

FUNDED BY THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

## Independent Midterm Evaluation of the Soy! Project in Ecuador

Catholic Relief Services

Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-4-0005



2006

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*Funding for this evaluation was provided by the United States Department of Labor under Task Order number DOLQ059622437. Points of view or opinions in this evaluation report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.*

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DyA	<i>Desarrollo y Autogestión</i> (Development and Management)
EI	Education Initiative
ICLP	International Child Labor Program
IECC	Inter-Institutional Education Coordinating Committees
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
INNFA	<i>Instituto Nacional de la Niñez y la Familia</i> (National Institute of Children and Family)
JUCONI	<i>Junto Con los Niños</i> (Together with Children)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PMP	Performance and Monitoring Plan
SAT	<i>Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial</i> (Tutorial Learning System)
SECAP	<i>Servicio Ecuatoriano de Capacitación Profesional</i> (Project for the Improvement of Vocational Training in Ecuador)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USDOL	United States Department of Labor

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The midterm evaluation of the SOY! Project in Ecuador was conducted in September and October 2006. The evaluation methodology consisted of several interviews with different actors involved with the project to collect quantitative and qualitative information regarding the project progress as of September 2006. The evaluator visited the project intervention areas in Pichincha, El Oro, Guayas, Los Ríos, and Cotopaxi, where she met with the people responsible of implementing the project as well as with the people involved with the project activities. Some of the people interviewed at the sites were school principals, teachers, students, parents, producers of banana and flowers, a child labor inspector, representatives from the municipalities (e.g., mayors, delegates of the *Consejo Cantonal de la Niñez*, and representatives of the Spanish and Bilingual educational programs). In each meeting with the local project team, one or two schools were selected to visit to evaluate the project involvement and activities carried on. In Quito, meetings were held with the Minister of Labor, representatives of the Social Banana Forum and the Social Flower Forum, staff from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and *Desarrollo y Autogestión* (DyA), representatives from national organizations (*Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia*, *Foro de la Niñez y Adolescencia*, *Contrato Social por la Educación en el Ecuador*), and others. With respect to quantitative information, only an update of the information provided in the Technical Progress Reports was needed. Much of this information was presented in the September 2006 Technical Progress Report that was given to the evaluator in Ecuador. With respect to qualitative information, interviews were an important source to evaluate the actual work that is being done in the field and to find out the strengths and challenges of the project.

The SOY! Project started in Ecuador in September 2004 for a period of four years. As stipulated in the cooperative agreement, the goal of the SOY! Project is to contribute to the elimination of child labor in the banana and flower industries of Ecuador. The purpose of the project is to get child laborers and children at risk of engaging in child labor take advantage of existing education opportunities in the areas of intervention of the SOY! Project. The project has following three specific outputs:

- Output 1**      Groups of key SOY! Project Stakeholders make meaningful contributions to education opportunities for child laborers or children at risk of entering the labor market.
  
- Output 2**      Municipal governments in SOY! Project intervention areas have applied plans, ordinances, and public policy mechanisms that favor education for child laborers or children at risk of entering the labor market.
  
- Output 3**      Education centers and programs offer quality education for children in SOY! Project intervention areas.

In the first two years of the SOY! Project, it has achieved its midterm goals as stated in the final project document. Much progress has been made in terms of sensitization at the national level and at the local level. Teacher, parent, child, and adolescent training on children's rights and the importance of education has been a priority for the project.

The SOY! Project has actively participated in the national campaign to promote children's rights and the eradication of child labor. This has been done in collaboration with the national government, local governments (municipalities), and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are working on this issue. The evaluation there made clear that the SOY! Project is nationally recognized for its involvement in different campaigns and activities and because of its collaboration with different institutions.

The project's proposal stated that US\$208,303 was expected as stakeholders' contributions to education opportunities (Output 1). As of September 2006, the project reports an additional US\$649,300 in stakeholder contributions, which represents 21.6% of its US\$3 million budget.

The SOY! Project achieved the following with respect to Output 2: *Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia* has been established in five *Cantones*. There are decrees for the establishment of the *Consejos Cantonales de la Niñez y Adolescencia* in four *Cantones*. *Junta Cantonal de Protección de Niños y Adolescentes* has been established in Cayambe. Inter-institutional networks have been established in all provinces. SOY! Project, NGOs, and government institutions (national and local) work in coordination.

The steps that SOY! Project has taken to improve quality of education (Output 3) include the following:

- Teachers trained in subjects and quality of education 737
- Schools repaired/built 40
- Schools that received furniture 106
- Schools that received books and teaching material 95
- Children that received scholarships 2,232
- Parents that have been trained 3,617
- Schools that have diagnostics and inclusive plans 85
  - 1 Red Canguana
  - 1 *Dirección Provincial Bilingüe*
- Centers or alternative educational programs (8-9-10 grades), distance learning, Tutorial Learning System (SAT)
  - 2 Schools with 8-9-10 grades (Pichincha)
  - 2 SAT centers (El Oro)
  - 2 SAT centers (Los Ríos)
  - 3 distance learning centers (Cotopaxi)

The most important challenge the project faces is incorporating of the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) approach of emphasizing children withdrawn and prevented from exploitive forms of labor as indicators of progress and achievements. This approach was presented to the project after the approval of the final project document that was designed with the purpose of helping

children laborers or children at risk of engaging in child labor to take advantage of existing education options in the areas of intervention of the SOY! Project. Although USDOL describes it as only a change of the enrollment indicator, it asked the project to set targets separately for children withdrawn and prevented. The project, while emphasizing its purpose, has always targeted children laborers or children at risk of engaging in child labor to take advantage of existing education options (i.e., to provide education for children that work or are at risk of engaging in labor). Furthermore, the SOY! Project has interpreted as direct beneficiary any child enrolled in a school in its area of intervention. This brings up the following issues.

1. The contribution of the SOY! Project toward the elimination of child labor in the banana and flower industries of Ecuador will not be fully represented in the withdrawn and the prevention indicators. According to the project, child/adolescent labor is a consequence of poverty and the culture of Ecuador, yet the project activities focus on educating children, some of whom are still involved in the worst form of labor, raising awareness, and contributing to strengthen the legal framework.
2. A problem with reporting. In all the technical progress reports (including the September 2006 report), the SOY! Project has reported as beneficiaries (children and youth registered in the SOY! Project in Table III.A) all children that were receiving directly or indirectly any type of service financed by the project. This includes all children in the schools that benefited from infrastructure improvements and/or teachers training. Nevertheless, direct service involves the provision of such goods and services as tutoring, school meals, uniforms, school supplies and materials, books and transportation vouchers, or other types of incentives to children withdrawn from or at-risk of entering exploitive labor to ensure their enrollment in at least one of the educational activities and/or training opportunities of the project.

Other challenges the project is facing are related to an uneven performance of its partners not related to differences in backgrounds and/or goals, a large percentage of students in Cotopaxi working making bricks (*bloques*) as a family business, the implementation of income generating activities in El Oro and Cotopaxi, and some other implementation difficulties.

### **Recommendations**

1. The project should improve the communication/coordination between the consortium members to share experiences and to benefit more from each others' background and expertise. The differences in the rhythm of implementation that were observed during the evaluation could be solved with more interaction between the consortium members.
2. In Cotopaxi, students work in family businesses making bricks. Therefore, the project should include this economic activity as part of the target areas of intervention. Children who work as brick makers have special needs because they start work between 2:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. The strategy to withdraw and prevent these children from the worst forms of labor needs to consider that the making of bricks is a family business.
3. The project needs USDOL's technical assistance to help it with the new focus on the withdrawn/prevented target. The technical support should involve training on how to

obtain information from the database to report the indicators (e.g., direct beneficiaries, enrollment, children withdrawn, children prevented, and completion), based not on school enrollment, but on the working status of children/adolescents. Technical support is also needed to alter the approach the project has used to accommodate the USDOL approach (i.e., focusing on withdrawn/prevention). The SOY! Project has been operating according to the expected outputs and activities in the original project design and consequently, supporting education for working children. To focus on withdrawn/prevention, new activities should be incorporated.

