

Independent Interim Evaluation of the *EducaFuturo* Project

Project to Combat Child Labor Among Vulnerable Populations in Ecuador
and Panama by Providing Direct Education and Livelihood Services
Funded by the United States Department of Labor



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This evaluation was prepared independently and the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Department of Labor or the United States Government.

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Acknowledgments

This report describes in detail the interim evaluation of the *EducaFuturo* project, conducted from February to May 2015. An independent evaluator conducted the evaluation and prepared it in accordance with the USDOL terms of reference. The evaluator would like to thank the staff from Partners of the Americas for their support throughout the evaluation, as well as stakeholders in Ecuador and Panama who offered their time, expertise and insights.

Acronyms

APRODISO	<i>Asociación de Profesionales Darienitas para el Desarrollo Integral Sostenible</i> (Darién Professional Association for Sustainable Integral Development)
APROTENGB	<i>Asociación de Profesionales y Técnicos Ngäbé de Bocas del Toro</i> (Association of Ngäbé Professionals and Technicians in Bocas del Toro)
CL	Child Labor
CMEP	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
COMUNIDEC	<i>Comunidades y Desarrollo en el Ecuador</i> (Communities and Development in Ecuador)
CoSPAÉ	<i>Consejo del Sector Privado para la Asistencia Educativa</i> (Private Sector Council for Educational Assistance)
DBMS	Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System
DIRETIPPAT	<i>Dirección Contra el Trabajo Infantil y Protección de la Persona Adolescente Trabajadora</i> (Directorate Against Child Labor and for the Protection of Adolescent Workers)
EpC	<i>Espacios para Crecer</i> (Spaces for Growth)
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labor Organization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSI	Management Systems International
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking
POA	Partners of the Americas
QL	Quantum Learning
SGA	Solicitation for Grant Applications
ToC	Theory of Change
TPR	Technical Progress Report
UDAI	<i>Unidades Distritales de Apoyo a la Inclusión</i> (District Inclusion Support Units)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
USDOL	U.S. Department of Labor

Executive Summary

On Dec. 27, 2012, the U.S. Department of Labor's (USDOL) Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) awarded Partners of the Americas (POA) \$6.5 million over a four-year period to implement the "EducaFuturo" project. Supporting implementation of the project are three agencies in Ecuador: *Fundación de las Américas* (FUDELA, Foundation of the Americas), *Comunidades y Desarrollo en el Ecuador* (COMUNIDEC, Communities and Development in Ecuador) and ExpoFlores, and three agencies in Panama: *Fe y Alegría* (Faith and Joy), *Consejo del Sector Privado para la Asistencia Educativa* (CoSPA, Private Sector Council for Educational Assistance) and *Asociación de Profesionales y Técnicos Ngäbe Bugle de Bocas del Toro* (APROTENGB, Association of Ngäbé Professionals and Technicians in Bocas del Toro). In Panama, the project is active in three provinces and two indigenous autonomous areas, and in Ecuador the project is active in four provinces.

The EducaFuturo project aims to reduce child labor and increase school enrollment among children aged 5-17 years, especially Afro-descendant, indigenous and migrant populations in Panama and children with disabilities in Ecuador. To this end, EducaFuturo works with stakeholders to improve educational results for children and adolescents involved in child labor and improve household income to offset the income earned by children.

The interim evaluation's purpose was to examine the progress toward meeting targets and objectives, assess challenges in implementation, document emerging good practices and provide recommendations to improve the project's effectiveness in its remaining period of performance. The evaluation's audience is USDOL, the grantee, project stakeholders in both countries and other stakeholders working to combat child labor. The evaluation took place from February to May 2015, with fieldwork conducted in both countries from April 5 – May 1. The primary limitation associated with this interim evaluation is that the *A Ganar* (which translates to "To Win" or "To Earn") and Livelihoods components were still in start-up during the evaluation, and therefore few opportunities existed to observe the implementation of these interventions. The following presents a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations to improve project performance in the remaining period of implementation.

The interim evaluation found that the EducaFuturo project design is responsive to the context of child labor in Panama and Ecuador due to its focus on vulnerable populations engaged in informal sector child labor. The primary services offered by the project are education and livelihoods, and are designed to mitigate the conditions associated with child labor in the target communities.

The delivery of direct services to these beneficiaries has seen uneven progress across the project. The education intervention for children ages 6-14, *Espacios para Crecer* (EpC, "Spaces for Growth"), has demonstrated the most success and the project is now opening a second cohort of EpCs for the 2015 school year. EpC is also successfully imparting new teaching methodologies to teachers and school directors who are already replicating the methods outside of the EpC. The primary challenge for EpCs identified by the evaluation is maintaining the quality of each facilitator's instruction.

The weakest area of implementation as of the interim evaluation is the project's provision of *A Ganar* educational services to youth, which started in 2014, the same time as EpCs. The project has enrolled slightly more than 10 percent of beneficiaries (135 of 1,290) as of March 31, 2015. In the near-term, *A Ganar* will require significant attention and management to get back on track, as well as flexibility in ensuring the methodology is appropriate for each group of adolescents. The Livelihoods component of EducaFuturo is also still in start-up. The primary challenge that the project will face in its livelihoods activities will be achieving a long-term impact through a short-term intervention. As EducaFuturo is

forecasted to provide livelihoods services to 1,600 households with only 5 percent of its budget, it will be critical to find innovative ways to stretch project resources to achieve the most impact.

The launch of EducaFuturo services was delayed due to turnover in implementing agencies during the first year of the project, as well as the significant work required to design the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) and conduct the baseline survey. While the project was awarded in late 2012, the first year of implementation was effectively 2014. Due to delays in the start of youth and livelihoods activities, the “full package” of project services will be implemented concurrently for only approximately one year — part of 2015 through close-out in 2016.

The evaluation also found that EducaFuturo could improve its coordination with other stakeholders. Coordination with the International Labor Organization (ILO)’s Public Policy Project is weak, despite the intent of USDOL to award complementary projects. In both countries, EducaFuturo has demonstrated promising partnerships with government counterparts, but most are still nascent. This is particularly important for the sustainability of project methods and interventions.

The following is a list of priority recommendations to improve the performance of the EducaFuturo project in the remaining period of performance, based on the interim evaluation’s findings and conclusions. The full list of recommendations is provided in the body of the report.

Recommendations

Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Improve monitoring and reporting of EpC attendance:** Implementing agencies should provide detailed comments on why some participants stop attending or erratically attend the EpC program and what follow-up actions they have taken or will take.

Education

- **Provide coaching and follow-up training to EpC facilitators:** The EducaFuturo project and implementing agencies should provide ongoing support and training to EpC facilitators to ensure continual skills development and thus the overall quality of the EpC program. This could be achieved through formal training, periodic retreats and informal mentorship among facilitators.
- **Confirm each EpC has adequate materials and space:** While the quality of the facilitator should be the project’s primary focus for its EpCs, it is also important to confirm that all EpCs have the appropriate materials to conduct EpC activities and adequate space for all participants, including chairs and desks. In those cases where supplies or space are inadequate, EducaFuturo should work with its implementing agencies and local and national government counterparts to fill the gaps.
- **Develop strategies for attracting and maintaining younger adolescents in the EpC program:** The project should develop strategies to ensure that its EpC groups are meeting the needs and interests of children aged 10–14, who are not old enough to participate in A Ganar. The project should organize its EpC groups so older students are not in the same classrooms as younger students, as this may encourage older students to drop out. The EpC curriculum should be supplemented to better engage this age group with topics or projects of interest.
- **Reconsider the 700-hour requirement:** EducaFuturo and USDOL should reconsider the 700-hour EpC attendance requirement for each student. Working with vulnerable youth requires flexibility, and not all children in the EpCs are likely to meet this requirement, given the experience of the first year. In particular, the 700-hour requirement should not dissuade the

project from engaging new participants in EpCs or from starting new EpCs in the final year of the project (2016), if resources allow.

Youth

- **Conduct careful monitoring of A Ganar:** It is critical for POA to closely monitor progress of A Ganar over the next six months, particularly in Panama, as this period will require significant efforts by its implementing partners to get A Ganar on track. EducaFuturo should set weekly and monthly targets to ensure that adequate progress is being made. Furthermore, EducaFuturo should ensure that CoSPAÉ and other implementing agencies are clear on the roles and responsibilities associated with starting new A Ganar groups in a particular community.
- **Propose revision of A Ganar targets to USDOL:** EducaFuturo should move forward with requesting a revision of A Ganar beneficiary targets to USDOL, reducing the number of beneficiaries in rural areas and increasing the number of beneficiaries in urban areas.
- **Adapt the A Ganar message and methodology to its beneficiaries:** EducaFuturo and its implementing partners should ensure that the A Ganar program's focus on employment and employability skills is sending the appropriate message to youth that those who are in school should stay in school. The methodology's emphasis on vocational and technical education may not be appropriate for all beneficiaries, and in those cases alternative activities should be designed that build on the life skills imparted in phase one and retain the spirit of A Ganar's focus on youth development. The project should also pursue its plans to adapt A Ganar to youth affected by disability.
- **Provide close technical support to the A Ganar program:** EducaFuturo should facilitate technical support and troubleshooting for A Ganar through the Partners of the Americas home office to ensure that the methodology is implemented appropriately. EducaFuturo should also ensure that A Ganar implementers are collaborating with other implementing agencies to facilitate knowledge sharing and recommendations. This could be of particular help to CoSPAÉ. Should CoSPAÉ not make adequate progress in the start-up of new A Ganar groups, EducaFuturo should consider its other options for implementation, including direct implementation by the project.

Livelihoods

- **Finalize all remaining livelihoods plans:** EducaFuturo should prioritize the development and approval of all remaining livelihoods plans as soon as possible. Given the relatively large number of livelihoods beneficiaries relative to resources available, EducaFuturo should prioritize its resources where they can have the most impact, and not necessarily where the greatest need is.
- **Provide follow-up and monitoring:** EducaFuturo's implementing agencies should be responsible for providing ongoing monitoring and support to livelihoods beneficiaries as part of their routine visits to families and children.

Sustainability

- **Provide guidance on Quantum Learning training:** EducaFuturo should take an active role in this process by preparing a packet of materials and guidance that can be distributed to the education ministries and beneficiary schools.

- **Facilitate a partnership with Quantum Learning:** If counterpart ministries are interested in doing so, EducaFuturo could facilitate a partnership with Quantum Learning to support the ongoing training of teachers and education administrators in Quantum Learning methods.

Stakeholder Coordination

- **Prioritize collaboration with the ILO:** EducaFuturo and the ILO Public Policy Project should seek areas of collaboration in the remaining period of performance, particularly in research efforts and awareness-raising.
- **Ensure active and regular communications with government:** It is incumbent on EducaFuturo to reach out to their counterpart ministries in both countries to update them on the project's progress and follow up on areas of potential cooperation.
- **Enhance role of the embassies:** The U.S. embassies in both countries should play a larger role in publicizing EducaFuturo's work, where advantageous, and support USDOL to monitor progress.

Project Background

Both Panama and Ecuador have advanced in their efforts to combat child labor and have successfully implemented programs that reduced child labor in a particular sector or in the total number of child laborers. Yet, in both countries, marginalized populations — such as indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrants — are still vulnerable to hazardous child labor. Further efforts are also needed to address child labor among children affected by disabilities, who often have an added vulnerability to exploitation.

The objective of the EducaFuturo project is to reduce child labor (CL) and increase school enrollment among children aged 5–17 years, especially Afro-descendants, indigenous and migrant populations in Panama and among children with disabilities in Ecuador. In Panama, the project is active in Bocas del Toro, Colón, Darién, and in the comarcas of Ngöbe-Buglé and Embera-Wounnan. In Ecuador, the project is active in Azuay, Cañar, Esmeraldas and Imbabura. The project seeks to achieve the following seven intermediate objectives (IO):

IO 1: Indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant child laborers and children at risk, as well as child laborers with disabilities, with increased access to and retention in school;

IO 2: Target households with improved livelihoods strategies;

IO 3: Target households and children with improved access to social protection (SP) programs;

IO 4: Target youth 15–17 years old transitioned from unsafe or exploitive working conditions to acceptable work and work training;

IO 5: Public and private sector institutions implement CL prevention/eradication activities in project related economic sectors or zones of intervention;

IO 6: Target households with positive change in attitude toward CL and the importance of children's right to education;

IO 7: Enhanced knowledge base on CL in Ecuador and Panama.

To reach these objectives, EducaFuturo works with stakeholders to improve educational results for children and adolescents involved in child labor, and to improve household income to offset the income earned by children. Specific project activities include:

1. Providing educational services to help reduce child labor and promote safe employment and entrepreneurship among youth;
2. Providing technical assistance to improve livelihoods and promote access to social protection services;
3. Strengthening policies and increasing the involvement of both the public and private sectors in reducing child labor;
4. Raising awareness at the national and local levels regarding the negative impacts of child labor; and
5. Conducting research that fills gaps in the child labor-related knowledge base, generates reliable child labor-related data and collects information on best practices and lessons that may be shared in Ecuador and Panama.

The project's period of performance is Dec. 27, 2012, through Dec. 26, 2016, and includes funding of \$6.5 million. The project is implemented by Partners of the Americas (POA), with the support of three agencies in Ecuador: *Fundación de las Américas* (FUDELA, Foundation of the Americas), *Comunidades*

y Desarrollo en el Ecuador (COMUNIDEC, Communities and Development in Ecuador) and ExpoFlores, and three agencies in Panama: *Fe y Alegría* (Faith and Joy), *Consejo del Sector Privado para la Asistencia Educativa* (CoSPAPE, Private Sector Council for Educational Assistance) and *Asociación de Profesionales y Técnicos Ngäbe Bugle de Bocas del Toro* (APROTENGB, Association of Ngäbe Professionals and Technicians in Bocas del Toro).

Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

Evaluation Purpose

As stated in the evaluation terms of reference (included in Annex A), the main purposes of the interim evaluation are:

- To examine the progress of the project thus far toward meeting its targets and objectives;
- To assess aspects of the project that are showing challenges in implementation, or that may benefit from a deeper analysis;
- To provide recommendations, particularly in areas where the project is encountering challenges, on what adjustments the project could implement to improve its effectiveness for the remaining period of the cooperative agreement; and
- To document emerging potential good practices.

The intended audience of the evaluation is USDOL, the grantee, other project stakeholders and stakeholders working to combat child labor more broadly. The evaluation's findings, conclusions, good practices and recommendations will serve to inform any needed project adjustments and to inform stakeholders about the design and implementation of subsequent phases or future child labor elimination projects, as appropriate.

The interim evaluation of the EducaFuturo project was undertaken between February and May 2015, with fieldwork conducted from April 5–May 1 in Ecuador and Panama.

Evaluation Questions

1. How relevant is the project's design and theory of change (ToC), as stated in the EducaFuturo CMEP, in the context of child labor in Panama and Ecuador?
2. How effective is the project in removing children from child labor? Assess whether the project is meeting its objectives and targets (E and L target¹ and CMEP performance indicator targets), and identify the challenges encountered thus far, particularly as concerns the youth component and livelihood services. Please highlight particular success or challenges with respect to the different sites and ethnic population with whom the project operates.
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of EducaFuturo's monitoring system? This includes implementation of the CMEP, the Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System (DBMS) and other data collection and reporting processes. What improvements can be made to strengthen monitoring?

¹ Education and Livelihood

4. Which services have been provided to households with disabled beneficiaries? Did the project have to make adjustments to their methodology (EpC and A Ganar) to include this population, and if so, were there differences between countries?
5. To what degree is Quantum Learning — the *Espacios para Crecer* and *A Ganar* methodologies — understood and recognized as an effective methodology to retain children in school and improve academic performance for the target populations?
6. Did Quantum Learning improve teachers' pedagogic practices? If so, how, and were there differences in each country?
7. To what degree has POA been able to build technical capacity to address child labor issues within the implementing agencies and other stakeholder agencies?
8. What have been the benefits and challenges of developing a project like EducaFuturo in two countries?
9. How has EducaFuturo coordinated activities with key stakeholders such as the ILO-led Public Policy Project and the governments of Ecuador and Panama?

Data Collection Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to integrate both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were gathered through document review and individual and group interviews, while quantitative data were drawn from performance indicators identified in the CMEP and reported in project technical progress reports (TPRs). Prior to beginning fieldwork, the evaluator created a question matrix that outlined the data sources that would inform responses to each evaluation question. This matrix was shared with USDOL, and is included in Annex B.

Documents reviewed by the evaluator prior, during and after fieldwork include the USDOL Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA), Partners of the Americas technical proposal, cooperative agreement and project revision documents, CMEP, baseline survey report and survey instrument, TPRs and associated correspondence, EpC attendance reports and assorted other project-related documents. The evaluator also received a demonstration of the direct beneficiary monitoring system (DBMS) database while in Quito, and requested and received various ad-hoc reports from the EducaFuturo monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team.

Individual and group interviews were conducted with a variety of project stakeholders, including Partners of the Americas and EducaFuturo project staff, USDOL representatives, implementing agency staff, teachers and facilitators, school directors, officials from the governments of Ecuador and Panama, and U.S. Embassy officials. The evaluator also conducted group interviews with parents of EpC and A Ganar beneficiaries and other community leaders in beneficiary communities, youth participating in A Ganar and livelihoods beneficiaries. Finally, the evaluator observed EpCs in both countries and participated in some EpC activities with participants. The range of project stakeholders interviewed by the evaluator was intended to provide a variety of perspectives on the project's progress and impact to date. To mitigate bias during the data collection process and ensure maximum freedom of expression of all respondents, EducaFuturo and implementing partner staff were generally not present during interviews. Following the fieldwork, the evaluator used MaxQDA qualitative data analysis software to organize interview transcripts by evaluation question and theme, which facilitated the analysis of interview data.

