



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

Evaluation  
Office

## *Strengthening the Capacities of the Ministry of Labor to Improve Working Conditions in Agriculture in the Dominican Republic- Midterm evaluation*

### Quick Facts

**Country:** *Dominican Republic*

**Evaluation:** *Mid-Term*

**Evaluation Mode:** *Independent*

**Administrative Office:** *DWT/CO-San José*

**Technical Office:** *FUNDAMENTALS*

**Evaluation Manager:** *Cybele Burga*

**Evaluation Consultant:** *Teodoro Sanz*

**Project Code:** *DOM/17/01/USA*

**Donor & Budget:** *U.S. Department of Labor, USD  
5,000,000*

**Keywords:** *Labor inspection, capacity building, child  
labor*

### Background & Context

*The general objective of the Project "Strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Labor to improve working conditions in Dominican agriculture" is to improve the strategic application of labor laws by the Ministry of Labor (ML) and, in this way, contribute to improve working conditions in the agricultural sector in the Dominican Republic. The Project contemplates four intermediate results: (a) Improved systems, tools and instruments adopted by the ML, (b) Better knowledge to enforce the legal framework with emphasis on the*

*agricultural sector evidenced by the ML, (c) Improved implementation of institutional initiatives related to acceptable conditions of work and child labor (CL) by key actors, and (d) Innovative strategies to improve job opportunities, working conditions and productivity, piloted. The Project has a budget of USD 5,000,000, formally began in December 2017 although it began to be implemented in May 2019, and ends in August 2021.*

*The mid-term evaluation seeks to assess progress towards the planned objectives and results, how it is being implemented and under what conditions, as well as to analyze what worked, what did not and why, the main difficulties and limitations. The main findings, conclusions and recommendations are expected to be used in the planning and implementation processes of future activities of the International Labor Organization (ILO), taking into account the challenges posed by the current context of the pandemic. The evaluation has covered the period January 2018-August 2020 and has reviewed the level of progress of all Project activities, both in Santo Domingo and in the other 10 provinces that are part of its intervention.*

*The internal clients of the evaluation are the ILO and the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and the external clients are the ML, the Employers' Confederation of the Dominican Republic (COPARDOM), the "Confederación Autónoma Sindical Clasista" (CASC), the National Confederation of Dominican Workers (CNTD) and the National Confederation of Union Unity (CNUS).*

*The evaluation has analyzed the Project taking into account the following criteria: (a) relevance, (b)*

validity of the design, (c) effectiveness, (d) efficiency, and (e) orientation towards impact and sustainability. Likewise, the evaluation integrates the crosscutting issues of ILO: International Labor Standards (ILS), social dialogue and gender equality and non-discrimination. The evaluation has applied a Theory of Change (TOC) approach, has used different quantitative and qualitative information gathering techniques to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, and has used a participatory approach that involved key stakeholders, such as the tripartite constituents of ILO and ILO staff.

Interviews were conducted with officials from the ILO Country Office for Central America, Panama, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, based in Costa Rica and the ILO Headquarters in Geneva; officials of the ML and the LLR; representatives of the employers' organization COPARDOM, the trade union associations CASC, CNTD and CNUS, the National Institute of Professional Technical Training (INFOTEP) and the Progressing with Solidarity Program (PROSOLI), and officers of USDOL. Discussion sessions were also held with the members of the Project team.

In total, 48 people participated in the interviews or discussion groups. The selection of these actors was made taking into account that all the institutions/directorates and people who have had a greater participation in the design and implementation of the Project are represented. Taking into account the current context of the pandemic and the impossibility of carrying out a field mission to the Dominican Republic, all the interviews or discussion groups have been carried out remotely.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

### Main Findings

(1) The intervention of ILO takes into account the needs of the ML to improve the strategic enforcement of labor legislation, in terms of updating and continuous training in labor matters for inspectors and other officials of the ML, strategic planning of inspections, updating of the specific protocols for inspection, content of the violation reports and reports on the inspectors' actions, information systems of the ML, among others.

