministries of education in El Salvador and Honduras, YPCA was able to enroll some youths to flexible modes of education programs to obtain high school diplomas or certification for finishing grade 7 to 9. Based on the results of the follow-up survey of the cohort study to be reported in TPR April 2020, youths enrolled in formal education continued at school after finishing the 5–6 months of participation in the YB component.

Starting self-employment or economic activity

YPCA provided training aimed at developing skills and abilities among participants to run a business through the “I am an Entrepreneur” curricula (“*Soy Emprendedor*” program). Although this methodology was considered too technical for some respondents, results were achieved in El Salvador and Honduras. YPCA delivered training sessions to teach young people how to start and run a business as an alternative to becoming employees. Results by country exceeded the targets, with 120 percent achievement against overall target; individually, El Salvador (130 percent) and Honduras (110 percent).

Some respondents, including technical staff of implementing partners and youth beneficiaries of YB component, mentioned that youth decided to enroll in this initiative because they did not see adequate job opportunities given their poor academic background and/or their age (18 is the minimum age required for employers to recruit). For female participants, self-employment may provide a more flexible option to accommodate time to take care of children.

Some respondents mentioned the “*Soy Emprendedor*” methodology as comprehensive and a sound alternative for those not able to obtain a job, but given the low academic background of participants, many found it too technical or complex. Additionally, those who did successfully prepare a business plan did not have the “seed capital” to launch the business. To address this, in both countries YPCA organized competitive contests to provide in-kind support to the best business plans. For example, in Honduras a girl won a competition to establish a photography studio; the studio was still in operation at the time of this evaluation. This strategy was not part of the original project design, but it was well assessed by respondents, even though it was introduced later in the project.

Some respondents indicated that project staff did not devote time to help develop the business plans as part of the YB training courses. Instead, young people were asked to develop such a plan at home using provided guidelines. The longitudinal study reported in October 2019 that youth gave the lowest rate to the self-employment courses; the Team recommends improving the self-employment module, given that knowledge gained disappear over time.²⁴ The Team considers this as an improvement area for future programs; most participants lack sufficient academic preparation to understand and successfully prepare the business plans.

²⁴ YPCA. 2019. Longitudinal Study, Report October 2019.

Challenges to accessing labor markets

Some of the major challenges to YPCA’s achievements related to getting jobs for participants were the scarcity of job opportunities for youth who had a high-risk profile, low academic background, lack of work experience, and the neighborhoods of residence. The stigmatization of youth residing in high-risk areas controlled by gangs and drug traffickers was a major challenge to overcome by the project. Respondents also mentioned that the practice of some companies to do polygraph and drug testing were other difficulties that youth faced to enter formal jobs; another challenge faced by youth to enter formal labor markets is to fulfill police and prison clearance checks typically requested by companies. Program technical staff tried to convince employers to avoid those practices with no success. The Team noted that it is legitimate and justified for employers to seek to hire youths with clean past experience, or in case of prior bad experiences, take on an informed decision when hiring at-risk youth. Nonetheless, polygraph tests are prohibited by law.

Box 8. Stigmatization of young people living in high risk neighborhoods

Close coordination and communication with employers facilitated access to employment by overcoming stigmatization of youths and alignment of project assistance -vocational training and soft skills- to business labor needs. As a result, employers gave preference to YPCA graduated youth as much as possible.

Despite the challenges to access employment mentioned above, YPCA overachieved the target of getting participants into the labor markets (29 percent versus a target of 25 percent). As discussed below in subsection “Employment generated by YPCA compared to national and local trends” this result seems better than national figures. Strategies that allowed this outcome included working with close interaction and coordination with local businesses and helping youths to employ themselves or continue formal education to increase the likelihood of getting a job in the future.

The majority of youths had no work experience, which along with the low academic background resulted in 71 percent of youths not getting a job. Because employment specialists of the program worked in close coordination with recruiters of enterprises, some got hired by medium-sized or large firms such as those pertaining to the textile manufacturing sector, including Hanes Brand International in El Salvador and Honduras and DECOTEX in El Salvador. Most employers interviewed in El Salvador and Honduras recognized that these youths were hired mostly because of their soft skills, and credited YPCA for adequately preparing youth for life and work, which means they would not have been hired without the project’s assistance.

Despite the vocational and soft-skills certificates earned in the program, only 40 percent of graduated youths were involved in a job-selection process, which reflects the lack of job opportunities. Some respondents mentioned that given the lack of employment, many participants decided instead to prepare a business plan to start self-employment. For the same reason, other youths applied for scholarships offered by the program to pursue additional education. Respondents identified scholarships to study English as a benefit, which included support for transportation to attend the training institutions.

Program technical staff in charge of employability had to improve the coordination with local businesses in some project locations (*sedes* or sites). Some respondents mentioned that there were locations in which the relationships with enterprises were weak and the project had to intensify the interaction with potential employers. As a result, graduated youths from YPCA were given special

treatment or preference by businesses. For example, some youths were recruited even without meeting the academic requirement—only through making a commitment to continue studying toward the academic diploma needed for the job position. Most businesses recognized that the project employment specialist was effective in promoting youth participants and was a key link between youth beneficiaries and businesses.

Alignment of vocational training to local market demand

To align vocational training provided to youth, YPCA carried out labor market studies in El Salvador and Honduras in 2017. Staff familiar with the studies reported that they provided general information and did not contain detailed indications to inform tailoring of vocational trainings, namely, specific trainings based on enterprise demand. The midterm evaluation carried out in 2017 recommended that project staff devise its own research to tailor vocational-training curricula.

Box 9. Vocational training and soft skills

All employers interviewed agreed that life and workplace skills (soft skills) developed by YPCA among youth are more important than technical training.

As a result, the project did identify, through employment specialists, some trainings aligned with local enterprise needs. This was brought about by visiting businesses, business associations, and chambers of commerce to identify which vocational training should be delivered. Vocational training was adapted to location. For example, in the northern zone of Honduras, vocational training in the manufacturing sector was delivered with some emphasis, while in Tegucigalpa, training was oriented more to the service sector and delivered technical courses on sales, customer service, call-center skills, and administrative skills.

One important finding drawn from many interviewees was the impact of soft-skills trainings on the behavior of YPCA beneficiaries. All employers interviewed agreed that life and workplace skills (soft skills) developed by YPCA among youths are more important than technical training. For example, interviews with large companies reported that they value soft skills the most, more than technical skills and abilities, since they had to train new employees in the technical operations of their businesses anyway.

According to most respondents, youths accessed jobs in different types of businesses such as barbershops, bakeries, automotive services, restaurants, retail, call centers, beauty shops, clothing manufacturing, and hospitals. The youth labor market studies in El Salvador and Honduras carried out in 2017 anticipated the challenge to access jobs in the formal sector for youth in general, and at-risk youths in particular, such as the ones assisted by YPCA.

Main causes of success

- **Methodology of project components.** A major success noted by most respondents relates to how YPCA succeeded in promoting, and in some cases transferring, the Club and YB models among government counterparts, fostering close coordination and ample collaboration between school centers and program offices throughout the intervention zones. Most respondents in El Salvador and Honduras reported that the methodologies of the Club and YB components are well-designed and should be widely replicated. Youth participants to YB activities stated unanimously that the trainings on soft skills and the way they were delivered had significant, notable effects on their view of life and resulted in a more positive attitude in their social life and workplaces. In 2019, graduated youths were asked to indicate, in order of importance, the aspects

most valuable for them. They said life skills, vocational training, and the ability to seek employment.²⁵

- **Experience and sound skills of program technical staff.** One of the keys to success appears to derive from the careful selection of motivated and interested technical staff in CRS and, to some extent, within implementing partners. Several school principals and employers mentioned the quality, experience, and customer-oriented attitude of program specialists, which induced a positive and notable change in the behavior of children and youth, as a critical factor to success.
- **Comprehensive approach of program design.** Inclusion of the Strong Families methodology under the Social Protection Services component, with soft skills to complement vocational training, was highly praised by almost all respondents. The solid combination of vocational training, life and work skills, and engagement of family members to seek their support for children and youth in their personal and work/business individual plans was crucial to obtain project objectives. As a result, this approach may have reduced the numbers of youths dropping out of school, engaging in child labor and hazardous work, joining in gangs or illegal activities and, to some degree, migration. The issue of migration is discussed in more detail below.
- **In-kind support to participants.** All interviewees reported that an important number of children and youth might have deserted from programs (Clubs and YB) if they had not received support for transportation, meals, child care, and other items.²⁶ Several informants from El Salvador and Honduras reported that some participants stay in the program because of the economic assistance provided. All technical staff mentioned that one of the reasons for dropping out of the program was the lack of resources to cover some expenses, including transportation, food, and, to lesser extent, child care. For Clubs, offering lunch or snacks was an additional incentive to keep children participating as expected. In the case of YB, most interviewees stated that not all participants and not all project sites were provided in-kind support to attend the program activities. A social worker conducted a socioeconomic assessment to select who most needed the support in some project locations. In mid-2018, CRS reported that efforts to improve the delivery of these benefits across all implementing partners were enhanced by providing guidelines, including a letter, that should be signed by all participants, informing on the benefits granted to them once engaged in the program, to implement a midterm evaluation recommendation. CRS also enhanced monitoring of the delivery of the support in the field. Since this support was part of the original program design, the Team recommends for future programs that all participants receive such support. A CRS senior manager stated that programs working with at-risk, marginalized and excluded young populations should be considered as a social investment and should not ask participants to cost-share their participation, given the precarity of their living conditions.²⁷
- **Experience and reputation of implementors.** CRS, Glasswing, *Fe y Alegría*, and FUNADEH have extensive previous presence in the municipalities or in the surrounding areas selected to work under YPCA. According to most senior and technical staff of these implementors, they are all very well known for their social protection over a long period of time in El Salvador and Honduras. As a result, gang members with presence in the territories did not tend to “prohibit”

²⁵ YPCA. 2019. Longitudinal Study, Report October 2019.

²⁶ A 2019 CRS cost-effectiveness study which included participants from the YB model of YPCA also concluded that in-kind support is key to ensure project’s results regarding participation and graduation from workforce development activities.

²⁷ This is supported by the conclusions of the 2019 CRS cost-effectiveness study.

or restrict the program’s work, although there were security aspects with some participants in, for example, Ciudad Arce, El Salvador and Choloma, Honduras. Additionally, Glasswing has expertise in the Clubs methodology and CRS and *Fe y Alegría* have developed expertise in the YB methodology. Glasswing collaborated to train *Fe y Alegría* in the Clubs methodology and CRS trained FUNADEH technical staff in the YB methodology, which according to YB participants and employers resulted in very effective delivery of trainings. The efficiency section describes some cases where the lack of reputation affected efficiency.

- **Quality of vocational training.** During field work, most informants from companies and the youth that graduated from YPCA indicated that the vocational training was key for success to finding a job, whether in the formal or informal sector. This is in line with the results of interviews conducted in 2019 as part of the longitudinal study of the project; according to this survey, vocational training was identified as the second-most valuable aspect of the YB component. Some youth reported that technical training was in line with local demand of companies, but that the number of job opportunities is low. Some courses included skill sets for those entering barber shops, bakeries, customer service, sales, beauty salons, cell-phone and computer repair, bartending, hair styling, and repair of industrial machinery.

Box 10. Reasons for success reported by interviewees

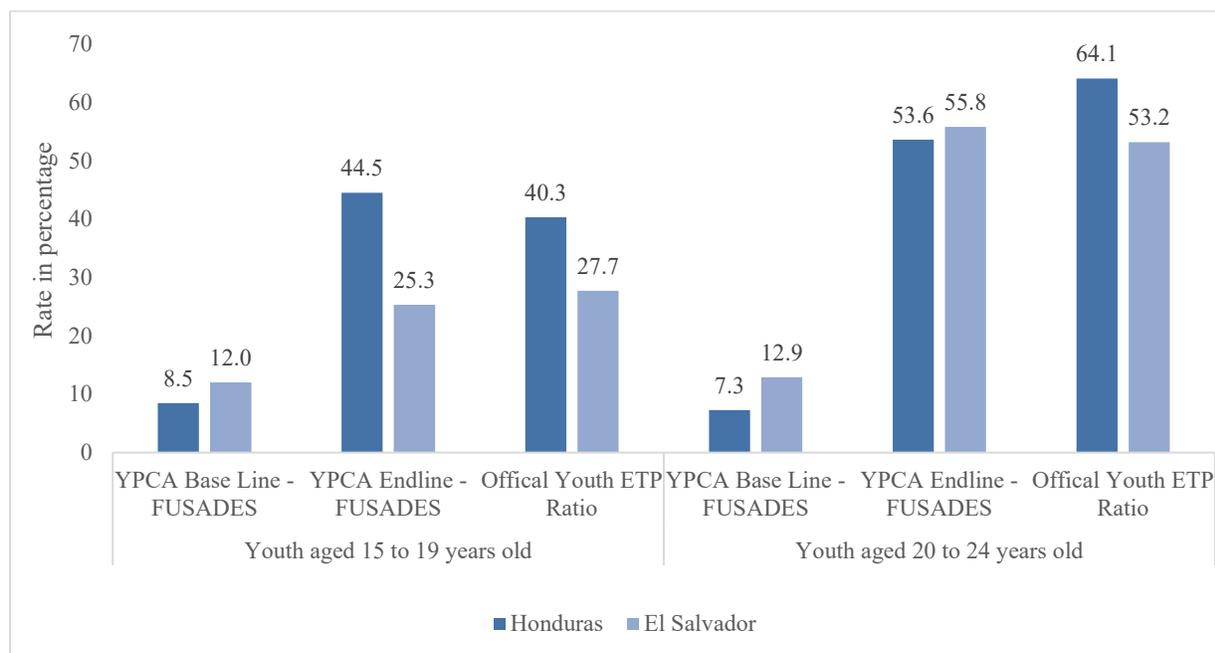
- The life and work skills developed by YPCA among children and youth were key to help them stay in school, access jobs or start a business.
- Technical staff created a motivating environment to maintain engagement in program activities.
- Alliances or linkages were established with enterprises in project areas (local level) and job opportunities identified jointly with firms.
- Internships, job fairs, vocational training delivered by staff from firms, and program referrals (letter of recommendation, introduction of youth to firms and preselection of candidates based on profiles) were provided.
- Youths were registered in job-search platforms.
- Coaching was provided on how to behave and dress during job interviews.
- Support was provided for transportation, meals and child care to ensure participation.
- Follow-up support was provided after graduating from the program, whether with a job or in self-employment.
- Extracurricular activities within Clubs were provided (e.g., visits to museums, parks, sports tournaments, and birthday parties for participants).

Employment generated by YPCA compared to national and local trends

As reported by the official national data from household surveys for 2018,²⁸ employment rates for youth aged between 15 and 24 years old in 2018 was 51.1 percent in Honduras and 41.9 percent in El Salvador. The Team compared these indicators with indicators collected by the project through the cohort study²⁹ and through the M&E system to better understand the achievement of results that the project has had regarding gender opportunities, especially for women.

At baseline the percentage of YB-participant youths between 15 and 24 years old employed was much lower than the national average, at 7.6 percent for Honduras and 12.9 percent for El Salvador. However, as shown in Graph 2, the endline cohort study shows that, as of 2020, these percentages increased to 44.5 in Honduras and 25.3 in El Salvador for youth aged 15 to 19 years old; and to 53.6 percent and 55.8 percent for those between 20 to 24 years old. Project performance results vary by age groups. At the end of the project, in Honduras the percentage of youth participants employed between 15 and 19 years old is higher than the official employment-to-population ratio by 4.2 percentage points. In El Salvador, however, the percentage of youth employed was 2.4 percentage points below the national official data. The percentage of YPCA youth participants from 20 to 24 years old employed is 10.5 percentage points below the national average in Honduras and was 2.6 percentage points above in El Salvador. As explained, project performance results in Honduras have been influenced by external conditions beyond the project’s control.

Graph 2. Employment-to-population-ratio by age, country, and project performance



Source: Honduras and El Salvador official data for youth employed: *Encuesta de Hogares para Propósitos Múltiples*,

²⁸ International Labour Organization Country Profiles, Employment-to-population-ratio. Available at: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>.

²⁹ The longitudinal study was designed to collect information from a random sample of each cohort every six months—thus providing information of the duration of the results of the YPCA.

2018. Data gathered from <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>. Employment-to-population (ETP) ratio indicator. Youth aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years old³⁰.
Project Data Source: FUSADES. YPCA BL and YPCA END represents baseline and final data collected by FUSADES under the cohort study (fixed panel data). Baseline data from six cohorts every six months between 2017 and 2019. Endline data for 2020.

It should be noted that YPCA works with at-risk youth population, as is analyzed in the “Numeric and demographic targets achievement” subsection, which also makes it more difficult to enter the labor market. The Team assessed that, under normal implementation conditions, the YPCA program is effective for youth employability; at-risk youth with low education participating from YPCA have a higher probability of getting a job. It may take time, but project participants eventually have a higher probability of being employed, similar to or above the national averages. Considering the project target population, this is regarded as a very positive result.

Numeric and demographic targets achieved in both countries

As mentioned above under “Overall effectiveness” sub section, most numerical targets were met by YPCA by the end of project. Additionally, the Team has compared the characteristics of the young people who participated in the Clubs to determine if they really were in child labor or at risk of falling into child labor, as well as their distribution by sex, age, and country. As shown in Table 9, the results indicate that, regardless of the country, or sex of the participants, the vast majority met the criteria of being at risk of falling into child labor or, to a lesser extent, were already involved in child labor activities.

On average, 85.5 percent of the participants were at risk of falling into child labor in El Salvador, while 14.5 percent were already involved in child labor. In Honduras, children at risk were 91.6 percent and the remaining 8.4 percent were involved in some form of child labor. When analyzing by municipality, Santa Ana in El Salvador presented the highest percentage of Clubs participants in child labor, with 18 percent (almost one of every five children) working. Villa Nueva in Honduras showed the lowest participation of children working, with only 1 percent. Given this distribution, it can be said that the work of the project regarding Clubs was largely preventive, since only 11.5 percent of the participants were actively involved in child labor.

³⁰ The employment-to-population ratio is the proportion of a country’s working- age population that is employed. Employment comprises all persons of working age who during a specified brief period, such as one week or one day, were in the following categories: a) paid employment (whether at work or with a job but not at work); or b) self-employment (whether at work or with an enterprise but not at work). Additional information available at: https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/description_EPR_EN.pdf

Table 9. Demographic characteristics of YPCA Clubs participants

Country and Municipality	Age		Sex		Child Labor		Total YPCA
	12–14	15–18	Male	Female	At risk of child labor	In child labor	
Mejicanos	258	127	193	192	333	52	385
San Salvador	356	275	343	288	536	95	631
Santa Ana	307	273	255	325	476	104	580
Soyapango	221	59	146	134	259	21	280
Total El Salvador	1,142	734	937	939	1,604	272	1,876
Choloma	256	50	161	145	285	21	306
El Progreso	307	392	324	375	633	66	699
La Lima	173	26	108	91	186	13	199
San Pedro Sula	329	243	262	310	516	56	572
Villa Nueva	76	11	45	42	86	1	87
Total Honduras	1,141	722	900	963	1,706	157	1,863
Total YPCA	2,283	1,456	1,837	1,902	3,310	429	3,739

Source: YPCA DBMS. Own calculations based on indicators syntaxis dictionary shared by CRS. Data may have differences when compared with CRS reports: The evaluation team found 3,739 children meeting the criteria shared by CRS for indicator E.1, while CRS reported 4,031, which includes participants from the initial pilot phase carried out in late 2016. This difference does not affect reaching project targets.