As presented in the table in Annex D, the evaluator interviewed 184 project stakeholders, the vast majority during fieldwork in Ecuador and Panama. Of the 184, 39 were interviewed individually, and the remainder in groups. A list of individuals interviewed is included as Annex C to this report.

Field Visits

The evaluator visited a selection of project sites to meet with project implementers and beneficiaries and observe project activities. The evaluator visited project sites for all implementing agencies currently operating under EducaFuturo, including the project's direct implementation in Darien. The evaluator was able to meet and interview beneficiaries of EpC, A Ganar and livelihoods activities. Many of the visits were to schools, but some were to community centers. Per the table in Annex E, the evaluator visited 16 EpCs across 12 beneficiary schools. In addition, the evaluator visited with two A Ganar groups in Ecuador and one group of livelihoods beneficiaries in Panama. In each country, one member of the EducaFuturo project staff traveled with the evaluator to facilitate introductions with implementing agency staff and beneficiaries; however, this person was not involved in the evaluation process.

Stakeholder Meeting

At the end of fieldwork in each country, the evaluator presented initial findings in a stakeholders meeting that included EducaFuturo staff, implementing agency staff, government officials involved in EducaFuturo activities, representatives of the U.S. Embassy in each country and other organizations that have collaborated with EducaFuturo. Each meeting's agenda and participant list were determined in collaboration between EducaFuturo project staff and the evaluator. EducaFuturo managed invitations and meeting logistics in both countries. The stakeholder meeting in Quito, Ecuador, took place April 16 and the stakeholder meeting in Panama City, Panama, took place April 30.

In both meetings, the evaluator presented preliminary findings and solicited feedback and recommendations from stakeholders. In Ecuador, the evaluator presented along with EducaFuturo project staff and government representatives. In Panama, presentations by EducaFuturo project staff and the evaluator preceded a group activity to solicit feedback and recommendations from different stakeholder groups. The agendas and participant lists for both stakeholder meetings are included as Annex F and Annex G of this report.

Limitations

The most significant limitation of this interim evaluation is that some of the project's primary interventions are still in start-up, and the evaluator was therefore unable to obtain much information on the implementation of these components. The evaluator spent significantly more time on the EpC intervention than the A Ganar and livelihoods interventions, as the latter two are in start-up. The evaluator was able to meet with two A Ganar groups in Ecuador, but none in Panama.² The evaluator also met with the only group of livelihoods beneficiaries, in Panama. In comparison, the evaluator visited 16 EpCs across 12 schools. As fieldwork for the interim evaluation lasted two weeks in each country and many of the project sites required lengthy travel to reach, the evaluator was unable to visit all project sites. As a result, the evaluation's findings are based on the sample of sites the evaluator was able to visit, along with interviews and document reviews. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluator visited a variety of project sites, including some that have performed well and some that have experienced challenges.

² As of March 31, 2015, one A Ganar group was active in Panama. The evaluator was unable to meet with this group because the schedule conflicted with participants' school commitments.

Evaluation Questions and Findings

Evaluation Question #1

How relevant is the project’s design and theory of change (ToC), as stated in the EducaFuturo CMEP, in the context of child labor in Panama and Ecuador?

The EducaFuturo project design is relevant in the context of child labor in Panama and Ecuador because it responds to an acute need in both countries: child labor prevention among vulnerable populations, particularly in the informal sector. Among the households surveyed at the start of the project, 71 percent reported having children or youth working below the legal working age, the majority in family farming.³ While certain aspects of the project’s theory of change do not appear to reflect the context of child labor in the communities that EducaFuturo targets, the evaluation found no evidence that these inconsistencies weaken the overall design and implementation of the project. The project’s theory of change, as represented in a results framework, is included in the terms of reference (Annex A).

The overall objective of the EducaFuturo project is to “reduce child labor and increase school enrollment among children 5–17 years old, especially Afro-descendants, indigenous and migrant populations in Panama and among children with disabilities in Ecuador.”⁴ To achieve this objective, the project has designed a series of interventions intended to mitigate factors associated with child labor. First there are educational services, including Espacios para Crecer (EpC), a non-formal transitional educational model for children aged 6–14 (Intermediate Objective 1), and A Ganar, a life-skills program for youth 15-17 years old (Intermediate Objective 4). School directors and EpC facilitators interviewed confirmed that the EpC is relevant in the context of child labor because it effectively reduces the number of hours available to target beneficiaries for child labor. Project staff noted that while the EpC will not fully remove all children from child labor, it replaces hours that they might otherwise have spent working with a constructive activity. The EpC model also has an important focus on educational quality, both through the EpC itself and through the capacity building of facilitators, teachers and schools in the EpC and Quantum Learning methodologies. School directors contrasted these teaching methodologies with those commonly taught in the public school systems in each country, and confirmed that they are more effective in engaging students and retaining them in school. Similarly, implementing agencies and A Ganar facilitators said A Ganar is relevant to reducing child labor, insofar as it provides vulnerable youth with a constructive outlet and opportunities for personal and professional growth.⁵

Together, EpC and A Ganar are intended to cover children and youth aged 6–17 years. Each EpC is intended to be multi-grade, but the difficulty of delivering content that is appropriate to such a wide age range (6–14) has resulted in some EpCs not including older participants. Indeed, at least two implementing partners have had difficulty maintaining the interest of older EpC participants, who feel the material is “kids’ stuff.” In this regard, a gap in the provision of educational services exists for children aged 10–14.

The educational activities contribute to Intermediate Objective 1 on access and retention in school. Within the project’s theory of change, this objective assumes that the conditions that lead to and support child labor among the target populations are driven by a lack of participation in the formal education system.

3 Baseline Survey Report, pages 21-23.

4 CMEP, page 1.

5 Respondents voiced concerns regarding the specific design of the A Ganar activity, which will be discussed in detail in response to evaluation question #2.

According to the baseline survey, however, the great majority of the EducaFuturo beneficiary population of children and youth is already in school. Of the 13,990 children and youth identified in the baseline survey, 88 percent (12,277) were attending school regularly during the six months prior to the household interview.⁶ The project's performance monitoring indicators establish a baseline of 91 percent of target children aged 5–14 who attend school regularly.⁷ This is somewhat lower than national statistics published in the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor country reports for Ecuador and Panama, which show a school attendance rate of 96.9 percent and 94.3 percent, respectively, for children aged 5–14.⁸ At the same time, the baseline survey demonstrates that despite attending school, many of these children and youth are nonetheless engaged in child labor. In Ecuador, 80 percent of households interviewed reported having children and/or youth working, while Panama's figure was 59 percent.⁹ While the theory of change implies that the EpC and A Ganar activities will serve to remove children and youth from child labor and reintegrate them into the school system, the baseline survey demonstrates that the majority of the project's target population is already in the school system, even if engaged in child labor.

The educational status of the project's beneficiary population has consequences for the design of specific activities, such as A Ganar, which is a sports-based youth employment program that teaches life and vocational skills.¹⁰ Respondents from an implementing agency as well as a U.S. Embassy stakeholder argued that a focus on vocational skills might not be appropriate for a population that is still in school.

The livelihoods and social protection components (Intermediate Objectives 2 and 3) of the project are designed to mitigate other factors associated with child labor. The livelihoods activities implemented by the project are intended to empower families to increase their household income and thereby obviate the conditions that made them vulnerable to child labor. Access to social protection programs, while a separate intermediate objective in the project results framework, is effectively one of various livelihoods strategies. The baseline survey conducted by EducaFuturo revealed that close to half of households in the project's target communities in Ecuador and Panama are unable to meet four basic needs — food, education, health and transportation. For example, in Panama, only 57 percent of households surveyed indicated that they were always able to provide their family with at least two meals a day; in Ecuador it was 55 percent.¹¹ This demonstrates that a significant percentage of families in beneficiary communities are vulnerable to economic insecurity.

Evaluation respondents affirmed the relevance of the livelihoods and social protection objectives to the overall project design. Project staff and implementing agency staff cited poverty as a key determinant of child labor, and viewed livelihoods activities as a means to increase income and overcome the conditions associated with child labor. However, two implementing agency respondents emphasized that the communities they work with have very difficult economic realities and, as such, a single approach to supporting livelihoods is untenable. Another implementing agency said that the livelihood activities do not guarantee increased household income; they only provide tools to households and develop their entrepreneurial spirit. They said increasing household income and alleviating poverty is the most significant challenge they face.

6 Baseline Survey Report, page 19.

7 Project Performance Indicator OTC.1

8 <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/panama.htm>

9 Baseline Survey Report, pages 21-22.

10 A project fact sheet is found here: http://www.partners.net/images/partners/A%20Ganar/A%20Ganar_English.pdf

11 Baseline Survey Report, pages 29-30.

While ostensibly of equal status to educational services in the project's theory of change, livelihoods and social protection services are secondary to educational services in terms of project resource allocation. Compared to the 41 percent of project funding (\$2,692,834) dedicated to educational services (EpC and A Ganar), the project dedicates only 5 percent of funding (\$325,930) to livelihoods and social protection services.¹² This aspect of the project's resource allocation relative to its theory of change was criticized by an implementing agency staff member; he said too few resources are dedicated to livelihoods, which he considered of foremost importance. Another implementing agency supported this perspective, saying educational services are short-term in nature, while the livelihoods interventions are longer-term and more important for the sustainability of project efforts.

Intermediate Objectives 5, 6 and 7 concern crosscutting services or activities to be undertaken by the project that support the institutional or community environment. These include awareness-raising, public and private sector cooperation on child labor, and relevant research and knowledge sharing. Similar to the livelihoods and social protection components, together these three areas represent a relatively minor share of project funding — only 3 percent (\$178,445).¹³ Nevertheless, various respondents cited awareness-raising as a critical aspect of the project's efforts. Project staff in both Ecuador and Panama said that in many communities child labor is considered to be a positive, formative experience for children. Further, staff in Ecuador said that child labor often has a strong cultural element in indigenous communities, as a means of passing ancestral knowledge. A representative from the U.S. Embassy in Quito who is familiar with the project said many families in rural areas see children as labor and do not see the distinction between labor that is safe for children (such as helping to clean dishes after dinner) and labor that has a deleterious effect on children and their education. In Panama, an implementing agency staff member said that while child labor is seen as a normal part of life in the communities he works with, many families would probably acknowledge that child labor is negative, but it continues because it represents a supplement to household income. For this reason he has focused awareness-raising efforts on the dangers inherent in child labor.

Beyond the specific activities that constitute the project's interventions, other elements of the project design support its relevance to the child labor context in Panama and Ecuador. These include the project's area-based approach, in which beneficiaries may be eligible to receive services regardless of the type of child labor, its resultant focus on the informal sector and its attention to vulnerable populations.

The EducaFuturo project has four target geographic areas in Ecuador and five target geographic areas in Panama.¹⁴ Within these target areas, the project does not focus on the reduction of child labor in a specific sector, but instead uses an area-based approach, in which beneficiary children and families may be eligible to receive project services regardless of the type of child labor. This design appears appropriate due to the predominance of informal sector agriculture as the main economic activity in which EducaFuturo beneficiaries are engaged. The baseline survey conducted by the project in 2013–2014 demonstrates that of the 9,015 children and youth identified in the survey as working, 64.5 percent are engaged in family farming (5,811).¹⁵ This largely corresponds to nationwide statistics published in the USDOL Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor country reports for Ecuador and Panama, which

12 According to budget figures in the project revision dated March 18, 2014.

13 Ibid.

14 The four target areas in Ecuador are the provinces of Azuay, Cañar, Esmeraldas and Imbabura; the five target areas in Panama are the provinces of Bocas del Toro, Colón and Darien and the indigenous administrative regions of Comarca Emberá-Wounaan and Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé.

15 Updated Baseline Survey Report, pages 22-24.

show agriculture as the sector with the highest incidence of working children (ages 5 to 14) at 71.0 percent and 73.5 percent, respectively.¹⁶

Implementing agency staff in both countries indicated that they agreed with the project's focus on informal sector child labor, such as agriculture. In Ecuador, one respondent from an implementing agency said that when the government reduces child labor in the formal sector (for instance, through inspection of a particular industry), child labor is often displaced to the informal sector. In Panama, a respondent from the U.S. Embassy noted that child labor in the informal sector and within families has been most resistant to government efforts to curb child labor.

In addition to its area-based design, the EducaFuturo project is also focused primarily on reducing child labor among vulnerable populations, specifically identified in the SGA as "Afro-descendant, indigenous and migrant populations." This design appears justified, given that these groups are some of the most susceptible to child labor in both countries as evidenced by data cited in the SGA, such as a 1998 statistic that in Ecuador nine out of 10 indigenous children work, compared to one non-indigenous child out of three.¹⁷ In Panama, the 2010 Child Labor Survey shows that while 7.1 percent of the population aged 5 to 17 is engaged in work, the percentage jumps to 25.5 in indigenous areas.¹⁸ Along with indigenous populations, Afro-descendants in both countries are cited among the most marginalized groups in society.¹⁹

In addition to these target groups, the SGA specifies an emphasis on migrant populations in Panama and disabled populations in Ecuador, both of which are justified. In the case of Panama, this focus is due to the fact that some indigenous families migrate within and outside the country to seek economic opportunities, disrupting their children's education.²⁰ One school official interviewed said this happens during the coffee and sugar cane harvest seasons and some families will temporarily uproot their families, children included, to work on plantations in Panama and in neighboring Costa Rica. This complicates their children's schooling, as they often fall behind and are not promoted to the next grade the following year. A ministry representative in Panama also cited this challenge, saying the mobility of entire families during coffee picking season made it nearly impossible to attend to the most at-risk populations in this part of the country for any consistent period of time.

In the case of Ecuador, the SGA requires that the project implement a pilot activity that targets children who are vulnerable to child labor by virtue of a disability, either their own or that of a family member. The SGA notes that Ecuador has already made efforts to provide inclusive services to individuals with a disability, but the ILO has identified disability as a priority area in global efforts against child labor. In the context of Ecuador, project staff said that this pilot was likely based on figures from the 2010 national census, which indicated a much higher incidence of disability in the Ecuadoran population than was previously known.

16 2013 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, USDOL.

17 Peter Bille Larsen Indigenous and Tribal Children: Assessing child labour and education challenges. ILO-IPEC 2003.

18 *Encuesta Nacional de Trabajo Infantil* Panama 2010, Informe de Resultados, ILO-IPEC

19 USDOL SGA 12-11, pages 4-7.

20 USDOL SGA 12-11, page 8.

Evaluation Question #2

How effective is the project in removing children from child labor? Assess whether the project is meeting its objectives and targets (E and L target and CMEP performance indicator targets), and identify the challenges encountered thus far, particularly as concerns the youth component and livelihood services. Please highlight particular success or challenges with respect to the different sites and ethnic populations with whom the project operates.

This section will address the effectiveness of the project in terms of meeting its quantitative performance targets, followed by a detailed discussion of the various factors affecting the project's successes and challenges in implementing its primary services.

The project is successfully achieving a reduction in the percentage of its beneficiaries engaged in child labor. In the April 2015 TPR, the project reports that it has reduced the percentage of its child beneficiaries engaged in child labor from 64 percent at the start of the project to 60 percent as of March 31, 2015, which corresponds to the project's target for this reporting period.²¹ These figures are reported in accordance with the definitions outlined in Annex 4 of the project CMEP.²² While 60 percent of beneficiary children are still engaged in child labor as of this reporting, it is highly probable that the project has achieved a reduction in working hours among this subset of the beneficiary population, by virtue of the time they spend in the project's educational services. This reduction could be attributed directly to the project's EpC and A Ganar activities, and indirectly to its livelihood and awareness-raising activities. As is, the project's performance monitoring system does not report on the reduction in working hours among beneficiaries. Further, it is possible that the project has prevented children at high risk of engaging in child labor from doing so, although again this is not measured by the project's performance monitoring system.

While the project is on target for reducing the percentage of its beneficiaries engaged in child labor, it is behind in meeting its targets for USDOL Education and Livelihood common indicators, as well as most of its project-specific performance indicators. The E1 and L1 indicators and targets are shown in Table 1; the same figures, disaggregated by activity, are shown in Table 2. The following sections will discuss why the project is behind in meeting its targets.

**Table 1: Achievement of USDOL Common Indicator Targets – E1 and L1
March 31, 2015**

USDOL Common Indicator	EducaFuturo Activity	Unit	Overall Project Target	Target as of 3/31/2015	Actual as of 3/31/2015
E1: Number of children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor provided education or vocational services	EpC	Individual	5,230	2,914	2,791
	A Ganar	Individual			
L1: Number of households receiving livelihood services	Livelihoods	Household	1,600	558	191
Total			6,830	3,472	2,982

²¹ Children's Labor Status (indicator C.1) as reported in the April 2015 Technical Progress Report.

²² EducaFuturo uses definitions of child labor based on U.N. Resolutions 182 and 138 on the hazardous and worst forms of child labor, the labor and child welfare laws and regulations of the governments of Panama and Ecuador and the project-specific criteria of any work activity that prohibits a child or youth from his or her right to attend school and function effectively as a student.

The USDOL common indicators for education and livelihoods have targets for each reporting period. The “target as of 3/31/2015” column in Table 1 represents the aggregate target through the most recent reporting period. As the USDOL common indicator E1 is reported as the sum of all EpC and A Ganar beneficiaries enrolled in the reporting period, its targets do not distinguish between activities. However, the EducaFuturo cooperative agreement and its amendments do distinguish between EpC and A Ganar beneficiary targets. Table 2 disaggregates overall project targets and actual completion to date, by activity. Since the project does not set periodic targets at the activity level, the percentage of target completion to date is included to give a sense of progress.