4. The SOY! Project should improve some of its implementation procedures such as the following:
  - Time when teachers are trained (students are losing school time)
  - Time when parents meet (in El Oro a group of parents complained that they cannot attend the project's activities because they are on Fridays during work time)
  - The way SAT in El Oro is being implemented (e.g., too many students in one classroom, broad age range, doesn't take into consideration that some youths are returning to school after some years away from classes, the lack of an appropriate schedule of classes for youths who work at the plantations)
5. El Oro and Cotopaxi should start alternative income-generating activities with parents of children who are currently working. Parents should commit themselves to reduce the number of hours their children work or to withdraw them from the worst forms of labor.
6. If the SOY! Project is to focus more on withdrawal and prevention, a review of the actual budget or an extension of the contract is needed. New activities should be defined because the current ones correspond to the outputs stated on the original project design. These new activities should be tailored made for each of the five regions. The income-generating opportunities that the project is going to implement in Cotopaxi and El Oro for 500 poor families of the target group will be a good source of information about what to implement.
7. To focus on withdrawal and prevention, the project could reduce its emphasis on social awareness-raising and increase activities that would allow families to obtain the income lost when the child is withdrawn from the worst forms of labor. In most cases, child labor is related to low family income (poverty) and although poverty alleviation strategies take time, the incidence of child labor in the worst forms of labor could be reduced in the project areas of intervention if—
  - Families are helped with micro credits
  - Mothers are taught activities that could provide alternative income<sup>1</sup> such as the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Alternative income-generation activities should consider if there is a potential market for the products.

- Banana dessert in El Oro
  - Paper made out of banana
  - Souvenirs made with residuals from the banana production (Patricia Bedoya from *Foro Bananero* has begun this activity)
- Families are guided on the procedure to register for the Development Bonus provided by the government. Families who qualify sometimes do not apply because of lack of knowledge about the procedure.
  - Work with the family issues such as home economics so they can improve the way they spend. CARE has developed some handbooks to work with the families (*Economía y producción* and *Relaciones familiares*) with the aim of improving families' budgeting. With the same amount of money, families could be better off by organizing their expenditures. The approach of CARE is to encourage less alcohol and more healthy food in the consumers' baskets.

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# I EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

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The mission of the International Child Labor Program (ICLP) of the USDOL's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) is to increase and support efforts to eradicate exploitive child labor worldwide. In FY 2001, ICLP began funding the Education Initiative (EI) with the aim of improving the access and quality of basic education for children who either have been involved in the worst forms of child labor or are at risk of becoming involved.

The evaluations of EI in Ecuador will be important to—

1. Help the SOY! Project identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation could be improved.
2. Assist ICLP to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the design of EI projects within the broad ICLP technical cooperation program framework.
3. Assess the degree to which the midterm goals and objectives of the Ecuadorian project have been achieved.

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## II METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION

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The terms of reference for this evaluation may be found in Annex I. The evaluation methodology consisted of several interviews with different actors involved with the project to collect quantitative and qualitative information regarding the progress made as of September 2006. The evaluator visited the project intervention areas in Pichincha, El Oro, Guayas, Los Ríos, and Cotopaxi. In each place, the evaluator met with people responsible for implementing the project as well as people involved with the project's activities. The people interviewed at the sites included school principals, teachers, students, parents, producers of bananas and flowers, a child labor inspector, and representatives from the municipalities (e.g., mayors, delegates of the *Consejo Cantonal de la Niñez*, and representatives of the Spanish and Bilingual educational programs). In each meeting with the project team, one or two schools were selected to visit to evaluate the project's involvement and activities. In Quito, meetings were held with the Minister of Labor; representatives of the Social Banana Forum and the Social Flower Forum; staff from ILO and DyA; representatives from national organizations (e.g., *Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia*, *Foro de la Niñez y Adolescencia*, and *Contrato Social por la Educación en el Ecuador*); and others (see Annex II for a detailed list of people interviewed). Only an update of the information provided in the technical progress reports was needed with respect to quantitative information. Much of this information was presented in the September 2006 Technical Progress Report that was given to the evaluator in Ecuador. Interviews were an important source of qualitative information to evaluate the work being done in the fields and to learn about the project's strengths and challenges. Annex III contains a brief summary of the comments received at the Stakeholders Meeting and a list of participants.

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## III FINDINGS

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### 3.1 GENERAL FINDINGS

The SOY! Project started in Ecuador in September 2004. It is important to mention that when the proposal was written, the situation of child labor in Ecuador was described as:

*Ecuador has one of the highest incidences of child labor in all Latin America. It is estimated that over 775,000 Ecuadorian children between the ages of 5 and 7 were working in 2001, 60% of these children work in the agricultural sector, and 20% work in the service sector. While the vast majority of the children working in the agriculture sector are employed on their own families' farms, many children employed in the banana and flower industries are exposed to some of the most dangerous forms of employment. Large and small banana and flower growers use toxic pesticides and fungicides, which are harmful to all farm workers, but especially to child laborers (p. 1).*

With respect to education, the document mentioned that:

*While many child laborers receive or have received some basic education, and approximately 92% of all 10- to 14-year-old workers are functionally literate, by the time a child reaches age 14, more than a third of this cohort has dropped out of school, and approximately 60% of all 17-year-old child laborers have dropped out of school entirely (p. 1).*

Regarding social awareness, the document points out that at that time:

*...in Ecuador there is a general lack of recognition of children as full citizens that have the right to enjoy similar rights and freedoms as adults, as well as a lack of understanding among all stakeholders of the fundamental rights of a child and the dangers associated with certain types of work. Although there are specific laws and policies to protect children, in order to attack the root causes of child labor and respond to the special needs of children, the government and social actors need to take a holistic approach in all developing planning and formulation of government policies that focuses on, takes in account and incorporates the rights of children (p. 6).*

It is important to mention here that the *Código de la Niñez y Adolescencia* was approved and published in Ecuador in January of 2003, just few months before the SOY! Project started.

Since the beginning of the SOY! Project, Ecuador has made substantial progress in terms of organizing the fight against child labor. There are several organizations working at the national level: the Minister of Labor and Employment, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Social Welfare, the *Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia*, the *Comité Nacional para la Erradicación Progresiva del Trabajo Infantil*, the *Asociación de Municipalidades Ecuatorianas*, and several NGOs.

The government of Ecuador made progress at the national level by enacting the following legislation:

- *Plan Nacional Decenal de Acción de Protección Integral a la Niñez y Adolescencia* (December 2004) states specific policies, goals, and strategies to protect children less than 6 years old, from 6 to 12 years old, and from 12 to 18 years old. Among those policies, the plan mentions progressive eradication of the worst forms of child labor.
- *Decreto Ejecutivo 179* (June 1, 2005) states that the integral protection of children and adolescents rights is a priority policy for the Ecuadorian Government.
- *Acuerdo Nacional por la Niñez y Adolescencia* (June 1, 2005) established that the priorities defined in the Ten Year Plan of Integral Protection were considered as public policy. Those priorities include, among other issues, the access of all children to education and basic health care, the eradication of the worst forms of child labor, and the constitution and strengthening of a decentralized national system of integral protection for children and adolescents (*Consejos Cantonales de Niñez y Adolescencia* and the *Juntas Cantonales de Protección de Derechos*).
- Labor Code amendment, adjusting it to the contents of the Code for Children (Approved by Congress on April 2006).

Despite these changes, Ecuador still needs to increase its efforts to prevent or eradicate the worst forms of child labor. Some of the institutions created by the government of Ecuador have very limited budgets and cannot participate actively in this task.

An important issue in Ecuador is the European Union's demand that its trade partners achieve EUROGAP certification, which includes child labor restrictions.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, EUROGAP has only had an effect on the hiring of children and adolescents at the largest plantations (farms) that wanted to keep their European markets. Lately, child labor inspectors have not found children working in big farms, but they have reported cases of child labor in farms that do not export to the European Union. Interviews at various schools for this evaluation found most of the students were working at the banana plantations, helping their parents for long hours, or making bricks at a family business.<sup>3</sup>

The SOY! Project has actively participated in the national campaign to promote children's rights and in the eradication of child labor. This has been done in collaboration with the national government, local governments (municipalities), and other NGOs that are working on the issue. The SOY! Project is nationally recognized for its involvement in different campaigns and activities and because of its collaboration with various institutions.

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<sup>2</sup> Ecuador has not signed a free trade agreement with the United States.

