



FINAL EVALUATION BRIEF | April 2024

## FINAL EVALUATION OF THE COOPERATION ON FAIR, FREE, EQUITABLE EMPLOYMENT (COFFEE) PROJECT

Fairtrade Registered coffee farm in Antioquia, Colombia (Photo by David Moore)

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The COFFEE Project, implemented by Verité, aimed to improve the implementation of social compliance systems that promote acceptable conditions of work and eliminate child labor and forced labor in coffee supply chains. The Project's technical scope covers the development of a toolkit and training modules corresponding to the US Department of Labor (USDOL's) eight-step *Comply Chain* model.

The Project implemented three pilot projects in partnership with private sector stakeholders and industry associations in Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. They included 1) training to test the toolkit in Mexico and Brazil; 2) initiatives to improve harvesting and increase workers' well-being and income in Colombia; and 3) tailored training programs and initiatives focused on recruitment-related risks in Brazil and on child and forced labor in Mexico.

USDOL commissioned WI-HER, LLC to conduct an independent final performance evaluation of the COFFEE Project. [Full report results and learning.](#)

### KEY RESULTS

**OUTCOME 1: Adoption of a robust and sustainable social compliance system by private sector stakeholders in coffee supply chains.**

- The training on child labor, forced labor and labor recruitment was well received by the trainees from the coffee companies, buyers, producers, and government agencies involved in the three pilot projects.
- Online tools on child labor, forced labor, recruitment and supply chain monitoring, improvement and reporting developed: The target number of tools (15) was surpassed (28). The target (500) of individuals reached by the toolkit was surpassed (2,140).

**OUTCOME 2: Strengthened capacity of private sector stakeholders to implement a robust and sustainable social compliance system in coffee supply chains.**

- The Project provided training through the pilot projects. In Mexico and Colombia, the training included interesting initiatives but was limited by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In Brazil, the training workshops and development of manuals strengthened the capacity of large-scale producers and smallholder cooperatives. In February 2024, the Project launched 14 new open-access training modules.

**OUTCOME 3: New social compliance tools on child labor, forced labor, and acceptable conditions of work piloted coffee business operations and supply chains.**

- The Project offered training using the initial version of the toolkit. In Mexico, the Project offered training to private-sector companies and the government agencies represented in the National Anti-Trafficking Commission.
- In Brazil, some business operations improved their compliance systems, especially regarding forced labor.
- The studies and workshops in Colombia focused on improving income, household livelihoods, and working conditions.

## DETAILED RESULTS

### OUTCOME 1

The toolkit helped coffee sector actors develop, adopt, and/or update their social compliance systems. However, the toolkit and training modules were not always adapted to the needs of the specific stakeholder groups they were intended for, such as field technicians, farm managers, coffee farmers, cooperatives, traders, and roasters, or to the local conditions in the countries where the toolkit was used.

The toolkit was most effective in the Brazilian pilot projects, where Verité adapted the toolkit to the needs of the managers, administrators, extension workers, and farmers who took part in the participatory workshops. In some cases, Verité helped companies develop training manuals, codes of conduct, and templates for contracts with permanent and temporary workers. In Mexico, the toolkit was well-received by major international coffee companies, but the Mexican informants stated that they would have preferred the training to be more participatory and practical, with teacher-student exchanges during class and work assignments to try out the new ideas and best practices.

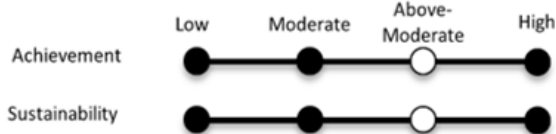
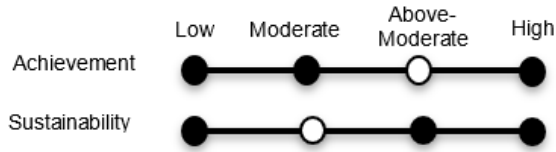
The website will be maintained by the grantee. However, at this stage it is not clear how it will be used and adapted for future training.

