

Evaluation Summary: DESTINO, Panama Education Initiative Project

Project and Evaluation Facts

Region/Country: THE AMERICAS/Panama
Grantee: Creative Associates International, Inc.
Project Duration: August 16, 2004-August 12, 2008
Fiscal Year Funded and Funding Level:
FY 2003 USD 3,000,000
Type of Evaluation: Final
Date of Evaluation: April 2008
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Evaluation Management: ICF Macro
Evaluator(s): Mauricio García-Moreno

Background and Context

Summary of Project Objectives and Focus

The DESTINO project was a four-year project implemented by Creative Associates International, Inc (CAI), in collaboration with three Panamanian NGOs. The project operated in rural areas of Chiriquí, Coclé, Veraguas, Herrera, Los Santos, and Darien provinces as well as the native regions of Ngobe-Buglé and Emberá, and was focused on children engaged in or at risk of engaging in exploitative labor in the agriculture sector.

The project was guided by the following Development and Immediate Objectives:

Development Objective: To reduce the number of children working in commercial agriculture in rural Panama by promoting children's participation in schooling and vocational training.

Immediate Objectives:

- Increase awareness of local, regional, and national groups about the problem of child labor in Panama;
- Strengthen the capacity of educational institutions to adopt strategies to improve the quality of their instruction and to reduce child labor; and
- Collaborate with local, national, and international organizations and institutions to promote policies and laws that reduce child labor.

The project was designed to work closely with government actors and NGOs, and to employ innovative educational initiatives.

Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

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

Methodology of Evaluation

The evaluation was based on a desk review of relevant documentation, followed by a field mission from the 13th to the 28th of April 2008 in the provinces of Chiriquí, Veraguas, and Darien, and the native regions of Gnobé-Buglé and Emberá. The field work consisted of interviews, focus groups and other information collection techniques involving project staff and stakeholders such as NGOs at the national and provincial level, government representatives, international organizations, representatives of coffee and sugar companies, children, parents of beneficiaries, and teachers. The evaluation was affected in accordance with the terms of reference (TOR), as prepared by Macro with input from USDOL and other key stakeholders.

Evaluation's Main Findings & Conclusions

At its conclusion, the project has realized all of its objectives; namely, the project has raised public awareness of the dangers of child labor; strengthened the capacity of educational institutions and NGO's; and supported the development of the national Child Labor Education Plan.

Nonetheless, the project has fallen short of its withdrawal/prevention goals, having withdrawn or prevented 1,844 children from exploitative work vs. a target of 3,095 children. In large part, this was due to the project's overestimation of demand for select educational interventions in target communities as

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well as limitations in the project's operational strategy.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Lessons Learned

- In the case of seasonal family migration, it is important for a child labor eradication strategy to target the working and educational conditions of the families at their migration destination, as well as at their home location;
- Activities to improve the quality of education must be implemented in communities where there are direct beneficiaries in order to understand the impact of these activities;
- Family income-generating activities must co-occur with educational measures to effectively eradicate child labor;
- The monitoring system must be used by project management, and project staff must be adequately trained not only to gather information, but also to interpret it and put it to use when carrying out their charges; and
- Coordination among implementing agencies must be established in detail at the beginning of the project and must include clear agreements on administrative and monitoring procedures.

Key Recommendations

- Avoid educational and training activities involving indirect beneficiaries, unless parents and teachers are the direct beneficiaries;
- Encourage project synergies by identifying in detail the overlap that will exist among different components and implementing organizations;
- Ensure that the beneficiaries of the projects do not include children who have participated in or are participating in similar projects implemented by other organizations;
- Coordinate, whenever possible, cash transfer programs with actions to improve the quality of education and eliminate child labor;
- Casa Esperanza (CE) and the Ministry of Education should review other countries'

experiences with expanding accelerated education programs (i.e. Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico) and learn from their lessons;

- CE should study how their three educational interventions could be improved to further reduce child labor;
- CE should more accurately forecast demand, the costs per center and per child beneficiary, and its targets;
- USDOL should promote among the project implementers a more managerial use of the monitoring system;
- Seek the participation of producer associations when pertinent, as working with individual producers is not sufficient to ensure the continuance of changes to production standards that rely on child labor; and
- Management contracts with implementing agencies should establish the venues and methods for resolving and conflicts or differences that arise.