<sup>3</sup> Child labor at the flower industry has a seasonal pattern (e.g., Saint Valentine's Day, Mother's Day). Therefore, not many children interviewed were working in this sector during the evaluation period, but they do work there occasionally.



- Schools that received books and teaching material 95
- Children that received scholarships 2,232
- Parents that have been trained 3,617
- Schools that have diagnostics and inclusive plans 85
  - 1 Red Canguana
  - 1 *Dirección Provincial Bilingüe*
- Centers or alternative educational programs (8-9-10 grades), distance learning, SAT
  - 2 Schools with 8-9-10 grades (Pichincha)
  - 2 SAT centers (El Oro)
  - 2 SAT centers (Los Ríos)
  - 3 distance learning centers (Cotopaxi)

There is a difference between SOY! Project's approach and USDOL's expectations. The project emphasizes making sure that child laborers and children at risk of engaging in child labor take advantage of existing education opportunities in the SOY! Project's area of intervention. Nevertheless, USDOL is also looking for numbers of children withdrawn from exploitive work and of children prevented from entering work. The USDOL/ICLP *Management Procedures and Guidelines* clearly states that the goal of the USDOL Child Labor Education Initiative Program Model is to reduce the incidence of child labor in the country, while the purpose is to ensure that the target children, whom have been withdrawn or prevented from participating in exploitive child labor, are educated (p. C-4). This difference in approach results in the following problems:

1. SOY! Project's contribution to the elimination of child labor in the banana and flower industries of Ecuador will not be fully represented in the withdrawn and the prevention indicators. According to the project, child/adolescent labor is a consequence of poverty and the culture of Ecuador, yet the project activities focus on the education of children, some of whom are still involved in the worst forms of labor, raising awareness, and contributing to strengthen the legal framework.
2. The second problem concerns reporting. In the technical progress reports (including the September 2006 report), the SOY! Project reported as beneficiaries (children and youth registered in the SOY! Project in Table III.A) all children that were directly or indirectly receiving any type of service financed by the project. This includes all children in the schools that benefited from infrastructure improvements and/or teachers' training. Nevertheless, the *Management Procedures and Guidelines* mentions that *direct service*:

*...involves the provision of such goods and services as tutoring, school meals, uniforms, school supplies and materials, books and transportation vouchers, or other types of incentives to children withdrawn from or at risk of entering exploitive labor to ensure their enrollment in at least one of the educational activities and/or training opportunities... (p. G-13).*

The project team explained that they report this way because they were told to do it this way at the beginning of the project. Table III *Performance Information and Assessment* states, “As of September 2007, 10,320 children and youths will have been registered in the SOY! Project (This will happen gradually with 2,905 registered by September 2005, another 2,880 registered by September 2006, and 4,535 children and youth registered by September 2007).” This means that since the beginning, the project counted children in the project regardless of the service the project provided them or without taking into account the working status of children. It is important to mention here that this number of children and youths are the target children mentioned in the Project Final Document (p. 8). This problem is evident in the reporting since there are two tables (III.A *Measurement Against Project Objectives* and III.B *Aggregate Performance Report on USDOL/ICLP Common Indicators*) with different values for the retention and graduation indicators.

Answers to fundamental questions provided by ICLP on their experience with the project are provided below. Please note that each question has been answered independently and therefore some of the arguments are repetitive.

## 3.2 PROGRAM DESIGN

1. *Please assess the degree to which the project’s original design is realistic and relevant in the current national context. Please take into account project revisions in regards to changes in the scope and targeted municipalities.*

As presented in the Final Project Document, the project was designed with the goal of contributing to the elimination of child labor in the banana and cut flower industries in Ecuador. The purpose was stated to help child laborers or children at risk of engaging in child labor take advantage of existing education opportunities in the areas of intervention of the SOY! Project. Considering the initial and current national context described in the section above, this design is realistic and relevant. Given the high number of children/adolescents working in Ecuador, the low enrollment rates, and the poor quality of education, the expected outputs were relevant. When commenting on the project’s revisions, it is important to point out the activities related to output as described in the Final Project Document.

- Output 1** Groups of key SOY! Project stakeholders make meaningful contributions to education opportunities for child laborers or children at risk of entering the labor market.
- 1.1 Contact and analyze the perceptions of key local stakeholders
  - 1.2 Define and execute an awareness-raising strategy
  - 1.3 Develop specific training tailored for each local stakeholder
  - 1.4 Provide technical assistance and facilitation for agreements/memorandums of understanding and relationships among stakeholders
  - 1.5 Based on initial local diagnosis, define a package of education products and assistance programs to which contributions can be made by key stakeholders

- 1.6 Provide follow-up and facilitation for implementation of education products and assistance programs

**Output 2**

Municipal governments in SOY! Project intervention areas have applied plans, ordinances, and public policy mechanisms that favor education for children laborers or children at risk of entering the labor market.

- 2.1 Develop awareness-raising, communication, and information campaigns at the local and national level
- 2.2 Strengthen advocacy skills and capacity of key stakeholders
- 2.3 Support and advocate for the implementation or strengthening of Children and Adolescents Integral Protection Systems
- 2.4 Support and advocate for participative designing and implementing of municipalities' local development plans
- 2.5 Facilitate agreements between public entities, the private sector, and civil society organizations to facilitate access to services for child laborers and children at risk of entering the labor market

**Output 3**

Education centers and programs offer quality education for children in SOY! Project intervention areas.

- 3.1 Conduct awareness raising with the Education Communities on rights
- 3.2 Train parents, teachers, and children in analyzing their situation, and develop “inclusive plans” within the Education Community for school management, and incorporating issues of child labor and children at risk
- 3.3 Train teachers and technical staff of provincial education boards in learning methodologies related to child laborers and children at risk of entering the labor market
- 3.4 Provide didactic materials, equipment, and infrastructure through participative management processes
- 3.5 Implement a diagnosis of education needs
- 3.6 Develop and/or strengthen basic and vocational education plans, create and/or support strategies for insertion and permanence in the education system of child laborers and at-risk children

These activities correspond to the project's expected outputs, on which the budget was elaborated.

Under this framework, the project operations started in September 2004. In November 2005, USDOL informed the project about the need to change the name of the enrollment indicator to consider *withdrawn and prevented*, and asked to set current and long-term targets for these new indicators for FY2006–FY2009. According to USDOL, this was only a new name for the enrollment indicator not a change in definition. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the project has always counted enrollment in its educational programs without consideration of the working status of the children. Because the message did not fall under the project's original design

(i.e., purpose, expected outputs, and activities), the project never understood the message that children working in exploitive child labor or the worst forms of child labor should not be counted as enrolled until they are removed from the worst forms of labor and enrolled in the project educational/training programs. This is not just a question of definition. For USDOL enrollment in education is a means to an end, the end being removal from the worst forms of child labor. Nevertheless, the framework of the project has always been that *child laborers and children at risk of engaging in child labor, take advantage of existing education opportunities in the areas of intervention of the project* (the purpose). It is not clear how the project is expected to go from educating to withdrawing children from child labor.

2. *Overall, how logical and coherent is the project design/strategy? How relevant are project indicators and means of verification? Please assess the usefulness of the indicators for monitoring (through the Performance Monitoring Plan) and measuring impact.*

A Logframe and a Performance and Monitoring Plan (PMP) were part of the initial project design. Both instruments focused on educational enrollment and were designed in accordance with the three expected outputs of the project. The number of children and adolescents who abandoned child labor was considered only in the performance indicator for the goal of the project. For the midterm evaluation, there were no quantitative means of verification to reference because most of the indicators did not have quantitative targets. It was only clear that as of September 2006, 9,240 children and adolescents were expected to enroll in the project's educational program and at least five local governments were expected to have operational plans or public policy mechanisms to provide educational services. The project's target for withdrawn/prevented for FY2006 was 174 withdrawn and 2,731 prevented (Annex D of the September 2006 Report). For the lifetime of the project, quantitative targets were also established for retention, completion, and for the stakeholders' contributions.

To measure the effect that USDOL expects at the end of the project (i.e., removal of children/adolescents from the worst forms of labor), Table III.B (Aggregated Performance Report on USDOL/ICLP Common Indicators) should be incorporated in the PMP.

