

FUNDED BY THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Independent Midterm Evaluation of the DESTINO Project in Panama

Creative Associates International
Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-4-0047



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS	vii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix
I INTRODUCTION	1
II EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	3
III EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	5
3.1 Key Issues Addressed in the Evaluation	5
3.2 Schedule and Means of Evaluation	6
IV FINDINGS	9
4.1 Project Design	9
4.2 The DESTINO Project General Outcomes by Midterm Evaluation	11
4.3 Project Implementation	15
4.4 Monitoring System	18
4.5 Partnership and Coordination	20
4.6 Management and Budget	23
4.7 Sustainability	24
V LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES	27
5.1 Best Practices	27
5.2 Lessons Learned	27
VI CONCLUSIONS	29
VII RECOMMENDATIONS	31
7.1 Restructure Project Design and Refocus Some Key Interventions	31
7.2 Maintain Close Coordination with CETIPPAT, ILO-IPEC, and Other Agencies	32
7.3 Strengthen the Project Monitoring System	32
7.4 Awareness-Raising	34
7.5 Other Complementary Activities That Should Be Encouraged by DESTINO Staff	34
7.6 Management-Related Issues	35
7.7 Sustainability	35

ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of the Evaluation's Key Informants, Meetings, and Site Visits

Annex 2: Stakeholder Workshop Agenda

Annex 3: List of Participants in Stakeholder Workshop

Annex 4: List of Documents Reviewed by the Evaluator

Annex 5: Cross Reference List of the TOR Questions and Pages Addressed in the Report

Annex 6: Suggestions from Participants at the Stakeholder Workshop

Annex 7: Reviewed Tables of Results up to July 2006 for CEC (Tutoring), EPA (Accelerated Primary), and IFAD (Agro-Technical High School), and up to February 2006 for CAIF (Farm Schools)

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAII	Creative Associates International Inc.
CAIF	Farm School
CCDI	<i>Centro de Capacitación y Desarrollo Integral S.A.</i>
CE	<i>Casa Esperanza</i>
CEC	Tutoring Course
CETIPPAT	National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Workers
DESTINO	Project to Combat Child Labor Through Education
EI	Child Labor Education Initiative
EPA	Accelerated Primary School/Course
FTN	<i>Fundación Tierra Nueva</i>
IFAD	Agro-Forestry Institute (high-school) of Darién
IFARHU	Institute of Training of Human Resources
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO-IPEC	International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IPAT	Panamanian Institute of Tourism
MEDUCA	Ministry of Education
MIDA	Ministry of Agriculture
MIDES	Ministry of Social Development
MITRADEL	Ministry of Labor and Work Development
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
REDNANIAP	National Network for Protection of Children and Adolescent Workers
SENAPAN	National Secretariat of the Nutritional Plan
STS	Student Tracking Software
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPR	Technical Progress Report

UDELAS	University of Las Americas
UNACHI	National University of Chiriquí
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This independent midterm evaluation was conducted to assess the achievements of Creative Associates International, Inc.'s Project to Combat Child Labor Through Education (DESTINO) in Panama toward reaching its targets and objectives as outlined in the cooperative agreement and project document submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). The evaluation considered all activities that have been implemented over the life of the project, addressing issues of project design, implementation, reliability of data on project results, lessons learned, and advancements toward the sustainability of the education interventions implemented by the project.

DESTINO has made visible the issue of the worst forms of child labor in Panamanian society. It has raised the awareness of the general population on this subject, as well as that of the communities, teachers, and agriculture producers with which it works. DESTINO has implemented some interesting education alternatives aimed to complement (i.e., tutoring courses), compensate for (i.e., farm schools), or substitute for (i.e., accelerated primary courses) the educational handicaps of child laborers. However, these alternatives do not necessarily lead to the eradication of child labor. Although the project had attained most of its planned outputs by its midterm, DESTINO's effect with regard to education enrollment, retention, and completion rates—as well as the eradication of child labor—has been less than planned. The project has targeted its services toward children under 12 years old, while most child laborers in the agriculture sector are 12 or older, and in many rural communities children lack any formal education opportunity above sixth grade.

DESTINO should increase its effect by refocusing part of its services on the 12- to 17-year-old age group, strengthening its monitoring system, and developing a closer collaboration with the National Committee on Child Labor (CETIPPAT) and other USDOL-sponsored projects in Panama.

As it did in the case of the accelerated primary school alternative, DESTINO should aim to institutionalize farm school services within the Ministry of Education (MEDUCA), so sustainability is also ensured for this alternative. To do so, DESTINO should help MEDUCA analyze the compatibility between the farm school model and the model used in MEDUCA's *Termina tu año* program, which works at local schools in rural zones. A common curriculum for the last two school months of each year could be developed and approved for both programs, giving some official recognition to farm school studies, so that when a child goes back to school after the harvest period, these studies are recognized as valid at his or her local school.

DESTINO should also provide support to MEDUCA for organizing more accelerated primary school services in other rural zones of the country, in which there is a significant number of potential beneficiaries. The number of children attending high school at the Agro-Forestry Institute of Darién should be increased through lesser-cost scholarships for external (non-resident) students. DESTINO should support FTN's efforts in requesting a subsidy from IFARHU to increase the number of scholarships it offers to students.

Likewise, the economic initiatives implemented with Gnöbe-Buglé and Emberá groups of women/communities should be linked more clearly with the eradication of child labor from these communities. In doing so, the project can better implement a system that allows it to periodically monitor the labor status of its beneficiaries and overcome the difficulties stemming from the unstable, annual migration of families and children from one farm to another.

Finally, the strategy for sustainability of DESTINO should be advanced through a closer link to CETIPPAT and MEDUCA.

I INTRODUCTION

The Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII) Project to Combat Child Labor through Education (DESTINO) is a four-year initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) that directs resources toward six provinces and two native counties in Panama. The project is designed to reduce children's involvement in agricultural labor and prevent children's participation in dangerous activities by improving the quality of and access to education in the communities.

The project is implemented by *Casa Esperanza (CE)*, *Fundación Tierra Nueva (FTN)*, and *Centro de Capacitación y Desarrollo Integral, S.A. (CCDI)*.

The *project goal* is to reduce the number of child laborers that work in commercial agriculture in the rural areas of Panama by promoting children's participation in schooling and vocational training.

The *project purpose* is increased educational program enrollment, retention, and completion among rural children who work in agriculture.

The *project-specific objectives/outputs* are as follows:

- Output 1** Increase awareness about the effects of child labor on the right to education among communities, families and leaders, educators, and farmers in project areas.
- Output 2** Improve formal and alternative educational systems' reach to promote better educational opportunities for child laborers and families.
- Output 3** Incorporate Child Labor Education Policy at the national level based on coordinated inter-sectorial input.
- Output 4** Strengthen government regulations and budget mechanisms to ensure sustainability of educational initiatives to combat child labor.

The target population of the project was estimated at 6,695 rural and indigenous child laborers and children at risk of working in the provinces of Chiriquí, Coclé, Veraguas, Herrera, Los Santos, and Darién, as well as in the native county of Gnöbe-Buglé and Emberá Wounaan territory. The project indirectly targeted 3,600 children, by providing training to 180 teachers in the Darién Province. Another 3,095 children were targeted directly through different interventions (i.e., tutoring courses [CEC], farm school [CAIF], accelerated primary school [EPA], and agro-forestry high school [IFAD]), of which 675 were to be prevented and 2,420 to be withdrawn from child labor.

As part of the regular procedures of the International Child Labor Program (ICLP), Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), an independent midterm evaluation of the DESTINO project (which began in August 2004) was conducted. This report describes the results of the evaluation.

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II EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The scope of this evaluation includes a review and assessment of all activities carried out under the USDOL cooperative agreement with Creative Associates International, Inc. The evaluation aims to assess the progress of the project toward reaching its targets and objectives as outlined in the cooperative agreement and project document. The evaluation considers all activities that have been implemented over the life of the project, addressing issues of project design, implementation, effectiveness, efficiency, lessons learned, reliability, and recommendations for future projects.

The *goals* of the evaluation process are as follows:

1. Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved
2. Assist the Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Child Trafficking (OCFT) to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of Child Labor Education Initiative (EI) projects within the broad OCFT technical cooperation program framework
3. Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved
4. Assess progress in terms of children's working and educational status (i.e., withdrawal from the worst forms of child labor [WFCL]; and enrollment, retention, and completion of educational programs).