To date, the project has enrolled a total of 2,791 EpC and A Ganar beneficiaries. This is just short of the target of 2,914 as of March 31, 2015. However, while the project has already enrolled approximately 67 percent of target EpC beneficiaries (2,656 of 3,940), it has enrolled only approximately 10 percent of the A Ganar beneficiaries (135 of 1,290). This breakdown reveals a significant deficit in enrolling adolescents in A Ganar.

**Table 2: Achievement of Overall Project Targets, Disaggregated by Activity
March 31, 2015**

EducaFuturo Activity	Overall Project Target	Actual as of 3/31/2015	Percentage Completion
EpC	3,940	2,656	67%
A Ganar	1,290	135	10%
Livelihoods	1,600	191	12%
Total	6,830	2,982	44%

The project is also significantly behind its target in the Livelihoods components (common indicator L1), having enrolled 191 beneficiary households out of the 558 target for March 31, 2015, or 12 percent of the overall project target of 1,600 households. Of the 191 households reported in the April 2015 TPR, 14 completed a livelihoods activity with the project during the reporting period, and 177 were engaged in preparatory activities such as workshops and focus groups to socialize the Livelihoods component and identify areas of potential project assistance.

The project’s progress in meeting its objectives and targets should be seen in the context of a timeline. The EpC and A Ganar activities were both initiated in early 2014, while the first livelihoods activity took place in March 2015. In this context, the relatively low level of progress achieved in the Livelihoods component is understandable, whereas the low level of progress achieved in A Ganar is more noteworthy, particularly when compared to the success of enrolling more than half of the target EpC beneficiaries. Nevertheless, it is unclear why the Livelihoods component did not start until a full year after the EpC and A Ganar activities.²³

23 In response to the draft evaluation report, POA provided the following comment: “Partners acknowledges that the livelihood and the A Ganar interventions are reaching the families and the youth at a later stage than the educational intervention. At the same time, Partners believes that the livelihood intervention requires time and effort in processes such [as] group development, a better knowledge of the community and its income-generation possibilities, marketing assessments and planning. The livelihood intervention also needs to coordinate closely with national, regional and local governments to mainstream the livelihood activities and offer as many opportunities to be integrated in the social protection government programs and thus [the] long-term sustainability of these activities.”

Another challenge that affected the start of all services under the project was the turnover in implementing agencies originally proposed by POA. Significantly, in Ecuador the project lost its main partner *Fundación Telefónica* (Telefonica Foundation) and its associated organizations, which then required EducaFuturo to alter its teaming arrangements.

The following section will discuss the factors affecting the success and challenges of the project's main services, drawing on the site visits and interviews conducted during the evaluation fieldwork.

Espacios para Crecer

In the case of the EpCs, despite the project's success in enrolling more than half of the target beneficiaries to date and the positive perception of the activity among all parents and teachers interviewed, the project has had difficulty in maintaining attendance and reaching the target number of hours in the 2014 school year. The CMEP states that each EpC requires 700 hours of instruction over the course of two years in 3.5 hour sessions; however, it does not explain why or how this requirement was set.²⁴ According to the April 2015 TPR, average attendance in 2014 was 226 hours in Ecuador and 188 in Panama, with a low of 116 hours in Darién, Panama, and a high of 307 hours in Cañar, Ecuador.²⁵ This represents a challenge for the project, as neither country's average attendance, if maintained in 2015 and 2016, is sufficient to meet the 700-hour requirement by the close of the project in 2016 for cohort 1 EpCs (those started in 2014) or cohort 2 EpCs (those started in 2015).

The average attendance figures include those children who enroll in an EpC and later drop out. EducaFuturo project staff reported that the attrition rate for the 2014 school year (the first cohort of EpCs) was 23 percent. Therefore, of the 2,274 children enrolled in an EpC in 2014, approximately 523 children dropped out. When contrasted with EpCs operated in other countries, this level of attrition does not appear particularly high. Staff from Entrena — the Dominican company that designed the EpC model — reported that they commonly see attrition rates of 15 to 20 percent across their EpCs, given the difficulty of working with vulnerable youth.

While attendance and retention in the EpC are different phenomena that require different responses, they may share similar causes. During the site visits to schools and interviews, parents and teachers discussed the reasons why some children may not attend regularly or may decide to drop out of the EpC. Parents in both Esmeraldas, Ecuador, and in Bocas del Toro, Panama, said parents who do not send their children to EpC either do not value the children's education or don't recognize the value provided by the EpC. A mother interviewed in Colón, Panama, said she was unsure at first about the purpose of the EpC and was reluctant to have her children stay at school all day. The parents interviewed in both countries said that most parents in the beneficiary communities do support the EpC. While some teachers acknowledged that changing the minds of certain parents — particularly those uninvolved in their children's education — was challenging, the project has made a concerted effort to engage parents and build support for the EpCs, conducting house visits and meetings at the local schools. Respondents from schools in Azuay, Esmeraldas, Cañar, Bocas del Toro, Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé and Darién all referenced meetings held by the project to motivate parents to continue sending their children to the EpC.

In certain cases, school schedules have also affected EpC retention, as participants attend the EpC when not in class, either in the morning or the afternoon. This issue was highlighted during site visits in Changuinola, Panama, where certain children who last year attended classes in the morning and the EpC

24 CMEP, page 54.

25 April 2015 TPR, pages 11-12.

in the afternoon are now attending classes in the afternoon and unable to attend the EpC in 2015. In one particular EpC (Finca 4), this schedule change affected eight students. The implementing agency APROTENGB reported that they were considering the possibility of opening a morning EpC to reincorporate those students.

One challenge that project staff, parents and teachers highlighted, particularly with regard to rural schools, is the need to provide a meal or snack to beneficiaries, due to the distance that some children need to travel from their house to the school. This affects the EpCs, as it is difficult for a child to return home to eat lunch between their regular classes and the EpC, and the project budget does not include resources to provide a snack or meal for children who need it. Many respondents recognized this as a challenge for the project, including POA and project staff in country, U.S. Embassy stakeholders, EpC facilitators, school principals and parents. USDOL is also aware of the issue, but noted that the cost was not budgeted by POA. Some project staff felt the lack of resources for food was preferable, as providing a meal or snack each day would change the overall scope of the project from an education project to a nutrition project.

Respondents noted variously that the lack of food can contribute to the inability of children to pay attention in the EpC, lack of interest from parents, lower attendance and dropouts. Project staff and implementing agency staff reported that the implementing agencies are delegated the responsibility of troubleshooting this problem, and that solutions vary across EpCs. For instance, *Fe y Alegría* staff noted its large time investment to find solutions to this problem in the EpCs that they manage, including obtaining donations from other sources, and that the food issue can be sensitive among parents who may lose interest if asked to provide food or cook for the EpC. At a community meeting during the evaluator's visit to a school in Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé (with an EpC managed by *Fe y Alegría*), one mother expressed frustration that the burden of cooking for the EpC was not evenly distributed among the mothers, and asked that all contribute equally.

In Panama, the burden on the implementing agencies is greater in 2015 than in 2014, as public provision of food to schools has been politicized by recent allegations of corruption against the former Martinelli administration and an ensuing investigation.²⁶ One school director in Panama said the school's supply of food for the 2015 school year had not arrived due to the ongoing investigation. In other schools, such as



EpC, Las Piedras, Esmeraldas, Ecuador

in Cañar, Ecuador, the EpC facilitator often takes it upon herself to provide food and cook for the children. Nevertheless, this is not a challenge that all schools share. For instance, the EpC coordinator in Darién, Panama, said the beneficiaries in Yaviza do not require a snack because they can easily return home between regular classes and the EpC.

Other factors present ongoing difficulties for the implementation of the EpCs. While all EpCs are affiliated with public schools in Ecuador and Panama, not all beneficiary schools have space available to host the EpCs, so the project and its implementing agencies have sought available space in

²⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31037242>

community centers and churches. For example, all of the EpCs visited during the evaluation fieldwork in Changuinola, Panama, take place outside of the schools they are affiliated with. Project staff in both countries noted that the ideal scenario is to have EpCs co-located in schools, as this facilitates closer interaction between children, facilitators, teachers and school management, and it affords a degree of security that a community center can't necessarily provide. Parents interviewed in communities where the EpC takes places outside of the school, however, did not express consensus that this aspect of the EpC was problematic; some noted that they would prefer the EpC to be located in the school, whereas others felt the community space was adequate. All EpCs visited by the evaluator in Ecuador were in schools, whereas the EpCs visited in Panama were in a mix of schools and community centers.

During evaluation site visits, the evaluator noted disparities in the availability of basic materials for the EpC between schools and community centers. For example, while the majority of schools provided sufficient chairs and desks for each child in the EpC, the evaluator only saw chairs or benches in the community centers. As there were no desks or tables to write on, the children would sit on the ground anytime they had to write or draw as part of an EpC activity. Not all schools were well-equipped, however; in a school in Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé, for example, the evaluator observed insufficient chairs and desks, and the facilitators reported that they also lacked sufficient materials such as color paper, pencils and markers. Lastly, facilitators in both schools and community centers said some of the EpC participant workbooks provided by the project have deteriorated significantly in only one year of use.

Despite logistical challenges with securing an adequate space for the EpC or ensuring that each EpC has the materials necessary, the evaluation respondents cited the EpC facilitator as the biggest determinant of an EpC's success, as they are ultimately responsible for articulating the Quantum Learning methodology that each EpC is based on. Project staff in both countries admitted that maintaining the quality of facilitators is difficult. Some facilitators are also teachers in the affiliated school, and therefore have received the academic preparation required to teach in the public school system. Other facilitators are community members and likely do not have the same teaching background. In Ecuador, a school director said that to be successful a facilitator needs *chispa* ("spark" in English); someone that is charismatic and can build trust and a sense of security within the group so that each child can participate freely. From this perspective, the characteristics of a successful facilitator may have more to do with personality than with academic background or career. On the other hand, a facilitator-teacher provides a more direct conduit for replicating the Quantum Learning methods in regular classes.

Respondents from Entrena, the Dominican company that originally designed the EpC model and has supported EducaFuturo through training, said that they have had positive and negative experiences with both teachers and community members as EpC facilitators. In fact, they noted that teachers often have a difficult time "unlearning" much of what they learned previously in their capacity as teachers, and that they have had particular success in identifying young community members to serve as dynamic EpC facilitators. One Entrena staff member said that in the Dominican Republic they see the highest attendance rates among those EpCs with very dynamic facilitators.

The evaluator visited EpCs facilitated by both teachers and community members, and observed a range of apparent interpretations of the methodology by the facilitator.²⁷ The evaluator visited EpCs in both Ecuador and Panama that were led by impressive facilitators who were dynamic, knew the activities and techniques, and commanded the attention of the children. The result was a fun, creative environment in which most children actively participated and one activity led seamlessly to the next. A good example was

27 Since the evaluator is not trained in Quantum Learning or the EpC model, his observations are more accurately "impressions" based on a limited understanding of the methodology and a short period of time spent in each EpC (between 30 and 90 minutes).

the EpC facilitator — a young community member — in *Escuela Ulpiano de la Torre*, near Otavalo, Ecuador. On the other hand, the evaluator also visited EpCs where the facilitator was tedious and disorganized. The result was a chaotic classroom with visibly distracted children.

The facilitators are not only responsible for managing the EpCs, but also for conducting visits to the homes of beneficiary children to maintain commitment from each family to the project. One implementing agency staff member said that not all facilitators are equal in this regard, either; some need to be encouraged to visit families, whereas others do not need to be reminded to stay in regular contact with families. Project staff already recognize the difficulty in identifying successful facilitators and maintaining the quality of each EpC. As such, they acknowledged the need to deliver follow-up training to facilitators to reinforce Quantum Learning and EpC concepts and ensure regular monitoring by the implementing agencies.

A Ganar

EducaFuturo's approach to working with adolescent youth, A Ganar, was effectively still in start-up at the time of the interim evaluation as it has proved difficult to implement in the target communities in Ecuador and Panama. As of March 31, 2015, EducaFuturo had enrolled 135 adolescents in five A Ganar groups — four in Ecuador and one in Panama — representing approximately 10 percent of the target beneficiaries. During the interim evaluation, various opinions on the design and implementation of A Ganar were voiced by EducaFuturo, its implementing agencies, and USDOL.

A Ganar is a youth workforce development program developed by POA to confront youth unemployment in Latin America. According to its website, the purpose of A Ganar is to “help youth in Latin America, aged 16–24, find jobs, learn entrepreneurial skills, or re-enter the formal education system.” The seven- to nine-month program includes four phases that inculcate life and employability skills through sport; provide



A Ganar, Pijal, Imbabura, Ecuador

technical, entrepreneurial or vocational training based on the local market; place youth in internships and apprenticeship based on the technical training; and offer follow-on support to include job placement, business development or re-integration in school.²⁸ According to POA project staff, in the past POA has guaranteed employment for A Ganar graduates, but they expressed reservation over whether that was feasible in the case of EducaFuturo.

EducaFuturo project staff and implementing agencies identified two major aspects of the application of A Ganar in Ecuador and Panama that differentiate it from POA's past experience. First, EducaFuturo's target

communities are primarily rural and peri-urban, areas that are often characterized by low population density, lack of economic activity, and in Ecuador and Panama, high levels of migration. This has affected the project's ability to identify a sufficient number of youth to form A Ganar groups, as well as to establish alliances with local businesses to provide training and internships. Second, the EducaFuturo target

28 <http://www.partners.net/partners/History1.asp#.VVzTB6rbKL8>

population is significantly younger than the target population envisioned in the original design of A Ganar — ages 15–17 and 16–24, respectively — and is already in school. A former project staff member said that the A Ganar program is being stretched under EducaFuturo to a younger and more rural population with fewer opportunities, and that while participation in the program is voluntary in nature, it has been difficult to even identify a minimal number of adolescents that meet project criteria in some communities. For this reason, in December 2014 the project changed its criteria of only working with adolescents that have a younger sibling in an EpC to more easily form A Ganar groups. Nevertheless, they reported that the program's focus on linking the A Ganar participant's vocational skills to a job is still a constraint, as there are few employment opportunities in most of the areas targeted by the project.

Given the challenges experienced in implementing A Ganar thus far, EducaFuturo project staff, implementing agencies and USDOL are already engaged in discussions on how to adapt the methodology to Ecuador and Panama. Some of the potential changes discussed with the evaluator include altering the provincial targets to reduce the intended beneficiaries in rural areas and increase the intended beneficiaries in more urban areas, such as Colón, Panama. Another proposal under discussion is to deemphasize the vocational aspect of A Ganar and focus instead on the life skills inculcated in Phase 1, or to emphasize employment skills in urban areas and entrepreneurship skills in rural areas.

Implementation of A Ganar is managed in Ecuador by FUDELA and in Panama by CoSPA. Of the two,

Box 1: Working with at-risk youth in Cañar, Ecuador

FUDELA is working in the province of Cañar with youth in the communities of Rivera and Honorato Vásquez. The evaluator met with small group of A Ganar participants and a FUDELA coordinator in Rivera.

The A Ganar participants have completed phase 1 and are in the process of starting the second phase; all were students in the local high school. They said they learned about teamwork and self-esteem in phase 1 through various activities, including soccer. In phase 2, they would be trained in mechanics and beauty skills (boys and girls, respectively), and were interested in opening businesses with their new skills.

The FUDELA coordinator noted that the participants had chosen which skills they wanted to learn, but that these were good selections for the local community, which is remote and relies on bus and car service, and doesn't currently have a beauty parlor. He also said that he had already seen changes in the youth since the start of the group, particularly in their academic performance, but that very few graduating students were likely to continue on to university; in the last graduating class, only 3 of 40 students went on to university. Many youth would start work immediately after high school, marry and start families, and some would emigrate abroad to find work. He noted that Cañar and Azuay provinces have historically seen high levels of immigration to the U.S. and Europe.

The FUDELA coordinator contrasted his experience working in Rivera with his experience in more troubled communities, such as Honorato Vasquez, where since forming an A Ganar group, a participant committed suicide. This particular case was related to gang violence, but he noted that most youth do not receive adequate attention or affection from their families, which are often headed by a single-parent or a grandparent.

FUDELA in Ecuador has had the most success in starting A Ganar groups, with four active groups as of March 31, 2015, each with between 21 and 35 youth. FUDELA also has prior experience working with A Ganar in Ecuador and elsewhere, through its institutional partnership with POA and original role in developing the methodology. Representatives from FUDELA interviewed during the evaluation discussed their experience with EducaFuturo and concerns on the adaptation of the methodology.

FUDELA agreed with the change to A Ganar selection criteria, stating that in 2014 it became too difficult to identify adolescents whose younger siblings were in EpCs and whose parents would receive livelihood services. They felt that this change in selection criteria did not weaken the project's approach, as the project's interventions are targeted as much at the community level as they are at the family level. FUDELA agreed as well that EducaFuturo's focus on younger adolescents in rural areas necessitates the adaptation of the method to a context other than what A Ganar was originally designed for. They noted that the A Ganar method is intended to either prepare youth to work or encourage them to return to school, yet the youth EducaFuturo is working with are largely

still in school. They said that phases 2 and 3 of A Ganar need to be flexible and respond to the needs of each individual, which may or may not include technical or vocational training. For example, in one A Ganar group, FUDELA designed a “mixed” phase 2 approach, comprising multiple activities instead of training focused on a particular vocational skill.