### **3.3 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

3. *Please analyze how the project is being implemented, in terms of management, coordination and creation of synergies.*

One of the project's strengths is its ability to work within a consortium of five partners, each of them with their own background and strengths. Nevertheless, considering the different partners' commitments and responsibilities, there is room to improve coordination for the cross benefit of the different partners' experiences. SAT implementation is an example of this. The SAT in El Oro (Diócesis of Machala) has too many children in one classroom; the age range of the students is wide; and most of the students work and study successively because classes do not start until 4:30 p.m. As a consequence, some students who work in banana shipping are frequently late for classes or absent from school when they need to work long hours. In contrast, the SAT in Los Ríos (*Fundación Wong*) constitutes a well-implemented alternative education program for adolescents.

Another strength of the SOY! Project is that it has been able to create synergies with other organizations (public or NGOs) that also work on child labor issues. There is an ongoing coordination of activities with national and local government institutions. The project works closely with the *Foro Social Bananero* and the *Foro Social Florícola*, and the project is aware of activities conducted by other projects funded by USDOL (*Wiñari* and OIT/IPEC).

4. *Please assess whether the project has been able to provide direct services to beneficiaries as planned. If not, what is the project's strategy to reach the established number of beneficiaries that will receive direct services? Is the strategy considering that the beneficiaries need to be receiving these services for a reasonable amount of time before the project ends?*

As mentioned before, until the September 2006 Technical Progress Report, the SOY! Project was reporting as beneficiaries all children who were directly or indirectly receiving any type of services financed by the project. This includes all children in the schools that benefited from infrastructure improvements and/or teacher training. The Final Project Document (p. 8) mentions that the project was going to target 10,320 children, 6,510 parents, and 225 teachers.

According to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) team members in Quito, the project members were trained to report beneficiaries according to the following scheme: 2,905 registered by September 2005, another 2,880 registered by September 2006, and another 4,535 children and youth registered by September 2007. Therefore, as of September 2006, they expected 5,785 (56% of the total) children registered, but in the September 2006 Technical Progress Report (Table IIIA), the project reported 2,923 by September 2005 and 4,086 for the next period. In total, they reported 7,009 child laborers and children at risk of entering the labor market who benefited from the educational opportunities that exist in the SOY! Project intervention zones. This number represents 21.2% more of the targeted population presented in the Final Document.

It is important to notice that these numbers do not represent what USDOL defines as direct services, that which “involves the provision of such goods and services as tutoring, school meals, uniforms, school supplies and materials, books and transportation vouchers, or other types of incentives to children withdrawn from or at risk of entering exploitive labor to ensure their enrollment in at least one of the educational activities and/or training opportunities...” (*Management Procedures and Guidelines*, p. G-13).

Given the definition of direct beneficiaries being used by the project, the strategy is considering that the beneficiaries will receive these services beyond the life of the project because the number of beneficiaries corresponds to school enrollments.

5. *Following the previous question and if the project is not meeting its end goals and targeted beneficiaries, in your opinion what corrective measures could be taken? Please provide a thorough analysis of the different strategies the project could undertake.*

Given the answer to the previous question, it is necessary to clarify with the SOY! Project the definition of *direct beneficiaries and direct services*. According to the definition the project has been using since the proposal, the project will achieve more than the proposed initial target beneficiaries.

To include the USDOL definition of beneficiaries, it is necessary for USDOL to work with the project to come up with a strategy to incorporate, under the umbrella and budget of the initial project design, activities that will lead to withdrawal and/or prevent children from exploitive child labor or the worst forms of labor. It is important to point out that the numbers of children withdrawn or prevented are underestimated in the September 2006 Technical Progress Report for the following reasons:

- Children who have diminished work hours or who have improved their working conditions were not considered (see footnote from Table III.B)
- Youths enrolled in the Los Ríos SAT program and who stopped working were also not taken into account (expressed at the stakeholders meeting).

The strategy to take into account these numbers is to review the data collected by each partner from the monitoring system. Information about type of work and/or number of hours of work is recorded there. On the comments to the draft version of this report, the SOY! Project mentioned that it has already begun to take the necessary corrective measures, and to include the information about steps for direct services

6. *Assess the difference of the project's overall impact and community engagement in those communities that are receiving financial support, in comparison to those that are not involved in the microfinance program.*

The September 2006 Technical Progress Report states that in Cotopaxi the initiative of credit provision to families in the project intervention zones continues to develop and is benefiting 160 families. Nevertheless, this evaluation has found that neither the Diocesan Social Ministry Office in Latacunga (Cotopaxi) nor the Espoir Foundation in Machala (El Oro) have started providing income-generating opportunities through their community bank initiatives to poor families of the target groups. The Cotopaxi and Machala partners have had previous experiences managing community bank programs and therefore were in charge of starting a similar program with the families that are beneficiaries of the SOY! Project educational initiative. Cotopaxi provides credit to a group of women, but this is not directly related to the SOY! Project's goals and objectives of contributing to child labor eradication and/or prevention.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cotopaxi uses profits from loans to other families to provide scholarships to target children of the SOY! Project. Nevertheless, it has not provided direct income generating opportunities to families of the target group.

7. *Indicate other issues that might be relevant to the implementation of the project to date, and for future activities.*

There is nothing more to indicate.

### **3.3.1 Political Factors**

8. *To what extent have factors outside the control of project management affected project implementation and attainment of objectives? Discuss the project's ability to successfully adapt to the political situation in Ecuador (continuous changes in the government, teacher's strikes, opposition to the FTA and U.S. Government related issues on behalf of the indigenous population).*

Since the beginning of the project in September 2004, Ecuador has had two presidents (Lucio Gutierrez and Alfredo Palacio). Ecuador will have a new president as a result of the October 2006 elections. These changes have had and will probably continue to have an effect on the project. In response to the draft version of this report, CRS stated that the repeated changes in the Minister for Social Welfare, for example, has reduced the possibility of counting on the 2,000 scholarship funds in the future. It is true that teacher strikes and blockades of roads by indigenous people protesting the Free Trade Agreement made it impossible to reach the schools, but this did not affect the project's implementation. Project implementers took advantage of cellular phones, which are very popular in Ecuador, even in rural areas.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the project began with new local authorities (*alcaldes*), and new elections for local authorities are scheduled for about the same time as that the project will end. This coincidence between the life of the project and that of the local authorities is favorable to the work that needs to be done at the local level.

### **3.3.2 Geographical Considerations**

9. *How has the project's choice of target areas impacted project implementation? Has the project encountered any major problems or challenges due to the geographical locations or distance between sites?*

Heavy rains and the lack of quality roads have challenged for the project's implementation, but interviewees mentioned that the frequent use of cellular phones helped a lot. The project did not report any major problem resulting from geographical location or distance between sites. Nevertheless, it is time consuming and tiring for team members to visit the schools to provide services.

10. *Are there any trends in the implementation of the project that might be specific to the distinct regions (Sierra-Costa)?*

In the Sierra region (specifically in Pichincha) where the project works with the flower industry, the project supports the bilingual education program. The project also supports an interesting music program, *Aprendizajes Musicales Alternativos Recreativos AMAR.-Metodología IVM:*

*Integral Vivencial Multisensorial.* With this program, children learn values and children's rights by playing Andean music with Andean instruments provided by the project.

The various trends in implementing the project do not correspond to the distinct regions (Sierra—Costa), but rather correspond to different performances of the partners although they are not associated with their backgrounds or responsibilities. This could be improved with more interaction and sharing of experiences between partners.

### 3.3.3 Targeted Sectors

*11. How well is the project engaging those families who currently value work over education for children, given the poor quality of the education and the need to survive? What are the mechanisms for reaching and including those families?*

This is one of the most difficult challenges for the project. Child labor in Ecuador is part of the culture and a response to a poverty situation. In all the intervention areas of the project, a great deal of effort has been made to sensitize parents of working children about children's rights and the benefits of education. These sensitization efforts have been done not only in schools but also through theater activities at parks and community gatherings. Nevertheless, the project has found it hard to reach families of children who do not attend school and to include them in the program.

*12. Assess the interventions for girls and indigenous children, identified by the project as particularly at-risk groups. How successful has the project been in incorporating their specific needs into the educational services?*

This question was asked during the interviews and some people were not aware that this issue was addressed in the Final Project Document. Therefore, it is important to note that the document mentions that “the project will also address the special needs of specific at-risk groups and indigenous children. The particular vulnerabilities and needs of these groups will be identified in the diagnosis of each school, related with teaching language, curricula relevance, attitudes from teachers and parents towards their education; and project activities will be designed to address these needs, and project monitoring and evaluation tools will disaggregate by gender, in order to assess the impact of project activities on these groups. Possible activities that will be made in favor of these groups include the updating of school curriculums to be culturally sensitive, and to address the problems of ‘hidden gender stereotyping’ in curriculum or classroom practices” (p. 9).