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III EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE EVALUATION

The evaluation had a participatory character because a wide range of project stakeholders and members of other institutions were considered key informants (for a list of the evaluation’s key informants, see Annex 1). The evaluation addressed 32 questions posed by the donor.¹

The following chart describes the main areas of evaluation and the key issues included within each of them.

Table 1: Description of Areas of Evaluation

Area of Evaluation	Key Issues
Project design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adequacy of DESTINO support of National Policy on Child Labor and EI goals.• The consistency of objectives and strategies with the reality of child labor and other social factors in Panama.• Realism of project’s targets.
Relevance of the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Qualitative analysis of the pertinence of the different strategic components of the project.
Project implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of the process of implementation and the way in which the project inserted itself into the local and national level inter-institutional context through specific partnerships and activities (including community organizations, government agencies, international cooperation agencies, nongovernmental organizations [NGOs], schools, and others).• Effect of political events on project implementation.• Assessment of the extent to which there is a common understanding among stakeholders of the concepts of “withdrawal,” “prevention,” “enrollment,” “retention,” and “completion.”• Assessment of project’s monitoring systems, tools, and criteria for identifying and tracking beneficiaries.• Highlight best practices and innovative approaches derived from project implementation.

¹ Please see the cross-reference list of the Terms of Reference (TOR) questions and pages in which they are addressed in this report in Annex 5.

Area of Evaluation	Key Issues
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of achievement of project's purpose and outputs. Provisional effect of project activities on (1) withdrawing and preventing children from child labor, (2) improving quality of education and students' performance in school, (3) raising community and family awareness of child labor, (4) enabling families to look for alternative income options, and (5) influencing national and local official policy on child labor. Provisional assessment of the effect of different project interventions (e.g., CEC, CAIF, EPA, IFAD, and teacher training) on the above issues.
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of performance of management systems. Assessment of communications with donor and subcontractors from the grantee point of view.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provisional assessment of the financial, technical, and social sustainability of the project results.

3.2 SCHEDULE AND MEANS OF EVALUATION

Fieldwork in Panama was performed on the following dates.

Table 2: Fieldwork in Panama by Date (2006)

Date	Type of Fieldwork
Nov. 20	Data collection in Panama City (CAII, CCDI).
Nov. 21	Data collection in David, Chiriquí (CE, National University of Chiriquí [UNACHI]).
Nov. 22	Visit to coffee farms and CAIFs in the highlands of Chiriquí.
Nov. 23	Visit to the Gnöbe-Buglé county (EPA, CEC at Kwerima).
Nov. 24	Visit to El Roble (EPA, CEC). Because of poor road conditions, the evaluator arrived late to the village of Chumicosa.
Nov. 25	Visit to an ethno-tourism income-generation project in Soloy, in the Gnöbe-Buglé county; interview University of las Americas (UDELAS) staff.
Nov. 27	Data collection in Panama City (government institutions and NGOs).
Nov. 28	Local holiday; conference call with USDOL and CAII-Washington; review of documents.
Nov. 29	Visit to El Zapallal primary school; interview with teachers about training received from the project: visit to IFAD of Darién; interview FTN staff.
Nov. 30	Visit to income-generation project with Emberá women at Peña Bijagual. Visit to Peña Bijagual formal public school—interview with teachers about teacher training.
Dec. 1	Interview the Regional Director of Education of Darién and the Director of FTN.
Dec. 2–3	Prepare for stakeholder workshop.
Dec. 4	Interview Ministry of Labor staff.
Dec. 5	Stakeholder workshop (see agenda of this meeting in Annex 2).

At each educational site, the educational site director was interviewed and focus groups and group or individual interviews were held with teachers (depending on the number of people available), students, parents, and producers (in the case of CAIFs). The evaluation methodology, previously applied to other program evaluations in several South and Central American countries, allowed for the collection and cross-referencing of multi-source information. The evaluator conducted all data collection, with no interference from third parties.

A number of data collection techniques were employed with different individuals and groups—

- A *desk audit* of documents including the project summary, cooperative agreement, Technical Progress and Status Reports, project log frames, performance monitoring plans (PMP), Project Design Workshop reports, work plans, management procedures and guidelines, and other research by the project and other agencies (e.g., the International Labor Organization [ILO], International Program for Eradication of Child Labor [ILO-IPEC]). The desk audit also included a phone conference with USDOL and CAII-USA staff (see list of documents reviewed by evaluator in Annex 4).
- *Individual and group interviews* with implementing partner staff (i.e., CAII, CE, CCDI, and FTN).
- *Individual interviews* with key actors from different organizations and institutions including the Ministry of Education (MEDUCA), the National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Workers (CETIPPAT), Ministry of Labor and Work Development (MITRADEL), Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), National Network for Protection of Children and Adolescent Workers (REDNANIAP), the U.S. Embassy, UDELAS, and UNACHI.
- *Focus groups* with students, parents, teachers, producers, and beneficiaries of income generating programs.
- *Observation* of such elements as classroom dynamics, infrastructure, and environment of educational sites.
- *Review of children's files* at CE.
- *Stakeholder workshop* held at the end of the visit and conducted by the evaluator, bringing together the national implementing partners and other stakeholders (see list of participants in Annex 3). The workshop allowed the evaluator to present the major findings and emerging issues of the evaluation, request recommendations, and obtain additional information from stakeholders. A group exercise to collect suggestions from participants about the most promising venues for project continuation was carried out during the stakeholder workshop (see suggestions from participants at stakeholder meeting in Annex 6).

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IV FINDINGS

4.1 PROJECT DESIGN

4.1.1 Ability of the DESTINO Project to Influence National Policy on Child Labor

At the start of the DESTINO project (August 2004), the Panamanian Government lacked a national policy on the issue of child labor. Likewise, CETIPPAT was nearly inactive before 2005. Although there were some educational alternatives for over-aged children and dropouts from school (e.g., the *En busca de un mañana* and *Maestro en casa* programs), these were not necessarily applicable in a massive, and at the same time, focused form to child and adolescent laborers, and particularly those under WFCL.

However, recent developments have produced important legal and policy changes in the country's official stand on child labor. In 2005, the government activated CETIPPAT, a public body formed by government agencies and representatives of employers and workers' associations, as well as civil society organizations. CETIPPAT drafted a National Plan for the Eradication of Child Labor (2007–2011), which comprises three objectives and seven strategic components. This plan was approved as a national policy and strategic guideline by the Panamanian Government in June 2006. By June 2006, CETIPPAT also helped pass the Executive Decree 19, which establishes a list of WFCL to be eradicated from there on. CETIPPAT is now formulating, together with its partner public agencies, its operational plan for year 2007 and it is discussing an initiative to raise the Minimum Age of Admission to Employment in Panama to 15 years old (currently it is 14 years old).

During the past year, in which it became a consultative member of CETIPPAT, DESTINO has been an active participant in this body's meetings and initiatives. DESTINO's main activities (e.g., awareness raising, educational initiatives, institutional or/and public policy strengthening) are all consistent with Panama's National Plan objectives and strategies, because most of DESTINO's interventions (e.g., awareness-raising campaigns, strengthening of public policies, vocational training for parents, training of teachers, educational initiatives—EPA, CEC, CAIF, and scholarships for students at the Darién IFAD) fall within the types of activities included in the National Plan 2007–2011.

4.1.2 Adequacy of DESTINO Project Support of the Education Initiative Goals

The design of the project fully supports the four goals of the USDOL EI: (1) awareness raising of the importance of education, (2) strengthening of formal and transitional education systems, (3) strengthening of national institutions and policies on education and child labor, and (4) ensuring the long-term sustainability of these interventions.

By the time of the midterm independent evaluation, the most important achievements of the DESTINO project were related to an increase in public awareness of WFCL; an increase in the awareness of institutional agents of WFCL; and improving and expanding education alternatives

for children so that the formal educational system is strengthened and child laborers and children at risk of child labor attend school. There is an important dialogue between CE and CETIPPAT, which should help support DESTINO in implementing joint actions with CETIPPAT under the new National Action Plan, as well as promote the long-term sustainability of the project's main initiatives. An agreement was signed between CE and MEDUCA in January 2005 regarding the implementation of four EPAs.