(2) The first three intermediate results are aligned with the result of the Project. In the first two, the

strengthening of the inspection system is sought through improvements both in the individual capacities of the inspectors, via training actions, and in the institutional capacities of the Inspection Directorate (DI), with the modernization of the tools and systems used by inspectors. In the third, the participation not only of the ML but also of various actors to establish strategic alliances and carry out joint initiatives is involved.

(3) Some intervention assumptions have not been included in the design, compliance with which would contribute favorably to the result (a sufficient number of inspectors, low labor turnover of ML officials, that the Local Labor Representations (LLR) have the material means necessary for the actions of its officers), and to the objective of the Project (permanent coordination between the Labor Inspectorate with other relevant instances in Occupational Safety and Health-OSH and justice, the legal regulations reinforce the sanctioning procedure for inspections).

(4) 32% of the 50 activities of the Project are in execution or have been executed, 46% have not yet started despite the fact that, according to the work plan, they should have already done so, and the remaining 22% were scheduled to start after August 2020. One of the main factors that explains these delays is the pandemic; However, it is not the only factor, since as of March 2020 (before the start of the pandemic) 10 of the 50 activities were delayed.

(5) The participation of employers' and workers' organizations in the implementation of the Project has been very low, mainly because the design almost did not contemplate a participation of these actors in the first two results and in the fourth. In the third result, it did so, but strategic alliances with these organizations have not yet been established, the network of employers against CL at the provincial level has not materialized, nor has the Inter-Union Committee to Fight Child Labor been strengthened.

(6) The incorporation of the gender equality approach has resulted in the fact that 59% of the people who have participated in the Project's training activities are women; in that it is expected that 30% of the households benefiting from the pilot program for labor insertion will be headed by women (result 1.4); and in that 6 of the 15 INFOTEP trainers who accompanied the companies in the implementation of SCORE, which is an ILO program the purpose of which is to improve the productivity and labor conditions in the small and

medium-size businesses, and 41% of the workers who were in charge of implementing SCORE in their companies are women (result 1.4).

(7) As of September of 2020, the Project has executed 34% of the budget, which reveals the delay in the financial execution of the Project, although it is consistent with the level of progress in the execution of the activities.

(8) The ML and ILO have worked together in the development of diagnoses, design documents and manuals and in the campaign “Throw your dart against child labor”, and the ML has also been the main beneficiary of the training provided in the second, third and fourth intermediate results of the Project. INFOTEP is the other institution that has had active participation in the Project, specifically in the implementation of the SCORE methodology. Instead, the role of other institutions has been basically as beneficiaries of the Project's training activities.

## **Conclusions**

(1) The Project is highly relevant because it takes into account the needs of the ML to improve the strategic enforcement of labor legislation, because it seeks to contribute to improving working conditions in a sector (agriculture) that concentrates a significant number of workers, and because it is aligned with national planning tools (Agenda 2030 Dominican Republic, National Development Strategy 2030, Institutional Strategic Plan of the ML 2017-2020) and ILO (Program and Budget 2020-2021). In addition, it takes on special importance in the current context of a pandemic, which will have effects on various thematic areas that the Project works on, such as CL, OSH, inspections and employment.

(2) The design of the Project is coherent and valid since the outputs, results and objective of the Project are aligned with each other; the indicators adequately reflect what the Project seeks to achieve. Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen the inspection system through a double strategy of improving the individual capacities of the inspectors and the institutional capacities of the DI. Aspects that, a priori, should favor the sustainability of the Project were considered, and the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) is an adequate instrument for monitoring, evaluation and results management, to measure progress in the fulfillment of outputs and results.

(3) However, in the design of the Project, it was necessary to include at the output level, a study on the prevalence of CL and/or on the labor conditions of the adolescents in situation of CL in the agricultural sector and the development of a Policy for the prevention and eradication of CL and/or the update of the National Strategic Plan for the Eradication of the worst forms of CL in the Dominican Republic, as well as intervention assumptions, the fulfillment of which would contribute to the result and the objective of the Project. Additionally, a greater participation of employers and workers could have been foreseen in the first, second and fourth intermediate results and a comprehensive strategy to address the gender equality and non-discrimination approach.