When looking into sex differences, the Team confirmed that participation in Clubs was very balanced, with 51 percent girls and 49 percent boys. The Clubs component was aimed at children of lower ages, with a project total of 61 percent of participants between 12 and 14 years old. When distributing by municipality, there are some differences. For example, in El Progreso, Honduras, 56 percent of participants were between 15 and 18 years old. In El Salvador, 44 percent of San Salvador participating children were in the same age range.

The Team considers that CRS and implementing partners did an excellent job reaching a balanced participation in child demographics. However, although the project did effectively meet its targeted population, targets should be differentiated by group and the Team considers that targets should have been higher for the current children engaged in child labor. Also, the Team noted that in the CMEP, targets were not divided by country or sex between CRS and USDOL; also, the original range of ages for Clubs was 14–17 and was widened to 12–17 in late 2017. It seems that this latter adjustment was very important to achieving the target for children assisted by Clubs (indicators under Outcome 1, “Motivation to attend school increased among at risk children and youth”).

The Team looked into similar disaggregation for the YB component. Numeric disaggregation is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Demographic characteristics of YPCA YB participants

Country and Municipality	Age			Sex		Total YPCA
	12 –15	16–18	19–25	Male	Female	
Mejicanos	10	194	169	103	270	373
Quezaltepeque	1	14	15	16	14	30
Sacacoyo	0	21	33	23	31	54
San Salvador	16	205	307	273	255	528
Santa Ana	15	271	244	194	336	530
Soyapango	25	94	100	85	134	219
Total El Salvador	67	799	868	694	1,040	1,734
Choloma	24	185	72	131	150	281
El Progreso	71	569	224	472	392	864
La Lima	15	114	73	90	112	202
San Pedro Sula	89	270	153	260	252	512
Tegucigalpa	62	258	259	325	254	579
Villa Nueva	24	48	14	54	32	86
Total Honduras	285	1,444	795	1,332	1,192	2,524
Total YPCA	352	2,243	1,663	2,026	2,232	4,258

Source: YPCA DBMS. Calculations based on indicator syntaxis dictionary shared by CRS. Data may have differences when compared with CRS reports: The evaluation team found 4,258 youth meeting the criteria shared by CRS for indicator 2.2.2, while CRS reported 4,272. This difference does not affect reaching project targets.

YPCA targeted youth from 12 to 25 years old (with additional requirements for youth between ages 21 and 25, as they had to have a family member engaged in child labor or WFCL or suspected of being at risk of child labor). According to the DBMS, 8.3 percent of participants were under 16 years old, 53 percent of participants were between 16 and 18 years old, and the remaining 39 percent were 19 years old or older (including 8.6 percent older than 21). When analyzing by sex, 60 percent of El Salvador participants were female; in Honduras, this percentage is reduced to 47 percent. As will be further explained in a gender analysis, given that women have lower employability rates (in both countries, national averages, and project-performance data), the Team considers that a higher percentage of women participating, as happened in El Salvador, was appropriate and an unintended gender gap reduction. Note, however, that official targets were not disaggregated by country or by sex between CRS and USDOL; demographics being further targeted is an opportunity for improvement for future projects.

Youth perceptions of quality of YPCA services

All youth interviewed in El Salvador and Honduras told the Team that they perceive the services delivered by YPCA to be of high quality. The treatment provided by program personnel delivering Clubs services reportedly made participants feel comfortable and appreciated. Some school principals observed that children and youth were enthusiastic when attending Clubs and that they made positive changes in their attitude and behavior within the education centers. The longitudinal study of the program found that youth mentioned several changes in their life due to YPCA support. Almost half of the respondents mentioned changes related to soft skills and then mentioned their preparedness for work (work skills).

Main features of quality mentioned by youth included the following:

- **Commitment of technical staff in different services.** All professionals working in the program were proactive and focused on achieving concrete results when delivering trainings in vocational education and skills for life and work.
- **Experience of staff was very important.** All respondents said the employment and self-employment specialists were dedicated and created good relationships with potential employers. For example, employers were involved in training activities, provided opportunities to visit their facilities, delivered sessions to explain enterprise objectives, and defined the values sought from employees.
- **Special treatment to participants.** Youth felt they were appreciated and treated with respect when attending the program activities. They enjoyed being part of the program.
- **Comprehensive support.** Many young people indicated that the program provided a series of benefits or services in addition to traditional trainings, which were key to success. For example, they received not only vocational education, but also courses or advice to improve their behavior in diverse social environments—such as how to address persons in public, how to face a job interview, or how to dress and talk with potential employers.
- **Program staff provided personalized assistance.** When a participant did not show up to program activities, personnel immediately contacted the participant or family members through various channels such as telephone, visiting the participants' house, or other. Once the situation was identified, practical actions were taken, such as providing support for transportation, meals, etc.

Two out of four school principals interviewed in El Salvador mentioned some issues regarding technical staff working under the Clubs component in the first year of implementation. Some staff were not reportedly committed and did not fulfill the profile to work with children as required by the nature of the project. The implementing partner had to replace the individual several times until an adequate hire was achieved. Once this happened, children participating in Clubs showed notable behavior improvements and the number of children willing to participate in Clubs surpassed the capacity of the program physical facilities.

Main reasons for desertion from Clubs and YB components

Although most participants were highly self-motivated and had consent of a family member, some still abandoned Clubs and the YB services. Economic and security issues were the main reasons of desertion, which are factors out of the YPCA implementors' control.

Desertion from Clubs. The drop-out rate for participants in Clubs was minimal in Honduras (3.6 percent) and relatively low in El Salvador (7.8 percent). In Honduras, two respondents said they did not have deserters at all, and one mentioned that the desertion rate fell from 10 percent to 2–3 percent, due to Clubs. Children were really motivated. In El Salvador, the desertion rate by Clubs participants was also low. It should be noted that the decision for leaving Clubs was family-based, around either economic or security factors. Migration was mentioned as another factor for dropping out of Clubs and school; this was, according to informants, related to a lack of economic opportunities. Data reviewed by the Team indicate that migration was the primary cause of desertion. The Team considers that migration is a consequence of lack of employment (search of economic improvement abroad) or because security risks (menace of gangs or uncertainty of living in risk areas). Some rationale from respondents for abandoning Clubs are as follows:

- Children help parents in economic activities such as selling in local markets. In the municipality of Santa Ana in El Salvador, most students come from families dedicated to informal businesses.
- When some students obtain low academic grades, parents decide to withdraw children as a punishment both in El Salvador and Honduras.
- There were cases of Salvadoran and Honduran families who decided to migrate to the U.S. This was more prevalent during the migration caravans organized in 2018 and 2019.
- Some participants were threatened by local gangs because they reside in a territory under control of a rival gang. In El Salvador, there was a case of one girl threatened by a gang and had to leave the school/program. Some families in Honduras were forced to leave due to gang threats.
- Some participants from schools in El Salvador mentioned above said to school directors that they left because they did not feel comfortable with the treatment of the volunteers who were delivering Clubs services.

Desertion from YB. Unlike Clubs, under the YB component participants were the ones deciding to drop out from the program—mainly due to economic and security factors. Overall, the desertion was almost 17 percent during the life of the project. Respondents listed some specific reasons, common to both El Salvador and Honduras:³¹

- Most youth engaged in the program with the main goal of obtaining a job to contribute to the family subsistence. In some cases, this was an urgent need and youth stopped attending the program when they obtained a job. For them, waiting five to six months to graduate from the YB component was not a choice.
- Some youth abandoning the program stated they lost motivation. This was observed in the case of youth that were recruited through visits to their homes (they were not self-motivated). Project staff followed up most of these cases and found out it was a personal decision.
- A number of youth could not afford transportation and/or meals to mobilize/attend program facilities/activities. Some vocational and/or soft-skills trainings required them to spend the whole day in some location. YPCA’s original design included funds and had an explicit policy to cover some of those expenses to motivate participation as discussed above under subsection “Main causes of success”
- A few young women got pregnant and stopped attending the YB component or they had to take care of their children.
- Some participants were threatened by gangs and had to relocate along with their families to a safer place.
- Migration to the U.S. was a factor, as part of the caravans that occurred in 2018 and 2019. The program overachieved the target of number of returned migrants assisted with YCPA services (106 versus a target of 50); some of them participated in those caravans (see Table 7).

Youth and family migration rights and challenges in the TOC

YPCA TOC expects, although it is not an explicit outcome within the results framework, to reduce irregular migration of youths and families to the principal destination of the U.S., given the risks of human trafficking, forced labor, or dangerous working conditions. To achieve this outcome, the project implemented an awareness-raising campaign to inform youth and families engaged in the

³¹ It should be noted that the program, as a project policy or rule, does not ask information about children or youth involvement in gangs or illegal activities as this might pose security risks to project staff or prevent enrollment in the program.

program. As part of the efforts to demotivate irregular migration, the project mapped out organizations working on migration issues, created a network of them, and established some alliances with national government institutions and international organizations working with migrant returnees.

Box 11. Risks of irregular migration campaign

The program did not include performance indicators to assess the campaign's effectiveness. Nonetheless, technical staff responsible for the campaign said they have cases of children or youth that decided not to migrate due to the awareness created by the campaign. As for services provided to returned children and youth, the program was able to identify and assist 106 individuals during the life of project, which exceeded the target of 50 returned migrants assisted by YPCA.

The YPCA extension in September 2017 included funds to carry out a migration campaign, which among its messages included "There are opportunities here." It was designed in June 2018 in consultation with the U.S. Embassies in Honduras and El Salvador, its implementation started in early 2019, and it was part of the activities expanded by the project in late 2017. Because in October 2018 some groups of Salvadorans and Hondurans started irregular migration caravans heading to the U.S., the project decided to delay the start of the campaign. For its implementation, the project recruited two communication specialists in 2018 based in El

Salvador and Honduras.

The campaign was implemented through presentations to children and youth in the program facilities, sharing videos and radio spots with testimonies of negative experiences due to illegal migration. In addition, there were working sessions with a number of national and international organizations working with children, youth, and returned migrants. In El Salvador and Honduras, the project sought to establish a network of organizations to support children and youth beyond the ones participating in the project. In El Salvador, the organizations included the Directorate of Migration and Foreigners (DGME), the National Institute for Children and Adolescents (ISNA), the National Commission on Migrants (CONMIGRANTES), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) to offer program services to returnees. In Honduras, with the same purpose as in El Salvador, the institutions contacted were the Migrants Centers (*Centro de Atención al Migrante* at the San Pedro Sula Airport), the Centro Belen for unaccompanied children and families located in San Pedro Sula, and Directorate for Children, Adolescents and Family (DINAF).

The Team considers that while raising awareness of the risks of irregular migration is important to reduce the outflows of migrants, its effect in reducing child labor, hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras is weak. Staying in a home country does not necessarily prevent children and youth entering in irregular or hazardous jobs or, even worse, engaging in gangs or illicit activities. Moreover, according to some informants from El Salvador and Honduras, the effectiveness of increased awareness becomes ineffective in situations in which lives have been threatened.

Stakeholder perceptions on the efforts made to promote safe, decent work

Most respondents from El Salvador and Honduras including beneficiaries, employers, central and local government, school directors, and technical partners staff, demonstrated a clear understanding of project objectives and the nature of the efforts made to secure decent and safe jobs. A majority of

interviewees were able to identify the main elements of the YB component, namely, development of skills for life and work, and vocational training. Some respondents stated that both types of curricula (soft skills and vocational) addressed as much as possible the needs of participants as well as local businesses.

Box 12. Stakeholders’ perception on promotion of decent work

Majority of respondents including employers, youth, and technical and senior staff in both countries recognized the importance of soft skills provided by YPCA. Some even said to evaluators that it is a *competitive advantage* of the project compared to traditional workforce development project.

In specific Honduras and El Salvador program locations, vocational training in manufacturing-sector operations were delivered while in others, courses were more around the service economic sector, including preparation to work in call centers, restaurants, retail, customer service, supermarkets, and cell-phone/automotive repair shops.

CRS reported in October 2019 that when visiting project sites, some business leaders told program participants about the importance of the soft skills being provided by YPCA.³² Youth unanimously asserted that soft skills consolidated in the program are essential in their lives after graduation; some are studying with support of YPCA (scholarships to study English, one person has established a micro-business, and others are looking for job opportunities).

Government agencies and municipal authorities in El Salvador and Honduras perceived both vocational training and soft skills as critical contributions to help vulnerable children and youth stay away from illicit activities, child labor, hazardous work, and gangs. Schools principals also align with this perception.

Commitment of external stakeholders to project execution and objectives

As a result of the highly positive perception of YPCA graduated beneficiaries discussed above, stakeholders were very committed to support program activities and goals. Regarding private-sector commitment to support graduated beneficiaries of YB component, all business leaders interviewed said to the Team that they have hired some of them already and that they didn’t have issues with any of them. In Honduras, one business representative mentioned a young woman who has proven to be highly competent and has been promoted to a position with higher profile. She also has been invited to provide advice and guidance to current and new employees.

Box 13. Commitment of stakeholders to YPCA

Most interviewees from the private sector stated that they will continue hiring YPCA graduates—as many as possible, based-on company’s needs.

It should be noted that some companies give priority to program graduates as they reference the particularly good experience, they have had with previous YPCA graduates.

GILDAN, a clothing manufacturer located in Honduras, hired 17 youth at once after visiting program facilities and organizing a selection process. This was the largest group of youth hired at a time, according to CRS.³³ The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cortes, Honduras, is committed to

³² YPCA. 2019. TPR October 2019. pg. 11

³³ YPCA. 2019. TPR October 2019. pg. 11

promote the hiring of youth graduating from YPCA.

SUBWAY, a large international fast food company in El Salvador, initially did not want to establish a relationship with the project due to a bad experience with a previous workforce development project. SUBWAY decided to collaborate with the project after an employment specialist from *Fey Alegria* pressed their participation. As a result, the firm hired YPCA beneficiaries even though they did not meet the academic level, with the condition that they continue studying to obtain a ninth-grade diploma (required for the position). This flexibility in hiring youth is given only to YPCA candidates. Also, in El Salvador, another employer said they allow youth from the program more flexible schedules, to allow them to continue studying.

Family support to children and youths

All respondents in El Salvador and Honduras, including from implementing partners, schools, employers, youth, government offices, and municipalities consider that Strong Families increased or improved their support to children and youth. Participants from YB component unanimously agreed that their families are more supportive of their personal and employment plans and that their relationships are notably better. Some specific examples of how families have improved are as follows:

- They share more time talking about the needs of children and youth as well as their individual plans and desires.
- They facilitate or allow time to attend the program services.
- Parents spent time with participants in program activities, particularly the Strong Families activities/sessions. Note that not all beneficiaries had parents attending the Strong Families component.

One youth mentioned that his mother did not change after participating in the program services in terms of talking, but she was more supportive when it came to his individual plans and activities related to attending school or the program.

One indicator that relates to family support to children and youth of YPCA is the percentage of participants that were placed in formal education or work. If more children and youths attended school or got employed over time, it is likely that family support had improved. This is more relevant for children whose final decision to attend school or get a job relies upon a family member. Table 10 below shows that over half of participants that were out of school or not working began to study or got a job after entering the program. These results were better in El Salvador than in Honduras, and better for male than for female participants. More flexible and free educational programs in El Salvador than in Honduras and the more unstable political environment and low national employment rates in Honduras could explain the low performance in the latter country. The difference of results on gender might be explained, as stated by some interviewees, by young women not accepting jobs. Work schedules are not suitable for them due to domestic work, child care responsibilities, or security risks of returning home late at night from work posed by living in an insecure neighborhood.

Table 11. Children and youth not at school and not working

Children and youth	All (n=1,054)	El Salvador (n=538)	Honduras (n=516)	Male (n=448)	Female (n=606)
All, n=1,054					
Baseline	72%	73%	72%	70%	73%
Follow-up	32%	30%	34%	22%	38%
Children (below 18)	n=294	n=77	n=217	n=138	n=156
Baseline	63%	73%	71%	63%	64%
Follow-up	31%	35%	30%	18%	42%
Youth (18–24)	n=760	n=461	n=299	n=310	n=450
Baseline	75%	73%	79%	73%	76%
Follow-up	32%	29%	37%	23%	37%

Source. CRS, YPCA Longitudinal Study, data to be included in TPR April 2020.

Case-management support

The case-management approach, as described in the results framework section of the CMEP, is intended to support children and young people facing additional constraints beyond employability or school drop-out risks such as use of drugs, legal problems, or absence of any parent control or guidance. This approach is an extension of the Community Youth Connect service, which has the purpose of linking participants with the social network protection in El Salvador and Honduras. Indicators “3.2.1 # of beneficiaries who are referred to complementary services by program staff” and “3.2.2 # of children and youth provided with emergency shelter assistance by the project” are related to these services (see Table 7).

Box 14. Emergency shelter assistance

Short-notice nature, immediate response required and scarcity of specialized service providers for this type of assistance posed enormous logistics and budgetary challenges to YPCA and notably limited the achievement of the expected results under indicator 3.2.2

Under this special service, the program could provide, for example, emergency residential services to beneficiaries under imminent threat of death. The CMEP established a target of 76 cases, but by the time of this evaluation only eight cases were reported. This is the indicator with lowest execution rate (11 percent). In 2017, CRS had assisted only one participant and indicated in the TPR of October 2017 that they were going to resolve issues of low performance in the case-management service, individual counseling, and referrals for protection. In the TPR of April 2018, CRS indicated that the services were behind target because staff needed training on protection systems in El Salvador and Honduras. Youth beneficiaries did not mention special cases, such as the ones the program was intended to serve under the case-management service.

The Team learned in the field that the referrals of regular cases were successfully identified and linked to appropriate institutions. Technical staff of implementing partners did mention having worked with young people with problems of drug or alcohol consumption and family violence,

which were treated within the program or referred to the social protection network. As reported in the TPR April 2020, the target of 1,000 referrals was exceeded by the end of project; the program referred a total of 1,298 beneficiaries.

The Team considers the case-management service provides a lesson learned when it comes to achieving results under indicator 3.2.2. Emergency assistance poses high security risks to program technical staff, it is demand-driven, and out of the program's control. In addition, achievement of these emergency cases was limited by the short response time required to support youths under imminent threat, which does not fit CRS expenditure policies, and the limited availability of specialized service providers³⁴. The Team recommends that special cases should be referred to the appropriate social protection service providers when available, as it was done with regular case-management cases under indicator 3.2.1.