As demonstrated in Box 1., FUDELA and EducaFuturo face the varied challenges in Cañar of working in communities with few opportunities for educational advancement, communities troubled by gang violence, and with vulnerable youth from families often separated by immigration. At the same time, they are providing a constructive outlet for these youth that builds skills that will hopefully benefit them in their future working lives.

In Panama, where CoSPAЕ leads the implementation of A Ganar, the project has seen less success in the formation of A Ganar groups. As of March 31, 2015, there was one active group in Changuinola, Bocas del Toro, with 12 participants. As an association representing the Panamanian private sector, CoSPAЕ had previously worked with youth to build market-oriented professional and technical skills and saw their engagement with the EducaFuturo project as an opportunity to integrate new methods to their approach to working with youth. During discussions with CoSPAЕ, however, they expressed a number of challenges they have faced in implementing the A Ganar methodology in the project’s target areas in Panama.

CoSPAЕ noted that the initial hurdle in starting A Ganar has been recruitment, which was supposed to be completed as part of the project’s baseline survey. In many beneficiary communities, there were not a sufficient number of adolescents identified that met the project’s criteria, often due to migration from rural communities. CoSPAЕ also reported that the baseline survey may have prioritized the identification of children over youth, as the EpC activity was intended to start first. The low density of adolescents in many of the communities where CoSPAЕ is supposed to work has forced them to consider forming smaller A Ganar groups or larger groups across multiple communities, but both of these changes would have budget implications given the cost of transport of facilitators and participants.²⁹

In addition to the difficulty of identifying participants, CoSPAЕ has found that the implementation of the A Ganar methodology in rural communities, such as the group in Changuinola, has certain constraints. These include the ability to identify gainful technical skills and internship opportunities in local communities with the support of local businesses. CoSPAЕ pointed out that agriculture is one of the few economic opportunities available in many communities, but that the youth are often not interested in this and that the jobs can be dangerous in nature, given the use of heavy machinery and chemicals. The methodology, particularly the vocational training and internship components, should therefore be flexible to adapt to community realities.

While the evaluator was unable to meet directly with A Ganar beneficiaries in Changuinola, he did meet with an A Ganar facilitator to discuss the group’s progress. According to the facilitator, the group started in May 2014, and included 14–17 year olds who had a sibling in an EpC. Phase 1 activities were often complicated by rain and the distance that some participants had to travel, but was nonetheless successful in building a rapport among the group. Phase 2, which took place during October and November 2014, was conducted through a partnership with the local public university, which the facilitator said he felt very lucky to obtain. The participants received training in entrepreneurship. Following this training, the

29 The October 2014 TPR notes that in the case of the Changuinola A Ganar group, “CoSPAЕ was able to find a facility that is geographically central for this group and secured cost share from a private company to cover for some transportation expenses ... *Petrolterminales de Panama* (PTP). PTP is providing 50 percent of transportation expenses for youth participating in A Ganar sessions. This represents a saving of \$6 USD per week for the youth, and their families.”

facilitator said that they were unable to implement Phase 3 “by the book,” as all participants are in school and unable to work. The group is now meeting once a week to work on a recycling activity that the facilitator designed that will culminate in a public service project, such as cleaning and beautifying a local park. The facilitator characterized the activity as a combination of Phase 3 (internship or practicum) and Phase 4 (follow-up), but noted that there was no budget for supplies and was looking into his options for procuring them.

The facilitator has been involved in discussions regarding the next A Ganar group to form in the Changuinola area, in *4 de Abril*, and noted that in addition to identifying all the participants, they also needed to find adequate spaces for the classroom and outdoor activities for Phase 1. The facilitator also stressed that the subsequent activities should be designed in advance, as their experience with the first A Ganar group was essentially improvised. The facilitator did not feel that the methodology itself was unworkable, however, just that it should be adapted, as they have done in Changuinola through activities that emphasize an entrepreneurial spirit over hard technical skills. Whatever the activity, they should be creative in nature and allow the participants to open their imaginations.

While CoSPAE and FUDELA are primarily responsible for implementing A Ganar for EducaFuturo, other stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation also provided their perspectives on the activity. Other implementing agencies, for example, coordinate with CoSPAE and FUDELA on the baseline surveys and identification of adolescents in the beneficiary communities. In Panama, APROTENGB and Fe y Alegría both acknowledged the difficulty of forming A Ganar groups and said that while they supported CoSPAE, it was ultimately up to them to resolve the difficulties associated with the methodology. The organizations have to collaborate in particular during the formation of new groups, as either APROTENGB or Fe y Alegría is already implementing EpCs in the communities where CoSPAE will start new A Ganar groups, and therefore their staff are already known in the community. This phase requires coordination between organizations, as CoSPAE is introduced in the community and presents its program to potential beneficiary families and adolescents. The evaluator noted that there may be a lack of understanding between implementing agencies regarding roles and responsibilities during this phase. Coordination during start-up is also important because, by virtue of their previous experience in the communities, APROTENGB and Fe y Alegría said they could provide recommendations to CoSPAE on how to adapt Phase 2 and Phase 3 to work best within the community.

Livelihoods

Similar to A Ganar, the Livelihoods component of the project was effectively in start-up during the mid-term evaluation. As of the April 2015 TPR, the project has reported an enrollment of 191 beneficiary households for livelihoods services and provided direct services to 14 households through an activity conducted in March 2015. As required in the EducaFuturo cooperative agreement, the project submitted a revised project strategy document for the Livelihoods component prior to beginning implementation; the first plan was submitted in August 2014, and was revised per USDOL comments in March 2015. Additionally, EducaFuturo directed its implementing agencies to prepare plans that detail the specific activities that they will carry out in their communities. Of the five implementing agencies, four have approved livelihoods plans.³⁰

Each livelihoods plan comprises a variety of activities, based on the particularities of local market, socioeconomic status of beneficiary households, and availability of and access to skills development and social protection programs. Examples of proposed activities include literacy and arithmetic training,

30 The *Fe y Alegría* livelihoods plan is pending approval.

training and or technical assistance to strengthen microenterprises and household agricultural practices, and connecting eligible beneficiaries with social protection programs, including services for the disabled. EducaFuturo also has seed funding (*capital semilla*) available for a limited number of microenterprise development schemes. In their plans, each implementing agency identifies a target number of beneficiaries for each activity proposed.

Producing these livelihoods plans required each implementing partner to identify both beneficiary households and activities that could have a meaningful impact on household income, and therefore on the household's vulnerability to rely on child labor. In terms of beneficiaries, households selected as participants in the Livelihoods component all have children participating in an EpC and/or A Ganar. To select activities, the April 2015 TPR notes that the plans were developed through a participatory approach, in which implementing agencies met with beneficiaries to come to a consensus on what activities to pursue. In Bocas del Toro, Panama, for example, APROTENGB identified potential beneficiaries and asked them to develop basic business plans for at least 3 activities, which were then evaluated for feasibility based on cost, the local market, and existing competition.

In Esmeraldas, Ecuador, COMUNIDEC said that their proposed interventions were tailored to the different economic situations in the communities they work in, some of which are agricultural communities and some of which are sustained by service sector jobs. They cited an opportunity to bring a Farmer-to-Farmers volunteer to Esmeraldas later this year to work in a community where cacao is produced and work with the community on commercialization.³¹ In Colón, Panama, Fe y Alegría is working to identify partnerships with local government institutions such as *La Autoridad de la Micro, Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (AMPYME)* to provide small business development and training services to EducaFuturo households. Further, a Colón coordinator said that he hopes to link beneficiary households with employment opportunities in the Colón urban revitalization project announced by the Varela administration.³² In Imbabura, Ecuador, ExpoFlores will link beneficiary households to employment opportunities in the flower production sector and support families affected by disability with access to social services.

In Bocas del Toro, Panama, where APROTENGB delivered the first livelihoods activity in March 2015, the project supported a group of 14 Ngöbe women to learn how to process cacao and market chocolate products, as a means to a sustainable income. The project hosted a Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) volunteer in Changuinola who led a 2-week workshop that taught the women the steps in the chocolate making process and explored ideas for how to commercialize their products. While chocolate retains a cultural significance among the Ngöbe indigenous group, the F2F volunteer noted in her trip report that none of the participants had ever made chocolate previously, and do not already have the equipment necessary to produce chocolate at scale. This was one of the challenges identified in the F2F trip report and discussed with beneficiaries during the evaluator's site visit. Another



Handmade chocolate produced by livelihoods beneficiaries in Changuinola, Bocas del Toro, Panama.

31 The Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Partners of the Americas, sends U.S. technical volunteers to provide training and assistance to farmers, cooperatives, agribusinesses, extension services, government agencies and other institutions.

32 <http://panampost.com/belen-marty/2014/07/03/panamas-colon-free-zone-set-for-city-wide-expansion/>

challenge cited by APROTENGB staff was the price of cacao, which increased significantly due to lower than expected production related to the Ebola crisis in West Africa. Nevertheless, the women signaled their intention to continue making chocolate by establishing a “brand” for their chocolate products, *Noba Balen*, beginning to sell in the local communities, and forming a cooperative organization by the end of the workshop.

Livelihoods activities should begin in all other communities in the near-term, as the EducaFuturo implementing agencies have already some or all of the beneficiary households. In the case of COMUNIDEC, their livelihoods proposal was first presented in October 2014, but they reported that due to shifts in EducaFuturo personnel there was a delay in obtaining approval and starting activities; they said they would have been ready to start implementing activities in November 2014. Fe y Alegría said they have already selected beneficiaries in Colón and Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé, but are still pending approval from EducaFuturo. Delays in the approval of livelihoods plans were highlighted during the small-group activity at the evaluation stakeholder meeting in Panama, and the group recommended that the project speed the process of approving plans and rolling out these activities. Delays in the start of livelihoods activities were a source of frustration among a group of parents interviewed in Darien.

Evaluation Question #3

What are the strengths and weaknesses of EducaFuturo’s monitoring system? This includes implementation of the CMEP, the Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System (DBMS), and other data collection and reporting processes. What improvements can be made to strengthen monitoring?

POA has demonstrated that they have a strong monitoring system capable of supporting the significant data collection, management and reporting requirements of the EducaFuturo project. Each child, adolescent and household that receives a direct service from the project has been surveyed and registered in the project database before receiving that service, and is monitored throughout the project’s implementation. This has required investments in both staff and organizational capacity, as well as investments in the tools to collect and manage the data. Throughout the evaluation fieldwork, however, the evaluator identified certain weaknesses in the monitoring system which will be detailed in the following section and related recommendations provided in the recommendations section.

The resources that EducaFuturo has dedicated to its monitoring system are a key strength, as the project has demonstrated its commitment to maintaining a robust system for collecting and managing data. Following EducaFuturo’s split management structure in Ecuador and Panama, the M&E team is divided between both countries. The lead M&E specialist is located in Quito, along with a staff member who oversees administration and management of the direct beneficiary monitoring system (DBMS). In Panama, the project has an M&E coordinator supported by an assistant who work directly with the team in Quito. The M&E staff said that the volume of data collected and processed by their team required them to contract additional support staff in both countries for data entry and cleaning. Given the significant role that the implementing agencies play in the project’s monitoring system, the M&E team provided training to implementing agency staff to conduct the baseline survey and comply with ongoing data collection tasks throughout implementation. Project staff members are also routinely conducting monitoring visits to sites in both countries, as evidenced by Annex H to the April 2015 TPR. In terms of financial resources, the project has budgeted \$696,900 for M&E related tasks, representing approximately 11 percent of the total project budget.³³

33 CMEP, pages 43-44.

The project's monitoring system is detailed in the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP), a USDOL requirement described in the SGA. The CMEP ties together the various aspects of the project's monitoring system, including its theory of change, results framework, performance monitoring plan with output and outcome indicators at the objective and intermediate objective level, baseline survey and evaluation plan, DBMS description, budget, and key child labor definitions that the project uses. In discussions with project staff in Ecuador and Panama, they reported that POA considers the CMEP to be very important and they are committed to implementing it well. However, they also noted that the CMEP process delayed the start of project services given the significant level of effort it required.³⁴ A former project staff member said that the CMEP work started in April 2013, and that the project submitted a new component of the CMEP or completed a new assignment related to the CMEP roughly every two weeks for USDOL to review. The final version of the CMEP is dated March 11, 2014 — a year after starting the process, and more than a year after the project start. The length of time associated with the CMEP development was anticipated in the USDOL SGA, however, which states that the process would require, "significant staff time at the beginning of the project" and that, "the CMEP should be completed within the eight months of project start-up." The length of time associated with CMEP development and resultant delays in the implementation of services represent a weakness of the project's monitoring system, although this is largely outside the control of POA.

Concurrent with the CMEP development process in 2013 was the baseline survey, also a requirement of the USDOL SGA. The objective of the baseline survey was twofold: identify the child labor and socioeconomic conditions of the project's target communities and identify potential beneficiaries. In doing so, the project also collected data for many CMEP indicators that are intended to be compared to endline survey data. The baseline survey was administered to households in target communities considered to be vulnerable by the project (e.g., Afro-descendant, indigenous), and with children between the ages of 5 and 18. The survey's sample is therefore considered purposive, not random. The survey was conducted in two iterations spanning 2013 and 2014 due to turnover in implementing agencies during the project's startup, and the need to conduct additional surveys in areas not covered during the first iteration. Along with the development of the CMEP, the delays in completing the baseline survey postponed the delivery of project services.

Project staff noted that conducting the baseline survey required a massive amount of energy and capacity building for implementing agencies, which are not professional research firms with experience in conducting household surveys. This was highlighted by the implementing agencies that received data from the first iteration of the survey in Ecuador. They stated that they had difficulty accepting the quality of the survey results and that they were not particularly useful for identifying potential beneficiaries, such as surveying families that were too distant from schools to reasonably enroll in an EpC. Other challenges associated with the baseline were outside the control of EducaFuturo and its implementing agencies, such as surveying households with children or youth who were not physically present in the community, or the difficulty of obtaining reliable responses to questions that involve sensitive topics, such as child labor.

The bias that may affect child labor surveys is recognized in the baseline survey report, and was noted during an interview with a former project staff member.³⁵ They felt that the baseline was flawed because the questions on the economic activities of children may incentivize a parent to lie — either understating if they perceive that as the socially desirable response or that social benefits may be compromised, or

34 In response to the draft evaluation report, USDOL confirmed that finalizing the CMEP was not a prerequisite for starting the delivery of project services.

35 Baseline survey report, page 55, "8.2 Data Collection Issues and Interview Biases"

overstating if any social benefits may be provided. The difficulty in collecting accurate information on child labor through household survey and other research methods is recognized by the ILO and a subject of academic debate.³⁶

The difficulty of conducting the baseline survey aside, it serves the important purpose of identifying the ultimate beneficiaries of the project — children, youth and their families. The baseline survey is essentially an enrollment process to receive direct project services, and is the first of periodic data collection events that involve beneficiaries throughout the project's implementation. Yet the project has not been able to draw all of its beneficiaries from the initial baseline survey. As noted in the April 2015 TPR, the project has conducted new surveys for cohort 2 EpC beneficiaries that are not already in the database.³⁷ Similarly, as highlighted in evaluation question #2 as a challenge for the implementation of A Ganar, the project has had difficulty identifying sufficient A Ganar participants from among the households surveyed during the baseline. Typically a baseline survey is conducted at the start of a project, prior to the intervention itself. As the EducaFuturo baseline also acts as an enrollment process for beneficiaries, and not all beneficiaries were identified in the initial baseline, the baseline is effectively an ongoing process, not limited to the start of the project. The evaluator discussed with EducaFuturo project staff whether they intended to update their baseline figures with the new data captured in subsequent surveys, but it appeared that they had not yet done so. Should the project update their baseline survey data, it will no longer be reliably comparable, in the aggregate, with endline survey data, as the former was collected at various points in time, before and after the start of project interventions. Should the project opt not to include new survey data in their baseline figures, then the endline survey will represent a different beneficiary population than was captured in the baseline survey. As the baseline survey data informed some of the project's indicator baselines and targets, this undermines EducaFuturo's ability to make reliable comparisons between their baseline and endline data at the indicator level.

Since much of the direct implementation of project services is managed by EducaFuturo's implementing agencies, they are responsible for providing much of the data that inform the project's reporting. One of the data collection processes that the evaluator was able to observe first-hand was the reporting of EpC attendance, conducted by the EpC facilitator during each session and reported to EducaFuturo on a monthly basis. The evaluator was able to review the monthly attendance sheets in each EpC that he visited, which contain the participants' names, attendance status for each session, accumulated hours for the month, and a space for comments regarding each child. While the facilitators of the EpCs visited by the evaluator all appeared to take attendance on a regular basis and fill out the sheet, very few of the facilitators effectively used the comments section of the report. For those children noted as absent during all or some of the month's EpC sessions, it was unclear what the reason was or what follow-up was conducted by the facilitator. As the project has set out a goal of 700 hours per EpC beneficiary, it is critical that they track attendance closely and follow-up when a child isn't attending. APROTENGB staff in Changuinola agreed that this was an area of improvement for EpC facilitators, as more detailed information on the status of each participant would help them to conduct more effective follow-up and site visits with families.