(4) The main advances that contribute to the result of the Project to improve the strategic enforcement of labor laws by the ML and/or to the objective of improving workers' working conditions, have been: the design of the software for the new Electronic System Case Management (SEMC), which stands out for its compatibility with other ML databases, for being a more user-friendly system and because it will be able to be used online; inspector training, which stands out for its national scope and for having prioritized the inspectors who joined in 2018; the CL campaign, which combines various media to spread its messages; and the implementation of the SCORE methodology in 28 companies.

(5) The main delays towards achieving the result of the Project are the development of the new SEMC; the design of the Institutional Statistical System; the strengthening of the General Directorate of Hygiene and Safety (DGHS); the establishment of alliances with entities that work in the prevention and/or eradication of CL; and the strengthening of the Local Steering Committees for the Fight against Child Labor (CDL) and the Inter-Union Committee for the Fight against Child Labor. One of the main factors that explains these delays is the pandemic, which has caused the postponement or suspension of many activities, but some outputs such as the design of the Institutional Statistical System and the strengthening of the DGHS have been delayed because ILO and the ML have not agreed on the scope of the intervention or the specific contribution of ILO.

(6) The gender equality approach has been reflected in the significant number of women participating in the training activities carried out by the Project and in the implementation of SCORE. On the other hand, no

actions have been developed (it was not envisaged in the design) to promote compliance with non-discrimination labor laws, to make visible the gender inequalities that influence the CL of girls and adolescents, or to take better advantage of the role that adult women can play in the prevention and eradication of CL. Nor have alliances been fostered with government institutions responsible for guaranteeing gender equality.

(7) In the implementation of the Project, the participation of employers' and workers' organizations has been very low, even in the third intermediate result where they had been expected to participate. In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Project, beyond the virtualization of certain activities, has not yet implemented actions to respond to this new context, such as adjusting the content of training for inspectors and analysts of the DGHS, prioritize the provinces most affected by COVID-19 and/or prioritize in supply and demand mappings the identification of sectors with rapid growth potential.

(8) In order to achieve the aforementioned progress at the level of activities and outputs, the support received by the Project team from the Director and specialists from the ILO Country Office for Central America, Panama, Haiti and the Dominican Republic based in Costa Rica has been important and also from the Headquarters in Geneva, as well as the coordinated work with the ML, as the main beneficiary and partner of the Project, and the fluid and constant communication with USDOL.

(9) However, the evaluation considers that the wide knowledge and experience of the ILO, both institutional and of the Project team, could be better used in the main thematic areas involved in the Project intervention (inspections, statistics, OSH, CL); and that PROSOLI and other institutions in the agriculture and education sectors could have a more active participation in the implementation of the third and fourth intermediate results, just as INFOTEP is having in the implementation of the SCORE methodology.

(10) It is estimated that it is unlikely that in the time remaining to finalize the Project, outputs that are necessary for the achievement of the expected results will materialize, such as the development of the new SEMC (linked to the first intermediate result), the implementation of the training programs for the DGHS (second result), the establishment of inter-institutional alliances to prevent and eradicate CL, and the

strengthening of the Inter-Union Committee to Fight Child Labor, as well as the CDL (third result), and the implementation of the pilot program of labor insertion for vulnerable families (fourth result). This estimate mainly takes into account the amount, size and estimated duration of the activities it includes, how many of them have already been carried out or at least initiated, and whether or not there is already an agreement between the ML and ILO on their scope and/or start date.

(11) If the expected results are fulfilled, there are factors that would favor the sustainability of the Project, such as the formal commitment of the ML to maintain the new SEMC, expand it, expand its use and require that all labor inspectorates use the system; and the permanent implementation, as part of the regular functions of the ML, of training programs on labor regulations for inspectors and on CL aimed at officials of the ML, and also, by the ML and/or INFOTEP, of the programs for labor insertion of vulnerable families and of SCORE in the companies. Regarding the latter, the sustainable provision of the SCORE methodology is also favored by the active participation that INFOTEP has had in the Project, an institution with significant human and financial resources, a presence throughout the country with a wide network of private training providers and with 5 advisors who will soon be certified as Master Trainer in SCORE.