Most educational interventions promoted by DESTINO are aimed at children in primary school (1st to 6th grade, in which the national enrollment rate is above 92 percent). Most of the children in this group are 6 to 12 years old. However, the greatest educational gaps in school enrollment correspond to the last three years of basic education/middle school (*premedia*—7th to 9th grade) and of high school education (*bachillerato*—9th to 12th grade). In both clusters, the institutional offering is insufficient (42 percent of children in the country do not complete studies above sixth grade), particularly in rural areas and among the indigenous population. Thus, given that there are scarce alternatives for adolescents, other than their involvement in labor, most child labor and WFCL in Panama involve children 13 to 17 years old.

This means that, even though it supports USDOL's goals, DESTINO's efforts are not focused on the age group and education levels that are associated with most child labor and WFCL in Panama. The effect of the project on this population is rather marginal (only 34 percent of project beneficiaries as of July 2006 are age 12 or above). Thus, although educational services are being provided by the project to an array of children (including in some cases pre-school children), the project strategy is not necessarily focused on those children that may be most in need of educational services or improvements to counter their involvement in WFCL. Several factors have an influence on this actual project outcome, such as the instability of family migration processes, which makes it difficult for the project to re-contact and retain a good part of its beneficiaries from one year to the next (in the case of CAIFs); the lack of formal education alternatives (post-primary studies) for children above 12 years old in most rural communities; the lack of such alternatives among DESTINO project education interventions (except for some scholarships in Darién); and the lack of sufficient and viable income-generating alternatives for young people and their families in the rural zones of project intervention.

4.1.3 Problematic Issues Regarding Project Design

The targets related to the project purpose (percentage increase in educational enrollment, retention and completion of child laborers in the rural sector) were not realistic, particularly with regard to beneficiary retention. If the current rate of compliance with targets is maintained (see Annex 7), the final outcome of the project may be well below its original target, particularly with regard to the number of children withdrawn from child labor.

Therefore, even though the targets for outputs were realistic and they are being achieved as foreseen, the project did not anticipate how to manage the effects of the instability created by irregular patterns of family migration (from one farm to another each year) on the continuity of the services provided to children at CAIFs. Thus, there will be a high number of children who are one-period beneficiaries during the four-year project span. Declaring such cases as "completed" would not be valid in terms of the USDOL definition of completion.

CECs benefit a smaller number of children per school, and most of their beneficiaries are under 12 years of age. Even though the EPA is a valid alternative approach to the problem of over-aged children who did not finish their primary school, these children represent a smaller and geographically dispersed population, a fact that results in insufficient enrollment in some zones and discontinuous class attendance by students living in rural regions far away from school.

In contrast to the focus of most of DESTINO's efforts, the main problem that seems to affect the education of child laborers is the lack of (or insufficient) educational offerings for seventh-grade students and above. Thus, in many rural zones, schooling "forcibly" ends by 6th grade, and even though most child laborers in agriculture are older than 12 years and lack formal education opportunities, the DESTINO project has a very marginal effect on this issue.

Two conditional cash-transfer-to-families programs, which are carried out by the Panamanian Government (Red de Oportunidades—US\$35/month in cash; SENAPAN—same amount in food coupons), seem to have contributed more to the prevention and withdrawal of child laborers in the Gnöbe-Buglé communities than the educational interventions carried out by the project. DESTINO's implementing agencies do not play a direct role in the distribution of these subsidies, but they do help child workers' families by agreeing with government agencies to target some of these benefits toward DESTINO beneficiaries. Implementing agencies such as Casa Alianza use this support as an incentive for families to stop child labor. CE has also obtained 198 scholarships from the Institute of Training of Human Resources (IFARHU) in support of the education of project beneficiaries.

4.2 THE DESTINO PROJECT GENERAL OUTCOMES BY MIDTERM EVALUATION

4.2.1 Project Purpose

With regard to the stated purpose of the project, there is some delay in achieving the targets established in the PMP: (1) Direct *enrollment*: 1,705 (*target*) vs. 1,292 individuals (actual result attained—reviewed by the evaluator,² equivalent to 65 percent of children contacted by the project); (2) Direct *retention*: 70 percent (*target*) vs. 50 percent (actual result attained—reviewed by the evaluator); and (3) Direct *completion*: 60 percent (*target*) vs. 6 percent (actual result attained—reviewed by the evaluator).³

² There are some differences between the data on project results shown in this report and that previously reported by the project because we have corrected some errors in reporting, such as children whose labor status had not been confirmed even though they were reported as withdrawn, children under six years old, and children who attended less than 70 percent of sessions provided by project services.

³ In the case of CAIFs, given that most children were not reachable from one year to the next, CE had been reporting as "completed" those cases of children who had attended CAIF during just one harvest period (and not the whole life of project, as should have been done). CAII disagreed that these child laborers had been eradicated through completion of CAIF and, pending a final agreement between both institutions, in 2006 CAII did not report these cases to USDOL as "completed," nor eradicated. (Both concepts are linked, but cases in which a child just participates in a one-time, one-to-two month summer CAIF course does not seem adequate to be considered "completed" or eradicated.)

Most beneficiaries initially contacted by the project belong to the group of children under age 12 (1,298 individuals, or 65 percent of the total population contacted), followed by the 12- to 14-year-old age group (546 individuals, or 27 percent of the total population contacted) and the 15- to 17-year-old age group (116 individuals or 6 percent of the total population contacted, in addition to 10 adolescents who benefit from a scholarship at Darién). There are 35 children under age 6 included within the CAIF recipients of services, but only three are above 14 years old. Thus, most of the direct project beneficiaries (65 percent) fall within the age group that includes a smaller portion of child laborers in Panama (12 percent), according to a nationwide study on child labor carried out with ILO-IPEC support in 2000.

The higher number of male beneficiaries registered by the project seems to correspond to the fact that, according to studies of ILO-IPEC, there is a much greater proportion of male child laborers (children and adolescents) in the agricultural sector than girls. Independently of any quota-related consideration, project results may be simply reflecting this issue.

CECs may play a relevant role as a withdrawal strategy of WFCL in those cases where children remain or live most of the year near the fields where they work during the harvest period. In such cases, the time employed in CECs, added to that employed in school attendance, limits the possibility of children getting involved in agriculture-related labor. In the case of Panama, this is true for melon growers and other communities, but does not fully apply to the case of coffee growers, in which child labor is done outside the community through family migration during a set period of the year. In the latter case, CECs serve mainly as a means to improve the quality of education, but not necessarily to withdraw children from child labor because there is scarce economic activity in those communities throughout the year.

4.2.2 Project Outputs

At the output level, by the midterm evaluation the DESTINO project had achieved most of its targets. Thus, the project has made progress on Output 1 (raising consciousness of key players on WFCL). The DESTINO project has made visible the issue of WFCL in Panama. This situation was not the case before the start of the project. To attain this goal, the project has implemented a media campaign at the national level on the issue of WFCL in the agriculture sector and has conducted widespread lobbying and sensitization activities with a broad range of key actors, including some coffee producers, to tackle this problem. It has also carried out a study on WFCL related to melon, tomato, and onion growing. However, the project has not yet implemented the sensitization process with community leaders and parents in Darién, and even though the project has improved in raising awareness among farm owners and teachers, it is necessary to increase the number of teachers sensitized to attain the original target of the project.

Regarding Output 2, the DESTINO project has attained most of its targets, particularly those related to the number of CECs, CAIFs, EPAs, and scholarships for the IFAD in Darién. DESTINO has also carried out a substantive effort to incorporate active teaching methodologies within project-sponsored schools. Income-generating initiatives for families (an ethno-tourism hostel by CCDI with Gnöbe-Buglé communities in Soloy, and training of Emberá women in crafts by FTN in Darién) are being implemented, but the outcome of these projects is pending, given that these interventions were implemented because of the cancellation of *Fundación para la Promoción de la Mujer's* original activities in support of the project. It is believed that both

initiatives will complete their activities, although the results of CCDI's efforts may not be evident during the lifetime of the project. It would be commendable to establish a clear commitment as to the role of the communities benefiting from both initiatives, in the eradication of child labor.

DESTINO has attained some partial advance with regard to Output 3 (national education policy on child labor in place). For practical reasons, the project decided to participate in CETIPPAT and REDNANIAP and to contribute to the discussion on the National Plan on Child Labor, instead of creating an additional network on the subject of child labor and education. DESTINO also contributed to the formulation and approval of a curriculum for EPA. DESTINO increasingly coordinates its activities with CETIPPAT.