The project monitoring and evaluation tools disaggregate by gender, but specific interventions for girls are not present in the project component of Machala, Cotopaxi, or in Los Ríos. Pichincha (Cayambe) and Guayas are working on the issue through values. Cayambe has even developed some handbooks. For example, *Vida Saludable* (Healthy Life) is a handbook used to work with students and families and it covers issues about body hygiene as well as the human reproductive system.

Interventions for indigenous children are present in Pichincha (the largest indigenous population in the project intervention area)<sup>5</sup> where the project is working with the *Dirección Provincial de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe de Pichincha* (Bilingual Education Department of Pichincha). In this area, CARE has also helped the Education Department develop the Strategic Plan for 2005–2010 and the project to improve the quality of bilingual education.<sup>6</sup> CARE in Cayambe has developed an interesting handbook about Andean nutrition (*nutrición andina*) to incorporate good eating habits using the Andean cooking style.

*13. Assess the project's ability to address the specific needs of children working in the banana sector vis-à-vis the needs of those in the flower sector.*

The project is addressing the specific needs of children working in the banana sector by offering SAT classes at a time that allows them to attend classes after working hours. This is the case of the SAT program implementation in Machala, but not in Los Ríos where students attending SAT do not work. In Los Ríos, the evaluator observed that SAT is an appropriate program to be implemented in rural communities because it seeks to prepare youth for a life in a rural setting by combining lectures with practical projects in agriculture.

Cotopaxi, an area of flower production, has implemented a distance learning program (*Monseñor Proaño*) where youths go to school on Saturday or Sunday and the rest of the week they study using homework. In Pichincha, the other area of flower production, the project has not implemented a distance learning program. In Cotopaxi, most students do not work in the flower industry, but work making “bricks,” usually at a family business.

Although Cotopaxi has a distance learning program for youths, there are children from elementary school<sup>7</sup> who work making “bricks” at the family business. They start working at an early age and are able to combine school with work when making bricks they wake up at 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m., they work until 6:00 a.m., and then the children go to school. The interviewed teacher reported that some children are extremely tired during the school day. Nevertheless, the schedule of this activity is not the only concern with respect to child labor. Among other activities, children work painting pieces of wood that serve as molds for the bricks. They paint the wood with discharged car oil and petrol.

*14. How relevant has been the project's strategy of separating the actions into two distinct age groups 5-12/13-15? Is this strategy instrumental in facilitating the process of removing children from labor? How effective is it for preventing drop-out in the transition from primary to secondary school?*

The breakdown in these two age groups is relevant because in Ecuador most school dropouts occur between elementary school and secondary school. It is estimated that only 20% of

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<sup>5</sup> The other intervention areas have more *mestizos*.

<sup>6</sup> They have already published *Proyectos Operativos Dirección Provincial de Educación Bilingüe de Pichincha and Plan Estratégico 2005–2010*.

<sup>7</sup> When commenting on the draft version of this report, the SOY! Project noted that “reviewing the database, we find that 67 children (of the 2,000 covered by the work of the SOY! team in the Social Ministry of Latacunga) are studying in school supported by the program and working in family block-making business.

elementary school graduates continue on to secondary school.<sup>8</sup> The small percentage that continues to secondary education is explained not only by the poor quality of education in Ecuador but also by a large shortage of secondary schools, especially in rural areas. Because of this lack of secondary schools, the project's strategy of breaking down the age groups is extremely relevant. The SAT program and the distance learning program implemented by the project fulfill the need of those students who want to continue school beyond the primary level. There is no doubt that these two programs facilitate the process of preventing children from entering the labor force by providing them an educational alternative. With respect to removing children from labor, the experience in Ecuador has not been so clear. The SAT program in Los Ríos has actually removed children from work. The SAT program in El Oro has been implemented with a schedule that allows working children to attend school. The latter also happens with the distance learning program in Cotopaxi.

### 3.3.4 Education Model

15. *Assess the implementation of pilot models for secondary education being tested by the project, such as the Tutorial Learning System (SAT) and the SECAP's Outreach Project mechanism.*

In Los Ríos and El Oro provinces, SAT operates in grades 8, 9, and 10. In practice, SAT is offered up to grade 9, but it is expected to be offered to grade 10 by the next school year. The *Instituto Nacional de la Niñez y la Familia* (INNFA) has been donating scholarships for youth participating in the SAT program. There are differences in the way SAT programs are implemented in the provinces. In Los Ríos, the SAT program is for youths who are no longer working, yet in El Oro, the SAT program constitutes an educational opportunity for youth working mainly at the banana plantations. In Los Ríos, the community donated a piece of land for students to practice what they learn in the classroom. Each student is responsible for production. They are learning how to fertilize with urea and how to decompose organic products into fertilizer. All students interviewed for this evaluation in the SAT in Los Ríos said they wanted to go to college to get a degree. Several of them were thinking about a degree in agricultural engineering, but others were thinking about becoming teachers. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that during the evaluator's visit to the SAT program in El Oro, students there appeared to have a higher standard of living than in any other school district visited in Ecuador. When interviewed, most of the youths in El Oro mentioned that they were working to buy their own clothing. Four students in the classroom bought cellular phones and two of them showed the evaluator the new motorcycles they had just bought with money made at the banana plantations.

With respect to the distance learning program (*Monseñor Proaño*) in Cotopaxi, the Provincial Department for Education has approved the initiation of the eighth, ninth, and tenth years of basic education. The distance program is also an educational program, primarily for working students, because students attend school only once a week.

To provide services in rural areas, SECAP has developed an Outreach Project mechanism in which SECAP provides the instructors and the didactic materials, and local communities provide

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<sup>8</sup> Final Project Document (p. 1).

the classroom or workshop equipment to carry out the course. There was no mention of the SECAP's Outreach Project mechanism during the interview process or in the documents that were reviewed for this evaluation, which suggests that it had yet to be implemented. However, the final project document mentions that *Servicio Ecuatoriano de Capacitación Profesional* (SECAP) provides certification in vocational training in areas such as carpentry, car repair, and micro-business management through its 17 training centers located throughout the country.

*16. Explain and assess any other education model the project might be using to increase the quality of education.*

In Naranjal, the evaluator was able to observe JUCONI activities intended to teach children how to play. The children attending elementary school needed support to play in an organized way. The evaluator was surprised by the children's lack of exposure to puzzles, but was impressed by their motivation to participate in this activity.

The project is training teachers in different subjects such as math, language, and arts to increase the quality of education. Teachers are also being trained in classroom management (e.g., how to present material). The project is also working on teacher's self-esteem because low self-esteem was having a negative effect on the quality of education. According to SOY! Project team members, these efforts are already having a positive effect on the quality of education.

*17. Discuss the project's reported increase of quality of education in some targeted areas, especially in the Los Ríos province. Explain what these changes are, and how quality is being measured.*

The project has not reported an increase in quality of education, but it has reported that Los Ríos province has a higher quality of education than any other province. This is explained because the partner in Los Ríos is *Fundación Wong*, which has always had a commitment to education. Of the 16 schools enrolled in the project in Los Ríos, seven of them are private (owned by *Fundación Wong*) and the other nine are public, but they receive financial aid from *Fundación Wong*. During the evaluator's visits to the project schools, the difference in infrastructure and material between the Los Ríos schools and the others was evident. Teachers who get paid by *Fundación Wong* have better incentives and working conditions than teachers from the public sector. Of course, *Fundación Wong* has more control of teacher absenteeism, which also increases the quality of education in the region.

The project measures quality through the School Quality Index. The index has two components. One component is related to general information about the school or center and its link to the local government. The other is related to quality. With respect to quality, this index takes into consideration the following indicators:

1. Educational community participation (*Participación de la Comunidad Educativa*)
2. Infrastructure and environmental conditions of the school or educational center (*Condiciones físicas y ambientales*)
3. Teaching and learning (curriculum)

4. Health and nutrition
5. Teachers and tutors
6. Children's rights and child labor

### 3.3.5 Awareness Raising

18. Assess the overall awareness raising campaigns conducted and supported by the project. Describe the participation of the different stakeholders in these campaigns.