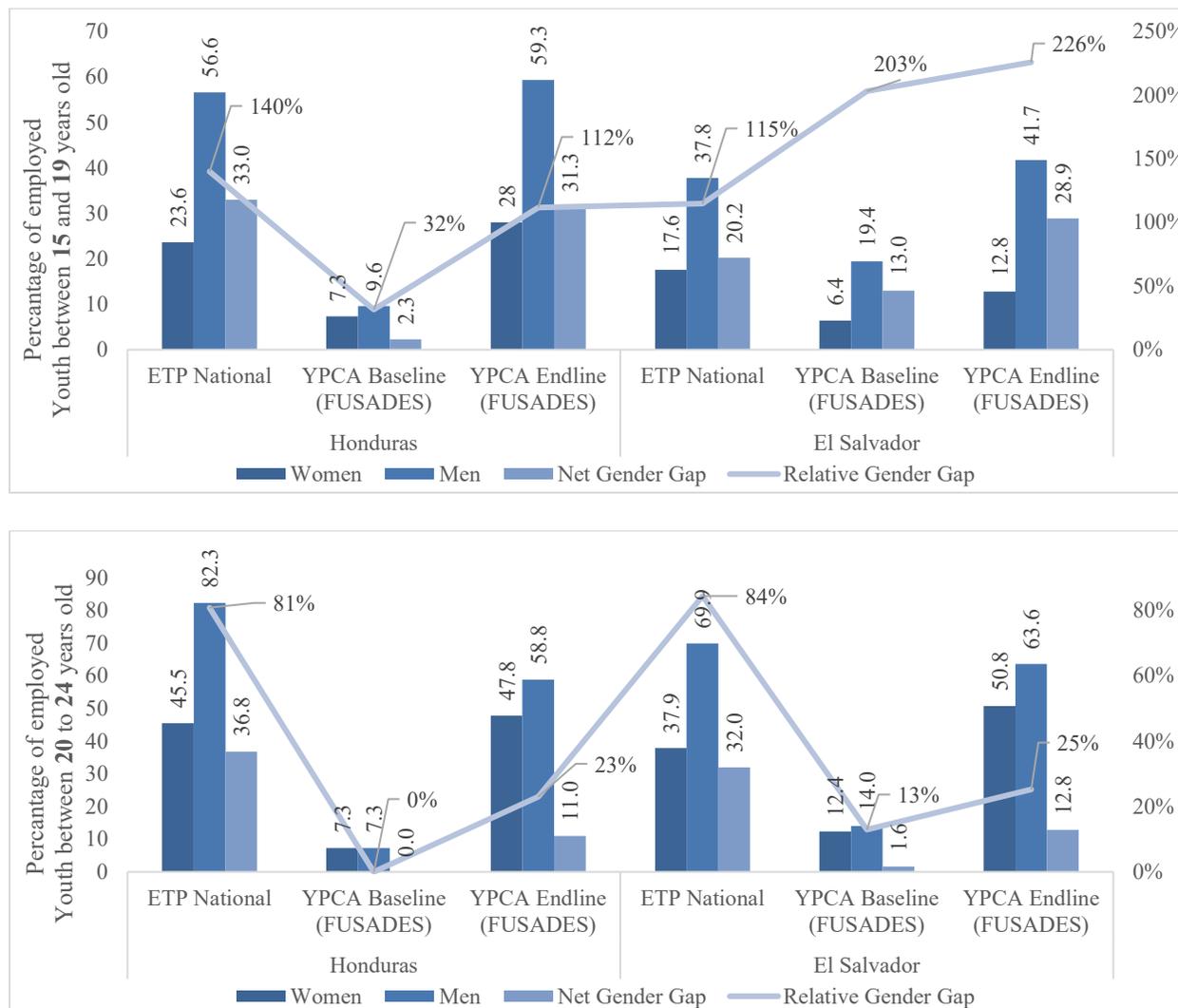
Gender equality

USDOL is interested in understanding if YPCA is closing gender gaps regarding access to employment, education, and self-employment. The Team has analyzed available data regarding employment disaggregated by sex and compares them with official indicators of percentage of employed youth, using the "Employment-to-Population Ratio" indicator. Given that the ILO statistics refer to the general percentage of occupation, the YPCA data presented in Graph 3 includes entrepreneurship, "decent" work, and other forms of work.

Data from the ILO for Honduras and El Salvador show that there is a large gap for young women in access to the labor market. Simply put, the relation is higher than 2 to 1 in the age group of 15 to 19 years old youth: for every young woman that gets some sort of job, two young men do the same. The national official gender gap for youth between 15 and 19 years old is larger for Honduras, at 33 percentual points, while in El Salvador, the gap is 20.2 percentual points. For youth between 20 and 24 years old, the net gender gap is even higher, at 36.8 percentual points for Honduras and 32.0 percentual points for El Salvador. The percent of youth employed is higher for this group than the younger population. As shown in Graph 3, the gender gaps vary depending on the country and age group, thus they are presented in two sections. when entering the project, approximately 11 percent of women and men had some type of employment. In the last update to the longitudinal study prepared by FUSADES, 50 percent of women and 68 percent of men had some type of job.

³⁴ CRS technical staff only identified one provider in El Salvador: "Cristosal" (<https://centroamerica.cristosal.org>). Whereas none was identified in Honduras.

Graph 3. Gender Gap: YPCA and National Employment Data by Country and Age (15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years old)



Source: Honduras and El Salvador official data for youth employed: *Encuesta de Hogares para Propósitos Múltiples, 2018*. Data gathered from <https://ilostat ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>. ETP: Employment-to-population indicator. Youth aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years old.

Project Data Source: FUSADES. YPCA baseline and YPCA endline labels represent baseline and final data collected by FUSADES under the cohort study. Baseline data includes only beneficiaries who participated in follow-up (fixed panel data). Baseline data from six cohorts every six months between 2017 and 2019. Endline data for 2020. Net Gender Gap (NGG) is calculated as the difference between percentage of men and percentage of women employed. Relative Gender Gap (RGG) is calculated dividing the NGG by the percentage of women employed.

The gap between men and women from project participants increased during the life of project for both countries and both age groups. RGG for youth between 15 and 19 years old went from a 32 percent at baseline, up to 112 percent at endline in Honduras; and in El Salvador it went from 203 percent at baseline to 226 percent at endline. RGG for youth between 20 and 24 years old went from a 0 percent at baseline, up to 23 percent at endline in Honduras; and in El Salvador it went from 13 percent at baseline to 25 percent at endline. However, when comparing the gender gap of project participants with the national gender gaps, it can be concluded that the YPCA is helping to increase young women's access to employment in a very positive way. Except for 15 to 19 years old youth in

El Salvador, gender gaps for YPCA youth are lower than the national averages, especially for the 20 to 24 years old group, where the RGG is around 59 percentual points lower for youth participating from the project when compared to the national averages at the same age range for both countries. Reasons that explain such good results related to gender are explained next.

A limitation of employing young women in the region is child care. Data from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) show that, for year 2019, the adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years) was 68.6 for El Salvador and 71.8 for Honduras.³⁵ The Central America region (average rate of 71.1) presents the second-highest rate, behind only the sub-Saharan Africa region (101.2 for 2018³⁶). Following up the recommendations of the YPCA midterm evaluation, CRS and the implementing partners allocated funds to provide child care to women who have children. Some partners did so through financial assistance to pay someone to care for the child while the mother was attending the vocational training sessions. Others provided the care service at or near the training sites. The measure was open to men and women, but most beneficiaries were women, who are typically responsible for taking care of children. Another gender-related measure used was the prioritization of support for self-employed women with children, due to the need to have flexible time which does not come with full-time jobs. Also, technical staff from all implementing partners were trained on the importance of considering gender equity when recruiting beneficiaries. In the field, each partner was free to apply the measures they considered appropriate and adapted to contextual conditions. Both CRS and implementing partners, as well as the evaluation team, consider these measures to be positive to ensure that more women can benefit from the project's services, thus improving the program's effectiveness.

The evaluation team was not able to identify gender requirements in the project design, however, nor in the targets. Vocational training topics were not gender-limited, they were open for both men and women, and both participation and graduations were in general well-balanced by sex. For example, the football soccer club and car repair vocational training that are generally considered as “for men only” allowed the participation of young women. In Honduras, one woman graduated as a mechanic and in El Salvador a man graduated as stylist for a beauty salon. It is recommended for future similar projects that targets should identify gender differences. CRS collected and reported indicators disaggregated by sex but could have implemented gender-specific actions or strategies if targets were set with USDOL.

Strengths and usefulness of the CMEP and DBMS

YPCA developed the CMEP in early 2016. The CMEP-development process was long and delayed the start of project activities until early 2017, after some pilots of Clubs had already taken place in December 2016 in some sites in El Salvador and Honduras. The CMEP includes the project's TOC; results framework; and indicators for project objectives, outcomes and outputs, including the source of data, definitions, methods of data collection, periodicity, frequency, targets, responsibility of data collection, data-quality check list, and the instruments and methodologies for data collection.

The CMEP states that “project stakeholders will obtain information about the level of progress through these indicators, to help determine whether the project is performing appropriately, or

³⁵ Pan American Health Organization. 2019. Core Indicators 2019: Health Trends in the Americas. Washington, D.C.: PAHO; 2019. Available at: <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/51542>

³⁶ Sub-Saharan data taken from World Bank database, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=ZG-ZJ>

adjustments are needed.”³⁷ To achieve this objective, the information and data gathered from/about children, youths, families, and other sources through several data collection instruments should be entered into a technological cloud-based platform named Zoho, which is done online using the iFormBuilder application. This application, in turn, is used to produce the DBMS database, which is the source of information supporting the project’s decision-making process to ensure the project tracks expected results. The project planned to use several forms to gather these data from the participant selection process until graduation. An important complement to the DBMS is the longitudinal study implemented by an external firm (FUSADES, based in El Salvador). This study tracked the graduated participants during the life of the project and since graduation either from the Clubs or YB component.

- The TOC clearly defines the results chain that will produce the expected results. Having children at schools; preparing youths to access decent employment, formal education, and self-employment; and improving or increasing family support to participants. This is well articulated and based on evidence. CRS and Glasswing have extensive experience working with the methodologies applied during project implementation. On the other hand, *Fe y Alegria* has previous experience implementing the YouthBuild methodology.
- The Team considers the CMEP as complete, particularly the set of indicators closely related to the planned outcomes and project objectives. Most of them meet quality standards such as specificity, measurability, adequacy, reliability, and timeliness—the characteristics recommended to design quality indicators. Nonetheless, the Team has identified a few indicators and other aspects that could be improved, as discussed below under weaknesses of the CMEP.
- Having a longitudinal study to complement the tracking of results is a major strength. Most donor-funded workforce development programs do not track performance of beneficiaries after they have been assisted in getting a job, started self-employment, or resumed formal education. The program allocated resources to capture data on how participants were performing *after* graduating from YPCA (up to 24 months later). The assistance lasted five to six months per cohort during the training phase and then surveyed graduated participants every six months until the end of the program—thus providing information of the duration of the results of the YPCA.
- The CMEP defined data collection methodologies and instruments for most indicators.

Some weaknesses of the CMEP and DBMS

Some weaknesses are discussed below that should be addressed in future programs to have a more complete CMEP and well-trained personnel to produce the key data and information for adaptive management. Although the Team considers the CMEP to be well developed, there are some weaknesses which may have affected data quality. These are as follows:

- Annual targets for the life of project were defined at the program level only and were not disaggregated by country, services, or sex to measure progress toward results. Nonetheless, CRS M&E technical staff interviewed mentioned they did have targets by implementing partner, program location, and per year as part of the project internal controls and monitoring.
- Some indicators did not have baseline data, which is key information to assess the impact of the project over time and particularly to understand the status of indicators prior to the start of the project. For example, the rate of retention/desertion in schools in municipalities assisted, the

³⁷ YPCA. CMEP. pg. 47.

annual percentage of youths getting employed, and the annual rate of at-risk youths assisted by the social protection network would provide information on the extent to which the program improved children and youth employment and education profiles.

- The calculation methodology of two out of 24 performance indicators was not adequate. These indicators are: 1) 1.2 – “Percent of Career Connect Club beneficiaries who report improving their social skills by the end of the school year;” and 2) 2.2.1 – “Percent of beneficiaries of YB component who report an increment in their life and work skills assessment after completing the Program.” The methodology included in the CMEP is a scale that measures resilience, depression, and ability to solve problems. Clearly, the methodology does not provide for the perception of the children and youths regarding improvement of their social, life and work skills. The Team considers that the methodology should be changed to a more practical one, for example, asking participants directly whether they perceived an improvement in their skills, for example using a Likert scale.
- Most respondents from El Salvador and Honduras and all partners stated that due to connectivity problems, on several occasions the data entry in the Zoho online platform using data collection forms created using iFormBuilder software, was a lengthy process; in some cases, the information got lost apparently due to low bandwidth. The midterm evaluation mentioned these issues in 2017, but issues persisted even during the final stages of the YPCA.
- Indicator PO1 is not consistent with indicators 2.2, 2.4, and 2.5. All these indicators refer to beneficiaries who had access to employment, self-employment, and formal education. PO1 refers to the “Percent of beneficiaries that obtain acceptable work, self-employment, or reintegrate into the formal education system” and has a target of 70 percent by the end of the project; the other three indicators refer to access to employment, self-employment and formal education respectively and their targets (25, 10 and 35 percent) are well below the target for PO1. As discussed above, while the PO1 indicator was not achieved, the other three indicators were achieved; this although they refer to the same expected results. Targets of these indicators, which are the most relevant for the project outcomes, need revising to make them consistent. According to CRS, the inconsistency is by the PO1 indicator, which is measured using data from the longitudinal study, which carry out follow up survey every six months (a sample of participants) while the other three indicators (2.2, 2.4, and 2.5) are measured using the total number of participants (not a sample). The Team would recommend using information from all participants in the case of indicator PO1, instead of a sample, to avoid the inconsistency.
- The CMEP did not undergo an external data quality assessment (DQA). Given the complexity of the project, it would have been highly recommended to do a DQA and resolve some of the weaknesses indicated in this section. For example, the indicators: 1.2 – “Percent of Career Connect Club beneficiaries who report improving their social skills by the end of the school year” and 2.2.1 – “Percent of beneficiaries of YouthBuild program who report and increment in their life and work skills assessment after completing the Program” presented issues in the way they were measured.

Box 15. Differences in monitoring data among implementing partners

During almost the whole life of the project, there were differences between the monitoring information of implementing partner staff and the information presented by CRS. Some information was missing in the system and the reasons for the gaps were not clear for CMEP users. By the end of the project, reportedly the differences were clear.

Efficiency

In this section, the Team identifies factors related to project management and design, including designation of key personnel and staff capacity, affected efficiency efforts, as well as relevant efficiency challenges and good practices. The evaluation also answers whether the allocation of the project budget, actual expenditures, or burn rate affected efficiency efforts. Broadly speaking, the Team considers that the financial and human resources were adequate or sufficient for the implementation of the project. However, there are opportunities to improve efficiency considering implementation timeliness, staffing, training, budget execution, and other issues related to the information quality produced by YPCA, as has been discussed under the effectiveness evaluation criteria and the M&E system implications.

Timeliness and financial implications on efficiency of activity

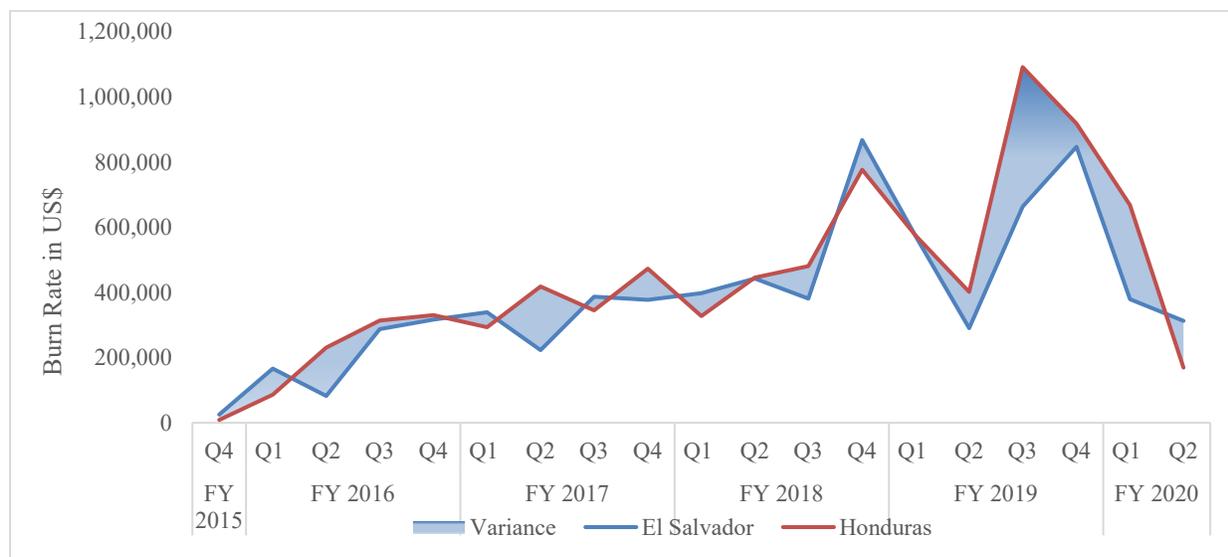
There was a late start of the field implementation of the project. During the first year, CRS was able to incorporate the implementing partners *Fe y Alegría* and Glasswing, both in Honduras and El Salvador since October 2015 (FUNADEH in Honduras was incorporated in October 2017), and project staff was trained in the YB model between February and March of 2016. During the first semester, the implementing partners identified sites to implement YPCA, but actual implementation was delayed. The first year was basically taken up in completing and receiving approval of the CMEP between CRS and USDOL. This affected financial and technical execution on the field, and the Team considers that this also affected the project's efficiency, given that the staff was already available but under-utilized. During the first year, the project expenses were 57.9 percent of the approved budget. In Year 2, financial execution was improved, although still below budget projection, at 84 percent of the initial budget. The budget was realigned and increased with the Modification 3, which was approved in September 2017, and Modification 4, but there was already a 30 percent aggregate budget gap for the first two years.

The low budget execution is further explained by the technical implementation challenges on the ground at the start of YPCA. Glasswing had problems recruiting participants for the YB component in Honduras and El Salvador at the early stages of the project, largely explained by the lack of an initial diagnostic of the communities, which is part of the YB methodology. Glasswing did not have a physical space to provide services, so they had to take additional steps to start the YB component implementation. Finding where to implement and assessing if there were enough youth in a given community likely limited their priorities at the early stages of the project. This led the organization to sites where they could implement, but there was not enough access to youths with applicable criteria to enter the project, given the gangs' control over certain territories and its borders, which limited youth availability to participate. Other factors included that the insecurity conditions were simply too high, given that the organization was unknown to the locals. Glasswing had to rotate sites during the first years for these reasons and, although the organization was able to focus its implementation properly, both financial and human resources could have been better utilized if the diagnostics were developed. Graph 4 below shows the financial execution by country and quarter, as well as the variance between counties.

Graph 4 reflects the slow start of the project and how it gradually normalized its burn rate between FY 2017 and FY 2018. It is notable that although there was an important reduction between FY 2017 Q4 and FY 2018 Q1 in Honduras, the project teams were fast to increase the burn rate between FY 2018 Q2 and Q4. Graph 4, however, also shows notable high and abrupt lows between FY 2018 Q4 and FY 2020 Q1 for both countries which, from the Team's perspective, verifies that execution was

low regardless of the country in the first years. YPCA executed more funds in the last seven quarters of the project than in the first 12 quarters.