### OUTCOME 2

All informants spoke highly of the training. The online training was, however, demanding for some people. They required at least a secondary education, time to study the materials, and access to reliable internet. Since the evaluation, the Project has produced simplified training and video clips.



The COFFEE Project Toolkit, developed in close alignment with USDOL's Comply Chain Framework.



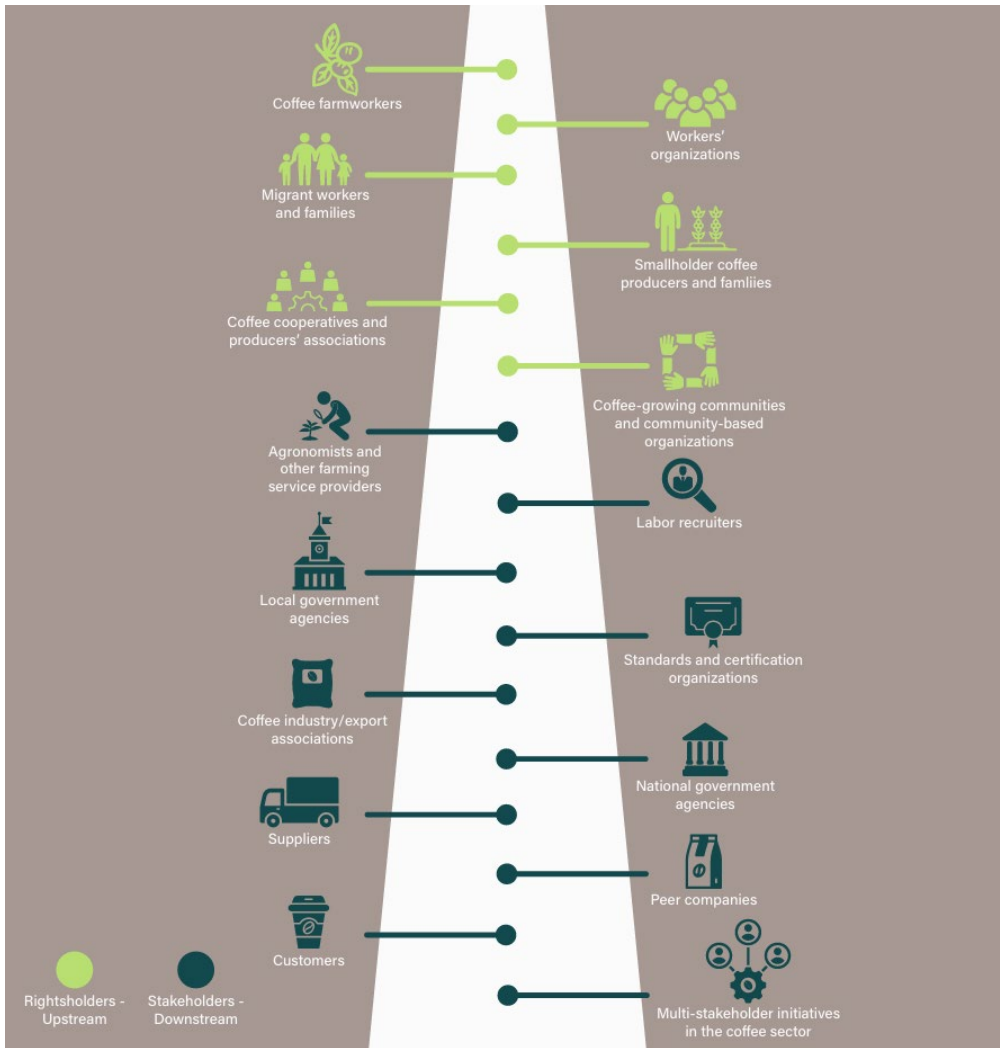
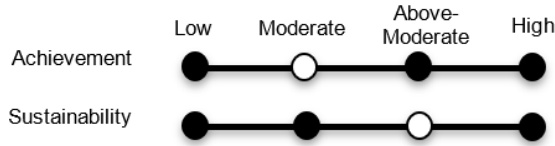
The pilot projects were designed to eliminate abuses and improve the conditions of all coffee workers. In practice, the projects were identified and implemented with the help of major companies, buyers, certifiers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and largely focused on producers who were organized and/or participating in certification schemes. The pilots did not focus on some of the most vulnerable groups involved in coffee supply chains.