DESTINO has complied satisfactorily with regard to Output 4 (budget and normative sustainability of the educational initiatives being implemented). An agreement was signed with MEDUCA to ensure the sustainability of the EPAs started by the project. Diverse alternatives proposed by the project have also been considered within the National Plan on Child Labor and there seems to be enough political force from CETIPPAT to strengthen educational alternatives for child laborers and to eradicate WFCL. CAII, CE, and FTN have obtained donations from third parties (e.g., cost of meals for children, scholarships for children from IFARHU, educational material for schools), which have increased the resources available for the DESTINO project.

There is widespread acceptance and satisfaction on the part of beneficiaries (children, parents, teachers, authorities) with regard to the project. Teacher attendance in training programs has been high.

The fact that the project has managed to attain most of its outputs (i.e., number of CEC, CAIF, and EPA), but not its targets at the purpose level, should lead to a review of the efficacy of the strategy being applied.

4.2.3 Project Impact on Beneficiaries

Impact on Children's Education and Child Labor

The project's educational alternatives are a relevant input that benefits the education of child laborers. The technical high school (with an agriculture-related degree) is a useful means for vocational training of adolescents in Darién. CECs serve to strengthen children's basic education skills (i.e., mother tongue, Spanish, and math) and knowledge. The EPAs not only have a positive effect on bringing back to school older dropouts and on increasing children's educational level, but also strengthen children's self-esteem. In the case of CAIFs, apart from keeping children from working in harvest-related activities (most project beneficiaries being in this case 12 years old), the pedagogical outcome is less evident given the reduced period in which this activity is implemented and the fact that MEDUCA does not legally recognize it within the formal education system. Thus, it is possible that a child who has participated in CAIF activities may still fail his or her (official) school grade and need to repeat it because of his or her absence from school during the final two months of the school year (which coincide with the harvest/family migration period).

Neither CAIFs nor CECs address the problem of the lack of formal educational opportunities for children older than 12 (seventh grade on) in many communities of the Darién and the Gnöbe-Buglé zones. This lack has a direct effect on the “availability” of “unoccupied” children for agricultural labor. For this reason, many of the people involved in coffee harvest activities are under the age of 18. This was verified during our visit to the coffee fields. During one such visit, a foreman of one of the Renacimiento farms said that “up to 50 percent” of the people working with crops were adolescents aged 14 to 17. This figure is not official because the number of people hired and paid by the farms is less than the real number of workers at each farm.

The IFAD of Darién lacks certain complementary educational programs that reinforce the quality of the education it provides (e.g., a bigger and better organized animal farm). Some of these needs seem to be low-cost and may be supported by the DESTINO project.

Impact on Parents and Teachers

Parents and teachers interviewed by the evaluator seem to have favorable attitudes toward children’s education and against child labor, the latter being clearer with regard to children younger than 12 years old. A similar opinion was held by the coffee producers whom we had the opportunity to interview. Opinion studies on this issue requested by CE and carried out by an independent source⁴ confirm that the awareness-raising campaigns have had a positive effect on sensitizing both common citizens and coffee producers on the negative effects of child labor and on the importance of education, and that these attitudes are now prevalent among both groups.

Impact on Communities, Women, and Other Groups/Institutions

Community groups, such as women’s organizations, also have a positive opinion of the DESTINO project, and they have seen their organizational and income-generating capacities increased. School headmasters believe that the project’s services have improved the skills of their members and have engendered complementary structures in support of formal schooling. The staff of one of the implementing NGOs has “mixed feelings” about the project, given that they perceive that this project has required much more effort on their part, both financially and time-wise, than what they had originally committed to.

The effect on government institutions and policy are as yet unknown: CETIPPAT is going through a planning exercise to organize its activities for 2007. Although it has taken some time for DESTINO to achieve a consultative status within this body, the relations with this institution are now very good.

⁴ Jaime Porcell y Asociados—Sistemas de Información S.A.

4.3 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

4.3.1 Educational Services Offered by the Project

The general “menu” of educational services offered by the project consists of the following:

- **Thirty CECs (at the same number of schools/communities):** This is an informal alternative, a *complementary addition* to formal education, which is implemented five days a week, for nearly 10 months per year, during the schooling period. The idea is to tutor beneficiary children throughout the life of the project or until they complete the sixth grade.⁵
- **Ten CAIFs in 2005 (8 in 2006, at a similar number of sites):** Although these units should work out as *transitional* schemes, leading to the completion of the school year and the children going back to school, in practice it is an alternative intervention that provides educational services five days a week, in periods ranging from 15 days to two months (depending at what moment of the year children arrive at the farms). Most beneficiaries of this activity are not retained the following year. CAIFs are not officially recognized by MEDUCA. Therefore, even if they attend them, the education received by children at CAIFs does not prevent them from having to repeat grades when they leave school early (i.e., before the end of the school year).
- **Seven EPAs:** This is an education *alternative* to formal schooling that is recognized by MEDUCA. It is implemented five days a week, 12 months per year, and is intended to retain its beneficiaries up to their completion of primary studies (up to sixth grade) or until the end of the project period.
- **Support to one technical high school at the IFAD of Darién (10 full scholarships for children):** This is a *formal* education alternative, recognized by MEDUCA (*bachillerato* or high school studies). It is implemented five days a week, 10 months per year, up to children’s completion of their secondary studies (12th grade) or until the end of the project period.

4.3.2 Retention Strategies

The project lacks a retention strategy that would realistically counter the instability caused by the annual migration of families to farms different from those of the previous year at the Panamanian border or Costa Rica. Afternoon or morning attendance of children at tutoring courses “mirrors” that of their parallel attendance at formal schooling in the morning or afternoon. CE’s strategy to retain students in this form is to provide annual scholarships supported by IFARHU (e.g.,

⁵ Completion of CEC according to DESTINO’s PMP: “...until they achieve the necessary academic skills to avoid school failure and/or abandonment of formal schooling.” However, the evaluator did not learn of any instrument or method applied to children by the implementing agencies to assess or anticipate this. The USDOL definition of retention and the fact that results are assessed per cohort should lead to children remaining in tutorials up to the completion of their formal studies (at most rural zones, equivalent to sixth grade) or until the end of the project.

education material, uniforms) and to increase the content and quality of meals provided at school to children. Thus, while children attend school, they are also retained in CECs. The EPAs lack a definite strategy for the retention of their pupils. As a retention strategy for the Darién IFAD students, the project provides an integral scholarship (internship – residence + meals and educational material) to its 10 beneficiaries.

Retention is sporadically verified. In the case of CECs and EPAs, the effect of irregular attendance on the final dropping out of a child from these courses is not assessed in an anticipative way so that preventative measures may be taken to avoid dropouts.

4.3.3 Quality of Education-Related Issues

The DESTINO project is pursuing the improvement of educational quality by interventions such as the following:

- Training of teachers in “active”/participative education methodologies.
- The development of an adapted curriculum for the EPA program.
- The implementation of tutoring courses as a complementary strategy to improve students’ learning and school performance and prevent repeating grades, which in turn may lead to early dropout from school.
- Donating educational and other material to the project’s target schools.

CAII has designed formats to evaluate educational quality and trained staff in how this is done. However, the effect the project is having on the quality of education is difficult to measure in the short term, except for the pre- and post-testing of the teacher training programs. An alternative method could be to run a control-group study of students’ performance in both non-target and target schools of the DESTINO project. However, a study of this kind may be costly and such a cost is not currently covered by the project budget.

4.3.4 Timeliness of Activities and School Selection Criteria

The start time of the project did not permit obtaining the necessary data for implementing the project on time in some cases. Given that the project started in the middle of the school year (August 2004), DESTINO could not begin to implement the educational alternatives component of the project until March of the following year (i.e., at the beginning of the Panamanian school year). This fact introduced a delay of project activities, causing the project to be unable to reach the outputs scheduled for its first year of implementation. Although this gave project staff more time to select schools, the alternative educational activities began at the same time as the study on child labor in agriculture. Therefore, the project was unable to use the data that resulted from

the study for strategic planning purposes.⁶ Likewise, in the Darién zone, some activities could neither be started nor developed according to the original schedule (i.e., training of teachers was cancelled by MEDUCA in February 2006 and finally started by July 2006).