Graph 4. Budget execution and variance by country, Life of Project (LOP)



Source: CRS financial data as of March 2020

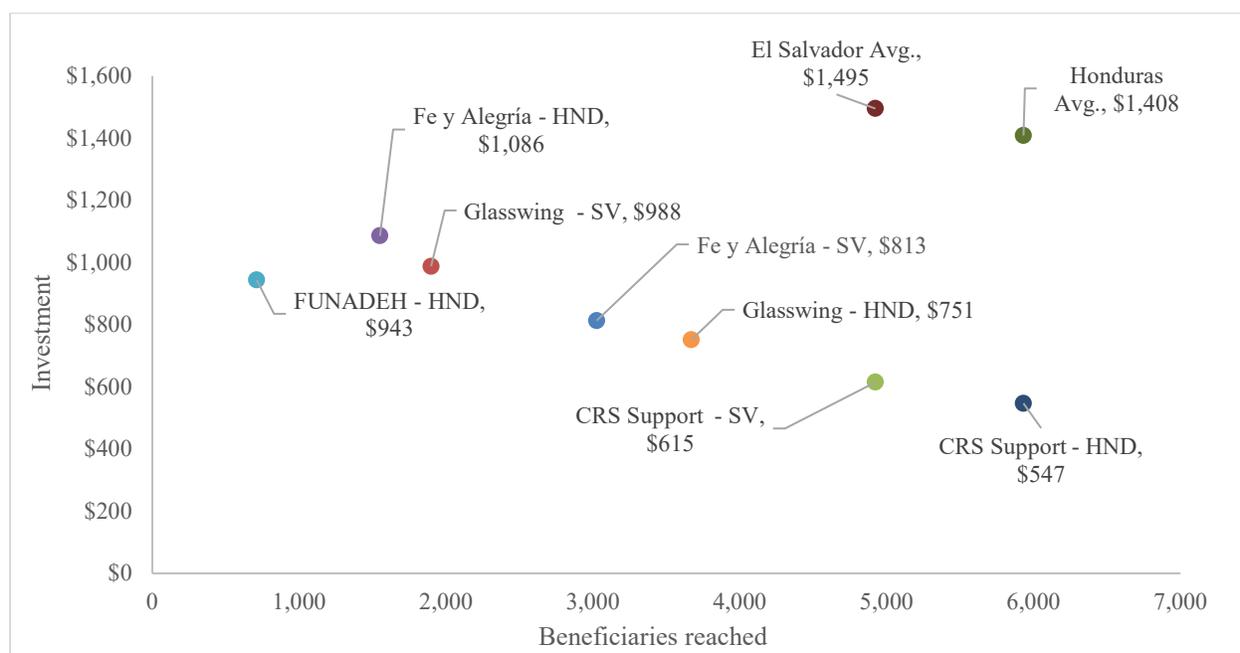
The project also made budget adjustments in order to increase reach to targets. For example, YPCA provided support for transportation, meals, child care, among other things, to ensure that participants were able to attend the Clubs and YB components. As is further discussed in the Sustainability criteria with inputs from CRS’s cost-benefit studies, the Team assesses that, although these adjustments might be seen as “welfare,” given the resultant increases in the effectiveness of the program and the sustainability of the results, these adjustments were efficient.

Finally, when reviewing the budget execution, the Team analyzed the investment averages per beneficiary, counting among the beneficiaries the youth from the Clubs and YB components, as shown in Graph 5.³⁸ It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive analysis, rather it aims to identify general efficiency trends.

Graph 5 reveals that there is a significant dispersion on the investment that each partner made per participant. The more the partner is up in the graph, the greater the financial investment. A series to the right of the graph reflects a greater number of beneficiaries served. Of the initial partners, *Fe y Alegría* Honduras served the fewest beneficiaries at the highest average cost, which is explained by the fact that around 55 percent of the beneficiaries were from the YB, which (at least at the beginning) required a greater investment; the remainder 45 percent were beneficiaries from the Strong Families program.

³⁸ Data are calculated dividing the project’s financial execution by the number of youth beneficiaries and family members reached from the three main Project Components.

Graph 5. Cost per participant by implementing partner



Source: YPCA modified-budget and participants-reached data from the DBMS. Own calculations dividing the total budget between the total amount of youth participants benefited.

It is curious that Glasswing in Honduras had a similar percentage distribution of participants to that of Glasswing in El Salvador: around 50 percent beneficiaries from Clubs, 25 percent in the YB component and the other 25 percent in Strong Families. However, the cost per participant was 32 percent higher in El Salvador than in Honduras, which shows that implementation costs are different in both countries. Looking especially at the budget, it can be seen that the average salaries are higher for El Salvador. In this sense, it is noteworthy that FUNADEH, as the last partner to start implementing, had an intermediate investment per participant compared to other partners.³⁹ It seems, however, that they had the lowest results on employability and/or entrepreneurs compared to the other partners. Only 3.2 percent of youth served by FUNADEH had their own business, compared to 9.3 percent average between *Fe y Alegría* and Glasswing in Honduras. For employment, this rate increases to 13 percent, compared to the 20-percent average for *Fe y Alegría* and Glasswing.⁴⁰ All the support provided by CRS must be added to these data. CRS support was also slightly higher in El Salvador than in Honduras, with a 12 percent difference. By combining the data and averaging by country, including all costs, the cost per participant in El Salvador is 6 percent higher than in Honduras.

Implications of information quality on efficiency

As discussed under the effectiveness analysis, although really complete on paper, the CMEP had major challenges in practice which also affected efficiency. The implementing partners' technical teams had difficulty completing data forms and uploading information into the online database.

³⁹ FUNADEH used in-kind resources not accounted in the budget and not reflected in these calculations.

⁴⁰ Note should be made that FUNADEH was "new" and had to learn and understand the project objectives and methodologies, whereas the other partners already had almost two years of experience.

Given the connectivity/compatibility issues among systems, it was common that small portions of data could get lost while uploading, which has been identified as the reason why implementing partners and CRS data were never consistent. The efficiency problem rose as technical teams needed to dedicate more time to finding data discrepancies and re-entering data, which was highly time-consuming. Especially at the start of the project, the implementing partner staff mentioned that sometimes they spent more time filling out/correcting data forms and uploading than carrying out their technical activities.

The Team considers that CRS should have dedicated more time to adequately training technical staff who might not be familiar with data entry tools and platforms. High staff turnover made it necessary to provide additional trainings on M&E procedures, which was a responsibility of implementing partners. Given that these problems still occurred during the final stages of YPCA and the amount of time that was invested in creating the CMEP, the Team considers that CRS should have opted for a more practical, easy-to-use platform. It should have considered staff capacity or should have dedicated time to test and validate that the tools were working as expected. Also, CRS could have reviewed data requirements with USDOL to prioritize relevant information. Although more data is always better in terms of having broader options for analysis, projects should separate required and optional data—and focus on the former.

It appears that uncertainties of financial execution given the crisis in Honduras and delays in financial reporting of partners and CRS did not permit up-to-date accounting information and accuracy about financial implementation trends, negatively influencing the projections for the implementation of the second half of fiscal year 2019 and the first quarter of fiscal year 2020, as is also illustrated in Graph 4 (above). By mid-fiscal year 2019, the project had already reached some of its numeric beneficiary's targets or was close to reach them, but had a gap of approximately \$1.1 million with respect to the approved modified budget and had around \$4 million unspent funds. CRS prepared a 14-month projection for these funds to the donor. CRS also prepared two scenarios to the consortium board: one in which they continue underspending⁴¹ and would have available funds for calendar year 2020; and a second scenario in which the project would catch up increasing expenditures. CRS explained that both scenarios were communicated to the implementing partners as options, not as certainties—however, expectations were generated. CRS and implementing partners aimed to increase technical implementation with the second scenario to eliminate the financial gap: open more sites, serve more youth. These changes were not officially “amended” in the Cooperative Agreements, but partners made commitments on the field to ensure that financial projections would be reached.

CRS reached their financial execution targets sooner than expected, and partners had to abruptly reduce field implementation, which affected efficiency. For example, cohorts' length was reduced. Given that commitments were already established with the communities, some partners preferred to comply with those agreements and decided to put up their own funds to cover implementation costs, to avoid abruptly ceasing these services. The Team considers that projections and targets should have been better communicated to the implementing partners, as all of them understood that there would be more funds—which was not accurate. CRS honored all the cooperative agreements and committed extra funds in some cases, but no organization should need to spend from their own resources to complete a technical implementation; there was enough funding for an organized phase-

⁴¹ As described in the Relevance criterion, schools (implementing sites) were closed between two and three months due to the sociopolitical crisis in Honduras and security risks for the staff and beneficiaries.

out of the activity, as numeric targets were almost reached. Additionally, reducing the number of hours dedicated to vocational and soft-skills trainings being delivered to YB participants could actually reduce the program effectiveness, as the service is not delivered as designed (reduced number of hours). CRS also reports that there were occasions where partners in Honduras had to cover some expenses temporarily while CRS complete the fund transfers.

Staffing and training

CRS personnel are distributed by country, with different positions and responsibilities, as shown in Table 12. Throughout the life of the project, there have been changes in both their job descriptions and their location, which the Team considers promoted the efficiency of the project. The Project Director was first in San Pedro Sula but relocated to San Salvador from the third quarter of 2019. Initially, there was an Employment Specialist and a Self-Employment Specialist; both positions supervised two countries. Seeing the amount of travel for both positions, it was decided to modify the roles so that one person would cover both positions in El Salvador, and the other person in Honduras (San Pedro Sula). After the project modification in 2017, another Youth Employment Specialist was added to Tegucigalpa (as CRS cost share).

Table 12. CRS project staff distribution

El Salvador ⁴²	Honduras
Project Director. Overall management of project. Reports to program director in Honduras and Country Director El Salvador.	Deputy Project Director. Assists project director with management; in charge of Outcome 3. Reports to Project Director.
M&E Specialist. Oversees M&E system and activities. Reports to Project Director.	Information Communication Technology/for Development (ICT4D). Oversees the Information and Communication Technology for the Project.
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and Admin Assistant. Assists M&E Specialist with data analysis. Reports to M&E Specialist in El Salvador.	Youth Employment Specialist (Tegucigalpa). Oversees and supports partner employment activities in Tegucigalpa. Reports to Deputy Project Director.
Training Specialist. In charge of Outputs 1 and 2. Reports to the Deputy Project Director.	Youth Employment Specialist. Oversees and supports partner employment activities in San Pedro Sula. Reports to Deputy Project Director.
Youth Employment Specialist. Oversees and supports partner employment activities in El Salvador. Reports to deputy project director	Communications Specialist. Oversees communication strategy in Honduras. Reports to Project Director.
Communications Specialist. Oversees communication strategy in El Salvador. Reports to Project Director.	Project Accountant. Responsible for accounting tasks in Honduras. Reports to the CRS Honduras Finance Manager and Project Director.
Project Accountant. Responsible for accounting tasks in El Salvador. Reports to the CRS El Salvador Finance Manager and Project Director.	Admin Assistant. Provides administrative assistance to the project team as required. Reports to the Project Accountant.
ISNA Pilot Officer (2). Responsible for implementing the YB and Cognitive Behavioral Curriculum pilot with ISNA. Reports to the pilot initiative with dotted lines to Project Director.	

In addition to the CRS staff, each partner has field teams that are based at the training centers, dedicated to support the Clubs, YouthBuild component, and Social Protection Services, including

⁴² Unless otherwise indicated, El Salvador positions are located in San Salvador and Honduras positions are located in San Pedro Sula.

Strong Families and Community Youth Connect. Each partner has an overall Project Coordinator responsible for the planning and execution of the project and budget, as well as monitoring staff performance. There are also “Project Site Coordinators” in charge of managing the services and staff at each implementation site. They verify that the forms administered at their sites are completed and accurate; ensure the timely implementation of beneficiary registration and follow up forms; that the follow-up plan is complied with (re-contact) for all beneficiaries in their office; and ensure that means of verification are collected for their beneficiaries. Staffing for clubs typically include an overall coordinator as well as the Site Coordinator; YB staffing includes an overall coordinator and technical staff for each component including life skills, work skills, entrepreneurship, basic education, and communication services; and the social-protection component, consists of a professional psychologist and social worker. Clubs make intensive use of local volunteers.

At a higher level, CRS and the project itself has the support of both CRS Home Office in Baltimore and the Regional Office for Central America, located in Guatemala (LACRO Office). LACRO supplies various specialists who have provided support to the project: the youth employability specialist (located in El Salvador) provided insight regarding methodologies or strategies for employability; the M&E regional specialist (located first in Guatemala and afterwards in Boston) provided support in the design of the CMEP and the cohort study. The financial specialist (located Guatemala) also supported administrative and financial procedures; and the security specialist (located in Honduras) supported the methodologies and strategies to create security protocols within the project for CRS and implementing partners. The project also received support at the country program level from the CRS Head of program, Finance, MEAL, Human Resources and ICT areas. The Project Director also had a reference person for relations with USDOL from the Business Development department. This person provided support and advice on regulatory and contractual matters with USDOL.

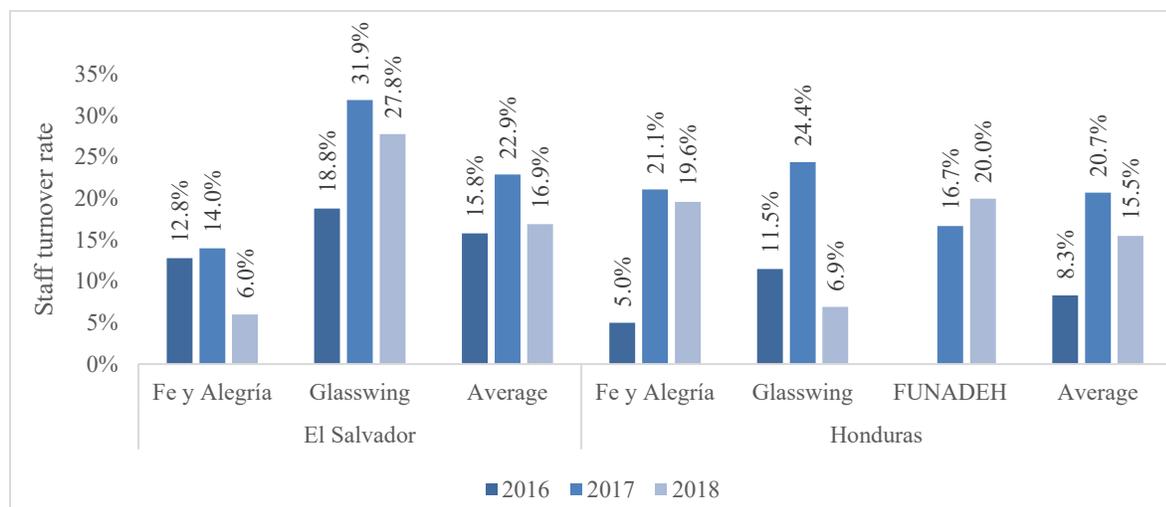
The Team considers that the project organization and staffing is adequate for the project needs, both on the field and at the management level, and that CRS’s LACRO and Home Office were instrumental for the project’s implementation. However, efficiency could be improved. CRS has implemented a “flexible” approach for several processes of the project implementation regarding its partners, as CRS avoided micro-managing implementors. This has led to uncertainty regarding procedures and policies, which is also reflected in the partners field staff roles. For example, CRS explains that the internal roles were standardized, but the Team found some cases where the workload distribution of partners’ field staff was not homogeneous between organizations and components, which in some cases led to overloaded personnel. For example, Glasswing School Coordinators explained to the Team that they had to take care of everything related to Clubs on their own. This role at Glasswing had to oversee psychosocial therapy for the youth of Clubs, unlike *Fe y Alegría*, where the Community Connect staff provided such support to Clubs, thanks to greater collaboration within the team. CRS explained that, given that the roles were standardized, differences might be more related to internal organizational reasons.

On the other hand, although the M&E requirements could consume a lot of time and resources, the Team assesses that the distribution of the staff is adequate and that what must be adjusted is the effectiveness and applicability of the M&E system and tools—not the personnel dedicated to it. Implementing partners also had someone designated for internal M&E processes.

Another important factor that affected the efficiency of the project was staff turnover, which is considered high. This is one reason why it was necessary to invest more time in training human

resources in the project methodology. Graph 6 below shows the implementing partner staff turnover rate for years 2016 to 2018, according to a study developed by an external organization.

Graph 6. YPCA implementing partners staff turnover rate 2016– 2018



Source: Stratega, Turnover and position profile study (2018)

The average turnover rate was between 16 and 23 percent for El Salvador, and 8 to 21 percent for Honduras, depending on the year. Fiscal year 2017 presented the highest staff turnover rate at more than 20 percent in each country (one of every five staff left the project). The evaluation team found that the reasons for this high turnover are diverse and, to some extent, beyond project control. The turnover study found that in El Salvador, 17 percent of staff got a job with a higher salary, 15 percent simply got another job, and 14 percent left because of security concerns. In Honduras, the 24 percent of staff got fired, 21 percent got another job, and 11 percent got a job with a higher salary. According to a CRS member in Honduras, *staff turnover has been affected by the lack of expertise working with youths*. San Pedro Sula is an industrial city; there are not enough human resources with experience in social projects, which affected its performance. In some cases, CRS got involved in the recruitment process of partner staff. The appropriate CRS technical personnel (according to area) participated in the selection and induction processes, which is considered a way to ensure that new partner staff had the appropriate profile.

On the other hand, issues of *insecurity* and the labor market also affected efficiency. Although insecurity has been decreasing in terms of homicide rates, El Salvador and Honduras continue to have high crime rates which affected staff turnover. For example, some received death threats for arriving at school sites and preferred to change jobs, which was beyond the control of the project. Interviewees also mentioned that there were *various employability projects* for young people in both countries, particularly in San Salvador and San Pedro Sula, even in the same areas of intervention, who *offered higher salaries* above the averages of the salary policies of the implementing partners. In some cases, such as *Fe y Alegría* in El Salvador, salary policies were revised to better suit the labor market. Additional training and recognition

Box 16. Efficiency Efforts

Project organization and staffing was adequate. CRS Home Office and Regional Office support was an added value. However, high staff turnover, late start of activities on the field, and M&E system procedures limited efficiency.

opportunities were also introduced for their staff, among other types of incentives. The Team considers that given the labor market conditions, providing this type of incentive is efficient and it is part of the economic theory of efficiency wages. A disadvantage, however, is that at the end of projects, local organizations can hardly maintain a salary above equilibrium unless they have financing, which may affect sustainability.

The project had to dedicate more financial resources and time to train the new staff. CRS initially provided training primarily on all components of the YouthBuild model, as well as the Strong Families program and drug and alcohol curricula. However, the Team considers that CRS should have invested time and resources in more complete initial training, to address the different components of the project, given that the implementing partners report that little training was dedicated to the Clubs component (which was led by Glasswing International). Since staff turnover was high, incoming staff were not necessarily familiar with the project methodologies. CRS could not provide a full YouthBuild workshop every time new staff came in; it would be inefficient. When possible, CRS did invite staff who had not been trained to trainings that were being carried out for other projects using the same methodology. However, the Team considers that the training of the new personnel should have had a more standardized methodology and not be left to the criteria of each partner, which affected the quality of the services provided to the beneficiaries. As some school directors mentioned, staff turnover affected activities' dynamism and youth motivation. On the other hand, the efforts of the project in the training and use of different methodologies must be recognized, among them, the "I am READY" which, as the partners recognize, has been effective for both project staff and youth beneficiaries.

Sustainability

Under this section, YPCA efforts to ensure replication of the programs after finalization are discussed, as well as the probability of the project being sustainable and the duration of the project's results.

Efforts to ensure sustainability

YPCA prepared a sustainability plan in a collaborative manner with various stakeholders in July 2016. By the end of 2017, CRS and implementing partners met to finalize the sustainability plan. Although this plan was considered somewhat broad by the midterm evaluation carried out during the first semester of 2018, CRS and implementing partners did implement several efforts to ensure YPCA sustainability. The main strategies/approaches implemented are described below.