In Colombia, the Project worked with smallholder producers who mainly rely on local labor and rarely employ itinerant *andariegos*, whose concerns differ from those of the locally hired workers. Similarly, in Brazil, the pilot engaged with fewer medium-scale farms, which typically depend on migrant labor but lack the capacity and resources to demand that labor brokers comply with all the requirements of the national legislation.



**OUTCOME 3**

At least 54 coffee businesses and supply chain stakeholders have piloted the toolkit. They include private sector actors, industry associations, multi-stakeholder initiatives, NGOs and certifiers, government, and academia. The impact accrued from stakeholders’ exposure to, and piloting of, the toolkit is likely considerable. The toolkit and training modules need to be updated, especially the RE-ACT Dashboard, which includes information updated annually. The new toolkit, launched in February 2024, must be maintained, regularly revised, and expanded to cover new issues. Training has been completed in Mexico and ended in Brazil in March 2024. Verité may have opportunities to continue or expand the training program, with financial support from private sector stakeholders.



Tool 9 of the COFFEE Project Toolkit: Guidance on Stakeholder Engagement.

**PROMISING PRACTICES**

This final performance evaluation identified the following promising practices:

1. Project training in Brazil with simplified manuals for specific users led to improved contracting and conditions for migrant workers.
2. The construction and repair of agricultural work accommodation blocks in Brazil offered a replicable model.
3. The MOU with the Polytechnic University of Tapachula, Mexico, has the potential to incorporate labor issues into the curriculum for students of agriculture.
4. The experience gained training civil servants from Mexico’s National Anti-Trafficking Commission could be replicated for other public sector officials.

## LESSONS LEARNED

This final performance evaluation identified the following lessons learned:

1. The training was most effective when Verité advised each stakeholder how to adapt it to their specific supply chain requirements.
2. The training would have been more effective had it incorporated 1) national and sub-national legislation; 2) institutional descriptions of the institutions responsible for enforcing labor legislation; and 3) analysis of issues faced by producers and other actors in supply chains.
3. The training and preparation of in-house manuals, tools, and codes of conduct were most effective when developed in cooperation with the stakeholders targeted by the Project.
4. Unless a program or activity are designed to reach vulnerable groups in the supply chain, the Project will not reach them.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This final performance evaluation identified the following recommendations, organized according to the intended audience:

### GRANTEE

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1. Agree on the responsibilities and funding sources to maintain, update, adapt, and improve the RE-ACT Dashboard and COFFEE Toolkit.
2. Adapt training to the country context and priorities of the people receiving training.
3. Offer participatory training with exercises, workshops, and events.
4. Focus future training programs on producers, extension workers and agronomists.

### USDOL

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5. Require a Project Management Unit or Coordinator for each country where Projects are implemented.
6. Longer implementation time for pilot projects to allow better planning and engagement with beneficiaries.
7. Prioritize agriculture students from polytechnics and universities for future training on labor rights.
8. Support projects that engage with key public sector agencies.
9. Support alternative approaches to engage with migrant workers.
10. Incorporate risk analysis and security procedures and protocols when working in countries and regions with security risks.

## EVALUATION METHODS

This performance evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The evaluation team carried out an in-depth desk review of the project documents, the COFFEE Toolkit, relevant monitoring and evaluation data, a short survey sent to a purposive sample of stakeholders, key informant interviews, and focus groups.