On the basis of interviews with teachers and school headmasters, CE staff selected some schools with a greater number of child laborers in which to implement CECs. Schools for EPAs were selected on the basis of the number of potential beneficiaries living in related communities. School selection was done in parallel to the research on child labor in commercial agriculture (e.g., melon, tomato, onion). The rural schools selected by the project are representative of the average size of schools in each zone, as well as of the different regional contexts in which children attend school, including school locations far away from some community sites and other barriers to access.

4.3.5 Technical Assistance Provided by Other USDOL Contracting Agencies

The Student Tracking Software (STS) proposed for all USDOL-funded projects could not be timely used by DESTINO's implementing agencies because of technical problems that could not be addressed rapidly and efficiently by USDOL's technical assistance contractors. Given the wide geographic dispersion among beneficiaries, implementing a continuous monitoring system that incorporates a rigorous and periodic follow-up of the labor status of children would require more substantive support in financial and human resources than USDOL's currently contributions. The STS could still be a useful tool for the project if DESTINO can contract someone to update the databases for the first two years so CE and FTN can then continue updating the system. The updating of both institutions' databases may allow DESTINO to make some needed review and amendments to the already-reported figures of the project, as for example, the number of completed/withdrawn cases through CAIFs (Cohort 2).

Support from USDOL's contractors (Management Systems International [MSI], Juarez and Associates, Inc.) in charge of providing technical assistance to the project was useful for the

⁶ The study on child labor at melon, tomato, and onion plots showed that (1) for every 10 workers interviewed, five were less than 18 years old (similar information was reported to the evaluator by a coffee farm foreman at Chiriqui); (2) most child laborers were male (81 percent); (3) 55 percent of the child laborers were 14- to 17-years-old (an additional 20 percent were 14-years-old); (4) 55 percent of child laborers were in the melon sector; (5) unlike what is observed in the case of coffee, most child laborers (89 percent) belonged to the "latin" (*ladino*) ethnic group and not to native groups as the Emberá or the Gnöbe-Buglé; (6) with regard to school attendance, 34 percent of children did not attend school, and 46 percent of workers in the tomato sector did not attend; (7) there are some relevant gender differences with 21 percent of female and 37 percent of male child laborers not attending school (and the ratio of male to female child laborers was four to one); (8) the percentage (and number) of male child laborers that have repeated a school grade is greater (49 percent) than that of girls (44 percent). Similar data could be obtained from CE registers for the farm program and the annual census of families in the coffee farms sector. To have a greater effect, project activities should focus as much as possible on those segments of the population (e.g., age, gender, child labor sector with higher risk of dropout from school) and where a greater number of child laborers are found. The information available may serve to orientate a more gender-sensitive and age-focused education program, focusing services and outreach strategies on those segments that are more negatively affected by child labor. The same goes for preventative activities: these may be more focused on those groups with a higher vulnerability of being involved in child labor and dropout from school.

establishment of a PMP. However, this process included some misunderstandings, such as the definition of *completion* used for CAIFs by implementing agencies' staff. Thus, while USDOL's definition of completion is, "The percentage of children withdrawn/prevented through a USDOL-supported program that complete the program(s)," DESTINO's definition of completion in the case of CAIFs is, "Beneficiaries continue until the end of harvest or until the parent is no longer hired as a laborer on the farm." DESTINO's definition of completion does not comply, in the case of CAIFs, with USDOL's definition. The latter emphasizes the prevention/withdrawal from child labor, more so than children's participation in an educational process. Likewise, the CAIF alternative is a short-term intervention with little follow-up that does not lead to lasting results.⁷ Giving CAIFs, which are two-month-long educational initiatives, the same weight in withdrawal results as initiatives that last up to three years (e.g., EPA, CEC, IFAD) does not seem conceptually consistent. In fact, the notion of "program" and "cohort" implies a more lengthy type of intervention and follow-up than the children's short-term, one-time participation in educational activities. It would be convenient to discuss with the USDOL contracting agencies the difficulties that they found in Panama to avoid repeating them in other countries. According to CAII sources, the message received from MSI with regard to the forms of child labor withdrawal was ambiguous (main forms of withdrawal were defined as the reduction in labor time or in the dangerous conditions of child laborers; however, this is not necessarily applicable to WFCL).

4.4 MONITORING SYSTEM

The project has developed a monitoring system using an Excel spreadsheet that will allow it to adequately measure its results, provided that it incorporates some additional categories that avoid registering a child as withdrawn/prevented in cases where there is not enough information about the labor status of children.

The DESTINO staff has the knowledge and ability needed to measure results in terms of USDOL common indicators, provided that they rigorously apply USDOL definitions in all cases.⁸ There are also some data registration issues that should be amended, such as (1) register as beneficiaries at CAIFs (withdrawal) children of a young age (under six years old); (2) register as beneficiaries children who have had an irregular attendance at CECs (less than 70 percent of sessions per month); and (3) register as beneficiaries of EPAs children that were not originally child laborers (e.g., some cases of this type were detected by the evaluator at the CEC El Roble). It may be convenient for the project database to be reviewed in retrospect, so as not to count the children involved in Situations 1, 2, and 3 toward GPRA indicators. Efforts should also be made to better assess and exclude these cases from GPRA data.

⁷ Farm schools function for around two months per year, but children enter and leave progressively at different moments of the month. For example, at the moment of the evaluation (end of November/beginning of December), many children were starting to arrive to the farm schools, the "peak of attendance" of this alternative being located from December 15 and later (when formal school is over).

⁸ Currently, the definition of "completion" is not being applied correctly in the case of farm schools: Children are considered as "completed" if they attend farm schools at the end of any year and cohorts are not followed up in this case throughout the LOP.

The main practical obstacle for measuring the project's outcome in a precise and continuous way is the extreme geographic dispersion of beneficiaries, their unstable migration patterns, and not having the exact addresses of children and families. This impedes the continuous and reliable monitoring of children's labor status. Follow-up field research (home visits) carried out by CAII in 2006 in the Gnöbe-Bugle County and the Central Provinces on the basis of a nonrepresentative sample of 106 individuals showed that between 10 and 35 percent of beneficiaries (depending on the specific zone of the country) continued working; 67 percent of these were 10 to 14 years old. All of the beneficiaries had been registered at CAIFs during the previous year. The follow-up exercise also detected that in 34 percent of the cases the beneficiaries' addresses were wrong and did not allow for re-contacting them, and that an additional 21 percent of the cases had an incorrect community name assigned to the address. Because of these errors, it may be suitable for USDOL and DESTINO to assess the viability of implementing, as an alternative form of monitoring and evaluation, periodical outcome studies on the basis of representative samples.

Implementing agencies do not have a consistent, periodic system to verify the labor status of children. In fact, there is no defined and universal strategy being applied to monitor the labor status of children benefiting from the education services provided by the project. CE reports that it collects this information from beneficiaries on an annual basis. However, it is not clear if this strategy is implemented in a universal manner and the labor status of children is also verified by an interview with the parents.

The CAII staff has repeatedly provided training and technical documents to implementing institutions' staff, and has contributed to strengthening data collection, verification, and quality control processes. The general analysis of data has been enriched by adding categories related to the effect of strategies and the reasons for drop out of beneficiaries. In 2006, CAII began a more thorough and continuous review and correction of the information provided by implementing agencies (i.e., checking in a detailed manner entry dates and number of days in which children received services), deciding in some cases not to include as withdrawn those cases that could not be sufficiently verified.

Except in the case of the criteria used to define the concept of completion at CAIFs (which both CAII and CE define as "beneficiaries that continue until the end of harvest or until the parent is no longer hired as a laborer on the farm," as agreed during the Juarez and Associates' technical assistance workshop and approved in the PMP), the Project Director and other CAII key staff seem to have shared with implementing agencies USDOL's official criteria and definitions with regard to the concepts of withdrawal, prevention, educational services, and direct beneficiaries. There have been, however, as mentioned above, certain tensions and disagreements with regard

to the form in which these same concepts have been understood by one of the implementing agencies, a fact which has produced some impasses between implementing agency and CAII staff.⁹

The original project document included only 10 days per year for CAII's supervision in the field. Considering the budget limitations, this was expanded to 50 days per year, which allows CAII staff to carry out diverse field supervision trips.