Another important data collection process conducted implementing agencies is the labor status reporting, which is conducted every six months by EpC and A Ganar facilitators. This data collection contributes to EducaFuturo indicators C.1 and C.2 — *percentage of children in child labor* and *percentage of children in hazardous child labor* — which measure the project's goal of a reduction in child labor. While the

36 See ILO, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_099577.pdf; Dammert and Galdo (2013), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp7446.pdf>; Dillon et al (2010), <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-5414>

37 April 2015 TPR, page 25.

evaluator was not able to observe this process first hand, he was able to discuss the overall process with EducaFuturo project staff. The methodology used by each facilitator to capture the labor status of each beneficiary is a clock activity, whereby each child fills out a clock with the various activities that they do in an average day. Using the project's operating definitions of child labor specific to each country, this activity allows the project to calculate the percentage of their beneficiary population both in and out of child labor, which can then be compared to baseline data, and eventually, endline data. One disadvantage of this approach is that the baseline data (and presumably endline) is based on an interview with the head of the household (a proxy for the child), whereas the periodic labor status data collection is based on an activity with the child. Recent studies have demonstrated significant variation in child labor reporting based on the type of respondent — child or proxy.³⁸

On the other hand, one strength of the project's use of the clock activity is that they have the ability to calculate the reduction in hours of child labor. While the project reports on the percentage of children in child labor, it does not report the reduction in the number of working hours that the project has contributed to. A common refrain among project staff and implementing agencies was that, contrary to the project's motto in Spanish — *¡Juntos eliminamos el trabajo infantil!* (Together we can eliminate child labor) — the most they could work toward was a reduction in the number of hours worked. A weakness of the project's monitoring system is that it does not currently measure the attainment of this goal, although it does have the data to do so.

Lastly, the evaluator was also able to review the direct beneficiary monitoring system (DBMS), a database built on Microsoft Access that houses all project data. Through a demonstration by the M&E staff in Quito, the evaluator was able to appreciate the various capabilities of the database, which is built around the variables that comprise the baseline survey questionnaire. Throughout the evaluation, the M&E team has been able to extract reports from the DBMS in a timely manner on information requested by the evaluator.

Evaluation Question #4

Which services have been provided to households with disabled beneficiaries? Did the project have to make adjustments to their methodology (EPC and A Ganar) to include this population, and if so, were there differences between countries?

As part of EducaFuturo's pilot intervention in Ecuador "to address the education and livelihood needs of child laborers affected by disabilities," the project has included disabled beneficiaries in their current and upcoming activities and is collaborating with the Government of Ecuador to provide assistance to this population. USDOL staff clarified that while the disability pilot is specific to Ecuador, the project is also expected to attend to the needs of disabled beneficiaries in Panama as needed.

As of May 18, 2015, EducaFuturo has provided educational services to 103 children affected by disability — 32 in Ecuador and 71 in Panama. Per the database report provided to the evaluator, the children suffer from a variety of physical, mental and cognitive disabilities, and span the targeted four provinces in Ecuador and three provinces and two indigenous autonomous areas in Panama. All disabled beneficiaries to date are EpC participants. With regards to the EpC methodology and materials, Ecuador project staff confirmed that the EpCs as implemented by EducaFuturo are not designed especially to work with children with disability; however, they have instructed their implementing agencies to be flexible with the EpC content when necessary. They noted that the disability component was considered a pilot, and therefore the EpC modules were not adapted to work specifically with cases of disability.

38 Dammert and Galdo (2013), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp7446.pdf>

To date, the project has not engaged any youth affected by disability through the A Ganar program or provided livelihoods services to families affected by disability. Project staff confirmed that while A Ganar as currently designed is not adapted to work with youth affected by disability, the project is planning to work with the Ecuadoran Ministry of Education to adapt the methodology to work with youth affected by disability. With regards to livelihoods, the project is planning to include families affected by disabilities in its livelihoods services.

The project's disability pilot is also an important area of collaboration with the government counterparts, particularly in Ecuador. According to ministry staff Ecuador, the EducaFuturo project is supporting an interagency effort to identify and assess disabilities among the project's beneficiary population. This involves the Ministry of Education's *Unidades Distritales de Apoyo a la Inclusión* (District Inclusion Support Units, or UDAI) — multidisciplinary teams that can conduct brigades to project schools to do an initial assessment of special educational needs — and the Ministry of Public Health's *Dirección Nacional de Discapacidades* (National Office for Disability), which can conduct a more thorough evaluation of a potential disability and issue the official state identification (*carne*) that grants access to certain public services on the basis of the disability. In January 2015, the Ministry of Education conducted an initial visit to the communities of Caluqui and El Topo de San Pablo in Otavalo to assess special educational needs among project beneficiaries, which the project plans to replicate in other communities.

Evaluation Question #5

To what degree is Quantum Learning – the *Espacios para Crecer* and A Ganar methodologies — understood and recognized as an effective methodology to retain children in school and improve academic performance for the target populations?

Quantum Learning, the methodology that underpins the EpC intervention, is well-regarded by all stakeholders interviewed by the evaluator as a strategy to retain children in school and improve academic performance. There is clearly interest in the sustainability of the methodology, as evidenced by the few EpC facilitators and teachers who have already replicated the training they received from EducaFuturo within their schools, as well as interest from government counterparts to expand EpC to other schools not targeted by the project. The evaluator interviewed the parents of beneficiaries, EpC facilitators and teachers, and school directors during his site visits, and also met with government representatives from the project's counterpart ministries. The following response will not include perspectives on A Ganar, which is not based on Quantum Learning.

Parents of children participating in the EpCs were very supportive of the methodology and noted that they have seen improvements in the behavior and academic performance of their children since the start of the EpC. In Colón, for example, one mother called the EpC “magnificent,” as she has seen advances in her child's ability to read and write. In Azuay, a group of parents expressed regret when they learned that the project would end in 2016, and asked that the school continue providing the EpC in the future. In Bocas del Toro, the president of a parents' committee expressed her support for the project and said that the majority of the parents in the community also supported it. She



EpC, Finca 4, Bocas del Toro, Panama

has seen a more open attitude in her children, as well as better grades. In Colón and Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé, two parents said that their children had academic deficiencies and that they were now improving thanks to the EpC. One mother in Esmeraldas said that she was initially surprised by her daughter's desire to be on time to the EpC, but that she had learned something from her daughter about being punctual.

Another theme that emerged in both Panama and Ecuador was that parents appreciated the EpC because it provided an academic support that parents themselves were unable to provide. In Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé, parents noted that many in the community have very low educational achievement and are therefore unable to help their children with schoolwork. Another agreed that the EpC was a support not just for the student, but for the family and overall community. Similarly in Cañar, where some parents initially did not want to send their children to the EpC because of farm and house work, they do recognize that the EpC provides an academic reinforcement that they cannot provide.

All of the EpC facilitators, teachers and school directors interviewed by the evaluator spoke admirably about the methodology. Facilitators and teachers in particular expressed support for the dynamic techniques associated with EpC, with the teachers noting that they can use similar techniques in their regular classes. Both facilitators and teachers who started with the project last year said that they had seen improvements in students' academic performance and behavior in the classroom. Two teachers in Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé said that the methodology uses techniques that motivate students to want to learn. Another teacher in Colón said that the methodology had changed the way he interacts with his students. Facilitators in Esmeraldas found the methodology attractive and very distinct from formal educational techniques.

There was also support for Quantum Learning and EpC among school directors trained by the project. A school director in Darien said that he thought the methodology was effective in ensuring that his students advance to the next grade level with the appropriate reading and writing skills. A school director in Otavalo who attended the March 2015 training said that the training itself was instructive, given the facilitation techniques employed by Entrena. She wants to take the training and teach all 20 teachers in her school to integrate the methodology into the school's formal classes. The sub-director at a large school in Bocas del Toro said that his school had already begun training its 80 teachers in the methodology, and that they are rolling out training by grade level to not occupy too many teachers at the same time. He contrasted the EpC teaching methods with those that are traditionally used in the Panamanian educational system, which he described as rote learning, and said that the inclusion of other teaching methods was effective as it maintained the interest of the students and engaged different ways of learning.

Even the director of a school in Esmeraldas who had not been available to attend the training was a supporter of Quantum Learning and EpC. She has observed the EpC facilitators that work in her school, and said that she is interested in extending the training to the full-time teachers at her school for the benefit of other students. She felt that the teaching techniques associated with Quantum Learning and EpC were more engaging and would help her students to stay on track and avoid the negative influences that exist in the community.

The evaluator also discussed the Quantum Learning and EpC methodologies with the project's government counterparts. The Ministry of Education staff in Ecuador remarked that the EpC model is inclusive and effective at integrating various educational techniques and that they are planning to replicate the training they received for other staff in the Ministry. The project also trained staff from the Ministry of Labor in Ecuador, who recognized Quantum Learning as an effective educational tool, but also potentially useful for the inspection work that the Labor Ministry does at the community level. While interested in replicating the training, they did express concern over whether Quantum Learning and the

training they received were copyrighted. In Panama, Ministry of Education staff also expressed support for sustaining the methods implemented by EducaFuturo, but asked for project support in determining how they could best adapt the methodologies to be used directly by the Ministry of Education.

During the evaluation stakeholder meeting in Panama, one of the small group discussions concerned the sustainability of Quantum Learning and EpC. Participants in this group agreed that the methodology was valuable and worthy of being sustained beyond the life of the project, either in after-school sessions similar to EpC, or in regular classes, and identified steps for the project to take in promoting sustainability. However, one of the key obstacles that the group identified in sustaining the methodology beyond the life of the project was the changing policies and regular staff turnover at the Ministry of Education. The group felt that the methodology would therefore be most effectively sustained at the level of individual teachers, who can apply the method in their teaching without the express permission of the ministry or even school management, although such support would be preferable.

Regarding the overall sustainability of Quantum Learning and EpC, the evaluator also conferred with Entrena, the Dominican company that originally designed the EpC model. Entrena staff recommended that if the education ministries of Ecuador and Panama are interested in sustaining the methodology and replicating in other schools, the best route would be to establish a direct partnership with Quantum Learning to receive extended training and follow-up support. This solution would likely require an investment by the ministries. Entrena reported that this is critical to maintaining the quality of the methodology, which can become diluted or simplified over time if not maintained. Entrena emphasized that Quantum Learning is not merely a series of dynamic activities, but a methodology that considers how students actually learn, and that this needs to be understood when adopting Quantum Learning.

Evaluation Question #6

Did Quantum Learning improve teachers' pedagogic practices? If so, how, and were there differences in each country?

Quantum Learning appears to be having a beneficial impact on teachers' pedagogic practices in both the EpCs and in their regular classes by applying techniques from Quantum Learning; however, there were no differences noted between Ecuador and Panama. As only a subset of EpC facilitators are also school teachers, the following response will distinguish when necessary between teacher facilitators and community facilitators. It also is important to note that while the evaluator observed 16 EpCs in 12 schools, he did not observe any regular classes taught by teachers trained in Quantum Learning.

Training data going back to the start of the project shows that 383 individuals have been trained in Quantum Learning and EpC. This figure is not exclusively EpC facilitators, as various stakeholders including project staff and government counterparts, were also trained. According to EducaFuturo's April 2015 TPR, during the October 2014 through March 2015 reporting period, the project trained 39 EpC facilitators in Ecuador and 47 EpC facilitators in Panama. This includes both community and teacher facilitators. These trainees demonstrated a very high level of satisfaction with Quantum Learning and EpC training. Of the 38 post-workshop surveys filled out by participants in Ecuador, 37 (97 percent) rated the workshop as a 5 out of 5 in response to the questions, *How motivational was the workshop*, and *How useful was the information*. Participants in Panama were in agreement; of the 36 post-workshop surveys filled out, 35 (97 percent) rated the workshop 5 out of 5 in response to the question, *How motivational was the workshop*, and 34 (94 percent) rated the workshop 5 out of 5 in response to the question, *How useful was the information*. While participants clearly found the workshops motivational and useful, the surveys do not reveal how the facilitators will apply what they've learned.

As discussed in evaluation question #2, the evaluator observed a variety of EpCs in both countries and noted that within an EpC, the use of the Quantum Learning methodology was not always consistent among facilitators. This was not more common in one country than another, nor were teacher facilitators necessarily more effective facilitators than community facilitators. In most cases, however, the evaluator observed that the EpC facilitator led the session in accordance with the activities detailed in the instructor guide, and participants were attentive and participatory as a result. When implemented “by the book,” therefore, Quantum Learning has benefited the performance of all EpC facilitators, whether teachers or community members.

It is also important to note that not all facilitators will learn everything from a single training. This was highlighted by Entrena staff, who emphasized that in addition to training, facilitators need follow-up training and ongoing coaching to maintain quality control over the methodology and EpC. EducaFuturo has similarly held “refresher” training for EpC facilitators. In Bocas del Toro, for example, one teacher facilitator said that he did not feel comfortable with the methodology, but that he received reinforcement training and is now able to apply the methodology as intended.

During interviews, certain respondents reflected on how the Quantum Learning methodology has affected teacher facilitators in their regular classes. Project staff in Panama said that the EpC model has an important demonstration effect, both for teacher facilitators, students, and teachers who aren’t facilitators. Teacher facilitators are directly exposed to the Quantum Learning methodology and techniques, and may be able to easily transfer lessons or techniques to their teaching. Students are also directly exposed to the methodology, which may change their expectations of how they can learn in school. Teachers who aren’t facilitators but work in schools where there is an EpC may be indirectly exposed to the methodology, either through other teachers who use the methodology, or students, who now have different expectations regarding how classes can be taught. The demonstration effect of Quantum

Learning also applies to school directors, who play an important role in promoting the methodology.



EpC, Finca 61, Bocas del Toro, Panama

According to one teacher facilitator interviewed in Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé, following the Quantum Learning and EpC training he reevaluated how he teaches and works with children. He acknowledged that some of the methods he used previously were probably not very effective in motivating learning. Other teacher facilitators remarked similarly that the training changed the way they thought about their regular classes. Staff from the implementing agency Fe y Alegría noted that some teachers were initially resistant to the methodology because it was contrary to their academic formation, but

that almost all of their teacher facilitators have successfully adopted the methodology with additional support and coaching. Fe y Alegría also said that if teacher facilitators can replicate the method in their regular classes, then that is a positive outcome of the project, but how teachers do this is not actually contemplated by the project.

Evaluation Question #7

To what degree has Partners been able to build technical capacity to address child labor issues within the Implementing Agencies and other stakeholder agencies?

An ancillary benefit of the EducaFuturo project is its efforts to build the technical capacity of its six current implementing agencies to combat child labor. EducaFuturo has variously contributed to this end, given the very different capacities of the organizations they are working with. The implementing agencies currently engaged by EducaFuturo include both established and grassroots community organizations, and bring varied experiences to the project. Above all, EducaFuturo is providing them with tools and methods that they can continue to implement beyond the life of the project. While the POA technical proposal originally included Fundación Telefónica, the social responsibility arm of Spanish telecommunications firm Telefónica, S.A. which funds child labor elimination projects across Latin America, EducaFuturo project staff said that they now have the advantage of working directly with grassroots and community-based organizations. This increases the sustainability of the project's interventions because the organizations will stay active in the communities beyond the life of the project.

The more established organizations working with EducaFuturo include ExpoFlores and COMUNIDEC in Ecuador, and Fe y Alegría and CoSPAЕ in Panama. ExpoFlores, an association of Ecuadoran flower producers and exporters, and Fe y Alegría, a Jesuit non-profit organization founded in 1955 that provides education services to vulnerable youth, both worked in child labor prevention prior to EducaFuturo. Child labor falls within ExpoFlores' social responsibility practice, and is one of the social aspects of their FlorEcuador® certification process. According to staff, ExpoFlores had already worked to combat child labor through school-based programs in the flower growing communities that they support, but that the EducaFuturo project has deepened that experience and provided a model that they can replicate. While an established organization, ExpoFlores is also very community-oriented due to the fact that they are focused exclusively on the flower-growing region of Ecuador, predominantly the provinces of Pichincha and Imbabura. EducaFuturo is also supported by COMUNIDEC, an Ecuadoran community development organization that had worked previously on the issue of child labor among vulnerable populations, particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant. According to COMUNIDEC staff, the organization had a prior relationship with Fundación Telefónica to implement child labor prevention programs, and is also currently working under the ILO Public Policy project.

Similarly, Panama's chapter of Fe y Alegría had also worked previously in child labor through the provision of educational services to poor and vulnerable families, and has a long history of working in both Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé and Colón. Fe y Alegría had not worked previously with the specific EducaFuturo model, but agreed that it would inform their future work in child labor prevention. Fe y Alegría also benefits from particularly close collaboration with project staff, as they share office space in Panama City.

CoSPAЕ is an organization that represents the Panamanian private sector, particularly in the areas of education and workforce development. CoSPAЕ staff said that prior to EducaFuturo they had worked in the area of youth workforce development and training in response to demands from their member organizations for skilled labor, but not specifically in child labor prevention. CoSPAЕ had been in contact with POA regarding the A Ganar program before starting work on EducaFuturo, as they saw the program as an opportunity to integrate new methods for working with youth into their organization.

The grassroots organizations that EducaFuturo is working with include APROTENGB in Panama and FUDELA in Ecuador. According to project staff in Panama, it was difficult to identify an appropriate partner organization in the Changuinola area of Bocas del Toro, an area characterized by extensive

banana cultivation. They eventually located APROTENGB, a small association of technical staff and community activists that work with the Ngöbe population that moved to the area to work on banana plantations, and trace their history to the struggle for indigenous rights in Panama and formation of the Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé in 1997. A former project staff member emphasized the importance of empowering this organization as little organizational infrastructure exists in the area, and because APROTENGB is committed to the development of indigenous communities in the zone. Further, they noted that APROTENGB has been flexible and responsive in adopting the project's methodologies. In discussion with APROTENGB staff, they said that they are already seeking new sources of funding to continue the work that they started with EducaFuturo, and that in the last two years of the project they plan to involve more local authorities in project activities to increase awareness of child labor issues.