- **Signing of agreements or letters of understanding.** CRS mapped out the organizations and entities based in El Salvador and Honduras working with children and youth with the potential to implement program methodologies after its finalization in September 2020. In El Salvador, CRS signed agreements of collaboration with Ministry of Labor, the National Institute for Youth (INJUVE), the (ISNA), the Salvadoran Institute for Professional Training (INSAFORP), the National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprise (CONAMYPE), Business Foundation for Social Action (FUNDEMAS) and the Technological University, UTEC. CRS also worked with IOM and a group of four municipalities (named *Microregion el Bálsamo*) to transfer the YB methodology and with the Ministry of Education to transfer the Clubs model. In Honduras, YPCA worked with the Ministry of Labor (MoL), Honduran National Service for Employment (SENAEH), the Institute for Professional Training (INFOP), Municipalities of Choloma and El Progreso, DINAF and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Choloma (CCICH), which

resulted in agreements of collaboration, except with INFOP and SENAETH⁴³; in addition, the project established working relations with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the National Institute for Young Offenders (INAMI). In both countries, YPCA further strengthened the capacity of the signing organizations to implement the methodologies of the program. The Team reports that the content of the agreements signed is quite broad, although very important as declaration of intentions. The agreements do not include specific actions needed to ensure sustainability of one of its three components. The Team was not able to identify specific actions detailed in the context of those agreements.

- **Study tour.** Efforts to promote the sustainability of YPCA included a study tour in September 2017 to the U.S. to learn how the YouthBuild model is being implemented; twenty representatives from government and private sector entities in El Salvador (3) and Honduras (17) traveled to the U.S. Honduras had priority, as El Salvador had participated in previous immersion tours as reported by CRS.
- **Tailored training courses and coaching.** YPCA also concentrated efforts in building capacity among implementing partners (Glasswing, *Fe y Alegría* and FUNADEH), schools, government, and municipalities by transferring the methodology and all related material needed to implement project components in the future. Most of these stakeholders consider themselves as well-equipped with the methodologies to implement the YPCA. This included training and coaching support as part of a certification process to build capacity on the “I am READY” curricula.
- **Presentation to different potential advocators and or funders.** CRS held meetings and working sessions with different representatives from employers, academia, and international organizations working with children and youth (e.g. UNHCR and IOM) to discuss and present the program. By learning on the impact of YPCA, these stakeholders may fund implementation of YPCA components or promote the funding of it by other donors.
- **Technical staff participated in local steering committees related to at-risk children and youth.** Both in El Salvador and Honduras, CRS and implementing partners had the opportunity to sit on committees working for improving livelihood of children and youth in high-risk areas. In some cases, staff were invited and in others, they asked to be included in those committees. In any case, these instances were used to present the YPCA project, seek support for current implementation, and prepare the ground for sustainability.
- **Pilot in El Salvador with ISNA.** CRS signed an agreement with ISNA to transfer the YB methodology starting in 2019 to work with children and youth with detention penalties. CRS transferred methodologies—including the “I am READY” and YouthBuild models, facilitation techniques and jointly developed curriculum for the youth. ISNA staff who have been trained are implementing the methodology.

Positive changes in attitude, the creation of vocational knowledge, skills and abilities, and soft skills and resilience are some relevant project results which have a high probability to sustain over time. These are intermediate results which may lead program participants to obtain jobs, increase formal education, and/or start a business.

⁴³ It should be noted that YPCA worked with the government institution INJUVE in El Salvador and the MoL in Honduras and agreed to sign an agreement. However, because a new political party took over the Presidential office in El Salvador and the signing ceremony in Honduras was rescheduled several times, the agreements were not finally signed.

The final report of the longitudinal study validates the premise that program results will be long-lasting. Data presented in the report show that over 70 percent of graduated youth are still working after 24 months from graduation; moreover, 38 percent have “decent” work, which is higher than the 12 percent rate observed 12 months after the graduation.⁴⁴ Regarding access to formal education and jobs, the group of youth out of school and not working was reduced from 28 percent to 17 percent, reflecting a positive lasting effect on access to formal school and jobs. In other words, the group of YPCA youth beneficiaries who are no longer in school and do not have a job or are not training to get a job was reduced almost by half after over four years of program implementation. Respondents from El Salvador and Honduras from implementing partners and employers consider the intermediate results of project are really valuable, particularly the life and work skills developed by children and youth. These factors determine the resilience and ability to find and maintain a job, which may be informal or formal depending on the opportunities in the labor markets.

Capacity built among sub-grantees

A majority of sub-grantee respondents consider that YPCA made effective transference of all methodologies of the program. In El Salvador and Honduras, school principals said they were properly trained and have the knowledge and materials to implement the Clubs and Strong Families methodologies. CRS transferred the YB model to Glasswing, *Fe y Alegría*, FUNADEH and other stakeholders mentioned above in El Salvador and Honduras. Senior and technical staff from Glasswing, *Fe y Alegría*, and FUNADEH all recognize the effectiveness of the YPCA methodological approach and stated that they are well prepared to implement the approach, although future implementation depends heavily on availability of funds.

The Team considers these efforts a very important step toward sustainability, due to the increased institutional capacity among stakeholders. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the agreements do not specify commitments to implement the project components after YPCA ends (YB, Clubs, and Social Protection Services).

Challenges to sustainability

Although YPCA is considered highly replicable given its effectiveness in improving child and youth livelihoods while reducing child labor, hazardous work, and WFCL, its sustainability faces certain important challenges. All respondents from El Salvador and Honduras from schools, implementing partners, and beneficiary government agencies pointed out that the program is expensive. Data from a CRS cost-effectiveness study indicate that the average cost for each YB participant in U.S. dollars is \$971 per enrollee, \$1,276 per graduate, and \$2,204 per job placement⁴⁵—beyond the scope of institutional budgets for most stakeholders. Therefore, availability of financial resources is considered as a major obstacle to replicating the project after its end. Although expensive, the benefits of the program are higher than the cost over a medium term. The CRS cost-benefit study indicates that the cost per participant to YB component is recovered within two to six years. Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses carried out within the program indicate that there are net benefits stemming from the YPCA, which is a solid argument to continue implementing similar programs.

Most government agencies, employers and beneficiary youth informants from El Salvador and

⁴⁴ YPCA. 2020. TPR. April 2020, page 10.

⁴⁵ CRS. 2019. “Cost-effectiveness of youth workforce development.”

Honduras highlighted another challenge to sustainability. They reported that the quality, experience, and commitment of the technical staff who work in the YPCA were key factors in its success. They projected, based on experience, that it will be a major challenge to find staff with the right profile to implement or replicate the YPCA project.

Opportunities of sustainability based on institutional capacity of implementing partners

The evidence gathered from the field about the YPCA model as a whole—including the three components of Clubs, YB, and Social Protection Services—indicates it is unlikely to sustain. Although there is high probability of it being partially replicated or used with some adaptations by all implementing partners and a variety of stakeholders, budget constraints will likely inhibit the YPCA model being replicated as a whole.

The Team learned in the field that some parts of the project will be implemented by a number of stakeholders including schools, the municipality of Choloma, and FUNADEH in Honduras. In El Salvador, ISNA will work with the methodology of YB after the end of the project. None of the respondents mentioned the possibility of implementing or knowing that someone else will implement the program as designed by CRS and its implementing partners.

Some project areas are likelier to sustain than others, both in El Salvador and Honduras. This might be possible due to two main reasons. First, the effectiveness of the project is proven—almost all respondents consider YPCA highly effective in helping children and youth stay in school, find an acceptable job, or start a business. Second, the capacity built in methodologies implemented by YPCA under the three components.

The component with highest probability of being sustained is Clubs. Principals of schools participated in workshops to receive the methodology for future implementation after the YPCA. Generally, the enabler for sustainability of this component is its low cost of implementation, as the methodology uses volunteers. Some schools report that they can afford some of the expenses related to food or snacks for Clubs participants (except extra entertainment activities).

The Social Protection Services, particularly the Strong Families program, is likely to be replicated in all schools as part of the existing official “*Escuela de Padres*” program. In Honduras, all respondents considered Strong Families as sustainable and will look for ways to implement the components. For example, according to interviewees, *Fe y Alegría* will continue to implement the Strong Families component in some of the public schools they support in Honduras. In El Salvador, one school principal told the Team that they collaborate with of the Department of Psychology of the National University, so they would continue to give psychosocial support.

The YB component is the least likely component to continue after YPCA. YouthBuild will be replicated in Honduras (in the municipality of Choloma), although it may not include some expenses such as transportation and food for participants as were covered under YPCA. The municipality has already budgeted for the implementation. FUNADEH and the Network of Community Technical Institutions (RedITC) are replicating some key methodologies in other programs and will continue to embed the methodology in future programs as much as possible.

Box 17. Sustainability of YPCA

Evidence gathered indicates that the project methodologies -Clubs, YB and Strong Families- are sustainable at least partially. Some stakeholders are already implementing a modified version of the methodologies of the project in both countries.

YPCA implementing partners all say they need to find financial support to replicate the YPCA model. Some of the partners are already applying the YB model in current programs funded by other donors.

Below are findings regarding how the YPCA model is already partially being executed and the expectations of being sustainable in the future.

- All respondents from implementing partners indicated that they are prepared to implement the methodologies of YPCA and will do their best to implement them in the future after YPCA. In Honduras, representatives from the Municipality of Choloma, Glasswing, and FUNADEH assured the Team that they will implement the YB component. In fact, CRS has received some funds from UNHCR (\$250,000) to further implement the methodology and it is competing for additional funds at the time of this writing (\$1 million). In Choloma, the municipality is currently implementing the YB model using its own funds. FUNADEH is applying the YB model in other projects and plans to continue using it in future interventions.
- In El Salvador, Glasswing is implementing a new project with funds from other donors and is applying the YB model, having recruited some former technical YPCA staff. INSAFORP is using a modified version of the YB model through five organizations that have been previously trained with in the methodology. *Fe y Alegría* is currently applying the YB methodology in other existing projects and plans to apply it in future projects. Other stakeholders such as UTEC and four municipalities from the El Balsamo microregion stated their willingness to implement the YB model, but at the time of the evaluation they had not done so.
- The Team considers that the most effective efforts toward sustainability are the transfer of methodologies to schools, implementing partners, and certain municipalities. Regarding government entities, the probability of replication of the YPCA model is not clear. In Honduras, one respondent from the government stated that the government is not planning to replicate the YB methodology considering they do not have the mandate, financial resources, and infrastructure to host a project such as YPCA. ISNA from El Salvador is implementing a pilot with support from CRS and expects to obtain the budget to reproduce the program after the end of YPCA.

V. LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

This section summarizes the lessons and promising practices identified by the Team, with the inputs obtained from document review, interviews, and the criteria of the evaluators. These are disaggregated by evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

Relevance

Lessons Learned

- When designing a TOC, factors that affect local-context applicability must be considered. YPCA correctly identified most of the causal mechanisms in its TOC, but its scope and applicability could have been more relevant had it incorporated more concrete actions to promote permanence in the educational system. The project faced a wave of migratory movements during implementation, resulting in one of the main causes of youth desertion from school. Although the project includes a migration campaign that shows the risks associated with migration, it was implemented late, in a complex high-migration context, and additional funding could have improved its reach.
- Motivation is not, in and of itself, enough to reduce desertion.
- Include younger children in Clubs.
- When designing a binational (or multi-national) project, do not assume that having teams in both countries will guarantee an exchange of experiences and learning between them. Incorporate concrete actions for information and experience exchange within the project design. Furthermore, have reasonable expectations about the extent to which these exchanges are applicable between countries. YPCA implementation has shown that although countries have similarities, administrative regulations, laws, and other conditions generally vary.

Promising Practices

- YPCA provides **support in the search for a job**, which is considered a significant added value and a highly successful and positive aspect of the methodology when compared to other projects in the area. This was a strong positive for YPCA and CRS and the Team considers that projects for youth employability should include this kind of support.
- According to the feedback received by most interviewees and employers, **the promotion of soft skills** is more relevant than vocational training to entering the labor market in both countries. This differentiates YPCA from similar workforce-development projects that may offer vocational training but lack the soft-skills approach. The YB component provides a comprehensive and effective set of soft skills in areas such as values, leadership, conflict resolution, self-esteem, communication, teamwork, and interviewing that help prepare youth for jobs or self-employment.

Effectiveness

Lessons Learned

- YPCA's effective start date was October 2015, but development of the M&E systems and plans, as main parts of the CMEP, took about a year and caused important activity delays. During the first year, a cohort study to complement the CMEP and its performance monitoring plan was also designed. The project was not fully operational until early 2017, when all activities were initiated. **A shorter period of time devoted to planning purposes** on the M&E subject matter

would allow additional time for activity implementation and improve actual project outputs and outcomes.

- YPCA’s strategy to recruit participants through different channels (such as online social media, oral presentations in schools and municipalities, and dissemination of brochures and booklets) ultimately engaged an adequate number of participants. Attrition was not a significant problem in the Clubs component, but the YB component faced important desertion rates in some program sites in El Salvador and Honduras—in Honduras, desertion rates increased during the political unrest in 2017–2018. Technical staff reported that economic reasons, such as lack of resources to afford transportation and meals to attend program activities, was a major restriction to participation. Although the program design anticipated providing support to participants, not all implementing partners provided it from the beginning or to all participants. Some girls deserted because they got pregnant or had children and could not pay for child care services. Once the program provided additional support for transportation, meals, and child care, desertion rates diminished. Learning from this experience shows that consistently providing mobilization, food, child care and other essential items early in the program and across all implementing partners may widen the level of participation.
- When selecting program sites for project offices in the field, conduct a thorough situational diagnostic to assess the existence of enough children and youths who meet selection criteria and ensure that there are no restrictions to mobility of potential participants (due to gang disputes or territories). This was not a concern for *Fe y Alegría*, which has had a long presence in the municipalities targeted by the program but was a factor for the others. There were cases in El Salvador and to some extent in Honduras where implementing partners faced low registration rates and therefore had to look for other sites better suited to program operations. As the selection of new program sites within boundaries of a “neutral zone” took time and delayed delivery of services, it is highly probable that a diagnostic of the geographic zones at the beginning of the project may have assisted in the achievement of results.
- When working with children and youth with poor academic profiles and a lack of job experience, carefully consider the probability of success in setting a target number of formal jobs for participants. This may require examining realistic, evidence-based targets and baselines from previous research or past evaluations of similar programs.
- Reducing school desertion does not depend solely on generating greater motivation. A number of participants abandoned the program due to migration, relocation to other cities/neighborhoods, and the family’s need for them to work.

Promising Practices

- Initially, the program sought alliances or collaboration with micro and small enterprises. By the end of 2018 and beginning of 2019, the project approached large firms and the insertion rate to labor markets registered an important improvement. Learning from this experience indicates **that working with firms of all sizes may be more effective than focusing only in micro and small enterprises**. Late in the program, employment specialists had to intensify relationships with large businesses to improve access to employment results.
- Most participants of YB component do not have any work experience and are looking for their first job. Additionally, they have not reached the academic level required for many positions in formal businesses. **The program has proven that a successful way to insert most youths with no work experience in local labor markets is to target jobs that do not fall under the category “decent” jobs—namely, informal jobs**. The longitudinal study provides evidence

that after gaining some experience and demonstrating their skills and abilities, graduated youth scale up to better jobs, including decent work positions. YPCA should be credited for soliciting USDOL to include the informal sector in the definition of access to employment jobs created.

Efficiency

Lessons Learned

- Develop an initial diagnosis of the geographic areas where it is expected to implement a project similar to that of YPCA as recommended by the project methodology. Failure to do so may affect the efficiency in the use of financial and human resources, as well as reaching the project goals, as there may not be the required number of beneficiaries or the insecurity so high that it is necessary to search for another implementation site.

Promising Practices

- CRS brought with it the support of their Home Office and LACRO. LACRO supplied various specialists that provided support on topics as methodologies or strategies for employability, the design of the CMEP and the cohort study, administrative and financial procedures, and methodologies and strategies to create security protocols within the project. **Getting this type of higher-level staff involvement and support was key for the project's implementation**, and the Team considers that it positively influenced efficiency in both administrative and technical execution.

Sustainability

Lessons Learned

- Planning toward sustainability was part of YPCA since inception and start-up. CRS designed the plan and implemented some activities, mainly focused on establishing agreements or collaboration with a reasonable number of stakeholders in Honduras and El Salvador. Several alliances were established by 2017 through agreements aimed at collaborating to improve services supporting at-risk children and youth. In the first semester of 2018, the midterm evaluation of the project recommended to prepare a more detailed workplan to ensure sustainability. In late 2019, CRS reported that the full update of the plan was still pending. Despite this, YPCA transferred methodologies of Clubs, YB, and Strong Families to select stakeholders. While transferring knowledge and experience is important for sustainability, such measures alone do not ensure a holistic implementation of the project TOC and its activities. Therefore, although there may be some long-lasting results, the probability of success of future replication of the project is uncertain. Most stakeholders from El Salvador and Honduras will implement or are implementing modified or reduced versions of the YPCA approach.

Promising Practices

- YPCA's approach of **having a municipality from Honduras implement the YB component while piloting the same component with a government agency in El Salvador** was reportedly successful. This pilot activity is built around working with youth with detention penalties and has secured replication of such component. Both entities stated to the Team that they will continue carrying out the corresponding services side by side.
- CRS and implementing partners briefed key stakeholders on the progress made by YPCA over time, which might have helped establish widespread awareness, support and foundation for

sustainability of the program components and methodologies as seen even before project closeout.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The ultimate goal of YPCA is to “reduce prevalence of child labor, hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras.” The project aims to increase the “participation by at-risk children and youth in formal/non-formal education, acceptable employment or self-employment.” The project TOC identifies that “dropping out of school or remaining unemployed for extended periods of time increases the likelihood of engaging in child labor or irregular work, because these forms of vulnerable work represent means of livelihood for these children and youth. They also face barriers to obtaining decent work because they lack the skills that these jobs require.” For these reasons, the project aims to motivate children to stay in school or, for those who have dropped out, help them to return; it also helps youth to obtain and maintain employment, which is supposed to have a positive effect on educational progress and livelihoods, and reduce vulnerability. In this sense, the project objectives are highly relevant to the context of both countries. The project identified three critical assumptions, of which the Team considers that two were met and one was met only partially, affecting the project implementation specifically in Honduras. On the other hand, the YPCA design did not address potential risks for project implementation.

The TOC focuses on increasing child motivation to stay in school but does not recognize that low or lack of motivation is not the primary cause of school attrition, which is considered or minimal and lower than national figures. Based on available participant data, the primary reason for dropping out of school is migration, which is driven by lack of economic opportunity and/or security. In the case of youth of an age to work, YPCA provides vocational training with the objective of equipping them with technical knowledge in how to carry out certain jobs, depending on the labor market in the implementation area. This type of training is relevant to help beneficiary youth access the labor market, as it allows them to develop basic technical skills to get a job. However, YPCA goes further and provides support in the search for a job, which is considered an added value and a highly successful and positive aspect of the methodology. YPCA also places great emphasis on developing soft skills and job values. This included respect, punctuality, readiness for work, maintaining a correct attitude, among others. The promotion of soft skills is reportedly more relevant than vocational training to enter the labor market in both countries.

The project was designed to be implemented in Honduras and El Salvador. A benefit of implementing it in two countries is that the administrative management burden on USDOL is reduced, by providing administrative and technical follow up on a single project instead of two. The reduction in administrative costs also benefited CRS, which needed proportionally fewer management personnel than if it were implemented separately. Other than the reduced administrative burden for USDOL and lower staff implementation costs to CRS, the Team has not been able to identify tangible or conclusive benefits of implementing the project in two countries at once. Both countries have high insecurity rates, and the project defined relevant strategies and practical measures for the context of insecurity where it operated, with the aim of minimizing personnel risks. Security protocols, however, should have been defined and implemented in the earlier phases of the project timeline.

