

Evaluation Summary: Combating Child Labor Through Education in the Dominican Republic

Project and Evaluation Facts

Region/Country: The Americas/Dominican Republic
Grantee: DevTech Systems, Inc.
Project Duration: August 6, 2003 – August 31, 2007
Fiscal Year Funded and Funding Level: FY 2003 USD 3,004,270
Type of Evaluation: Final
Date of Evaluation: June 2007
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Evaluation Management: Macro International, Inc.
Evaluator(s): Noor Denkers

Background and Context

Summary of Project Objectives and Focus

Combating Child Labor Through Education in the Dominican Republic was a four-year project aimed at withdrawing and preventing children from exploitative labor by expanding access to and improving quality of basic education. The project operated in eleven regions and was focused on children engaged in or at risk of engaging in exploitative work in the following sectors: hazardous agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, and urban labor.

The project was guided by the following Immediate Objectives:

- Awareness of the importance of education and the dangers of child labor is increased amongst parents, educators, and leaders in target communities;
- The educational system in target areas is strengthened so as to attract and retain children and adolescents who had been involved in the worst forms of child labor (WFCL);
- A long-term sustainability plan for project activities is disseminated.

The project was designed to work closely with government actors, various NGOs, and community-based organizations.

Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

The final evaluation examined project performance during the cooperative agreement in relation to stated objectives. Specifically, the evaluation reviewed and assessed activities with respect to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Further, the evaluation was designed to inform the development of future EI programs and to highlight best practices as well as areas for improvement.

Methodology of Evaluation

The evaluation was based on a desk review of relevant documentation, followed by a field mission to the Dominican Republic between the 20th of May and the 1st of June 2007. The field work consisted of interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and other information collection techniques with stakeholders including government representatives, NGOs, children, parents of beneficiaries, community leaders, teachers, school directors, facilitators, and project staff. Further, the evaluation was conducted in accordance with the terms of reference (TOR), as prepared by Macro International with input from USDOL and other key stakeholders.

Evaluation's Main Findings & Conclusions

Performance Summary

At its conclusion, the project has served to withdraw or prevent 5,043 children from WFCL, exceeding its stated target of 4,200 children.

Further, the project has served to:

- raise awareness among parents and community leaders about the importance of education in lieu of child labor;
- create *Espacios para Crecer* (EpC), an effective and innovative school enrichment program that can be reproduced in other countries;
- form a consortium of NGOs, academics, and business leaders to support the expansion of EpC centers; and
- gain the support of the Secretary of Education (SEE) to explore expansion of the EpC model throughout the formal education system.

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Nonetheless, the evaluator contends that the project could have been improved by:

- matching vocational training to local labor market demands;
- complementing educational activities with funding for alternative income-generation programs;
- increasing coordination with IPEC; and
- improving data collection and reporting.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Lessons Learned

- The EpC model has been very effective as a transitional activity and has contributed to an improvement in educational indicators such as enrollment, persistence, completion, repetition, dropout, and academic performance;
- The EpC has been a dynamic, innovative, low-cost model and an effective tool for the eradication of child labor;
- A baseline study should be conducted at the beginning of the project to facilitate data comparison;
- Alternative income generating programs that respond to local needs would serve to compensate for family income forgone due to children being withdrawn from child labor;
- Market research should be conducted to identify the needs and demands of the labor market to ensure that vocational training programs are effective;
- Training on data collection and reporting must be carried out from the project onset with all people involved in the process, concentrating not only on technical aspects, but also on the reasons why adequate and accurate data collection and reporting is important to ensure quality feedback;
- SEE involvement throughout the project has resulted in not only institutional support for the EpC model, but also a commitment to explore possibilities to gradually integrate the EpC into the formal education system; and

- The involvement of community organizations and local NGOs has contributed to the sustainability of the project activities.

Key Recommendations

The following are a few of the key recommendations as presented by the evaluator:

- Maintain good relations with Secretaries of Labor and of Education to yield long-term change;
- Refine project-monitoring systems by:
 - Allowing grantees to hire more people to carry out control visits;
 - Centralizing the database;
 - Training staff from implementing organizations on not only how to collect data but also on the importance of why it is done;
- Promote greater coordination between EpC facilitators and teachers within the formal education system;
- Strengthen the vocational education program by including a baseline study on the demands in the local labor markets and adapt courses to meet demands;
- Strengthen alternative income generation programs for parents to compensate for loss of income due to withdrawal of children from child labor;
- Consider expansion of the EpC model to other regions; and
- Strengthen public-private partnerships and corporate sector involvement to ensure sustainability of effort.