FUDELA is another small organization working with EducaFuturo, and has a unique relationship with POA and EducaFuturo. According to EducaFuturo project staff, FUDELA was founded by POA approximately ten years ago, and POA has an ongoing commitment to ensuring the sustainability and success of the organization. Further, according to FUDELA staff, the organization played a role in the original development of the A Ganar methodology, which they continue to implement under EducaFuturo and have adapted to other youth development programs in Ecuador. FUDELA staff said their work focuses on the inclusion of adolescents and youth from vulnerable communities, and that they are a part of both domestic and international civil society networks, such as POA. Similar to Fe y Alegría in Panama, FUDELA shares office space with EducaFuturo in Quito.

In addition to the technical capacity building that EducaFuturo provides its implementing agencies in Ecuador and Panama, there is also administrative and management support that has been provided. Finance and administration staff in Panama City and Quito spend significant time with implementing agencies to improve their monthly financial reporting. Two implementing agencies mentioned that these reporting requirements were burdensome, but that the project supports them in complying with the requirements.

The ability of each implementer to comply with such requirements is a priority for EducaFuturo and POA as evidenced by the case of APRODISO, which previously held a cooperative agreement with EducaFuturo to implement services in Darien and Comarca Emberá-Wounaan. According to POA staff, the agreement with APRODISO was terminated on March 31, 2015 due to significant delays and deficiencies in APRODISO's narrative and financial reporting. EducaFuturo has since assumed direct implementation of project services in the zone.

Evaluation Question #8

What have been the benefits and challenges of developing a project like EducaFuturo in two countries?

EducaFuturo's two-country operating model is a unique aspect of the project, and one that presents both opportunities and challenges. POA staff said they were unsure why USDOL had included both countries in the same SGA. They noted that while child labor is an issue in both countries, Ecuador and Panama are characterized by real cultural differences and different political climates. According to USDOL, the project was designed in both countries to facilitate an exchange between minority and indigenous communities in both countries on the issue of child labor, and because both countries have a history of marginalization among those populations.

The potential for communication and lesson-sharing between both countries was the only advantage of the two-country model cited by evaluation respondents, including project staff in both countries. Staff in Panama noted that the project is unique in affording a regional perspective to child labor, whereas most

assistance projects are country-centric. They said that the two-country model affords an opportunity to share best practices and challenges between countries. When asked for an example, project staff in Panama said that based on their own practice, they recommended that the Ecuador office hold regular meetings with all implementing agencies to share ideas and challenges. Project staff in Ecuador agreed, saying that the advantage of the two-country model was comparing processes and learning from the progress in each country.

Project staff identified more challenges associated with the two-country model than benefits, however. POA home office staff said that the communication and coordination required between both country offices was significant. A staff member in Quito noted that one country is necessarily subordinate to another, and Ecuador, despite having more beneficiaries, is effectively second to Panama. One challenge that results from this situation is that decisions are ultimately taken and approvals granted in Panama, even if they concern issues specific to Ecuador. The staff member in Quito said that this has caused them delays which have affected implementation of the project activities. They also noted that the Ecuador office was previously not privy to the project budget, and that this complicated coordination between the offices.

A POA staff member who worked closely with the Panama office said that POA has invested a lot in regular communication between the offices and with the main office in Washington, with weekly calls between all offices. While they said the operating environments are quite different in both countries, the project does share common objectives and methodologies. Still, they said that the management of the two-country model was a significant drawback, as managing the project across two separate legal systems did not lend itself to an economy of scale; administration costs are likely higher and it has been difficult to harmonize systems between the offices. The staff member said that all the little differences between operating in Ecuador and Panama require significant time and effort to manage.

Evaluation Question #9

How has EducaFuturo coordinated activities with key stakeholders such as the ILO-led public policy project and the Governments of Ecuador and Panama?

EducaFuturo's efforts to combat child labor in Ecuador and Panama supplement the actions taken by other stakeholders, including the Governments of Ecuador and Panama, the ILO, and U.S. Embassies. In particular, USDOL funded this service provision project, "in conjunction with a parallel and complementary project ... to strengthen national capacity in policy, enforcement and compliance to combat child labor," which was subsequently awarded to the ILO.³⁹ Coordination between both projects was anticipated in the SGA, particularly in the area of awareness-raising, and was referenced in POA's technical proposal.⁴⁰ As of the interim evaluation, coordination by EducaFuturo with stakeholders such as the ILO has been inconsistent, and in some cases, weak.

In an initial interview with POA, staff said that there are good relations between EducaFuturo and the ILO project, but that substantive coordination and synergy could improve. A former project staff member noted that coordination meetings between projects were regular during start-up, but they were unable to sustain the coordination once both projects were more active. In addition to coordination meetings, which now

39 SGA 12-11, page 3.

40 EducaFuturo Technical Proposal, pages 25-26. "Partners will work at both the national and local levels to support existing policies that prevent and combat child labor. Partners is aware that opportunity SGA 12-10, a separately funded opportunity, will focus on strengthening policies and enforcement to combat child labor among vulnerable populations in Ecuador and Panama. EducaFuturo will work closely with the implementing organization(s) of opportunity 12-10 to ensure collaboration at all levels."

appear to be infrequent, a staff member in Ecuador cited EducaFuturo's participation in an ILO-supported workshop as an example of collaboration. An ILO advisor in Panama explained that the projects started to meet in early 2013 to define how they would collaborate throughout implementation and that the projects identified research and awareness-raising as the best areas in which to collaborate. To date, however, they noted that substantive collaboration between the projects has been minimal.

Despite the lack of collaboration, respondents from both projects identified various future possibilities for collaboration, primarily in the area of research. EducaFuturo is scheduled to produce two pieces of research related to child labor, and recently initiated planning for a study on corporate social responsibility with Café de Eleta, a Panamanian coffee producer. It was not clear whether the ILO will have a role in this study. According to an ILO advisor, the Public Policy project recently started a study on disability and child labor, in which the EducaFuturo project contributed data, but that the projects weren't actively collaborating. The ILO advisor also suggested that the ILO could scale up some of their activities in areas where EducaFuturo is working and the ILO is not. They mentioned in particular the *rutas de atención* — the multi-sectoral protocol for the identification and referral of child labor cases — which could be implemented with the support of EducaFuturo's implementing agencies in their target communities. Staff from two of EducaFuturo's implementing agencies and an Embassy representative said that while the projects were not collaborating closely, there were lessons from EducaFuturo's experience working in the field that should be applied to ILO's work in child labor policy.

EducaFuturo's collaboration with the Governments of Ecuador and Panama has been more successful than its work with the ILO, but the project has faced distinct challenges in navigating the political environments of both countries. Project staff said that due to the political climate in Ecuador vis-à-vis relations with the U.S., the project has had a lower profile with the government, although the environment has improved since the start of the project. One notable challenge in Ecuador at the start of the project was with the *Mesa de Trabajo Interinstitucional Contra el Trabajo Infantil* — an interinstitutional collaboration effort on child labor prevention, led by the Ministry of Labor. According to interview respondents, the relationship with this coordination entity was complicated by the termination of the agreement between EducaFuturo and Fundación Telefónica, which was apparently influential in the organization.

Despite the initial challenges, EducaFuturo's collaboration with government counterparts now appears to be strongest in Ecuador. As referenced in evaluation question #4, the project is collaborating with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health to identify and assess disabilities among the project's beneficiary population. Also with the Ministry of Education, the project is planning to work on the adaptation of the A Ganar methodology for youth affected by disability. With the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, the project is finalizing an agreement to work with a public educational center in Cuenca that supports vulnerable children through educational services and outreach to families. The center would implement the EpC methodology, and potentially work with youth through A Ganar and support families through training opportunities. With the Ministry of Labor, EducaFuturo is also working on an agreement to define future areas of coordination, potentially involving the Ministry's technical staff based in the provinces that EducaFuturo targets.

The majority of interviews with Ecuadoran government officials were very positive toward the project and the prospects of future collaboration. The only reservations expressed by government officials toward the EducaFuturo project came from interviewees who focused on the project's initial interaction with the *Mesa de Trabajo Interinstitucional* during project start-up. These interviewees recommended that EducaFuturo take a more active approach toward collaborating with the government and ensure regular dialogue with the relevant ministries.

The project has faced distinct challenges in Panama, due largely to the 2014 general election and turnover of staff in counterpart ministries. The evaluator met with staff from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor, most of whom were new as of 2014 and not very familiar with the project. In the case of the Ministry of Education, staff reported that EducaFuturo needed to collaborate closely with them because the project's activities are similar to after-school tutoring that the Ministry is already implementing. Ministry respondents said that they had met with the former Project Director to begin coordinating project sites and services, but that they had not yet had a formal meeting with the new Project Director to continue this process. They noted that EducaFuturo's services could be strengthened by the Ministry's "weight" — that any requirement at the school level that carries the Ministry's signature would be attended to promptly. They gave the example of schools providing sufficient space for an EpC. They also stated that the Ministry could learn a lot from EducaFuturo's experience in the field, as the main office does not have access to real-time information or insight into the challenges of working in rural areas. They cautioned that while they would like to see how the project's methodologies can be integrated into ministry processes and activities, EducaFuturo should be flexible and understand that the Ministry is already conducting similar work. They noted that there was some resistance to changing the EducaFuturo activities and methods in discussions regarding how they could be integrated into the Ministry. Ultimately, they want to ensure that EducaFuturo is complementing what the government is already doing, which they said requires closer coordination.

Similarly, staff at the Ministry of Labor's *Dirección Contra el Trabajo Infantil y Protección de la Persona Adolescente Trabajadora* (DIRETIPPAT) said that there wasn't any documentation on the EducaFuturo Project when they started in office in 2014, and are therefore largely unfamiliar with the project. They had met with the former Project Director and knew that the project had a difficult start. Further, they said that DIRETIPPAT had shared with EducaFuturo a database of the beneficiaries of their *Acción Directa* program — a cash transfer program conditioned on school attendance and academic performance — but that they were unsure of the status of this collaboration. They had understood that EducaFuturo would share beneficiary data with DIRETIPPAT to ensure that they are not duplicating efforts and providing similar benefits to the same child or family. They also noted that DIRETIPPAT has social workers and psychologists on staff that could be a resource for the project. They concluded that they want EducaFuturo to be successful and are ready to collaborate, but have yet to be engaged by the project.

U.S. Embassy staff interviewed by the evaluator in Ecuador and Panama had similar concerns regarding the EducaFuturo project and gave several recommendations to improve communication. As the EducaFuturo project is managed centrally by USDOL in Washington, the Embassies have no formal oversight role. The evaluator met with staff from the political and economic sections that indirectly cover U.S.-funded activities such as the EducaFuturo and ILO Public Policy projects. Both Embassies said that they generally have more regular interaction and communication with the ILO than with EducaFuturo, although there have been high-level site visits to EducaFuturo project sites in the past. In Panama, for example, the U.S. Ambassador conducted site visits to Darien and Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé, and is well-aware of the EducaFuturo project due to his interest in supporting at-risk youth. Staff from the U.S. Embassy in Panama staff said that high-level site visits, such as by the Ambassador, are important for sustainability — they bring attention to site and the Ambassador is able to call on local partners and government officials to attend and provide follow-up. This outreach to government partners is particularly important because it can force the hand of local officials, particularly in areas where they are not working or may not be aware of the existing child labor issues. In Ecuador, U.S. Embassy staff said that they want to collaborate with EducaFuturo to do more site visits in the future.

U.S. Embassy staff in both countries felt that their communication and coordination with EducaFuturo could improve going forward. Staff in Panama said that they found out by accident of the project director's resignation, and weren't notified regarding the new leadership. One U.S. Embassy staffer in Panama

suggested that USDOL designate someone at the Embassy with a more formal oversight role to support project monitoring, particularly in areas such as the youth and Livelihoods components that have faced challenges in initiating. Staff in Ecuador asked that the project keep the Embassy abreast with progress, as the Embassy has resources that could amplify messages and provide contacts where necessary. They asked specifically whether there are project milestones or activities that the Embassy could highlight through a ribbon-cutting or similar event. They noted that while the USG is funding multiple activities on child labor in Ecuador, and that child labor is a priority for the Ecuadoran government, the U.S. unfortunately is not getting any credit for its efforts. They said this was good publicity to reach “hearts and minds,” particularly in an area of policy agreement between the U.S. and Ecuador. In summary, staff from both Embassies agreed that everyone could benefit from more open communication between the Embassy, EducaFuturo and USDOL.

Conclusions

Project Design: The EducaFuturo project design is responsive to the context of child labor in Panama and Ecuador, which is particularly critical among vulnerable populations in the informal sector. The project’s geographic targets and area-based (as opposed to sector) approach has allowed it to focus largely on the informal sector, predominantly agriculture. While the population supported by the project is engaged in child labor, it also demonstrates a very high level of school attendance. This represents an inconsistency between the project design and the theory of change, which posits that child labor will be mitigated by increased access to and retention in school. While this may be true in out-of-school populations, the project is not actually working with populations for whom access is a problem. Because child labor and regular school attendance are not mutually exclusive, EducaFuturo is better understood as an effort to reduce and prevent child labor among an in-school population, and not an effort to remove children from child labor by reinserting them into the school system.

Project Implementation: As of the interim evaluation, the project has faced a variety of challenges in the implementation of services. While it is meeting its target for percentage reduction of beneficiaries in child labor, it is not meeting its enrollment targets for educational and livelihood services. The roll-out of services was delayed due to turnover in implementing agencies during the first year of the project, as well as the significant work required to design the CMEP and conduct the baseline survey. The project spent over a quarter of its anticipated lifespan engaged in designing its monitoring system and conducting a baseline survey, and is expected to dedicate more time to the endline survey. While this is largely outside the control of EducaFuturo, the excessive amount of time spent on activities that are secondary to the project purpose has reduced the time and resources that can be dedicated to its primary purpose — delivering services to marginalized populations. As such, while the project was awarded in late 2012, the first year of implementation was effectively 2014 with the start of EpCs.

The evaluation found that EducaFuturo’s activities are regarded as effective means to engage the beneficiary population and mitigate the conditions associated with child labor. The project’s activities are comprehensive to the extent that they reach child, adolescent and household, however the project had to loosen its policy of working exclusively with adolescent beneficiaries with younger siblings in EpCs because of the difficulty of finding sufficient participants for A Ganar. There are gaps in the project’s attention to younger adolescents — ages 10 to 14 — that fall in between its EpC and A Ganar services. Further, given the delays in the start of youth and livelihoods activities, the “full package” of project services will only be implemented concurrently for approximately one year — during part of 2015 and until close-out in 2016. If the project’s theory of change assumes an interactive effect between components, it will be limited to the time all components are actually active in each beneficiary community.

EducaFuturo has seen its greatest success to date in its EpCs, which provide constructive learning spaces for children who would otherwise be working or at-risk of working, including children affected by disability. The EpC is also significant in that it is successfully imparting new teaching methodologies to teachers and school directors, who have already demonstrated their enthusiasm to replicate the methods outside of the EpC. The evaluation found that the project does face challenges in maintaining the quality of each EpC. This is largely determined by the facilitator, but also by the availability of materials and an adequate facility with desks and chairs for each child. Maintaining the quality of each EpC will help support increased attendance and retention in the EpC and ensure that each child receives the appropriate number of hours.

The methodological basis for EpC, Quantum Learning, already has many adherents among teachers and school directors in Panama and Ecuador. Both Ministries of Education have also shown interest in the further adoption of Quantum Learning and EpC methods beyond the scope of the project, a process that the project can support in its remaining time. This applies to after-school activities similar to EpC, as well as to the methods that teachers use in their regular classes.

The weakest area of implementation as of the interim evaluation is the project's provision of A Ganar educational services to youth, which started in 2014 along with EpCs. This service is effectively still in start-up, particularly in Panama, where the project has only formed one group thus far. In the near-term, A Ganar will require significant attention and management to meet its target numbers. The challenges of A Ganar are due not only to the logistics of identifying youth that meet the project's criteria in target areas and establishing partnerships with local businesses, but also the application of the vocational training component to a younger population that is still in school. Nevertheless, in both countries, implementing agencies have demonstrated creative ways of making the program work, and can draw on the leadership of POA in A Ganar and the knowledge afforded by other implementing agencies working in those communities.

The Livelihoods component of EducaFuturo is similarly still in start-up, with four out of five implementing agencies' livelihoods strategies approved to start implementation. Each livelihoods strategy is distinct, and conforms to the specific economic conditions found in the communities where the implementing agency works. Therefore, the challenges that the project will face in conducting these activities will likely be specific to each community or activity. However, the one livelihoods activity conducted thus far exemplifies what will likely be a common challenge — providing a household a short-term intervention (training on how to produce and commercialize chocolate) that has long-term effects (an increase in household income). Given that EducaFuturo is forecasted to reach 1,600 households with livelihoods interventions with only 5 percent of their budget, it seems unlikely that they can provide more sustained support to alleviate the poor economic conditions that often lead to child labor.

Two-country model: Another challenge — and opportunity — highlighted by the evaluation is the project's two-country operating model. While this presents administrative burdens for the project team, it also provides a space to share regional experience on the issue of combating child labor. To date the project has not taken full advantage of this space — while there is regular communication between offices on administrative and management issues, there does not appear to be a similar level of exchange on more substantive issues regarding project strategy and implementation. This could represent the added value of the two-country approach, and provide cross-country support to areas of the project that are struggling.