Although recent, important progress has been made regarding monitoring processes, the data which implementing agencies report to the project lack credibility, and a deeper analysis must be done to determine the labor status, age, regular attendance at project activities, and drop-out rates of beneficiary children to report these points as accurately as possible to the donor. The project's inaccurate classification in 2005 of children who had completed the CAIF program (after one 15–60 day program) should be amended to reflect more accurate figures on this issue.¹⁰

4.5 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

4.5.1 Partnership-Related Issues

Regarding partnerships and alliances, the DESTINO project has demonstrated the following strengths:

- It modeled itself (for awareness raising campaigns, CECs, and CAIFs) on CE's prior experience in projects combating WFCL. Working with an institution that is well known in Panama may also be considered an asset.
- It incorporated various education institutions (UNACHI, UDELAS) in support of project objectives. In this framework, CAII contributed to training 100 students from UNACHI in innovative educational methodologies.
- It engaged the support of diverse mass media and other organizations for the project.
- It engaged the support of some coffee producers for project activities at their farms.

⁹ As described within the report *Observaciones a Informe de Centros de Atención Integral en Fincas (CAIF)-Comarca Ngäbe-Buglé-Excel-Febrero 2006—Informe Final*, the way in which CE has registered and reported information has not always followed the details and criteria proposed by CAII, both with regard to the number of days attended by children at CAIFs, and when and why children left CAIFs. Because in 2006 CAII was not sure of the reliability of all the information provided by CE, it also decided not to include this information in GPRA reporting until it could be verified.

¹⁰ Children participating in CAIFs should be registered as “withdrawn” in the GPRA reporting only after: (1) follow-up is carried out on their labor and educational status at another moment of the year (May to July—may be done through sampling, as CAII did in 2006), or (2) after completing at least two or three CAIF periods (a difficult task considering annual migration). That is, CAIF beneficiaries' cohorts should be followed up as any other educational alternative cohort through a longer period of time to assess results. Reports should be amended following these criteria.

- It garnered the support of women’s organizations located in Gnöbe-Buglé and Emberá ethnic groups to establish income-generating opportunities in these communities.

However, DESTINO’s partnership efforts have faced some challenges, such as the following:

- The conceptual discrepancies between CAII and CE with regard to the criteria for measuring project results and how to carry out the project’s monitoring and supervision of activities.
- Some administrative weaknesses of FTN (e.g., reporting for donor) had to be compensated by CAII. CAII has also assumed direct responsibility for implementing teacher training courses for teachers in Darién, which was an FTN responsibility. Because of FTN’s limited experience in this field, it is not yet clear how the sensitization campaign will be carried out in Darién.
- The ambiguous attitude of coffee producers and their acceptance of adolescent labor in agriculture.
- Although the DESTINO project has provided continuity in 2006 to 10 CE-run CECs initiated on the basis of a previous ILO-USDOL-funded project, this may have resulted in the double registration of beneficiaries among both projects, and may have led to attributing financial “sustainability” results to DESTINO when they came from different funding from the same source (USDOL).¹¹

4.5.2 Insertion of Project DESTINO Within the Relevant Panamanian Institutional Framework

Relations with Government Agencies

DESTINO has taken advantage of different opportunities to strengthen its relations with government agencies, such as the following:

- The establishment of a commitment by MEDUCA to assume the costs/continuity of the EPAs once DESTINO comes to an end. MEDUCA schools provide the classrooms where both CECs and EPAs are held.

¹¹ This hypothesis should be checked by CAII by comparing the list of beneficiaries of ILO’s project in 2005 and that of CAII in 2006, for the following communities/tutorial courses run by CE: (1) Emplanada de Chorchá, (2) Alto Bonito, (3) Las Trancas, (4) Quebrada Carrizo, (5) Cerro Puerco, (6) Kwerima, (7) Quebrada de Cianca, (8) Quebrada de Loro, (9) Hato Chamí, and (10) Oma. It is the impression of the evaluator that this was not intended by any of the parties. The issue has to do more with USDOL’s own registration system. If some of the beneficiaries of these two different projects carried out by two different agencies (ILO-IPEC and CAII) in two different years are the same, they should not be registered twice, by USDOL, as withdrawn. USDOL should develop some rules to prevent these kinds of issues in the future.

- DESTINO's inclusion as a consultative agency of CETIPPAT. Participating in this forum provides an opportunity to influence the development of eradication policies on WFCL and on the improvement and increase of educational services to child laborers.
- The recent approval by the Government of Panama of the National Plan on Child Labor and of a list of WFCL to be eradicated. This new framework, which is close to DESTINO's own conception and aims, should encourage greater synergy between the project and governmental agencies' increasing actions on child labor.

Notwithstanding all of the above, project implementation has been negatively affected by some external, government-related factors, such as the frequent turnover of government functionaries, both at the national and regional levels, which forces DESTINO project staff repeatedly to make new contacts with the incumbents. Likewise, the awareness about the need to eradicate WFCL is incipient among regional authorities.

Greater efforts are needed to help refine MEDUCA's commitment with regard to the EPA. There is a need for a greater coordination between DESTINO's activities and those carried out by the National Direction of Basic Education and other offices of MEDUCA at the national level. For instance, student results at EPAs are not being duly registered within MEDUCA's national statistics. It would also be important to ensure that by the end of the project, MEDUCA will provide adequately trained teachers for the EPAs.

Another important issue is that of schools underreporting the dropout rate in the last quarter of each year. We were informed by CAII's staff (and had the opportunity to confirm this information during our visit to one school in a Gnöbe-Buglé community) that in several cases children who are absent during the last quarter (harvest period) of the year, or those who enter the school semester late, are immediately promoted to the next grade "if they had been good students during the previous quarters." In such cases, teachers provide false grades for the missed quarter.

Relations with International Agencies and Other Nongovernmental Organizations

The start of a second phase of an ILO-IPEC/USDOL-funded project in support of CETIPPAT may be an excellent opportunity to promote linkages with DESTINO activities and vice-versa. Until recently, the coordination of activities between CAII and ILO-IPEC had been mostly limited to the exchange of information/results of research and to the exchange of ideas within CETIPPAT. Thus, although both projects (DESTINO and ILO-IPEC) have implemented activities through CE, the exchange between CAII and IPEC has been sporadic.

There are no local NGOs or civil society organizations that specialize in, or are involved in, addressing the issue of WFCL, other than CE and the organizations (FTN and CCDI) included in DESTINO. If DESTINO is to ensure sustainability of its efforts, it will need to promote the involvement of more private and community-based, nongovernmental institutions in the fight against WFCL.

4.6 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

CAII was legally established in Panama one month after the signing of a cooperative agreement with USDOL, which resulted in an initial delay because of the need to establish bank accounts and make funds available for the project.

CAII's project staff has shown some management strengths, by introducing some improvements among implementing agencies' administrative practices related to the planning of expenses, procurement systems, expenditure control, and inventory of equipment and financial monitoring. Likewise, CAII has promoted improvements with regard to planning processes and instruments at both FTN and CCDI (implementing agencies) and is striving to improve program monitoring by improving the quality of the information provided by CE (currently, any information that cannot be verified by CAII will not be reported to the donor).

Up to the midterm evaluation's date, CAII and the implementing agencies showed success in leveraging non-project resources. CE's reputation in Panama has been instrumental in obtaining important free support for the project from diverse media to develop massive campaigns on WFCL and the importance of education. Government support had also been obtained for food and scholarships for children at CE and FTN programs, as well as a private donation of educational material for DESTINO-related schools (equivalent to US\$49,000), obtained by CAII in Washington, DC. CCDI is discussing with MIDES and the Panamanian Institute of Tourism (IPAT) their support for the tourist resort project at Soloy.

However, there are some management difficulties that require administrative improvements. CAII's role with regard to the supervision and approval of the activities and results reported by implementing agencies needs to be reinforced. This is particularly important in cases where beneficiaries have been inaccurately reported as withdrawn without verification by DESTINO staff.

The project needs to strengthen FTN's capacity to implement the teacher training and awareness-raising components autonomously, so that it can stand on its own and demonstrate its ability and credibility within the Darién community. There is also still room to improve FTN's financial abilities (projection of expenditures). FTN recently hired an administrator to reinforce FTN's reduced staff.

CAII program staff seems sufficient in number. Apart from the full-time Project Director and the Administrator, there is a monitoring specialist at CAII who was originally (and remains) hired on a half-time contract. Since November 2006, his services have been complemented and supported by a program assistant.