The approach the SOY! Project has taken with respect to the awareness-raising campaigns has been under the umbrella of children's rights in general. According to the project, this approach allows them to raise public awareness based on the link between the quality of education and child labor prevention. Furthermore, the broad approach of children's rights provides the project with the opportunity to collaborate with other organizations that are trying to raise awareness on other issues of children's rights such as sexual exploitation, mistreatment and abuse, and the need for increased government resources for social policies. The project has coordinated activities with organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund, DyA, Education for All, National Council for Children, National Watch Group for Children's Rights, and with stakeholders such as *Foro Social Bananero* and *Foro Social Florícola*.

The SOY! Project developed awareness-raising materials for different audiences: business people (social responsibility), parents, students, and the general public. Some material specifically addresses the topic of child labor. An example of this is the *Boletín Informativo—Erradicación del Trabajo de Niños y Adolescentes en Ecuador*, published by *Foro Social Bananero*, SOY! Project, and DyA.<sup>9</sup> Another example is the *Combatiendo el Trabajo Infantil y Garantizando el Futuro de Nuestra Niñez a Través de la Educación* published by the SOY! Project. At the local level, SOY! Project and *Fundación Wong* are publishing an informative supplement called *Proyecto SOY!—Erradicando el Trabajo Infantil, Fomentando la Educación y la Participación Social de los Niños y Adolescentes*.

During the evaluator's stay in Ecuador, the project awareness-raising campaigns were present in the newspapers either at the national level or at the local level through SOY! Project partners. At the national level, the project supported and actively participated in the *Mírame a los Ojos* (Look into my Eyes) campaign. This campaign was the result of a combined effort of several government institutions and NGOs to raise awareness among the presidential candidates and the general public about the expectations children and adolescents have had about preservation and protection of their rights. Child labor was specifically mentioned in this campaign, which also developed activities for the creation and strengthening of institutions that protect children's rights.

In all provinces, the partners have sponsored theater presentations, dance, music, and mime performances to disseminate information on children's rights and the eradication and prevention of child labor. Some of the partners also have weekly radio shows with adolescents. These

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<sup>9</sup> The title of the June 2006 issue was *La eliminación de trabajo de niños y adolescentes: Un objetivo a nuestro alcance* (The Eradication of Children and Adolescents Labor: a Target That Is Within Our Reach).

campaigns have had a good effect on children, parents, teachers, and local government authorities.

### 3.3.6 Monitoring and Measurement

*19. Assess the project's success in reporting only enrollment to reporting withdrawn/prevention. Is the program design and budget relevant and realistic under this focus?*

The project has not been able to accurately report withdrawn/prevention. It has also not been able to report enrollment of children who have been removed from or are at risk of entering the worst forms of child labor and are matriculated in one of the project's educational programs. Before the September 2006 Technical Progress Report, the project reported educational enrollment without regard to the working status of children. The September 2006 report attempts to report both educational enrollment and enrollment, taking into account the working status of the child.

Nevertheless, none of these indicators are accurately reported. The reported educational enrollment indicator is not related to the provision of a direct service, but constitutes an indicator of the children/adolescents enrolled in the schools of the project's intervention area. Furthermore, the numbers that are being reported correspond to a fraction of the 10,320 target children of the project. The annual fraction of this number that was incorporated as enrolled was determined at the beginning of the project. The indicator that takes into "consideration the working status of the child" is underestimated because it does not consider the youths of the SAT program in Los Ríos who are no longer working or the students who are working fewer hours. Nevertheless, the project can obtain this information from its database.

The project's design is not relevant or realistic if the project does not focus on the withdrawn/prevention target. None of the project's outputs or activities are specifically related to withdrawn/prevention.

According to Table III.B, the 10,320 children who were considered as targets in the Final Project Document will now be the withdrawn/prevented targets. The numbers by fiscal year are as follows:

**Table III.B: Withdrawn/Prevented Targets by Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Withdrawn Target	Prevented Target	Total Enrollment
FY2006	174	2,731	2,905
FY2007	173	2,707	2,880
FY2008	272	4,263	4,535
Total (Life of the project)	619	9,701	10,320

How are these children going to change their working status? Will this come automatically as a short-term (there are only two more years until the end of the project) consequence of the educational program that the project is implementing? Right now, most of the students interviewed combine work and study. Some of them are usually late for classes, miss classes on

the days the plantation has to ship the bananas, or are tired in school from waking up too early in the morning to go to work. Furthermore, some children/youths are still working under the worst forms of labor (e.g., banana plantation, bricks, making bread at the bakery). Considering only the outputs and activities of the Final Project Document, the same budget is neither realistic nor relevant with this focus.

*20. Assess the current monitoring strategy of involving and relying on community stakeholders (teachers, parents, other children and SOY! Project promoters) to track the education and work status of children every six months. Explain the project monitoring system for tracking the work status of those children identified as withdrawn.*

The SOY! Project monitoring strategy relies on parents, youth organizations, and community organizations in Guayas, Pichincha, and Los Ríos because the project partners in these areas have had previous experience working with these community groups. In general and for the whole project, the monitoring strategy relies on teachers and SOY! Project promoters. The project partners work with a monitoring system that includes information about the child, the location (province and community), the school, the permanence in the school, and the working condition of the child (e.g., activity in which he/she is involved, number of hours worked, change in the number of hours worked, and if he/she receives payment for the work). The information is collected among the teachers and the SOY! Project promoters.

With respect to those children identified as withdrawn, it is important to mention that there is no tracking information if they do not attend school. If they do attend school, the methodology described above is applied (i.e., the indicator is the working condition of the child).

*21. Has the project been able to accurately collect data on its direct beneficiaries and report on USDOL common indicators (withdrawal, prevention, retention, and completion) thus far?*

The SOY! Project has problems with the reporting of data. The problem starts with the concept of “direct beneficiaries.” The project has been reporting as direct beneficiaries all the children in the schools where it has any activity even if this activity is only infrastructure remodeling.

With respect to completion, it is not clear what the project is reporting. In Table III.A (footnote) from the September 2006 Technical Progress Report, the project reports, “The project currently reports... the targets for the first year of children and youth that will conclude a complete cycle of studies. The target of culmination/graduation will be established on an annual basis, in accordance with the number of children enrolled in the last levels of each educational cycle.” The confusion might arise from the meaning of *educational cycle*. Because the project offers services at the primary school level, the secondary school level, the distance learning program, and the SAT program, it is difficult for the project to match the duration of these different cycles with the duration of the project to report completion. In Table III.A of the September 2006 Technical Progress Report, the project reported zero graduations.

There is no problem reporting retention because the information comes directly from the school/educational center attendance rosters. Before the September 2006 Technical Progress

Report, the project considered in the denominator all the children attending school and/or educational centers in the project interventional areas. Nevertheless, in Table III.B of the September 2006 Technical Progress Report, this was corrected and the numerator corresponds to what USDOL defines as retention (i.e., with respect to children withdrawn/prevented through a USDOL supported educational program(s) who continue in the program). There is a typo in the report and therefore for the period 09/01/05–03/31/06, the number reported as numerator should be the denominator and vice versa.

In the September 2006 Technical Progress Report, the numbers for children and adolescents who have been withdrawn and prevented was revised. Nevertheless, the footnote of Table III.B states, “in this report, children that are currently involved in the eradication of child labor process are not included (i.e., those children that have diminished work hours or that have improved their working conditions).” This footnote indicates the project is still having problems with accounting for children withdrawn. According to the *Management Procedures and Guidelines*, these children should be considered children withdrawn from exploitive work because children withdrawn refer to those children who were found to be working in exploitive child labor and no longer work under such conditions as a result of a project intervention. This includes the following:

1. Children who have been completely withdrawn from work.
2. Children who were involved in hazardous work or work that impedes a child’s education but who are no longer working under exploitive conditions because they are now working fewer hours and/or under safer conditions.
22. *Assess the degree to which project staff, implementing organizations, and other stakeholders have a clear and common understanding of the concepts for identifying a child as prevented or withdrawn.*

See above.