Effectiveness

Overall, YPCA was effective. It achieved 84 percent of its targets, with execution rates above 91 percent. The Team considers this is very good performance, given the complexity of working in two countries and with children and youth residing in high-risk municipalities. High-profile objectives and outcome indicator targets, access to employment, self-employment, and formal education targets were fully met or almost met at 100 percent of achievement. El Salvador generally exceeded the high-profile targets and Honduras, in general, did not.

Evidence from the field indicates that vocational trainings provided to participants were aligned to local labor market needs and thus had high likelihood of leading to future employment. Despite several important difficulties graduated youth face in order to get a decent job, the program was able to produce more jobs than the national market in El Salvador and Honduras.

The project did not set numeric or demographic targets for youth working in hazardous jobs. The number of youths *engaged* in hazardous work is very low—the majority of them are classified as *at risk of entering* child labor or hazardous jobs. Thus, the Team interviewed youth at risk; these participants stated that the quality of program services is excellent and felt comfortable participating in activities.

Desertion rates observed in the Clubs component was minimal. Regarding the YB component, participants largely deserted due to economic and security reasons. They could not pay for transportation, meals, and child care; they had to work to contribute to their family's subsistence. Some security reasons included threats from gang members controlling the territory where the activity site was located. To overcome attrition explaining these factors, YPCA provided funds to cover for transportation, food, child care, and related expenses. Irregular migration, principally to the U.S., was another reason for leaving the program. In this case, YCPA implemented an awareness campaign during the fourth year of implementation; it informed of the dangers faced by migrants in their route to the U.S.

Because stakeholders consider YPCA's work important, most of them contributed in different ways to project objectives—e.g., by hiring youth graduated from the program, providing vocational training and advice, facilitating internships and job interviews, job fairs and even giving preference in the recruitment. Respondents from government or municipalities said to evaluators that they will implement the YB component after the end of the project, but with some adjustments; basically, they will not be able to provide support for transportation, meals, and similar expenses due to budget constraints.

There was a clear message from all youth interviewed that their family relationships improved due the influence of program services under the Strong Families program. Some youth mentioned special cases that received special treatment—for example, a girl that needed support for child care, which was granted. In another similar case, project staff allowed a girl to take her child to the project site, where a program volunteer took care of the child. Regarding gender gaps, data from the program disaggregated by sex reflect some reduction in the gap of entry to the labor and self-employment markets, as well as in reinsertion to formal educational system, although the program did not set targets for gender indicators. According to CRS report of April 2020, during life of the project 106 returned migrants were provided program services.

The CMEP is fairly complete; its main strengths are the clear and relevant TOC and results framework. The most significant weaknesses include the lack of baseline data for some indicators;

calculation of two indicators are not adequate; employment has two different definitions; targets are not disaggregated by country, gender and age; technological issues regarding bandwidth; bureaucratic processes to enter and download data; and the generation of reports with figures which did not tie with the math of the implementing partners.

Efficiency

The Team considers that project organization and staffing is adequate for the project needs, both on the field and at the management level. However, efficiency could be improved. Staff turnover is considered high. The Team has found that the reasons for the high turnover are diverse and to some extent beyond project control. Staff turnover has been affected by the lack of expertise working with youths and issues of insecurity and the labor market. Insecurity affected staff turnover; there were some who received death threats for arriving at school sites and preferred to change jobs. There were also various employability projects for young people in San Salvador, even in the same areas of intervention of the project, who offered higher salaries, above the average of the salary policies of the implementing partners. In some cases, implementing partners were able to revise their salary policies to better suit the labor market.

The CMEP, although fairly complete, had major challenges in practice which also affected efficiency. Especially at the start of the project, implementing partners staff mentioned that sometimes they spent more time filling out or correcting data forms and uploading than carrying out their technical activities. The Team considers that CRS should have dedicated more time to adequately validating their tools and training technical staff in them, who may not have been familiar with these tools and platforms.

Sustainability

Results generated by YPCA among children and youth with respect to knowledge, social skills, and life and work skills are sustainable. The cohort study has shed light on this assertion; after 24 months, over 70 percent of youth graduated from YPCA have retained jobs and nearly 40 percent are employed in what is termed “decent” work.

YPCA requires important level of funds to be replicated in a holistic manner. A cost-effectiveness study carried out by CRS in 2019 indicates that the average cost per participant, graduated and employed, is \$1,300 and \$2,200 respectively.⁴⁶ Most respondents recognized the effectiveness of the program but also the high level of resources needed. Budget restrictions are the most important threat to sustainability, according to some respondents from both countries. For this reason, the replication of the YB component may be a reduced version of the methodology. Nonetheless, given the resources, they would reportedly replicate the component fully.

Chances of YPCA of being fully implemented—including all components—is improbable. However, there are reportedly plans for replicating some of its components. All school directors said they will carry out the Clubs methodology but will reduce or not include providing lunch, site visits, and other motivating extracurricular activities. YB will be continued by the municipality of Choloma. *Fe y Alegría* will replicate this component with some changes in El Salvador and

⁴⁶ CRS. 2019. Cost-effectiveness of youth workforce development. Lessons from three CRS YouthBuild models in four countries.

Honduras. Glasswing has been awarded some funds to replicate the component and will compete for additional funds from UNHCR. Likewise, ISNA in El Salvador will replicate it after the project's ending, beginning in 2020.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that this final performance evaluation report will be finalized after the YPCA project ended or will be near to end of programmatic activities, the below recommendations are intended for consideration in future projects with similar objectives and target populations.

Recommendations for USDOL

- **Relevance.** The scope and applicability of the YPCA TOC could have been more relevant if it had incorporated more concrete actions to address economic and security causes of desertion from schools and thus promote higher and better permanence rates in the educational system than those achieved. Motivation alone is not enough for a reduction in desertion, especially if economic and security concerns affect project beneficiaries. For a future project, the Team recommends including economic and security issues as main causes of attrition rates in schools in the TOC, build in a migration campaign from the beginning of the project, assign enough funding for its compelling and visible communication, and define measurable indicators and outcomes.
- **Relevance.** Given that security factors could severely affect program implementation in high-crime areas, it is recommended that USDOL requests their contractors to comprehensively identify security risks and implications as part of their M&E Plan. The plan could include a section identifying specific security risks and associated mitigation measures, and appropriately address security issues in the MEL procedures in order to ensure that the program is able to reach its targets.
- **Effectiveness.** Conduct an external data quality assessment after one or two years of start of the program. This would allow for identification of recommendations to the PMP from the early stages of the project.
- **Effectiveness.** USDOL should consider activities in future programs aimed at addressing gender gaps beginning with the request for applications. YPCA's request for applications did not include solicitation of specific activities to reduce gender gaps but the program did have positive results in this regard.

Recommendations for CRS

- **Relevance.** Implementing a project in countries like El Salvador or Honduras has risks associated with the security context. YPCA took practical steps to improve security in both its design and day-to-day implementation. The Team recommends, however, that security trainings and development of security protocols should be implemented during the first year of the project, instead of the later stages. Such protocols could contribute to improve both staff and beneficiaries' well-being.
- **Effectiveness.** For all indicators, the PMP should include baselines, targets, detailed methodologies for calculation, and means of verification. The PMP should also include targets per implementing partner and disaggregate them as appropriate by country, age, sex, and

geographic area. The Team recommends documenting changes to the PMP, including definitions and targets. One recommendation is to define a measurement methodology to identify changes in social skills and life and work skills achieved due to services provided under Clubs and YB components, respectively.

- **Effectiveness.** Self-employment proved to be an important and effective way to help youths as an alternative to formal work, particularly for young girls with children. Given that the curriculum for self-employment was considered too technical by participants, it is recommended to make the methodology easier to follow by program participants in order to prepare business plans, by providing a mentorship and/or coaching to develop the business plans with personalized project staff support.
- **Efficiency.** When implementing a program in various countries, the prime implementer must ensure that there is someone in each country who can create and maintain high-level relationships without losing momentum. High-level responsibilities should be assigned to more than one person based, for example, on a job description and workload analysis.
- **Efficiency.** Relevant training should be provided to new staff in a prompt manner. Given the project's high turn-over, the project should set aside funds in their budgets to provide homogeneous reinforcement to project staff. Other projects have benefited from yearly reinforcement trainings that also serve as a venue for experience exchange and enrich project implementation.
- **Efficiency.** In general, the Team recommends having more homogeneous or even standardized processes. Although CRS should not fall into micro-managing the local partners, having more homogeneous processes in terms of training, role distribution, implementation schedules, support policies for participants, actions to be carried out in the field prior to providing project services, among others, allows for a more efficient use of both financial and human resources.
- **Sustainability.** Use information from the cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit CRS studies of the YB component to demonstrate its high rate of return to government agencies working with at-risk children and youth, not only in terms of personal improvement of individual youths but also for society.
- **Sustainability.** Design pilots of specific “reduced” program components, whether Clubs, YB, or Strong Families, and implement them using fewer resources. This would make it simpler for organizations implementing the pilot to continue the implementation of these versions of the program, where there are fewer financial barriers.

Recommendations for USDOL and CRS

- **Relevance.** When designing a binational or multi-national project, it is recommended to incorporate concrete actions to ensure information and experience exchange within the project design, if such outcome is expected to inform adaptive management and scale up project performance.
- **Effectiveness.** Consider streamlining the CMEP process to make it less time-consuming and to allow more time for implementation. This should include designing the proper M&E documentation such as manuals for data collection and defining a more expeditious process to review data inconsistencies, as needed. Provide training on using the IformBuilder and Zoho platforms, particularly for data entry and use of information. All technical staff with M&E functions should be adequately trained from the start of project implementation.
- **Effectiveness.** The labor studies carried out by the project provided some indications on how to align technical vocational training courses, but they are considered to be too general to inform

the tailoring of the trainings' curricula at a local level. For future projects, it is recommended to develop local labor-market studies, with support from the project employment specialists.

- **Sustainability.** Efforts toward sustainability should be organized in a detailed work plan which can be monitored to measure progress toward expected results. This implies having monitoring indicators for any plan of sustainability. This plan should be implemented from the very start of the project. Agreements to create alliances with local organizations should include specific actions needed to ensure sustainability of one of its three components.

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Other documents consulted

Sustainability Agreements in El Salvador: INJUVE, ISNA, Ministry of Labor and Social Provision (MTPS), FUNDEMAS, UTEC, INSAFORP

Sustainability Agreements in Honduras: DINAF, Choloma and El Progreso municipalities, CCICH

Implementing Partners Agreements in El Salvador: *Fe y Alegría*, Glasswing International

Implementing Partners Agreements in Honduras: *Fe y Alegría*, Glasswing International, FUNADEH

YPCA Direct Beneficiaries Monitoring System Data Base (DBMS)

Youth Pathways Manuals: Strong Families, Clubs and YouthBuild components

Project Documents: CRS YPCA Technical Proposal, Project Extension Document , YPCA Modifications 1, 2, 3, and 4 between CRS and USDOL

IX. ANNEXES

Annex A. Terms of Reference (TOR)

Final Evaluation Terms of Reference / 2020

**ILAB OCFT Project: Youth Pathways Central America
(El Salvador & Honduras) – Implemented by CRS**

**Evaluation Firm:
DevTech Systems, Inc.**

February 2020 - 2021

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CMEP	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DPMS	Direct Participant Monitoring System
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking
SGI	Small Group Interview
ToC	Theory of Change
TPR	Technical Progress Report
USDOL	U.S. Department of Labor

I. Background and Justification

The Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) is an office within the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). ILAB's mission is to promote a fair global playing field for workers in the United States and around the world by enforcing trade commitments, strengthening labor standards, and combating international child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking.

OCFT works to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking around the world through international research, policy engagement, technical cooperation, and awareness-raising. Since OCFT's technical cooperation program began in 1995, the U.S. Congress has appropriated funds annually to USDOL for efforts to combat exploitive child labor internationally. This funding has been used to support technical cooperation projects in more than 95 countries around the world. Technical cooperation projects funded by USDOL support sustained efforts that address child labor and forced labor's underlying causes, including poverty and lack of access to education.

This evaluation approach will be in accordance with DOL's Evaluation Policy⁴⁷. OCFT is committed to using the most rigorous methods applicable for this performance evaluation and to learning from the evaluation results. The evaluation will be conducted by an independent third party and in an ethical manner and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and privacy of participants. OCFT will make the evaluation report available and accessible on its website.

Project Context

An estimated 152 million boys and girls ages 5 to 17—more than double the entire child population in the United States—are involved in child labor in the world, and half of those are in hazardous work that endangers their safety, health, and moral development.⁴⁸ Child labor is a serious problem in the Central American region, and El Salvador and Honduras are no exception. Data from the 2018 EPHPM (Permanent Home Survey of Multiple Purposes) indicate that in Honduras,⁴⁹ 16.1 percent of children and youth between 10 and 17 years of age work, and this percentage increases to 24.1 percent for young people aged 15 to 17. In El Salvador, 2015 data from the International Labour Organization (ILO)⁵⁰ indicate that 6.2 percent of children aged 5 to 13 work, while 28.6 percent of those aged 14 to 17 do. Working from an early age limits spending the necessary time for basic or higher academic studies, and has negative consequences in terms of performance, facilitates the abandonment of the formal

⁴⁷For more information on DOL's Evaluation Policy, please visit <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/evaluationpolicy.htm>

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of Labor. [2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, p.11](#).

⁴⁹ Calculations based on Encuesta Permanente de Hogares y Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM) 2018 Data.

⁵⁰ [Magnitude and Characteristics of Child Labor in El Salvador 2015 Report](#).

education system, and increases the risk that young people fall prey to and are exploited by gangs, along with other worst forms of child labor (WFCL).

It is important to consider that the project operated in poor urban areas of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, San Salvador and its surroundings; which are characterized by the prevalence of crime and gang presence. Although in recent months the rate of homicides has decreased in both countries, they are still high compared to other countries in the region and globally.

ILAB leads the USDOL's efforts to ensure that workers around the world are treated fairly and are able to share in the benefits of the global economy. The Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) mission is to promote the elimination of child labor and forced labor through policy, research, and technical assistance projects.

Project Specific Information

Youth Pathways Central America (YPCA) is a project that aims to improve the livelihoods of children and youth in Honduras and El Salvador, who are either engaged in or at risk of engaging in child labor, hazardous work or illicit or irregular work. To contribute to this goal, the project provides direct services to increase education and job-related skills. The project also aims to improve the youth workforce development system by aligning training services and job skills in an effort to increase employment opportunities.

Recognizing the problem faced by El Salvador and Honduras, ILAB awarded Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partners US\$16,478,000 to implement the YPCA project in order to reduce the prevalence of child labor, hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras. Specifically, YPCA aims to increase the participation of at-risk children and youth in formal and non-formal education, acceptable employment, or self-employment through three main outcomes:⁵¹ 1) increase the motivation to attend school among at-risk children and youth; 2) increase access by at-risk children and youth to employment and self-employment opportunities; and 3) that children, youth, and their families benefit from the network of social protection services.

YPCA implements four main strategies to achieve these outcomes:

- **Career Connect Clubs** are designed to increase students' motivation to attend school, offering educational and recreational activities such as art, dance, soccer, leadership, debate, and communication.
- **YouthBuild Program** provides training and community service projects to help youth acquire critical leadership, service, and job-preparedness skills.
- **Strong Families** service model enhances positive relationships between parents and children, teaching families of vulnerable children and youth to provide the support, guidance, and oversight they require to remain in school or in their jobs.

⁵¹ Taken from the CRS YPCA TPR Annex A – Template.

- **Community Youth Connect (case management approach)** provides children and youth with additional support to address problems such as use of drugs, legal problems, and absence of parent control or guidance.

The strategy **Career Connet Clubs**, is a model designed by Glasswings to provide supplementary education activities to core school curriculum. More than 22,000 school-aged children have benefited from the clubs across Central America. In addition, the project provides emergency residential services to youth under imminent threat, follow-up services to beneficiaries after the training is over and links returned migrant children and youth to project educational and employment services. The project also supplies Case Management Services for those youth and families who report higher levels of risk.

The other approach is the **YouthBuild** model which has been implemented by CRS in Central America since 2010. It has reached more than 5,000 youth between the ages of 16 to 25 years old from high-crime areas, most of them unemployed and not attending school. This methodology provides vocational and life skills, as well as job seeking orientation services. The project fosters linkages between employers and national institutions related to youth employability and vocational service providers in order to improve government services and better align them to labor markets needs in both countries.⁵²

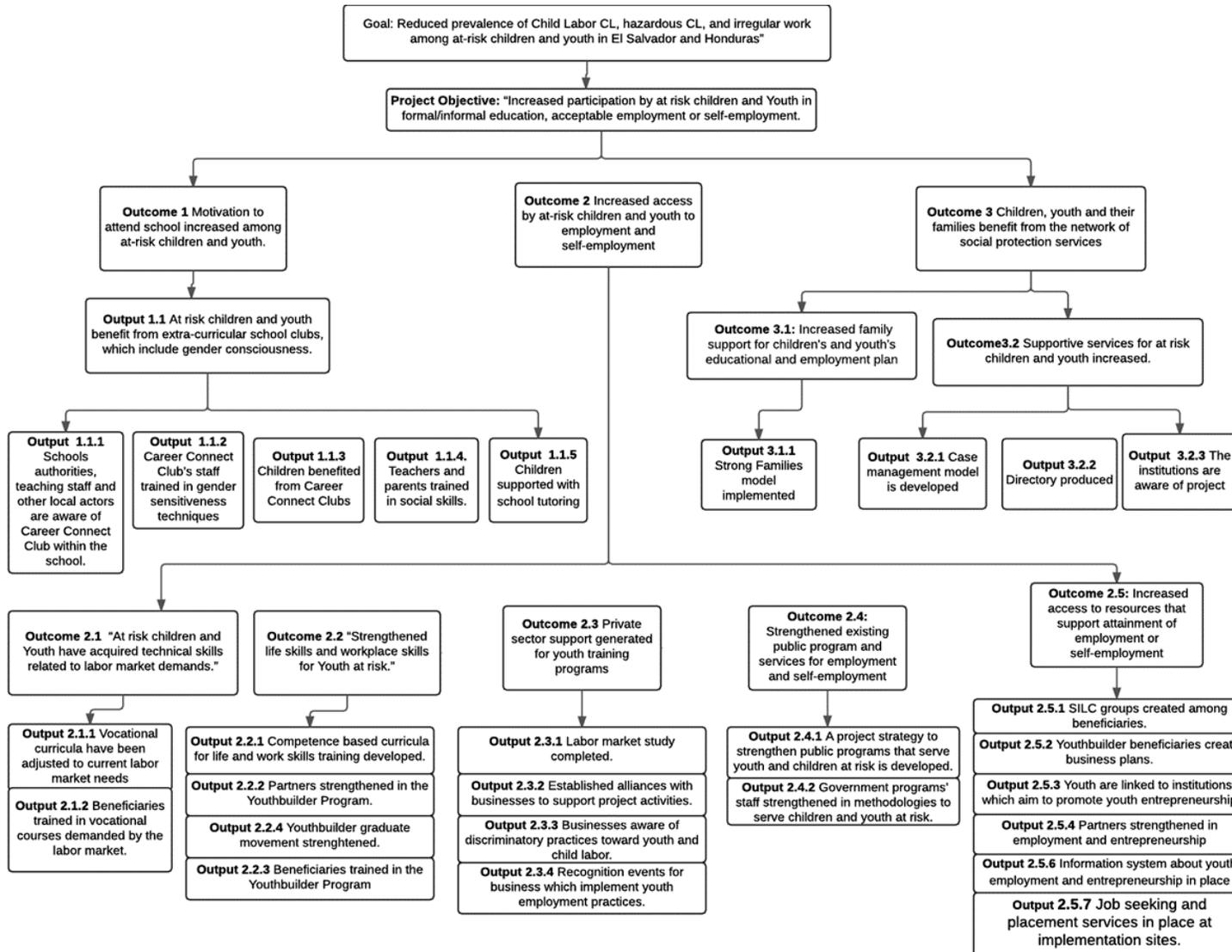
The theory of change underlying the results framework as stated in the CMEP is as follows:

“The ultimate Goal of the project is to achieve ‘Reduced prevalence of child labor (CL), hazardous child labor, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras’. To contribute to this goal, the project has the following objective: ‘Increased participation by at risk children and youth in formal/non-formal education, acceptable employment or self-employment.’ Dropping out of school or remaining unemployed for extended periods of time increases the likelihood of engaging in child labor or irregular work, because these forms of vulnerable work represent means of livelihood for these children and youth. They also face barriers to obtaining decent work because they lack the skills that these jobs require. For these reasons, the project poses that keeping children in school or helping them to return—for those who have dropped out—; and helping youth to obtain and maintain employment, will have a positive effect on educational progress, livelihoods and reduce their vulnerability.”⁵³

The results framework for the Youth Pathways Central America project is shown below.