The position of an education specialist has always existed in the project within CAII. Although from the budgetary point of view it was incorporated within the budget allocated to CE, this person works for and reports to CAII.

4.7 SUSTAINABILITY

General Issues

Some steps have been taken by the Project to ensure sustainability. For example, there is an agreement in place between DESTINO and MEDUCA that guarantees the Ministry's continuation of the EPA. However, no funding source has yet been identified for CECs and CAIFs that would guarantee the continuity of these alternatives after the end of the project. While both initiatives partially depend on local contributions (e.g., for classrooms and other necessities), it is unlikely that farm producers would pay the costs of teacher salaries, which are covered now by DESTINO. The IFAD in Darién has some financial support from government and other sources, which may be increased in the future, providing sustainability to this effort in the long-term. Other than the current support it receives from MIDES, IFAD could see support from the Ministry of Agriculture (MIDA) to become a model and means of technical training for MIDA in the Darién province.

The project's initial strategy for sustainability was insufficient. Apart from the support of MEDUCA for the EPAs, DESTINO lacked a realistic strategy for the sustainability of its different components. Given the context of extreme poverty in which the families of child laborers and rural communities live, it is unrealistic to think that they would contribute to the costs of the CECs, CAIFs, or EPAs.

With regard to vocational training and income-generating initiatives for families and women, the future sustainability (as well as the economic success) of the tourist resort at the Gnöbe-Buglé community of Soloy may be greatly helped if MIDES follows through with its plans to pave the road leading to this community. However, the results of this initiative in terms of income generation and its role in the reduction of child labor will not be evident during the life of the project. Regarding the sustainability of FTN's initiative of promoting the production of colorful baskets created using traditional materials and techniques by Emberá women's organizations, the sustainability of this initiative would be greatly enhanced if FTN were to create more stable marketing channels for these products both in Panama City and abroad.

Some lessons could be learned about the project's accomplishments and weaknesses in terms of sustainability of interventions:

Financial Sustainability

The main strength of the project concerning the sustainability of its interventions is the previous experience and institutional prestige of CE. These factors have helped bring rapid support for the project from government agencies, private donors, and mass media. The latter could easily provide sustainability to public campaigns on the subject. CE is strongly linked to the CEC and CAIF methodologies employed as part of the DESTINO project. CE will probably be able to secure funds for the continuation of these services from other donors, as it did with some activities originally funded by the USDOL/ILO-IPEC project.

The early establishment of an agreement between CAII and MEDUCA to ensure the continuation of the EPAs is a good example of a successful path to follow in incorporating project-related schemes into government structures.

Technical Sustainability

The technical sustainability of some of the education interventions (tutoring courses, accelerated primary courses) has been strengthened through the training of teachers and the elaboration, testing, and approval of specific curricular and educational materials. These capacities need to be strengthened and expanded by MEDUCA.

Social Sustainability

The fact that the sustainability of the initiatives of the DESTINO project is based, to a great extent, on the reputation of one of the implementing institutions, demonstrates that it has a limited base for the overall sustainability of the project. The DESTINO project needs to strengthen the social sustainability of the initiatives it proposes by increasing awareness and support from the communities in which it is operating and among the producers on farms.

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V LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

5.1 BEST PRACTICES

DESTINO has resulted in the development of the following best practices that may be replicated in other, similar projects:

- Building bridges with CETIPPAT to articulate DESTINO's fieldwork with the development of national policies on child labor. Both CE and CAII now play a relevant role in this body.
- Introducing EPAs as a means to allow older school drop-outs to "catch up" with their education.
- Incorporating university/education students as teachers in its CAIF program.
- Linking the subject of education and child labor in a powerful message in favor of children's education and of the eradication of WFCL (i.e., "*te cambio mi mochila por la tuya*").
- Promoting that some cultural traditions (such as basket weaving) be resurrected and become a means of income for women in Emberá communities, linking the activity of basket production with the diffusion of messages on education and child labor.

5.2 LESSONS LEARNED

- The start-up of a wide variety of educational alternatives should be done in phases and sequentially. Starting the alternative programs nearly at the same time and in a short timeframe hampered the project's implementation.
- Educational services should be tailored to the educational needs of the children/adolescents that are most frequently involved in WFCL. In the case of Panama, these would be children/adolescents 12 to 18 years old. Producing specific educational alternatives for these groups would make the project more sensitive to the needs of child laborers.
- To efficiently work with government agencies, particularly with MEDUCA, the project staff must maintain its efforts to coordinate with the national, regional, and local decision-making bodies, and monitor the decisions made at the different levels to ensure a harmonized framework.
- Continuous awareness-raising and advocacy activities are needed to have a sustainable effect on people's attitudes toward child labor and education, particularly with regard to adolescents.

- In cases of massive migration, where school retention and home-identification monitoring strategies cannot be implemented, a project should develop a more random, periodical methodology for testing its efficacy.

VI CONCLUSIONS

DESTINO has made the issue of WFCL visible in Panamanian society. It has raised the awareness of the general population on this subject, as well as that of the communities, teachers, and agricultural producers with whom it works.

DESTINO has implemented some interesting education alternatives aimed at complementing (i.e., CECs), compensating for (i.e., CAIFs), or substituting for (i.e., EPAs) the educational obstacles of child laborers. However, these alternatives do not necessarily lead to the eradication of child labor. Although the project had attained most of the planned outputs by its midterm, the effect of DESTINO with regard to education enrollment, retention, and completion rates, as well as on the eradication of child labor, has been less than planned. The project has concentrated its services on children younger than age 12, while most child laborers in the agricultural sector are age 12 or above, and in many rural communities children lack formal education opportunities beyond the 6th grade.

The project needs to refocus its services toward the age group that has the greatest risk of involvement in WFCL (i.e., 12- to 17-year-olds) and increase the supply of formal educational alternatives to this population.

The project needs to implement a system that will allow it to periodically monitor the labor status of its beneficiaries and overcome the difficulties resulting from the unstable, annual migration of families and children from one farm to another.

DESTINO should collaborate more closely with CETIPPAT, MEDUCA, and other USDOL-sponsored projects in Panama. This would help to advance the project's strategy for sustainability.

The economic initiatives implemented with the Gnöbe-Buglé and Emberá groups of women/communities should be linked more clearly with the eradication of child labor.

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VII RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 RESTRUCTURE PROJECT DESIGN AND REFOCUS SOME KEY INTERVENTIONS

The project design should be restructured so that—

- DESTINO provides support to the adolescent population that is at greatest risk of becoming involved in child labor in the agricultural sector. It could do this by increasing the supply of education at the middle school level (seventh grade on). By increasing the access to middle school studies in selected rural locations, DESTINO would both help prevent and eradicate child labor as well as increase enrolment rates and the average years of education in those communities. Each year, there is an increasing number of children in those communities who finish sixth grade and who, in the majority of cases, stop their education and increase their participation in labor activities. Thus, DESTINO should advocate that MEDUCA train teachers and make primary school infrastructure available in the afternoons to create multi-grade middle schools (seventh to ninth grade) where they do not yet exist in the Gnöbe-Buglé county and the Darién province. In other cases, accelerated middle-school courses could be implemented. DESTINO would cover the cost of these middle schools for one to two years, and this effort could later be taken over by MEDUCA. The annual cost of a seventh grade course for 30 students is estimated to be nearly US\$10,000. It is commendable that CAII worked with CETIPPAT to get IFARHU to provide scholarships for adolescents withdrawn from labor that start middle-school/seventh-grade studies in selected communities.
- As it did in the case of the EPA alternative, DESTINO should aim to institutionalize CAIF services as part of the educational offering of MEDUCA, so that the sustainability of this alternative is also ensured. To do so, DESTINO should help MEDUCA analyze the compatibility between the CAIF model and the model used in MEDUCA's *Termina tu año* program, which works at local schools in rural zones. A common curricula for the last two school months of each year could be developed and approved for both programs, giving some official recognition to CAIF studies, so that when a child goes back to school after the harvest period, his or her studies are recognized as valid by the local school.
- DESTINO should provide support to MEDUCA so that MEDUCA organizes more EPA services in other rural zones of the country where there is a significant number of potential beneficiaries.
- DESTINO should support the implementation of MEDUCA's program *Termina tu año*, which may be a good complement to DESTINO's CAIFs, in other zones of the country. This may serve to prevent repetition of grades where CAIFs are not in place and officially recognized by the Government of Panama.
- The number of children attending high school at the IFAD of Darién should be increased through lesser-cost scholarships for external (non-resident) students. DESTINO should

support FTN's efforts in requesting a subsidy from IFARHU to increase the number of scholarships it offers to students.