23. *Identify and explain any difficulties the project might be having for collecting data from schools and municipalities.*

The project did not report any difficulty in collecting data from schools or municipalities. The schools manifested close collaboration with the SOY! Project as they regard the project with gratitude because they feel it is helping them. All the municipalities but one in Los Ríos work with the project to establish Cantonal Councils for Children and Adolescents and Systems for Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents.

### 3.4 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

24. *Assess the overall effectiveness of the partnership with Save the Children-UK, CARE, Fundación Wong and the Ecuadorian Catholic Episcopal Conference.*

One of the strengths of the SOY! Project is its partnership with all the organizations of the consortium. Each organization contributes its own expertise, which enriches the activities of the project.

25. *Address the coordination, quality of the interaction and level of collaboration with:*

- Other USG funded programs such as the World Learning *Wiñari* Project and ILO-IPEC.
- Flower and Banana Social Forum
- Municipalities and local level authorities
- U.S. Embassy and Consulate
- Other governmental and nongovernmental programs aimed at the same population

The SOY! Project has managed to coordinate and to develop a good relationship with other institutions. It is important to mention that the SOY! Project is recognized at the national and the local levels as a leader in promoting children's rights and the eradication of child labor. There is coordination with other U.S. Government-funded programs (*Wiñari* Project and ILO-IPEC). Some discrepancies arose because these partners could not work in the same geographical area, but all the differences were settled.

The SOY! Project works in collaboration with the Flower Social Forum and the Banana Social Forum. Because the secretary of the Banana Social Forum, Mrs. Patricia Bedoya, is also the Representative for the Ecuadorian Catholic Episcopal Conference, the Banana Social Forum seems to have more activities with respect to child labor eradication than does the Flower Social Forum.

The SOY! Project coordinates with the local and municipal authorities in all but one municipality in Los Ríos. The quality of the interactions depends on the project partners. Some, such as Cayambe (CARE), work closely with the municipality and local representatives of the Minister of Education. Other partners, though they work with the municipalities on topics such as children's rights and child labor, are not sharing experiences and benefiting from the experience of other groups working in the same area. For example, in El Oro (Diócesis of Machala), the wife of the mayor mentioned that they received financial aid for the children's scholarships from the Diócesis of Machala, but they did not have other types of activity coordination even though El Oro has a program for student retention and alternative income-generation activities for the mothers. In the latter activities, women learn knitting, crochet, and macramé.

With respect to the U.S. Embassy in Quito, the project worked closely with the labor officer, Vanessa Schultz. Nevertheless, since she was transferred to another region a few months ago, there has been almost no contact with the U.S. Embassy in Quito. This is because the post has been staffed by a temporary worker.

There is coordination of activities with governmental and nongovernmental programs that are directed at the same population. This issue was very clear at the meeting with the Minister of Labor where representatives of the *Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia*, of the *Foro de la Niñez y Adolescencia*, the *Foro Social Florícola*, and the *Contrato Social por la Educación en el Ecuador* explained that they all work together and support the SOY! Project's activities.

*26. Explain the status of the development of Inter-Institutional Education Coordinating Committees (IECC), and their link to Education Community representatives. Have the IECC been established in all municipalities? Have they been operating, and if so, how instrumental have they been in coordinating awareness rising and supporting efforts?*

When referring to Inter-Institutional relations, the project reports usually refer to networking with other organizations. Nevertheless, Mr. Cesar Paredes (SOY! Project coordinator) said that in all provinces but El Oro, the IECC was established and was already functioning. Eighty-five schools in the project intervention areas have participative diagnostics and educational inclusive plans. It was also reported that in three provinces, public officers from the *direcciones provinciales de educación* have been taking part in the collection of information from educational centers, which demonstrates their involvement.

*27. What have been the major challenges and opportunities in the coordination with the host country government at the national level, particularly Ministers of Education and Labor, as well as other government agencies active in addressing relating children's issues?*

At the time of the evaluation (October 2006), there was good interaction between the SOY! Project and the Ministers of Education and Labor as well as other government agencies. These groups coordinate activities regarding social awareness on children's rights and the value of education for working children. The continuous changes in Ministers had been a challenge to the project but not at the time when the evaluation took place.

### **3.5 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET**

*28. Has USDOL technical assistance in understanding federal reporting requirements e.g., GPRA, feedback on Technical Progress Reports, and overall communications between grantee and USDOL been adequate and sufficient?*

In terms of technical assistance in understanding federal reporting and on feedback on Technical Progress Reports, members of the project in Ecuador and in Baltimore agreed that USDOL has done a good job. The technical assistance has been adequate and sufficient. The people interviewed also felt that they have received prompt responses to their questions.

There has been and still are problems with the change in the name of the enrollment indicator from just enrollment to withdrawn/prevented. The project understands the definition provided by USDOL but needs more technical assistance because the problem comes from the initial project design. The focus of the project has always been to help child laborers or children at risk of engaging in child labor take advantage of existing education options in the project's areas of intervention. The project needs technical assistance to cross-reference the two reports: one based on enrollment in educational programs without regard to the working status of children and the other based on enrollment of school age children who have been removed or are at risk of entering the worst forms of child labor. The project knows the definitions, what it does not know is how to record and report (i.e., it knows what it has to do but it does not know how to do it).

*29. Please address the high number of staff changes and how that might have affected the project implementation and the project's relation with stakeholders. Expand on actions that the project might have taken to minimize the impact.*

There have been changes in key personnel (Alexandra Moncada, the initial project director, Patricio Cajas, the initial education specialist), as well as personnel from the consortium members (e.g., Jesenia León from U.K. Save the Children). When asked, the unanimous response was that these changes have not affected the project's implementation. Nevertheless, any change in key personnel at the general level of the project and in coordinator personnel at the local partner level, brought delays in the implementation of certain actions. Although it helped that Alexandra Moncada stayed in Ecuador as a CRS regional official and was always in contact with the project, the extent of change in project personnel has had an effect. These changes affected the implementation of certain actions (e.g., alternative income generation activities), as well as the coordination of strategies between the partners. However, the evaluator did not perceive any effect on the project's relation with its stakeholders.

The USDOL project officer and the labor officer at the U.S. embassy in Ecuador also changed during the first two years of the project.

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

In terms of management areas, there should be more exchange of ideas and experiences between the local partners. Although two committees have been created to ensure effective coordination of the consortium (i.e., the central Coordinating Committee and the Technical Committee), there are differences between local partners in the way things are being implemented that are not the result of the differences in scope and emphasis stated in the proposal. The different components of the project, each of them with unique backgrounds and previous experiences, are not benefiting from knowledge and/or ideas exchange.

There is also not enough sharing of experiences between the consortium members and their local partners. For example, SAT in El Oro has implementation problems: too many students (31) in one single classroom; no centers implemented inside the classroom; most of the students work; and students are late for classes or do not attend school during high labor demand seasons at the banana plantations. Nevertheless, *Fundación Wong* has a well implemented SAT program that is accepted by students who are returning to study after some years or who have no other opportunity to study in their community.

However, there is coordination of interventions and activities at the national level, as in the case of the *Mírame a los Ojos* (Look into my Eyes) campaign.

### 3.6 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT

*31. Overall, was the project's initial strategy for sustainability adequate and appropriate? What steps have been taken so far to promote sustainability and continuation of education strategies for combating child labor beyond the life of the project?*

Since its beginning, the SOY! Project understood that the idea of sustainability is linked to the project effect and the ability of individuals, communities, and the Nation to ensure that the activities or changes implemented endure. In this respect, the project is working on the following measures:

1. Raising awareness about children/adolescents rights (including not working) and about the importance of children education.
2. Teachers and parents training activities.
3. Strengthening institutional capacity at the national level—work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Welfare.
4. Working in coordination with national institutions that advocate to protect children's rights.
5. Building institutional capacities at the local level—municipalities, *Consejos Cantonales de la Niñez y Adolescencia*.
6. Incidence in Public Policies—citizen's agenda for education, ten-year plan for education, ten-year plan for childhood and adolescence, and eradication plan for child labor.

*32. Assess the project's success on mobilizing stakeholders to make commitments and contribute to the creation of education opportunities for children and adolescents.*

The project's proposal stated that US\$208,303 was expected as stakeholders' contributions to education opportunities (Output 1). As of September 2006, the project reports an additional US\$649,300 in stakeholder contributions, which represents 21.6% of its US\$3 million budget.