⁵² Taken from the YPCA Mid-Term Evaluation Report.

⁵³ Taken from the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan



Results Framework:

Goal: Reduced prevalence of Child Labor CL, hazardous CL, and irregular work among at-risk children and youth in El Salvador and Honduras.

Project Objective: Increased participation by at risk children and Youth in formal/informal education, acceptable employment or self-employment.

Outcome 1: Motivation to attend school increased among at-risk children and youth.

Outcome 1.1: At risk children and youth benefit from extra-curricular school clubs, which include gender consciousness.

Output 1.1.1: Schools, authorities, teaching staff and other local actors are aware of Career Connect Club within the school.

Output 1.1.2: Career Connect Club's staff trained in gender sensitiveness techniques

Output 1.1.3: Children benefited from Career Connect Clubs

Output 1.1.4: Teachers and parents trained in social skills

Output 1.1.5: Children supported with school tutoring

Outcome 2: Increased access by at-risk children and youth to employment and self-employment

Outcome 2.1: "At risk children and Youth have acquired technical skills related to labor market demands."

Output 2.1.1: Vocational curricula have been adjusted to current labor market needs

Output 2.1.2: Beneficiaries trained in vocational courses demanded by the labor market.

Outcome 2.2: "Strengthened life skills and workplace skills for Youth at risk."

Output 2.2.1: Competence based curricula for life and work skills training developed.

Output 2.2.2: Partners strengthened in the Youthbuilder program.

Output 2.2.3: Youthbuilder graduate movement strengthened.

Output 2.2.4: Beneficiaries trained in the Youthbuilder program

Outcome 2.3: Private sector support generated for youth training programs.

Output 2.3.1: Labor market study completed.

Output 2.3.2: Established alliances with businesses to support project activities.

Output 2.3.3: Businesses aware of discriminatory practices toward youth and child labor.

Output 2.3.4: Recognition events for business which implement youth employment practices.

Outcome 2.4: Strengthened existing public program and services for employment and self-employment

Output 2.4.1: A project strategy to strengthen public programs that serve youth and children at risk is developed.

Output 2.4.2: Government programs' staff strengthened in methodologies to serve children and youth at risk.

- Outcome 2.5: Increased access to resources that support attainment of employment or self-employment.
 - Output 2.5.1: SILC groups created among beneficiaries.
 - Output 2.5.2: Youthbuilder beneficiaries create business plans.
 - Output 2.5.3: Youth are linked to institutions which aim to promote youth entrepreneurship
 - Output 2.5.4: Partners strengthened in employment and entrepreneurship
 - Output 2.5.5: Information system about youth employment and entrepreneurship in place
 - Output 2.5.6: Job seeking and placement services in place at implementation sites.
- Outcome 3: Children, youth and their families benefit from the network of social protection services
 - Outcome 3.1: Increased family support for children’s and youth’s educational and employment plan
 - Output 3.1.1: Strong families model implemented
 - Outcome 3.2: Supportive services for at risk children and youth increased.
 - Output 3.2.1: Case management model is developed
 - Output 3.2.2: Directory produced
 - Output 3.2.3: The institutions are aware of project

II. Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

The purpose of this final performance evaluation is to assess progress toward achieving the theory of change as described in the Project background section above. Specifically, this final performance evaluation will assess the extent to which the project has achieved its stated goals and objectives, assess effectiveness of project implementation and management, and make recommendations to improve the performance, relevance, and sustainability of future USDOL-funded projects in similar contexts. The evaluation team will glean information from a diverse range of project stakeholders who participated in and were intended to benefit from interventions. The final performance evaluation will:

- Provide evidence-based conclusions, lessons learned, and actionable recommendations; and
- Assess the project’s plans for sustainability at local and national levels and among implementing organizations, and identifying steps to enhance its sustainability.
- Ensure that USDOL, ILO, and other project stakeholders are informed about how project design, relevancy and efficiency have affected project results.

Intended Users - The evaluation will provide OCFT, the grantee, sub-grantees, other project

stakeholders, and stakeholders working to combat child labor, forced labor, and other labor violations more broadly, an assessment of the project's performance, its effects on project participants, and an understanding of the factors driving the project results. The evaluation report will be published on the USDOL website, so the report should be written as a standalone document, providing the necessary background information for readers who are unfamiliar with the details of the project.

III. Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Questions – filled in by contractor after consultation with OCFT and Grantee. An Evaluation Matrix Table is included in Annex A.

Relevance/Design:

1. How relevant (given any changes in the national landscapes) is the project's Theory of Change (ToC) as stated in the Project Document and CMEP in El Salvador and Honduras? Does the project design address the real critical assumptions and risks necessary? Does it appropriately address the livelihood needs of youth given the labor market conditions in both countries, particularly for youth in marginalized urban areas?
2. What have been the benefits and challenges of developing the project in two countries?
 - a. What were the main challenges that project faced to work with youth and children at urban areas with high prevalence of gangs?
3. Have any changes to the national landscape impacted the critical assumptions and risks articulated in the Theory of Change?
4. How has the project addressed security-related challenges in their design and in their M&E procedures?
 - a. How did the project adjust implementation strategies to address security issues at the local level? What are the main lessons learned from this experience for future projects that will operate in similar contexts?

Effectiveness:

5. How effective has the project been in helping youth access (according to what definition) to acceptable work (non-hazardous/less vulnerable) jobs or pursue further

- education? How has the project ensured the vocational training it provides to youth is market-relevant and likely to lead to future employment?
- a. How are these results analyzed considering national and local labor market for targeted population (Youth and children at risk)?
 - b. What are the main challenges that participants face to get access to labor market?
6. How effective is the project, in both countries, in reaching its numeric targets and its demographic targets of children, youth at risk of, or engaged in child labor hazardous child labor or irregular work?
- a. How do these youths perceive the *quality* of services that the project is delivering?
7. How has the project dealt with attrition?
- a. What are the main reasons why youth drop out of *Youthbuild* and *Career Connect Club*?
 - b. How has the project addressed migration rights and challenges of youths and their families in the theory of change?
8. How do project stakeholders perceive the project's efforts and contributions toward the promotion of safe, acceptable work?
- a. What is their degree of commitment to project execution, and their contribution towards the project's objectives (including local and national government)?
9. Do youth perceive that their families support them especially those whose relatives are participating in other project services? Do they perceive that the case management support has helped them (for those who have benefited from those services)?
10. Related to gender equity, are we closing the gender gaps regarding access to employment, education and self-employment?
11. (M&E Systems): What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's CMEP and participant monitoring system (DPMS), which is integrated with the longitudinal study of participant outcomes? Is the DPMS delivering useful and relevant information to drive the project decisions?

Efficiency

12. How have factors related to project management and design, including designation of

key personnel and staff capacity, affected efficiency efforts? Please identify relevant efficiency challenges, good practices, etc. (human/financial/etc.).

13. How has the allocation of the project budget/actual expenditures/ burn rate affected efficiency efforts?

Sustainability (limited assessment at mid-term; more information available for final evaluations):

14. How is the project promoting the sustainability of expected outcomes with stakeholders (i.e. sub-partners, government, local authorities, civil society, etc.)? Is it likely that the results achieved will be durable enough to continue after the end of the project? To what degree has the project built-up the capacity of sub-grantees?
15. What are the major challenges to achieving sustainability? What opportunities exist to support sustainability?

IV. Evaluation Methodology and Timeframe

The evaluation methodology will consist of the following activities and approaches:

A. Approach

The evaluation approach will be qualitative and participatory in nature, and use project documents including CMEP data and longitudinal study to provide quantitative information.

Qualitative information will be obtained through field visits, interviews and focus groups as appropriate. Opinions coming from stakeholders and project participants will improve and clarify the use of quantitative analysis. The participatory nature of the evaluation will contribute to the sense of ownership among stakeholders and project participants.

To the extent that it is available, quantitative data will be drawn from the DPMS and results from the Longitudinal and Cohort study, and project reports and incorporated in the analysis. The evaluation approach will be independent in terms of the membership of the evaluation team. Project staff and implementing partners will generally only be present in meetings with stakeholders, communities, and beneficiaries to provide introductions. The following additional principles will be applied during the evaluation process:

1. Methods of data collection and stakeholder perspectives will be triangulated for as many as possible of the evaluation questions.

2. Efforts will be made to include parents' and children's voices and beneficiary participation generally, using child-sensitive approaches to interviewing children following the ILO-IPEC guidelines on research with children on the worst forms of child labor and forced labor.
(<http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=3026>) and UNICEF Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children (http://www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html).
3. Gender and cultural sensitivity will be integrated in the evaluation approach. To do so, the evaluation team will disaggregate findings by gender when it makes sense to do so and will analyze, as described in the evaluation questions, how the Activity is helping to close gender gaps in the fields of child labor/youth employment.
4. Consultations will incorporate a degree of flexibility to maintain a sense of ownership of the stakeholders and beneficiaries, allowing additional questions to be posed that are not included in the TOR, whilst ensuring that key information requirements are met.
5. As far as possible, a consistent approach will be followed in each project site, with adjustments made for the different actors involved, activities conducted, and the progress of implementation in each locality.

B. Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will consist of:

1. **The Lead Evaluator:** Mr. Mario Martinez will spearhead implementation of the Terms of Reference and articulate the overall technical direction and management. As the evaluation team lead and point of contact with ILAB and beneficiaries, Mr. Martinez will develop the data collection protocols, conduct field data collection and analysis, write reports, and deliver oral presentations.
2. **Senior Technical Expert:** Mr. William Lazaro will provide expertise on at-risk youth and employability in El Salvador and Honduras. He will provide inputs to the desk review and draft evaluation report as needed. He will also collaborate with the Lead Evaluator and research associate during interviews in El Salvador.
3. **Research Associate:** Mr. Miguel Núñez will assist the Lead Evaluator with desk review analysis, fieldwork data collection support, data cleaning, coding, and analysis, in addition to developing the one-page summary of infographics.
4. **Enumerator:** This person will assist the Evaluation Team with interview transcription, and data collection during focus groups and interviews as needed.

One member of the project staff may travel with the team to make introductions. This person is not involved in the evaluation process, or interviews.

The international evaluator will be responsible for developing the methodology in consultation with DevTech, USDOL, and the project staff; assigning the tasks of the national consultant (as applicable); directly conducting interviews and facilitating other data collection

processes; analysis of the evaluation material gathered; presenting feedback on the initial results of the evaluation to the national stakeholder meeting and preparing the evaluation report.

C. Data Collection Methodology

1. Document Review

- Pre-field visit preparation includes extensive review of relevant documents
- During fieldwork, documentation will be verified and additional documents may be collected
- Documents may include:
 - CMEP documents and data – including access to project databases as relevant,
 - Baseline and endline survey (if available) reports or pre-situational analyses,
 - Project document and revisions,
 - Project budget and revisions,
 - Cooperative Agreement and project modifications,
 - Technical Progress and Status Reports,
 - Project Results Frameworks and Monitoring Plans (as part of the CMEP),
 - Access to the Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System or to requested data from the system (i.e. project staff to query system for any beneficiary data related to sample frame design/selection for the evaluation)
 - Work plans,
 - Correspondence related to Technical Progress Reports,
 - Management Procedures and Guidelines,
 - Research or other reports undertaken (KAP studies, etc.), and,
 - Project files (including school records) as appropriate.

2. Question Matrix

Before beginning fieldwork, the evaluator will create a question matrix, which outlines the source of data from where the evaluator plans to collect information for each TOR question. This will help the evaluator make decisions as to how they are going to allocate their time in the field. It will also help the evaluator to ensure that they are exploring all possible avenues for data triangulation and to clearly note where their evaluation results are coming from. The Contractor will share the question matrix with USDOL.

3. Interviews with stakeholders and focus groups

Informational interviews will be held with as many project stakeholders as possible. The evaluation team will solicit the opinions of, but not limited to: children, youth, community members in areas where awareness-raising and service-related activities occurred, parents of project participants, adults who have received livelihood services, educators and education administrators, government representatives, employers and private-sector actors, legal

authorities, union worker association officials, non-governmental organization (NGO) and CSO officials, the action program implementers, and program staff regarding the project's accomplishments, program design, sustainability, and the working relationship between project staff and their partners, where appropriate.

Depending on the circumstances, these meetings will be one-on-one or group interviews. The groups will include 6-10 participants, who will be selected by applying sampling criteria related to their participation in project services and locations, as well as work and educational status when it applies.

Technically, stakeholders are all those who have an interest in a project, such as implementers, partners, direct and indirect participants, community leaders, donors, and government officials. Thus, it is anticipated that meetings will be held with:

- OCFT staff responsible for this evaluation and project prior to the commencement of the field work
- Implementers at all levels, including child labor monitors (if applicable), involved in assessing whether children have been effectively prevented or withdrawn from child labor situations
- Headquarters, Country Director, Project Managers, and Field Staff of Grantee and Partner Organizations
- Government Ministry Officials and Local Government Officials who have been involved in or are knowledgeable about the project
- Community leaders, members, and volunteers
- School teachers, assistants, school directors, education personnel
- Project participants (children withdrawn and prevented and their parents)
- International NGOs and multilateral agencies working in the area
- Other child protection and/or education organizations, committees and experts in the area
- U.S. Embassy staff members

During the interviews and focus group discussions, notes will be taken with the support of a "note taker" or by the evaluation team. The meetings will be recorded (if consent is obtained), with the purpose of using the audio files as a reference, when necessary, to ensure consistency and fidelity of the notes taken during meetings. The notes will be reviewed and coded by the evaluators for their analysis and systematization of the results.

4. Field Visits

The evaluator will visit a selection of project sites. The final selection of field sites to be visited will be made by the evaluator. Every effort should be made to include some sites where the

project experienced successes and others that encountered challenges, as well as a good cross section of sites across targeted CL sectors. During the visits, the evaluator will observe the activities and outputs developed by the project. Focus groups with project participants will be held, and interviews will be conducted with representatives from local governments, NGOs, community leaders and teachers.

D. Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

The evaluation mission will observe utmost confidentiality related to sensitive information and feedback elicited during the individual and group interviews. To mitigate bias during the data collection process and ensure a maximum freedom of expression of the implementing partners, stakeholders, communities, and project participants, implementing partner staff will generally not be present during interviews. However, implementing partner staff may accompany the evaluator to make introductions whenever necessary, to facilitate the evaluation process, make respondents feel comfortable, and to allow the evaluator to observe the interaction between the implementing partner staff and the interviewees.

E. Stakeholder Meeting

Following the field visits, a stakeholder meeting will be organized by the project and led by the evaluator to bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including the implementing partners and other interested parties to discuss the evaluation findings. The list of participants to be invited will be drafted prior to the evaluator's visit and confirmed in consultation with project staff during fieldwork. ILAB staff may participate in the stakeholder meeting virtually, or may set-up a de-brief call with the evaluation team after fieldwork.

The meeting will be used to present the major preliminary results and emerging issues, solicit recommendations, discuss project sustainability and obtain clarification or additional information from stakeholders, including those not interviewed earlier. The agenda of the meeting will be determined by the evaluator in consultation with project staff to ensure that political sensitivities are taken into account. Some specific questions for stakeholders may be prepared to guide the discussion and possibly a brief written feedback form.

The agenda is expected to include some of the following items, as appropriate, based on the expertise of the evaluation team:

1. Presentation by the evaluator of the preliminary main results
2. Feedback and questions from stakeholders on the results
3. Opportunity for implementing partners not met to present their views on progress and challenges in their locality

4. If appropriate, Possible Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) exercise on the project's performance
5. Discussion of recommendations to improve the implementation and ensure sustainability. Consideration will be given to the value of distributing a feedback form for participants to nominate their "action priorities" for the remainder of the project.

A debrief call will be held with the evaluation team, DevTech Home Office Staff, and USDOL after the stakeholder workshops in El Salvador and Honduras to provide USDOL with preliminary results and solicit feedback as needed.

F. Limitations

Fieldwork for the evaluation will last three weeks, on average, and the evaluator will not have enough time to visit all project sites. As a result, the evaluator will not be able to take all sites into consideration when formulating their results. All efforts will be made to ensure that the evaluator is visiting a representative sample of sites, including some that have performed well and some that have experienced challenges.

DevTech and CRS will work together to determine the final list of sites to visit for this evaluation, the most inclusive possible. CRS will liaise with local entities to conduct the visits. However, although there are neutral zones, some target participants are in highly violent areas. These areas will be included to the extent possible, as long as it is secure to develop the field work. If security concerns arise during the fieldwork, the evaluation team may need to make adjustments with CRS.

This is not a formal impact assessment. Results for the evaluation will be based on information collected from background documents and in interviews with stakeholders, project staff, and project participants. The accuracy of the evaluation results will be determined by the integrity of information provided to the evaluator from these sources.

Furthermore, the ability of the evaluator to determine efficiency will be limited by the amount of financial data available. A cost-efficiency analysis is not included because it would require impact data which is not available.

G. Evaluation Interrater Reliability

Each of the two evaluators, Mario Martinez and Miguel Núñez, will focus on separate project sites (municipalities and project locations/offices) in both countries, El Salvador and Honduras. For data collection and analysis, interrater reliability will be addressed as follows:

After the instruments have been created, the evaluation team will meet virtually to understand consistently evaluation questions and key concepts and variables. The team will create and apply common documents to extract quantitative and qualitative data from document review, interviews and focus groups. Evaluators will ensure they understand data collection instruments consistently and the ways they should be used during fieldwork. Any

differences will be discussed and resolved. Evaluators will communicate regularly throughout the data collection and analysis process to maintain alignment in approaches.

During the report-writing phase, each evaluator will be responsible for drafting their respective findings, interpretations and conclusions at the municipal and country levels, and together will collaborate to draft the evaluation report on the project-level synthesis.

Additionally, the team (Lead Evaluator and Research Associate) will work with the Senior Technical Expert (STE) to ensure consistency in understanding and application of data collection methodologies, instruments and analysis of results. The STE will provide inputs to help the main evaluation team to better analyze key results, findings and relevant recommendations.

H. Timetable⁵⁴

The tentative timetable is as follows. Actual dates may be adjusted as needs arise.