Coordination with external stakeholders: EducaFuturo's coordination with other stakeholders is another area for increased attention in the remaining period of performance. Coordination with the ILO Public Policy project is conspicuously absent, particularly given the emphasis that USDOL placed on collaboration in the SGA. In both countries the project has demonstrated promising partnerships with

government counterparts, but most are still nascent. This is particularly important for the sustainability of project methods and interventions. Lastly, coordination with Embassies is lacking, which could support the project to highlight its achievements and support USDOL with monitoring progress.

Good Practices

The following is a list of five “good practices” observed by the evaluator and cited by project stakeholders during fieldwork.

Adaptation of EpC Methodology: The EpC methodology is proving to be an effective means of engaging children outside of their traditional schooling to reduce and prevent child labor, while improving academic performance and imparting new teaching methods to teachers and school directors. As described in the interim evaluation, there is significant support for the EpC methodology from schools, parents, government representatives, and the facilitators and students themselves. While challenges exist in maintaining the quality of each EpC, stakeholders agree that EducaFuturo’s implementation of this methodology and efforts to adapt the curricula to the distinct country contexts in Panama and Ecuador are essential to the project’s ongoing success, and represent a valuable tool for future child labor prevention programming.

Recruitment of High-Quality EpC Facilitators: The EpC facilitator largely determines the quality of the EpC, and EducaFuturo has done an admirable job of engaging and training dynamic individuals for this role. The project has a mix of schoolteachers and community members as facilitators, and each provides unique advantages; schoolteachers learn new teaching methods to replicate in the classroom and strengthen the link between the EpC and the school, while community members strengthen the link between the EpC and the community and are well placed to build community support for the project. While not all facilitators observed by the evaluator appeared to implement the methodology in the same way, the project is cognizant of the critical role of each facilitator and is committed to ongoing monitoring and training.

Regional Coordination: Coordination staff in each target region strengthens the management of EducaFuturo. These coordinators, hired mostly through the project’s implementing agencies, provide oversight and quality control of project activities within their geographic area. Coordinators also serve as a liaison with beneficiary families and local officials in beneficiary communities, often visiting families to ensure active participation in the project and meeting with local officials to request support for the project. The regional coordinators will play a critical role in providing oversight and quality control as the youth and livelihoods activities ramp up and the project reaches its full implementation.

Parental Involvement: EducaFuturo has successfully engaged parents in project activities, achieving support for participation and raising awareness regarding the importance of education and the risks of child labor. EducaFuturo regularly convenes groups of parents to discuss participation in the EpC, conducts home visits to meet one-on-one, organizes family committees to raise awareness in local communities and has trained parents and other community members as EpC facilitators.

Monitoring by Project Staff: EducaFuturo has demonstrated a strong commitment to monitoring project activities. According to Annex H of the April 2015 TPR report, EducaFuturo staff conducted a total of 26 monitoring visits in Panama and Ecuador during the October 2014-March 2015 reporting period. This has allowed the project to strengthen data collection and reporting processes with implementing agencies, more accurately track project performance and identify incomplete beneficiary records for completion.

Given the difficulties faced in specific project areas, it will be critical that EducaFuturo maintain this level of monitoring as the project moves forward.

Recommendations

The following list of recommendations is based on the interim evaluations findings and conclusions. The recommendations are intended to improve performance of the EducaFuturo project in its remaining time, as well as inform USDOL in its future strategies and project designs.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Improve monitoring and reporting of EpC attendance:** Implementing agencies should use the attendance template to the fullest extent by providing detailed comments on why some participants stop attending or erratically attend the EpC program and what follow-up actions they have taken or will take. This will allow EducaFuturo and its implementing agencies to more closely monitor attendance and respond to cases where attendance is lagging.
- **Reduce the time and resources dedicated to CMEP development and baseline surveys in future designs:** The EducaFuturo project lost a year of service provision due to CMEP and baseline requirements. The value that these products add to the project is not proportionate to the amount of time invested in them, and USDOL should find ways to achieve similar ends without compromising such a significant portion of a service provision project.
- **Separate the baseline from beneficiary registration:** Future DOL projects should treat the baseline separately from the process of identifying and registering beneficiaries. The baseline should measure the prevalence of child labor in a beneficiary community prior to the start of an intervention, to contrast with a similar prevalence survey at the end of the intervention. As the EducaFuturo baseline was also the means to identify beneficiaries, not all of whom were identified prior to beginning the project, the baseline is effectively an ongoing process. As such, the baseline data will not be reliably comparable to endline data. Limiting the scope of the survey should also support the above recommendation of reducing its burden during start-up.

Education

- **Provide coaching and follow-up training to EpC facilitators:** The EducaFuturo project and implementing agencies should provide ongoing support and training to EpC facilitators to ensure continual skills development and thus the overall quality of the EpC program. This could be achieved through formal training, periodic retreats and informal mentorship among facilitators.
- **Confirm each EpC has adequate materials and space:** While the quality of the facilitator should be the project's primary focus for its EpCs, it is also important to confirm that all EpCs have the appropriate materials to conduct EpC activities and adequate space for all participants, including chairs and desks. In those cases where supplies or space are inadequate, EducaFuturo should work with its implementing agencies and local and national government counterparts to fill the gaps.
- **Develop strategies for attracting and maintaining younger adolescents in the EpC program:** The project should develop strategies to ensure that its EpCs are meeting the needs and interests of children aged 10–14, who are not old enough to participate in A Ganar. The project should organize its EpC groups so older students are not in the same classrooms as

younger students, as this may encourage older students to drop out. The EpC curriculum should be supplemented to better engage this age group with topics or projects of interest.

- **Reconsider the 700-hour requirement:** EducaFuturo and USDOL should reconsider the 700-hour EpC attendance requirement for each student. Working with vulnerable youth requires flexibility, and not all children in the EpCs are likely to meet this requirement, given the experience of the first year. In particular, the 700-hour requirement should not dissuade the project from engaging new participants in EpCs or from starting new EpCs in the final year of the project (2016), if resources allow.

Youth

- **Conduct careful monitoring of A Ganar:** It is critical for POA to closely monitor progress of A Ganar over the next six months, particularly in Panama, as this period will require significant efforts by its implementing partners to get A Ganar on track. EducaFuturo should set weekly and monthly targets to ensure that adequate progress is being made. Furthermore, EducaFuturo should ensure that CoSPAЕ and other implementing agencies are clear on the roles and responsibilities associated with starting new A Ganar groups in a particular community.
- **Propose a revision of A Ganar targets to USDOL:** EducaFuturo should move forward with requesting a revision of A Ganar beneficiary targets to USDOL, reducing the number of beneficiaries in rural areas and increasing the number of beneficiaries in urban areas. This should allow the project to more easily reach the target number of beneficiaries; however, it should not deter the project from starting new groups in the short-term.
- **Adapt the A Ganar message and methodology to its beneficiaries:** EducaFuturo and its implementing partners should ensure that the A Ganar program's focus on employment and employability skills is sending the appropriate message to youth that those who are in school should stay in school. The methodology's emphasis on vocational and technical education may not be appropriate for all beneficiaries, and in those cases alternative activities should be designed that build on the life skills imparted in phase one and retain the spirit of A Ganar's focus on youth development. The project should also pursue its plans to adapt A Ganar to youth affected by disability.
- **Provide close technical support to the A Ganar program:** EducaFuturo should facilitate technical support and troubleshooting for A Ganar through the Partners of the Americas home office to ensure that the methodology is implemented appropriately. EducaFuturo should also ensure that A Ganar implementers are collaborating with other implementing agencies to facilitate knowledge sharing and recommendations. This could be of particular help to CoSPAЕ. Should CoSPAЕ not make adequate progress in the start-up of new A Ganar groups, EducaFuturo should consider its other options for implementation, including direct implementation by the project.

Livelihoods

- **Finalize all remaining livelihoods plans:** EducaFuturo should prioritize the development and approval of all remaining livelihoods plans as soon as possible; however, this should not delay the start of livelihoods activities in other areas. Given the relatively large number of livelihoods beneficiaries relative to resources available, EducaFuturo should prioritize its resources where they can have the most impact, and not necessarily where the greatest need is. This is particularly true for the recipients of *capital semilla*.

- **Provide follow-up and monitoring:** While the livelihoods activity itself may be short-term, EducaFuturo’s implementing agencies should be responsible for providing ongoing monitoring and support to livelihoods beneficiaries as part of their routine visits to families and children involved in the project.

Sustainability

- **Provide guidance on Quantum Learning training:** Project beneficiaries are already replicating the Quantum Learning training in their schools, and others are interested in doing so. EducaFuturo should take an active role in this process by preparing a packet of materials and guidance that can be distributed to the education ministries and beneficiary schools. This also will ensure that the quality of the training is maintained, and avoid any copyright issues associated with reproducing the training.
- **Facilitate a partnership with Quantum Learning:** If counterpart ministries are interested in doing so, EducaFuturo could facilitate a partnership with Quantum Learning to support the ongoing training of teachers and education administrators in Quantum Learning methods.

Stakeholder Coordination

- **Prioritize collaboration with the ILO:** EducaFuturo and the ILO Public Policy Project should seek areas of collaboration in the remaining period of performance, particularly in research efforts and awareness-raising.
- **Align direct service and policy projects:** In future project designs, USDOL should consider designing complementary direct service and policy projects in tandem, to ensure that synergies between the two are realized.
- **Ensure active and regular communications with government:** It is incumbent on EducaFuturo to reach out to their counterpart ministries in both countries to update them on the project’s progress and follow up on areas of potential cooperation.
- **Enhance role of the embassies:** The U.S. embassies in both countries should play a larger role in publicizing EducaFuturo’s work, where advantageous, and support USDOL to monitor progress.

Annexes

Annex A – Evaluation Terms of Reference

EducaFuturo – Panama and Ecuador

Implemented By: Partners of the Americas

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). OCFT activities include research on international child labor; supporting U.S. government policy on international child labor; administering and overseeing cooperative agreements with organizations working to eliminate child labor around the world; and raising awareness about child labor issues.

Since 1995, the U.S. Congress has appropriated over \$900 million to USDOL for efforts to combat exploitive child labor internationally. This funding has been used to support technical cooperation projects to combat exploitive child labor in more than 90 countries around the world. Technical cooperation projects funded by USDOL range from targeted action programs in specific sectors of work to more comprehensive programs that support national efforts to eliminate child labor. USDOL-funded child labor elimination projects generally seek to achieve five major goals:

1. Reducing exploitative child labor, especially the worst forms through the provision of direct educational services and by addressing root causes of child labor, including innovative strategies to promote sustainable livelihoods of target households;
2. Strengthening policies on child labor, education, and sustainable livelihoods, and the capacity of national institutions to combat child labor, address its root causes, and promote formal, non-formal and vocational education opportunities to provide children with alternatives to child labor;
3. Raising awareness of exploitative child labor and its root causes, and the importance of education for all children and mobilizing a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures;
4. Supporting research, evaluation, and the collection of reliable data on child labor, its root causes, and effective strategies, including educational and vocational alternatives, microfinance and other income generating activities to improve household income; and
5. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

The approach of USDOL child labor elimination projects – decreasing the prevalence of exploitive child labor through increased access to education and improving the livelihoods of vulnerable families – is intended to nurture the development, health, safety, and enhanced future employability of children engaged in or at-risk of entering exploitive labor.

USDOL-funded child labor elimination projects are designed to ensure that children in areas with a high incidence of child labor are withdrawn and integrated into educational settings, and that they persist in their education once enrolled. In parallel, the program seeks to avert at-risk children from leaving school and entering child labor. The projects are based on the notion that the elimination of exploitive child labor depends, to a large extent, on improving access to, quality of, and relevance of education. Without improving educational quality and relevance, children withdrawn/prevented from child labor may not have viable alternatives and could resort to other forms of hazardous work.

In FY2010, Congress provided new authority to ILAB to expand activities related to income generating activities, including microfinance, to help projects expand income generation and address poverty more effectively. The addition of this livelihood focus is based on the premise that if adult family members have sustainable livelihoods, they will be less likely to have their dependent children work and more likely to keep them to school.

The approach of USDOL child labor elimination projects – decreasing the prevalence of exploitive child labor through increased access to education and improving the livelihoods of vulnerable families – is intended to nurture the development, health, safety, and enhanced future employability of children engaged in or at-risk of entering exploitive labor.

Project Context – In Panama, more than 60,000 children are economically active or working while in Ecuador, there are over 155,000 children who are economically active or working. Although Ecuador and Panama have made efforts during the last decade to combat child labor, children remain engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in agriculture, domestic labor, and informal urban labor. These are often Afro-descendant, indigenous and migrant children. Additionally, there are child laborers affected by disabilities whose educational and livelihood options have been compromised.

The major factors which contribute to child labor in Ecuador and Panama can be divided into two broad categories:

- Precarious living conditions of households and children that increase their dependency on child labor for income generation; and
- An institutional and community environment in Ecuador and Panama that is not conducive to sustainable action toward preventing and eliminating child labor.

The precarious living conditions of households are associated with the following factors:

- Children have limited access to quality education, as there is a high dropout rate at the lower secondary education level and inequalities in access for indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant groups;
- Indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant households have insufficient means with which to satisfy their basic needs, leading to the use of child labor to increase family income or the number of available labor hands;
- Indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant households lack access to social protection programs; and
- Indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant youth often work in hazardous or exploitive conditions.

A weak institutional and community environment with regard to child labor in Ecuador and Panama is expressed in:

- Public and private entities that take limited action to eradicate or prevent child labor, especially among indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant populations;
- Lack of public awareness about what constitutes exploitive child labor, about laws and regulations prohibiting child labor, and about the right to education for children and youth; and
- Insufficient knowledge about child labor among indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant populations, and about the relationship between disabilities and child labor in Ecuador.

Project Specific Information – The objective of the EducaFuturo project is to reduce child labor and increase school enrollment among children 5-17 years old, especially Afro-descendants, indigenous and migrant populations in Panama and among children with disabilities in Ecuador. In Panama, the project is active in Bocas del Toro, Colón, Darien, and in the Comarcas of Ngobe-Bugle and Embera-Wounnan. In Ecuador, the project is active in Azuay, Cañar, Guayas, and Imbabura. The project seeks to achieve seven intermediate objectives (IO):

IO 1: Indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant child laborers and children at risk, as well as child laborers with disabilities with increased access to and retention in school;

IO 2: Target households with improved livelihoods strategies;

IO 3: Target households and children with improved access to Social Protection (SP) programs;

IO 4: Target youth 15-17 years old transitioned from unsafe or exploitive working conditions to acceptable work and work training;

IO 5: Public and private sector institutions implement CL prevention/eradication activities in project related economic sectors or zones of intervention;

IO 6: Target households with positive change in attitude toward CL and the importance of children's right to education;

IO 7: Enhanced knowledge base on CL in Ecuador and Panama.

To reach these objectives, EducaFuturo works with stakeholders to improve educational results for children and adolescents involved in child labor, and to improve family income to offset the income earned by children. Specifically the project is designed to:

- Provide educational services and institutional capacity building to help eradicate child labor and promote safe employment and entrepreneurship among youth;
- Support linkages with existing public and private child labor initiatives in Panama and Ecuador;
- Provide technical assistance for promoting access to social protection services and improved livelihoods;
- Strengthen policies and increase the involvement of both the public and private sectors in reducing child labor;
- Raise awareness at the national and local levels regarding the negative impacts of child labor; and
- Conduct research in both target countries that: fills gaps in the child labor-related knowledge base, generates reliable child labor-related data, and collects information on best practices and lessons that may be shared in Ecuador and Panama.

The \$6.5 million project runs from Dec. 27, 2012, to Dec. 26, 2016. Under the leadership and coordination of Partners of the Americas (PoA), the EducaFuturo Project is implemented by three agencies in Ecuador, called Fundacion de las Americas (FUDELA) COMUNIDEC and ExpoFlores, and three agencies in Panama: Fe y Alegría, Asociación de Profesionales y Técnicos Ngäbe Bugle de Bocas del Toro (APROTENGB) and Asociación de Profesionales Darienitas para el Desarrollo Integral Sostenible (APRODISO). The beneficiaries for the EducaFuturo project are summarized in the table that follows.

EducaFuturo Beneficiaries			
Population	Ecuador ¹	Panama	Total
Children	2,100	1,840	3,940
Youth	720	570	1,290
Families	1,000	600	1,600
Total	3,820	3,010	6,830

¹Includes 310 children and youth with disabilities.

II. Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

Evaluation Purpose

The main purposes of the interim evaluation are:

- a. To examine the progress of the project thus far toward meeting its targets and objectives;
- b. To assess aspects of the project that are showing challenges in implementation, or that may benefit from a deeper analysis;
- c. To provide recommendations, particularly in areas where the project is encountering challenges, on what adjustments the project could implement to improve its effectiveness for the remaining period of the cooperative agreement;
- d. To document emerging potential good practices.

The evaluation should provide stakeholders with information to assess and revise, as it is needed; work plans, strategies, objectives, partnership arrangements and resources.

Evaluation Scope

The scope of the interim evaluation includes a review and assessment of all activities carried out under the USDOL Cooperative Agreement with Partners of the Americas. All activities that have been implemented from project launch through the time of evaluation fieldwork should be considered. The evaluation will assess the positive and negative changes produced by the project — intended and unintended, direct and indirect, as well as any changes in the social and economic environment in the country — as reported by respondents.

Intended Users

The evaluation will provide OCFT, the grantee, other project stakeholders, and stakeholders working to combat child labor more broadly, an assessment of the project's experience in implementation and its effects on project beneficiaries. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations will serve to inform any project adjustments that may need to be made, and to inform stakeholders in the design and implementation of subsequent phases or future child labor elimination projects as appropriate. 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.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will address the following questions:

1. How relevant is the project's design and Theory of Change (ToC), as stated in the EducaFuturo CMEP, in the context of child labor in Panama and Ecuador?