March 05 to September 05	US\$226,400
October 05 to February 05	US\$254,800
March 06 to August 06	US\$168,100
Total	US\$649,300 = 21.6% of the budget

Some of the commitments stakeholders have made include the following:

- Social Welfare Ministry & INNFA—scholarships for 2,232 children and adolescents

- INNFA—technical and logistic support for training activities technicians for health activities
- *Foro Social Bananero* and *Florícola*—technical and logistic support for training activities
- Municipalities—
  - Office space for the project in two *Cantones*
  - Resources for sanitary infrastructure in 19 schools
  - Educational material in 7 schools
  - Funding for summer camps for 1,000 children and adolescents
- *Direcciones Provinciales de Educación Hispana y Bilingüe* and NGOs—
  - Technical and logistic support for training activities and training monitoring in 4 provinces
- Local NGOs—
  - Technical and logistic support for training teachers, government workers, children, adolescents, and families
- Families—
  - Labor for infrastructure and maintenance

33. *Assess the project's work with the municipalities for supporting the Children and Adolescents Integral Protection Systems. Is the project actively incorporated in the local political framework? Has the project been instrumental in coordinating local government, business and local civil society to advance children's rights and improve access to education?*

A strength of the project has been its ability to work with local governments. Out of 11 local governments in the implementation area, five have already established the *Consejo Cantonal para la Niñez y Adolescencia* and four have the legal framework to establish it. In four out of the five provinces, the IECC was also established and is functioning. Eighty-five schools in the project intervention areas already have participative diagnostics and educational inclusive plans. These accomplishments show that the project is actively incorporated into the local government framework. Only in the municipality of Quevedo in Los Ríos has the project not been able to work with the local authorities mainly because of the mayor's attitude toward the SOY! Project. The latter seems to be a question of the mayor's desire to control everything (micro management).

*34. Assess the implementation of “inclusive plans” where the project seeks to promote parental involvement in school management, including assisting with a school maintenance plan.*

The evaluator interviewed parents in all but one school or educational center. The interviews demonstrated that parents knew about the project and were involved in its activities. There have been reports of parents providing labor for infrastructure and maintenance. In Cotopaxi, the evaluator saw parents working on building classrooms for the SAT program and the distance learning program with resources provided by the community.

*35. What has been the impact to date of the project on the role of community members in combating child labor? Assess the capacity and motivation of community members to continue their involvement with the issue once the project has ended.*

The sensitization effort made by the project in terms of combating child labor has had a great effect on the community members. The evaluator witnessed active participation of community leaders in school activities and children’s rights sensitization. Furthermore, in Cotopaxi, the evaluator saw community members actively participating in the building of their school. In Los Ríos, the community donated one acre of land so that SAT students could learn about agricultural issues. The evaluator’s impression was that community members were highly motivated to support the education of their children. Nevertheless, the issue of financing the scholarships and the improvements in schools was a constant concern among community members when talking about the end of the SOY! Project.

## **IV LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES**

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One of the best practices learned from this project correspond to the implementation of the SAT educational program in Los Ríos. SAT is an appropriate program to implement in rural communities because it seeks to prepare youth for a life in a rural setting by combining lectures with practical projects in agriculture. The class that was observed was working in centers (small groups of students) to promote the exchange of ideas and solidarity among students. In Los Ríos, the community donated a piece of land for the students to practice what they learned in the classroom. Every student was responsible for an agricultural project. For their project last year, students grew beans and sold them to collect money for a water pump. Students in this program were withdrawn from labor and when interviewed, expressed their interest in acquiring a college education.

Another good practice relates to the relationship that the SOY! Project has with its partners. As mentioned before, the five partners have different backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, and they complement each other. Partners have been able to combine efforts to work for one single project rather than working for five mini projects.

The SOY! Project helped establish or strengthen inter-institutional networks of cooperation that are working actively in Ecuador.

As a lesson learned, the evaluators should consider the change in the performance indicator. The way USDOL implemented the change of the performance indicator was not appropriated because, as of today, the project is encountering problems.

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## V CONCLUSIONS

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With respect to its initial project design, the SOY! Project has achieved excellent results for its three outputs. One of the main contributions of the SOY! Project during its two years of operation is that it effectively changed individual and social behaviors and attitudes that used to promote and tolerate the worst forms of child labor in Ecuador. The project has also been able to create relationships with its partners and with national government institutions, local governments, and other NGOs working on children's rights and specifically on child labor issues. This helped incorporate issues related to children's rights and the risks of child labor into Ecuador's social agenda. The SOY! Project also helped improve the quality of education in its intervention areas. Groups of stakeholders have contributed an additional 21.6% of the project budget to increase education opportunities for children who are working or at risk of entering the labor market.

The most difficult challenge for the project is to work with the issue of withdrawn/prevention. This is not only a question of reporting accurately to USDOL, but a question of project design. For USDOL, enrollment in education is a means to an end, the end being the removal from the worst forms of child labor in Ecuador. The purpose for the SOY! Project is that child laborers or children at risk of engaging in child labor take advantage of existing education options in the project's areas of intervention.

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## VI RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. The project should improve the communication/coordination between the consortium members to share experiences and to benefit more from each others' background and expertise. The differences in the methods of implementation that were observed during the evaluation could be solved with more interaction between the consortium members.
2. In Cotopaxi students work in family businesses making bricks. Therefore, the project should include this economic activity as part of the target areas of intervention. Children who work in the manufacturing of bricks have special needs because they start work between 2:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. The strategy to withdraw and prevent these children from the worst forms of labor should consider that the making of bricks is a family business.
3. There is a need for USDOL's technical assistance to SOY! Project to help it with the new focus on the withdrawn/prevented target. The technical support should be for training on how to obtain from the database the information to report the indicators (e.g., direct beneficiaries, enrollment, children withdrawn, children prevented, and completion) based not on school enrollment but on the working status of children/adolescents. Technical support is also needed to alter the project's approach to coordinate with USDOL's approach (i.e., focusing on withdrawn/prevention). The SOY! Project has been operating according to the expected outputs and activities in the original project design and consequently, supporting education to working children. To focus on withdrawn/prevention, new activities should be incorporated.
4. The SOY! Project should improve some implementation procedures such as the following:
  - Time when teachers are trained (students are losing school time)
  - Time when parents meet (in El Oro a group of parents complained that they cannot attend the project's activities because they are on Fridays during work time)
  - The way SAT in El Oro is implemented (too many students in one classroom, broad age range, does not take into consideration that some youths are returning to school after some years away from classes, appropriate schedule of classes for youths who work at the plantations)
5. El Oro and Cotopaxi should start alternative income-generating activities with parents of children who currently work. Parents should commit themselves to reduce the number of hours their children work or to withdraw them from the worst forms of labor.
6. If the SOY! Project is to focus more on withdrawal and prevention, a review of the budget or an extension of the contract is needed. New activities should be defined because the current ones correspond to the outputs stated on the original project design. These new activities should be tailored for each of the five regions. The income-generating opportunities that the project is going to implement in Cotopaxi and El Oro for

500 poor families of the target group will be a good source of information about what to implement.

7. To focus on withdrawal and prevention, the project could reduce its emphasis on social awareness raising and increase activities that would allow families to obtain the income lost when a child is withdrawn from the worst forms of labor. In most cases, child labor is related to low family income (poverty), and although poverty alleviation strategies take time, the incidence of child labor in the worst forms of labor could be reduced in the project areas of intervention if—
  - Families are helped with micro credits
  - Mothers are taught activities that could provide alternative income<sup>10</sup> such as the following:
    - Banana dessert in El Oro
    - Paper made out of banana
    - Souvenirs made with residuals from the banana production (Patricia Bedoya from *Foro Bananero* has started with this activity)
  - Families are taught to register for the Development Bonus provided by the government. Families that qualify sometimes do not apply because of lack of knowledge about the procedure.
  - Work with the family issues, such as home economics, to improve the way they spend money. CARE has developed some handbooks to work with families (*Economía y producción* and *Relaciones familiares*) with the aim of improving families' budgeting. With the same amount of money, families could be better off by organizing their expenditures. The approach of CARE is to encourage less alcohol and more healthy food in the consumers' baskets.

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<sup>10</sup> Alternative income-generation activities should consider whether there is a potential market for the products.