Task	Responsible Party	Date
Evaluation launch call with USDOL	DOL/OCFT	February 10, 2020
Background documents sent to Contractor	DOL/OCFT	February 14, 2020
TOR Template submitted to Contractor	DOL/OCFT	February 20, 2020
Contractor and Grantee work to develop draft itinerary and stakeholder list	Contractor and Grantee	February 17-21, 2020
Logistics call - Discuss logistics and field itinerary	DOL/OCFT, Contractor, and Grantee	February 14, 2020
Contractor sends minutes from logistics call	Contractor	February 18, 2020
Draft TOR sent to DOL/OCFT	Contractor	February 21,

⁵⁴ This is the original timetable, but it was changed after final TOR was approved to accommodate changes in fieldwork schedules and subsequent deliverables.

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Task	Responsible Party	Date
		2020
Identify a list of stakeholders and submit question matrix to DOL/OCFT	Contractor	February 21, 2020
Finalize field itinerary and stakeholder list for workshop	DOL/OCFT, Contractor, and Grantee	February 28, 2020
Cable clearance information submitted to DOL/OCFT	Contractor	February 28, 2020
Final TOR submitted to DOL/OCFT for approval	Contractor	February 28, 2020
Final approval of TOR by DOL/OCFT	DOL/OCFT	Week of March 3
Submit finalized TOR to Grantee	Contractor	Week of March 3
Interview call with DOL/OCFT	Contractor	March 11-13, 2020
Fieldwork (El Salvador and Honduras)	Contractor	March 16- April 3, 2020
Post-fieldwork debrief call	Contractor	Week of April 6 2020
Draft report submitted to DOL/OCFT and Grantee for 48-hour review	Contractor	May 8, 2020
DOL/OCFT and Grantee comments for 48-hour draft due to Contractor	DOL/OCFT and Grantee	May 13, 2020
Revised report (2-week review draft) submitted to DOL/OCFT and Grantee	Contractor	May 27, 2020
DOL/OCFT and Grantee/key stakeholder comments due to contractor after full 2-week review	DOL/OCFT and Grantee	June 10, 2020
Final report submitted to DOL/OCFT and Grantee	Contractor	July 1, 2020
Final approval of report by DOL/OCFT	DOL/OCFT	TBD

Task	Responsible Party	Date
Draft infographic document submitted to DOL/OCFT	Contractor	July 1, 2020
DOL/OCFT comments on draft infographic	DOL/OCFT	TBD
Final infographic submitted to DOL/OCFT	Contractor	TBD with DOL/OCFT
Final approval of infographic by DOL/OCFT	DOL/OCFT	TBD
Editing and 508 compliance by contractor	Contractor	TBD with DOL/OCFT
Final edited report submitted to COR	Contractor	TBD with DOL/OCFT
Final edited approved report and infographic shared with grantee	Contractor	TBD with DOL/OCFT

V. Expected Outputs/Deliverables

Five Weeks following the evaluator’s return from fieldwork, a first draft evaluation report will be submitted to the Contractor. The report should have the following structure and content:

- I. Table of Contents
- II. List of Acronyms
- III. Executive Summary (no more than five pages providing an overview of the evaluation, summary of main results/lessons learned/good practices, and key recommendations)
- IV. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology
- V. Project Description
- VI. Evaluation Questions
 - A. Answers to each of the evaluation questions, with supporting evidence included
- VII. Results, Recommendations and Conclusions
 - A. Results – the facts, with supporting evidence

- B. Conclusions – interpretation of the facts, including criteria for judgments
 - C. Key Recommendations - critical for successfully meeting project objectives – judgments on what changes need to be made for future programming
 - D. Lessons Learned and Best Practices
- VIII. Annexes - including list of documents reviewed; interviews/meetings/site visits; Interview questionnaire –example or template for KIIs, stakeholder workshop agenda and participants; TOR; data collection instruments, etc.

The key recommendations must be action-oriented and implementable. The recommendations should be clearly linked to results and directed to a specific party to be implemented. It is preferable for the report to contain no more than 10 recommendations, but other suggestions may be incorporated in the report in other ways.

The total length of the report should be approximately 30 pages for the main report, excluding the executive summary and annexes.

The first draft of the report will be circulated to OCFT and the grantee individually for their review. The evaluator will incorporate comments from OCFT and the grantee/other key stakeholders into the final reports as appropriate, and the evaluator will provide a response, in the form of a comment matrix, as to why any comments might not have been incorporated.

While the substantive content of the results, conclusions, and recommendations of the report shall be determined by the evaluator, the report is subject to final approval by ILAB/OCFT in terms of whether or not the report meets the conditions of the TOR.

VI. Evaluation Management and Support

The Contractor will be responsible for Evaluation Management and Support. Fieldwork will be conducted by the Lead Evaluator and Research Associate in close coordination with CRS staff. CRS will cover costs associated with ground transportation, meetings and workshops, and other logistics related to fieldwork in El Salvador and Honduras. DevTech's home office Contract Manager will ensure management of all other travel logistics including flights, hotel, USG e-Country clearance, and completion of the High Threat Security Training.

Specific responsibilities and support for the evaluation of YPCA are as follows:

Evaluation team is responsible for:

- Review project background documents
- Review the evaluation questions and refine the questions, as necessary
- Develop and implement an evaluation methodology (i.e., conduct interviews, develop focus groups, review documents) to answer the evaluation questions, including a

detailed discussion of constraints generated by the retrospective nature of this evaluation methodology and data collection and how those constraints could be avoided in future projects

- Conduct planning meetings/calls, as necessary, with USDOL and CRS.
- Cover international travel (airline tickets), hotels, meals, taxis to and from airports, and other incidental travel expenses.
- Decide composition of itinerary, field visits, and interviews to ensure objectivity of the evaluation.
- Present verbally preliminary findings to project field staff and other stakeholders as determined in consultation with USDOL and CRS after the fieldwork is completed.
- Prepare initial draft (five weeks after fieldwork) of the evaluation report, infographics and share with USDOL and CRS.
- Prepare and submit final report.

USDOL is responsible for:

- Providing evaluation questions and other input.
- Approving the TOR.
- Obtaining country clearance.
- Briefing CRS on evaluation to ensure coordination and preparation for evaluator.
- Reviewing of and providing comments on the draft evaluation reports.
- Approving the final draft of the evaluation report.
- Participating in the post fieldwork debriefing.

CRS is responsible for:

- Reviewing and providing input to the TOR.
- Providing project background materials to the evaluator.
- Providing information on all project sites for the evaluator to choose from in deciding the evaluation itinerary.
- Preparing a list of recommended interviewees.
- Scheduling meetings for field visit and coordinating all logistical arrangements (including incentives to participants for attending evaluation activities)
- Reviewing and providing comments on the draft evaluation reports.
- Participating in the post-fieldwork stakeholder debrief to review and discuss preliminary findings.
- Provide local ground transportation to and from meetings and interviews including visits to project sites requiring ground transportation.
- Organizing, participating in, and paying for the stakeholder meeting.

ANNEX A. Evaluation Matrix

CORE Evaluation questions	Data Source ^a	Methods for data collection.
I. RELEVANCE		
<p>1. How relevant (given any changes in the national landscapes) is the project’s Theory of Change (ToC) as stated in the Project Document and CMEP in El Salvador and Honduras? Does the project design address the real critical assumptions and risks necessary? Does it appropriately address the livelihood needs of youth given the labor market conditions in both countries, particularly for youth in marginalized urban areas?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DoL Project managers, USA • CRS-YPCA Project Director • CRS-SV-Youth Employment Specialist. • CRS-SV-Country Program Representative • CRS-HN-Country Program Representative • Implementing Partners Directors (Glasswing, Fe y Alegria, FUNADEH) • Employers/Businesses • Principals of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review (CMEP, Project Document, TPRs, etc.) - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) - Small groups interviews (SGIs) - Skype/Telephone interviews
<p>2. What have been the benefits and challenges of developing the project in two countries?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DoL Project managers, USA • CRS-YPCA Project Director • CRS-HN Deputy Project Director • CRS-SV-Country Program Representative (Country Director?) • CRS-HN-Country Program Representative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review (TPRs) - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and small groups Interviews (SGIs) - Telephone/skype interviews
<p>a. What were the main challenges that project faced to work with youth and children at urban areas with high prevalence of gangs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing partners-Technical staff-Youtbuilders Program • Implementing partners-Technical staff-Volunteers-Career Connect Clubs • Implementing partners-Technical staff-Strong Families Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small groups interviews
<p>3. Have any changes to the national landscape impacted the critical assumptions and risks articulated in the Theory of Change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPRs, Mid-term evaluation Cohort study • DoL Project managers, USA • CRS YPCA Project Director • CRS YPCA Deputy Project Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review - Key informant interviews - Telephone/skype interviews

CORE Evaluation questions	Data Source ^a	Methods for data collection.
<p>4. How has the project addressed security-related challenges in their design and in their M&E procedures?</p> <p>a. How did the project adjust implementation strategies to address security issues at the local level? What are the main lessons learned from this experience for future projects that will operate in similar contexts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing partners-Technical staff-Youtbuilders Program • Implementing partners-Technical staff-Volunteers-Career Connect Clubs • Implementing partners-Technical staff-Strong Families Program. • CRS-Technical team 	<p>- Small groups interviews</p>
II. EFFECTIVENESS		
<p>5. How effective has the project been in helping youth access decent (non-hazardous) jobs or pursue further education? How has the project ensured the vocational training it provides to youth is market-relevant and likely to lead to future employment?</p> <p>a. How are these results analyzed considering national and local labor market for targeted population (Youth and children at risk)?</p> <p>b. What are the main challenges that participants face to get access to labor market?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPMS, Cohort study, TPR • USDOL Program Manager (Deborah Martierrez and/or Lorena Davalos) • YouthBuild participants focus groups • CRS YPCA M&E officer • Employers/Businesses (vocational training relevance). • Country data related to Youth employment at urban areas in Honduras & El Salvador as available. 	<p>- Document review (includes nationwide or specialized surveys as available)</p> <p>- KIIs and FGDs as above</p> <p>- Telephone/skype interviews</p>
<p>6. How effective is the project, in both countries, in reaching its numeric targets and its demographic targets of youth engaged in hazardous child labor?</p> <p>a. How do these youths perceive the quality of services that the project is delivering?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPMS • TPR Data • Longitudinal-cohort study • CRS YPCA M&E officer • Other nationwide quantitative data as available 	<p>-Document review</p> <p>-Statistical analysis of DPMS</p>
<p>a. How do these youths perceive the quality of services that the project is delivering?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouthBuild participants focus groups • Career Connect Clubs participants focus groups • Strong Families participants focus groups 	<p>-FGDs</p>

CORE Evaluation questions	Data Source ^a	Methods for data collection.
<p>7. How has the project dealt with attrition? a. What are the main reasons why youth drop out of Youthbuild and Career Connect Club?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group interview: Implementing partner’s Technical staff -Youtbuilders Program • Small group interview: Implementing partner’s Technical staff and Volunteers-Career Connect Clubs • YouthBuild participants focus groups • Career Connect Clubs focus groups • Principals of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SGIs - FGDs - KIIs
<p>b. How has the project addressed migration rights and challenges of youths and their families in the theory of change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRS- YPCA-Communication specialists (SGI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SGI or telepone/skype call
<p>8. How do project stakeholders perceive the project’s efforts and contributions toward the promotion of safe, decent work? a. What is their degree of commitment to project execution, and their contribution towards the project’s objectives (including local and national government)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MINTRAB-SV • Secretaría de trabajo-HN-regional San Pedro Sula • Municipalidad de Choloma • SENAHEH (Tegucigalpa). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -KIIs - SGIs
<p>9. Do youth perceive that their families support them especially those whose relatives are participating in other project services? Do they perceive that the case management support has helped them (for those who have benefited from those services)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouthBuild participants focus groups • Career Connect Clubs focus groups • Strong Families participants focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -FGDs
<p>10. Related to gender equity, are we closing the gender gaps regarding access to employment, education and self-employment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPMS • TPR Data • Longitudinal-cohort study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review - Data analysis - Statistical analysis of DPMS

CORE Evaluation questions	Data Source ^a	Methods for data collection.
11. (M&E Systems): What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's CMEP and participant monitoring system (DPMS), which is integrated with the longitudinal study of participant outcomes? Is the DPMS delivering useful and relevant information to drive the project decisions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRS YPCA M&E officer • Implementing partners-Project coordinators. • CRS-YPCA Project Director • FUSADES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review - Data analysis - Statistical analysis of DPMS - Telephone/skype interviews
III. EFFICIENCY		
12. How have factors related to project management and design, including designation of key personnel and staff capacity, affected efficiency efforts? Please identify relevant efficiency challenges, good practices, etc. (human/financial/etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Partners Directors • Implementing partners-Project coordinators. • CRS-YPCA Project Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KIIs and SGDs - Telephone/skype interviews
13. How has the allocation of the project budget/actual expenditures/ burn rate affected efficiency efforts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRS-YPCA Project Director • Financial YPCA project specialist • Financial partners staff • Implementing Partners Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review - KIIs and SGIs
IV. SUSTAINABILITY		
14. How is the project promoting the sustainability of expected outcomes with stakeholders (i.e. sub-partners, government, local authorities, civil society, relevant UN bodies, etc.)? Is it likely that the results achieved will be durable enough to continue after the end of the project? To what degree has the project built-up the capacity of sub-grantees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Partners Directors • CRS-SV-Youth Employment Specialist. • CRS-SV-Country Program Representative • CRS-HN-Country Program Representative • USDOL Project Managers • ACNUR (HN) • ISNA (SV) • Principals of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review - KIIs and SGIs

CORE Evaluation questions	Data Source ^a	Methods for data collection.
15. What are the major challenges to achieving sustainability? What opportunities exist to support sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Partners Directors • CRS-SV-Youth Employment Specialist. • CRS-SV-Country Program Representative • CRS-HN-Country Program Representative • USDOL Project Managers • ACNUR (HN) • ISNA (SV) • Principals of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document review - KIIs and SGIs

^a Not all evaluation questions will be asked to all stakeholders. There will be different interview protocols/guides for implementing partners, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders as appropriate. Questions will be adapted to take into account the level of involvement and/or knowledge of respondents regarding project design, implementation and results.

Annex B. List of Interviewees

[Redacted to preserve anonymity]

Annex C. List of Evaluation Questions

Relevance

1. How relevant (given any changes in the national landscapes) is the project's Theory of Change (ToC) as stated in the Project Document and CMEP in El Salvador and Honduras? Does the project design address the real critical assumptions and risks necessary? Does it appropriately address the livelihood needs of youth given the labor market conditions in both countries, particularly for youth in marginalized urban areas?
2. What have been the benefits and challenges of developing the project in two countries?
 - a. What were the main challenges that project faced to work with youth and children at urban areas with high prevalence of gangs?
3. Have any changes to the national landscape impacted the critical assumptions and risks articulated in the Theory of Change?
4. How has the project addressed security-related challenges in their design and in their M&E procedures?
 - a. How did the project adjust implementation strategies to address security issues at the local level? What are the main lessons learned from this experience for future projects that will operate in similar contexts?

Effectiveness

5. How effective has the project been in helping youth access (according to what definition) to acceptable work (non-hazardous/less vulnerable) jobs or pursue further education? How has the project ensured the vocational training it provides to youth is market-relevant and likely to lead to future employment?
 - a. How are these results analyzed considering national and local labor market for targeted population (Youth and children at risk)?
 - b. What are the main challenges that participants face to get access to labor market?
6. How effective is the project, in both countries, in reaching its numeric targets and its demographic targets of children, youth at risk of, or engaged in child labor hazardous child labor or irregular work?
 - a. How do these youths perceive the *quality* of services that the project is delivering?
7. How has the project dealt with attrition?

- a. What are the main reasons why youth drop out of *Youthbuild* and *Career Connect Club*?
 - b. How has the project addressed migration rights and challenges of youths and their families in the theory of change?
8. How do project stakeholders perceive the project’s efforts and contributions toward the promotion of safe, acceptable work?
- a. What is their degree of commitment to project execution, and their contribution towards the project’s objectives (including local and national government)?
9. Do youth perceive that their families support them especially those whose relatives are participating in other project services? Do they perceive that the case management support has helped them (for those who have benefited from those services)?
10. Related to gender equity, are we closing the gender gaps regarding access to employment, education and self-employment?
11. (M&E Systems): What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project’s CMEP and participant monitoring system (DPMS), which is integrated with the longitudinal study of participant outcomes? Is the DPMS delivering useful and relevant information to drive the project decisions?

Efficiency

12. How have factors related to project management and design, including designation of key personnel and staff capacity, affected efficiency efforts? Please identify relevant efficiency challenges, good practices, etc. (human/financial/etc.).
13. How has the allocation of the project budget/actual expenditures/ burn rate affected efficiency efforts?

Sustainability

14. How is the project promoting the sustainability of expected outcomes with stakeholders (i.e. sub-partners, government, local authorities, civil society, etc.)? Is it likely that the results achieved will be durable enough to continue after the end of the project? To what degree has the project built-up the capacity of sub-grantees?
15. What are the major challenges to achieving sustainability? What opportunities exist to support sustainability?

Annex D. Evaluation Team Members

A two-member team conducted the final evaluation of the YPCA project with support from a local technical expert. **Mario Antonio Martinez served as the Lead Evaluator.** Mr. Martinez is an experienced evaluator with expertise in education, child labor and protection, youth at risk, crime and violence prevention, youth and workforce development, labor markets, and gender inclusion. With more than 25 year of professional experience, Mr. Martinez has designed and implemented performance and impact evaluations of international development programs and projects funded by USDOL, the International Labour Organization (ILO), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union (EU), and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Mr. Martinez has served as a Lead Evaluator responsible for technical leadership and field data collection in El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Macedonia, Liberia, Burkina Faso, and Paraguay, among other countries. In 2011, he managed the midterm evaluation of the ILO’s program in El Salvador to assess progress towards eradicating child labor and WFCL, and for the USAID Mission to Honduras he led the assessment of youth at risk in five municipalities to support the design of a five-year education strategy. Recently, Mr. Martinez led a multi-country final evaluation of the USDOL’s CLEAR II program aimed at combating child labor and WFCL which involved seven countries (Belize, Panama, Honduras, Jamaica, Nepal, Liberia, and Burkina Faso). He received his M.Sc. in Applied Economics from the *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*.

Miguel Núñez served as Research Associate. Mr. Núñez is an M&E specialist with over eight years of experience working with development projects funded by USAID and EU in the areas of creating access to better education, children rights in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Mr. Núñez collaborated in the design, implementation, and coordination of (1) the systematization, and (2) the final evaluation of the “Primero Aprendo in Centro America Project,” implemented by CARE International, that worked to eradicate child labor in 30 communities of the region and enhance youth and children’s rights. He also led the development of early-grade reading evaluations in the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. As the Deputy Chief of Party, he coordinated a gender-based violence perception study and supported the design and implementation of an education quality and security diagnostic in Prinzapolka (the poorest municipality of Nicaragua). Mr. Núñez received his B.A. in economics from the *Universidad Centro Americana*.

Local Technical Expert William Lázaro. Mr. Lázaro supported the Team as a youth and M&E specialist. Mr. Lazaro has 12 years of experience working with projects against child labor funded by USDOL and implemented by ILO. His work has focused on economic, social, and education research in Central America. Mr. Lázaro developed a report in 2015 for the ILO on the magnitude and profile of child labor in El Salvador and served for five years as the Monitoring Officer of the ILO-funded International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor. Currently, Mr. Lázaro provides technical support to a USAID-funded project on children and youth in El Salvador.