2. How effective is the project in removing children from child labor? Assess whether the project is meeting its objectives and targets (E and L target and CMEP performance indicator targets), and identify the challenges encountered thus far, particularly as concerns the youth component and livelihood services. Please highlight particular success or challenges with respect to the different sites and ethnic population with whom the project operates
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of EducaFuturo's monitoring system? This includes implementation of the CMEP, the Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System (DBMS), and other data collection and reporting processes. What improvements can be made to strengthen monitoring?
4. Which services have been provided to households with disabled beneficiaries? Did the project have to make adjustments to their methodology (EPC and A Ganar) to include this population, and if so, were there differences between countries?
5. To what degree is Quantum Learning – the *Espacios para Crecer* and A Ganar methodologies — understood and recognized as an effective methodology to retain children in school and improve academic performance for the target populations?
6. Did Quantum Learning improve teachers' pedagogic practices? If so, how, and were there differences in each country?
7. To what degree has Partners been able to build technical capacity to address child labor issues within the Implementing Agencies and other stakeholder agencies?
8. What have been the benefits and challenges of developing a project like EducaFuturo in two countries?
9. How has EducaFuturo coordinated activities with key stakeholders such as the ILO-lead public policy project and the Governments of Ecuador and Panama?

III. 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 to provide quantitative information. Qualitative information will be obtained through field visits, interviews and focus groups as appropriate. Opinions coming from beneficiaries (teachers, parents and children) will improve and clarify the use of quantitative analysis. The participatory nature of the evaluation will contribute to the sense of ownership among beneficiaries.

Quantitative data will be drawn from the CMEP and project reports to the extent that it is available 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 (<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.

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. Interim Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will consist of:

1. The international evaluator

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

The international evaluator will be responsible for developing the methodology in consultation with Management Systems International (Contractor), USDOL, and the project staff; directly conducting interviews and facilitating other data collection processes; analysis of the evaluation material gathered; presenting feedback on the initial findings of the evaluation to the national stakeholder meeting and preparing the evaluation report.

The responsibility of the interpreter in each provincial locality is to ensure that the evaluation team is understood by the stakeholders as far as possible, and that the information gathered is relayed accurately to the evaluator.

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
 - Baseline and endline survey reports
 - Project document and revisions,
 - Cooperative Agreement,
 - Technical Progress and Status Reports,
 - Project Results Frameworks and Monitoring Plans,
 - Work plans,
 - Correspondence related to Technical Progress Reports,
 - Management Procedures and Guidelines,
 - Research or other reports undertaken (baseline 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 findings are coming from. If timing allows, please share the question matrix with USDOL.

3. Interviews with stakeholders

Informational interviews will be held with as many project stakeholders as possible. The evaluation team will solicit the opinions of children, community members in areas where awareness-raising activities occurred, parents of beneficiaries, teachers, government representatives, legal authorities, union and NGO 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. Technically, stakeholders are all those who have an interest in a project, for example, as implementers, direct and indirect beneficiaries, 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 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 beneficiaries (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 member

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 children and parents will be held, and interviews will be conducted with representatives from local governments, NGOs, community leaders and teachers.

In Ecuador, the evaluator will visit one or more sites per Implementing Agency. For FUDELA (A Ganar for youth 14 to 17 years old) this includes the communities of Rivera and Honorato Vasquez in the province

of Cañar, the community of La Dolorosa in the province of Azuay and Cotama in the province of Imbabura. For ExpoFlores (*Espacios para Crecer* for children ages 8 to 12) this includes the communities of Pucara and Cotama. For Comunidec (*Espacios para Crecer* for children ages 8 to 12) this includes the communities of Tabiaso and Las Piedras, both located in the province of Esmeraldas.

In Panama, for Fe y Alegría (*Espacios para Crecer* for children ages 5 to 12) this includes communities in the province of Colón. For APROTENGB (*Espacios para Crecer* for children ages 5 to 12) this includes the community of Changuinola in the province of Bocas del Toro. For CoSPAÉ (A Ganar for youth ages 14 to 17) this includes in Changuinola.

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 beneficiaries, 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

The evaluator will hold an initial debriefing with the EducaFuturo team prior to the stakeholder meeting.

Following the initial debriefing with the project team, a stakeholders meeting will be conducted by the evaluator that brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials involved in EducaFuturo activities, representatives of the Implementing Agencies, representatives of the U.S. Embassy in both countries, organizations that have collaborated closely with EducaFuturo and others that the evaluation team consider of interest. 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. Project staff will handle invitations and logistics for the meeting.

The meeting will be used to present the major preliminary findings and emerging issues, solicit recommendations, 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. 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:

1. Presentation by the evaluator of the preliminary main findings
2. Feedback and questions from stakeholders on the findings
3. Opportunity for implementing partners not met to present their views on progress and challenges in their locality
4. 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 evaluator and USDOL after the stakeholder workshop to provide USDOL with preliminary findings and solicit feedback if necessary.

F. **Limitations**

Fieldwork for the evaluation will last two 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 findings. 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.

This is not a formal impact assessment. Findings for the evaluation will be based on information collected from background documents and in interviews with stakeholders, project staff, and beneficiaries. The accuracy of the evaluation findings 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. **Timetable**

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

Task	Date
ToR Template submitted to Contractor	12-15-14
Background project documents sent to Contractor	2-9-15
Draft TOR sent to OCFT	2-10-15
Identify a list of stakeholders	2-13-15
Logistics call-Discuss logistics and field itinerary	2-20-15
Finalize field itinerary and stakeholder list for workshop	3-6-15
Finalize TOR with USDOL and submit to Grantee	3-6-15
Question matrix submitted by evaluator	3-13-15
Cable clearance information submitted to USDOL	3-13-15
Fieldwork	4-7-15 to 4-29-15
Post-fieldwork debrief call	5-4-15
Draft report to MSI for Quality Control review	5-11-15
Draft report to USDOL for 48 hour review	5-18-15
Draft report to DOL and grantee for comments	5-20-15
Comments due from DOL and grantee	6-3-15
Report revised and sent to MSI for quality review	6-7-15
Revised report to USDOL	6-9-15
USDOL approval to finalize report	6-16-15
Final report to USDOL	6-30-15

IV. **Expected Outputs/Deliverables**

Ten working days 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 (providing an overview of the evaluation, summary of main findings/lessons learned/good practices, and key recommendations)
- IV. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology
- V. Project Description and Results to Date
- VI. Evaluation Questions and Findings
 - A. Answers to each of the evaluation questions, with supporting evidence included
- VII. Conclusions, Good Practices and Recommendations
 - A. Conclusions – interpretation of the facts, including criteria for judgments
 - B. Good Practices
 - C. Key Recommendations - critical for successfully meeting project objectives – judgments on what changes need to be made for future programming
- VIII. Annexes - including list of documents reviewed; interviews/meetings/site visits; stakeholder workshop agenda and participants; TOR; etc.

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 key stakeholders individually for their review. Comments from stakeholders will be consolidated and incorporated into the final reports as appropriate, and the evaluator will provide a response to OCFT, in the form of a comment matrix, as to why any comments might not have been incorporated.

While the substantive content of the findings, 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.

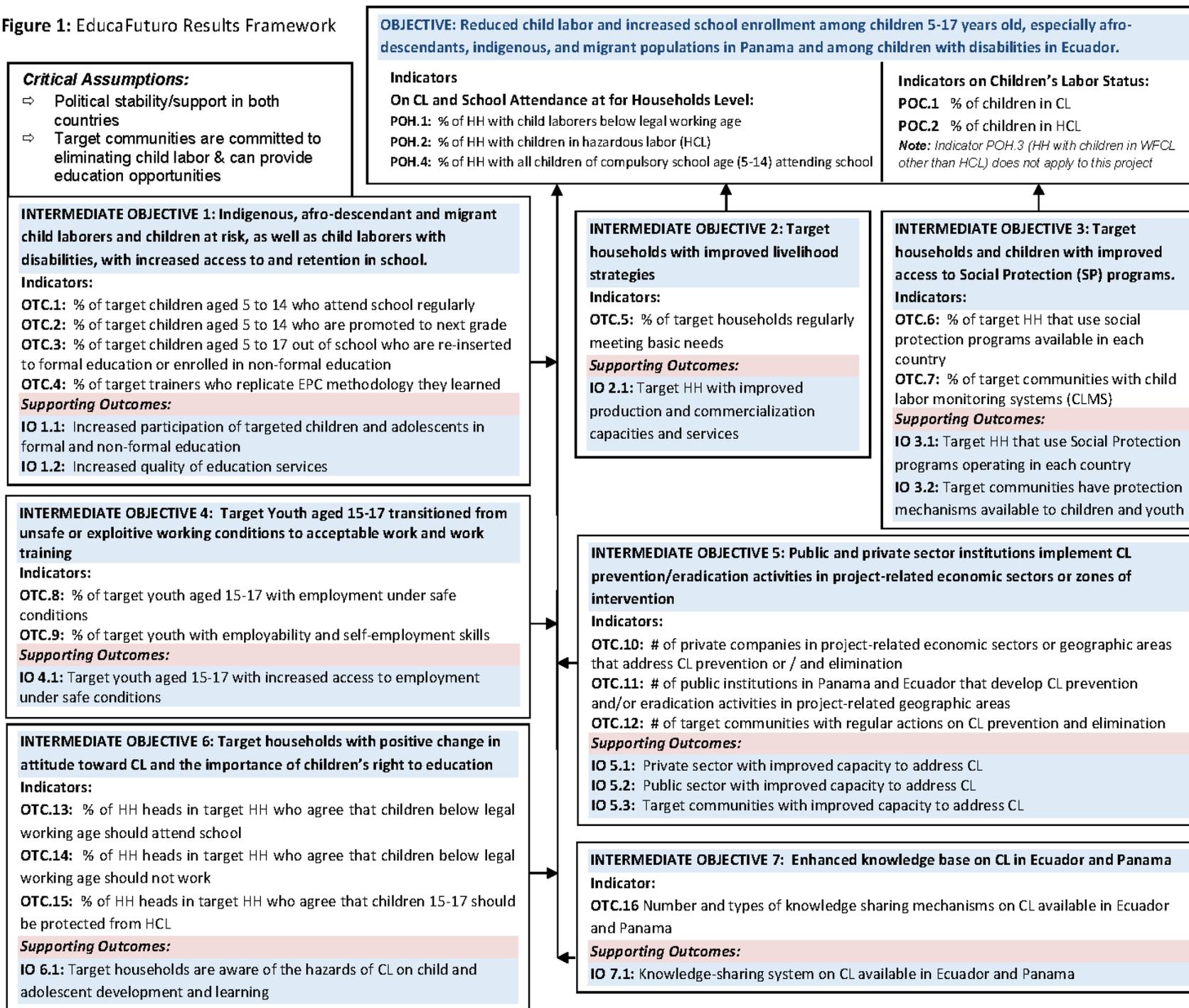
V. Evaluation Management and Support

MSI evaluator Adam Peterson will carry out this evaluation. Mr. Peterson has five years of experience in carrying out technical evaluations and assessments and managing field programs. Mr. Peterson has participated in the design and implementation of a wide range of evaluations, including survey and questionnaire design, sampling, field data collection and analysis. In 2013 he completed a major evaluation of a U.S. State Department grants program for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, which included managing in-country data collection and coordination with private sector and NGO grantees, conducting interviews with all U.S.-based key informants and analyzing and reporting findings, conclusions and recommendations on the large-scale grants program.

The evaluator will work with OCFT, MSI, Partners of the Americas and its local partners to evaluate this project.

MSI will provide all logistical and administrative support for its evaluator, including travel arrangements (plane and hotel reservations, purchasing plane tickets, providing per diem) and all materials needed to produce all deliverables. MSI will also be responsible for the management and technical oversight necessary to ensure consistency of methods and technical standards and to provide complete copy editing and formatting of the final report.

Figure 1: EducaFuturo Results Framework



Annex B – Question Matrix

Questions Matrix: The following questions will guide the interim evaluation of the <i>EducaFuturo</i> project.			
	Evaluation Questions	Interviews/Site Visits	Document Review
1.	How relevant is the project's design and Theory of Change (ToC), as stated in the EducaFuturo CMEP, in the context of child labor in Panama and Ecuador?	Project Director Implementing Agency Staff Ministry Representatives USG Representatives	CMEP Baseline Survey Report DOL and ILO Reference Documents
2.	How effective is the project in removing children from child labor? Assess whether the project is meeting its objectives and targets (E and L target and CMEP performance indicator targets), and identify the challenges encountered thus far, particularly as concerns the youth component and livelihood services. Please highlight particular success or challenges with respect to the different sites and ethnic population with whom the project operates.	Project Director Project M&E Coordinators Beneficiary Schools/Students (EpC) Parent Committees Livelihoods Beneficiaries Youth Beneficiaries (A Ganar)	CMEP TPRs Livelihoods Strategy
3.	What are the strengths and weaknesses of EducaFuturo's monitoring system? This includes implementation of the CMEP, the Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System (DBMS), and other data collection and reporting processes. What improvements can be made to strengthen monitoring?	Project Director Project M&E Coordinators Implementing Agency Staff	CMEP DBMS Data Collection Tools/Protocols
4.	Which services have been provided to households with disabled beneficiaries? Did the project have to make adjustments to their methodology (EPC and A Ganar) to include this population, and if so, were there differences between countries?	Project Director Implementing Agency Staff Beneficiary Schools/Students (EpC) Youth Beneficiaries (A Ganar) Ministry Representatives (SETEDIS)	TPRs
5.	To what degree is Quantum Learning – the Espacios para Crecer and A Ganar methodologies — understood and recognized as an effective methodology to retain children in school and improve academic performance for the target populations?	Project Director School Principals Beneficiary Teachers (QL/EpC) Parent Committees Ministry Representatives	QL Materials TPRs

6.	Did Quantum Learning improve teachers' pedagogic practices? If so, how, and were there differences in each country?	Project Director School Principals Beneficiary Teachers Beneficiary Students	TPRs CMEP
7.	To what degree has Partners been able to build technical capacity to address child labor issues within the Implementing Agencies and other stakeholder agencies?	Project Director Implementing Agency Staff Ministry Representatives	Sustainability Plan TPRs Baseline Survey Report
8.	What have been the benefits and challenges of developing a project like EducaFuturo in two countries?	PoA Staff Project Director and Staff	TPRs
9.	How has EducaFuturo coordinated activities with key stakeholders such as the ILO-lead public policy project and the Governments of Ecuador and Panama?	Project Director ILO Representatives Ministry Representatives USG Representatives	TPRs

Annex C – List of Individuals Interviewed

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Annex D – Respondent Matrix

Stakeholders Interviewed for Interim Evaluation (March-May 2015)

Stakeholder Group	Ecuador	Panama	U.S.	Method of Interview	Characteristics
POA/EducaFuturo staff	7	10	2	Individual and Group	Project staff based in Quito, Panama City, and DC
USDOL			2	Group	USDOL staff that manage EducaFuturo
Implementing Agency Staff	9	8		Individual and Group	FUDELA, COMUNIDEC, ExpoFlores, Fe y Alegría, CoSPAЕ and APROTENGB
EpC/A Ganar Facilitators	8	8		Individual and Group	Facilitators of EpCs and A Ganar groups
School Directors	5	4		Individual	Directors of beneficiary schools
A Ganar Youth	15			Group	A Ganar groups in Pijal, Imbabura and Rivera, Cañar
Parents	35	32		Individual and Group	2 Parent Committees in Ecuador and 7 Committees in Panama
Livelihoods Beneficiaries		14		Group	Farmer-to-Farmer beneficiaries in Changuinola, Bocas del Toro
Government Officials	10	5		Individual and Group	Ministries of Labor, Education, Health, Social Development Coordination, and Economic and Social Inclusion in Ecuador, and Ministries of Education and Labor, and Mayor of Colón in Panama
U.S. Embassy	2	4		Individual and Group	Political, Economic and Public Affairs Officers
ILO		2		Group	ILO Public Policy Project staff
Other			2	Individual	Representatives from Entrena
Total Interviews	91	87	6		184

Annex E – Schools Visited

Schools Visited for Interim Evaluation (April 2015)

Country	School	EpCs Observed	EpC in School	Community	Province	Notes
Ecuador	Escuela Ulpiano de la Torre	1	Yes	Cotama	Imbabura	
	Escuela Ignacio Malo	2	Yes	La Dolorosa	Azuay	
	Escuela La Inmaculada	1	Yes	Colepato	Cañar	
	Escuela Eloy Alfaro	1	Yes	Rivera	Cañar	
	Escuela Teodoro Moran Valverde	1	Yes	Las Piedras	Esmeraldas	
Panama	Escuela Flor de Anis	4	Yes	Boca del Monte	Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé	
	Escuela Finca 4	1	No	Pantanal	Bocas del Toro	EpC is located in church
	Escuela 4 de Abril	1	No	4 de Abril	Bocas del Toro	EpC is located in community center
	Escuela Finca 61	1	No	Finca 61	Bocas del Toro	EpC is located in community center
	Escuela Jose del Carmen Mejia	1	No	Yaviza	Darien	EpC is located in MIDA center
	Escuela Nuevo Progreso	1	Yes	El Progreso	Darien	
	Escuela Porfirio Melendez	1	Yes	Colón	Colón	
Total	12	16				

Annex F – Ecuador Stakeholder Meeting

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Annex G – Panama Stakeholder Meeting

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