- Some current withdrawal targets should be reduced to a more reasonable level. CECs should be reserved for those cases in which the activity competes with child labor, during certain shifts of the day, as an eradication strategy.
- The quota of withdrawal targets among different zones of the country, including Darién, should be more balanced.
- Short-term, low-cost vocational training for adolescents should be introduced as a new output of the project.

7.2 MAINTAIN CLOSE COORDINATION WITH CETIPPAT, ILO-IPEC, AND OTHER AGENCIES

- To avoid any possible duplicity of actions between the DESTINO project and a new USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC project implemented by CETIPPAT, DESTINO should coordinate all of its education initiatives with CETIPPAT. Both projects should try to apply a common definition of the interventions that are to be prioritized and to make an efficient distribution of the geographic areas in which both projects will implement their activities. A common agenda and a mechanism for periodic meetings and exchange should be established between both projects. DESTINO should also support the efforts of CETIPPAT to increase the minimum age of admission to employment in Panama to 15 years old.
- DESTINO should make an effort for more coordination and more frequent meetings with some national-level MEDUCA bureaus, such as the National Bureau of Basic Education.
- Given the small number of private sector initiatives in support of the eradication of WFCL, DESTINO should encourage other organizations in each province or region to get involved in this field.
- If the restructuring of services proposed above is implemented, the project could look to procure long-term support for CECs from the *Pro Niño* Program of Telefónica S.A. This enterprise is supporting similar programs for child laborers in diverse Latin American countries. DESTINO could also make efforts to incorporate the project CAIFs into the official *Termina tu año* program promoted by MEDUCA and CETIPPAT.

7.3 STRENGTHEN THE PROJECT MONITORING SYSTEM

- DESTINO monitoring and evaluation staff should—
 - Implement a more consistent mechanism to monitor the labor status of beneficiaries, including comparing the information collected from children with that of parents or teachers. Given the difficulties resulting from migration and the distance between the

- CAIF and a child beneficiary's home community, monitoring could be done through annual random sampling of the total list of registered beneficiaries. This would be a cheaper and more viable alternative to the monitoring of all beneficiaries. Such periodic studies should be carried out after the harvest period (i.e., between May and July each year).
- Register and report the indicators of indirect enrollment, retention, and completion (this is not being done).
 - Determine the number of additional potential beneficiaries, age 12 to 17 years old, who migrate to farms but do not receive DESTINO project services. This can be done by using the data collected through the annual farm census. This would provide a yearly "baseline" reference for the monitoring of the project focus. It should be expected that each year an increasing number of children above 12 years old would be targeted and incorporated as program beneficiaries. Establishing the proportion of the latter among each year's total number of potential teenager beneficiaries at farms would allow monitoring of the extent of the project's reach toward this population.
 - In coordination with CETIPPAT, advocate that MEDUCA conduct an annual child labor census during school enrollment periods.
- DESTINO should adjust the project database to the definition of indicators established by USDOL's Management Procedures and Guidelines (MPG) document by conducting a thorough retrospective review of the GPRA data reported thus far (per cohort).
 - The project should require that implementing agencies report on additional categories to avoid confusion between withdrawn children and cases in which children are receiving services but are not withdrawn or there is no reliable data on the issue (see enclosed tables in Annex 6). This should be done by adding the following categories to Table III-B in USDOL's semi-annual Technical Progress Report (TPR): (1) Children that receive services and are withdrawn from child labor; (2) Children that receive services but are not withdrawn from child labor; and (3) Children that receive services but for whom there is no reliable labor status data.
 - The monitoring system should include performance standards that (1) establish a minimum threshold of attendance at educational sessions (in CECs, EPAs, and CAIFs) to register a project beneficiary as such (e.g., attendance of at least 70 or 80 percent of all educational sessions); (2) establish criteria to verify that all beneficiaries of accelerated primary courses are effectively "child laborers" or children at risk of becoming engaged in exploitive work; (3) establish that beneficiaries of farm schools under 6 years old will be registered exclusively as "prevented"; (4) establish the proportion of total children (and of child labor) enrolled at each school that are serviced by CECs; (5) measure attendance and quality of education at CAIFs, as well as the participation of children in the coffee harvest (visits to the fields) during the most intensive period of harvest (probably by mid-December). It would be beneficial to establish a mid-December census of the children (6 to 17 years old) living each year at the eight coffee fields to establish the proportion that is being assisted by the project.

- When necessary, request that USDOL staff provide clarification on any doubts regarding monitoring definitions and criteria that may arise from one or another implementing agency. This would help establish a more homogeneous framework for managing information.

7.4 AWARENESS-RAISING

- The Project should strengthen awareness-raising efforts directed at—
 - Farm producers, particularly with regard to the new (2006) law on WFCL and the need to protect adolescent laborers.
 - Regional authorities (from MEDUCA and other agencies) on the national goal to eradicate WFCL.
 - Communities in the Darién region on WFCL, including the issue of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.
 - Farmers, producers, and plantation foremen (who oversee hiring and fieldwork) with the hopes that child labor will be eliminated from agricultural production.
- The project should seek an explicit commitment to the eradication of child labor from communities benefiting from economic initiatives sponsored by the project.
- The project should increase efforts to incorporate other institutional actors in the fight against WFCL. For example, the Baha'i Church has an important influence among the Gnöbe-Buglé county (40 percent of the people profess this creed) and runs a radio station that has widespread acceptance. The latter could become a means for a more continuous awareness-raising campaign directed at local people on the issues of education (one of the priorities of the Baha'i community) and WFCL.

7.5 OTHER COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES THAT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED BY DESTINO STAFF

- The project should collaborate with CETIPPAT and encourage its members to promote the implementation of activities aimed at eradicating WFCL, such as the following:
 - An increase in the number of labor inspectors and of logistical resources at MITRADEL, as well as an increase in the frequency with which MITRADEL conducts spot-check visits at farms and other sites.
 - An increase in the monetary amount that employers are fined when caught violating the country's child labor laws.
 - The legal incorporation of public and private banking into the fight against child labor. Banks finance farms, so the development of regulations that require banks to

request certification from clients could oblige borrowers to provide proof that their business operations are or will be “child-labor-free.”

- An initiative to establish a “child-labor-free” certification process for Panamanian agricultural products. This could get socially responsible corporations involved in the fight against child labor, particularly in their relationships with producers.
 - A bi-national awareness-raising campaign, conducted by Labor and Agriculture authorities of both countries to address the issue of adult and youth labor in the north of Panama migrating each season to neighboring coffee fields in the southern zone of Costa Rica.
- It is important to support the implementation by third parties of vocational training and income-generating initiatives for adults and adolescents in the Gnöbe-Buglé and Darién regions. The project lacks sufficient investment in these areas, which would be complementary to its goals and highly beneficial for child laborers and their families.

7.6 MANAGEMENT-RELATED ISSUES

- CAII’s authority and role with regard to monitoring and supervision needs to be strengthened. It is important that CAII and CE reconcile their differences with regard to registration and monitoring of results, so they can comply more accurately with USDOL requirements.
- CAII should promote a greater level of independence of FTN in the administrative and technical implementation of project activities. CAII has supported FTN in some key functions that should be assumed completely by the latter.
- The costs of the salary of DESTINO’s Education Specialist should be allocated under CAII’s and not CE’s budget. Because the previous Education Specialist requested to be hired under CE’s umbrella, the costs of these positions were included within this implementing agency’s budget. However, this position, which is supervised by CAII’s Project Director, serves the entire project and not only CE’s program.

7.7 SUSTAINABILITY

- The DESTINO project strategy for sustainability should be clearly linked to a closer coordination of its activities with other institutions that are part of CETIPPAT.
- DESTINO should redouble its efforts with regard to the Panamanian Government agencies and CETIPPAT to ensure future financial support for the continuity of the educational alternatives implemented by DESTINO at public schools.
- If the project decides to re-focus its efforts to provide middle school programs to children above the age of 12, it should approach Telefónica S.A. to discuss the possibility that some of DESTINO’s tutoring courses start being supported by the *Pro Niño* program.