(12) A fact outside the Project that may favor the achievement of the result is that the ML has hired approximately 60 new inspectors in the 2018-2019 biennium. It is also positive for the sustainability of the Project that with the new administration there has not been any change, to date, in the managers and workers of the Directorates/Departments that participate in the Project, as well as of the LLR, because the majority are career officers, which gives them job stability. On the other hand, there has been no regulatory change in recent years to reinforce the ML sanctioning procedure for companies to ensure that the working conditions that gave rise to the sanction are effectively improved, which would be positive for the fulfillment of the Project's objective.

## Recommendations

### Lessons Learned

(1) It is important that ILO, the donors and constituents maintain a fluid communication from the moment ILO is selected to carry out a project. For this, it is

necessary for ILO to inform donors and constituents about the main characteristics of the programming, design and implementation of the projects it executes.

(2) The main lessons learned from the SCORE implementation pilot program are: (a) the commitment and involvement of Senior Management of the companies that implement SCORE is essential because it is the one that has the resources to achieve the desired results, (b) the importance to generate a culture of standardization and continuous improvement in employees, and (c) the importance of involving all areas of the company in the preparation and implementation of improvement plans.

(3) In a pandemic context, the Project's decision to virtualize certain activities is adequate and efficient. However, it should be taken into account that not all institutions have virtual infrastructure and/or "virtual culture" available, which can limit, for example, the coverage of training actions to members of the CDL or the vulnerable population who will be the beneficiary of the pilot training program for job placement.

#### **Good Practices**

(1) The Project has taken advantage of and complemented the progress made by other ILO projects such as the Global BRIDGE Project and the Project "Improving working conditions in the banana sector", both with regard to strengthening inspections (results 1.1 and 1.2 of the Project) as well as the improvement of productivity in companies by applying the SCORE methodology (result 1.4 of the Project).

(2) The indicators of the objective and intermediate results of the Project reflect what the Project seeks to achieve, what it seeks to contribute, and the output indicators reflect the main strategies to be used to strengthen capacities and improve/modernize the systems, tools and instruments. The tools provided to collect information on the value of the indicators are appropriate and it is considered appropriate that the responsibility for collecting the information is shared between the ILO Project team and the officials of the different Directorates/Departments of the ML, and that of verifying the information falls exclusively on the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.

(3) From the design of the Project, strategies were contemplated that, a priori, favor the sustainability of the Project, such as the permanent implementation, as part of the regular functions of the ML, of training programs on labor regulations for inspectors and on CL aimed at officials of the ML, and also the permanent

implementation, in charge of the ML and/or INFOTEP, of programs for the employability of vulnerable families and incorporation of SCORE in companies.

(4) The information and awareness campaign "Launch your dart against child labor" combines various means to spread its messages: (a) radio spots, (b) social networks (c) banners, posters, office supplies kit, (d) megaphone advertising in agricultural areas, and (e) participation of influencers.

#### **Recommendations**

(1) ILO and the ML reach agreements on: (a) the Project activities that must continue or initiate in the next 4 to 5 months; (b) the scope of the outputs that are relevant to carry out in order to achieve the result and objective of the Project but the progress of which up to now is practically nil; (c) updating the work plan, identifying those activities and outputs that are not going to be able to be carried out during the execution period of the Project; and (d) the roles to be played in the remainder of the Project. (For ILO and ML / Very high priority / Very short term).

(2) Use the CMEP as a monitoring and management tool to measure the level of progress in the outputs and results and to facilitate the decision-making process based on evidence. Likewise, carry out the study of Pre-Situational Analysis to calculate the baseline value of one of the indicators of result 1.3 of the Project and carry out the Study of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (CAP) of different actors on Child and Adolescents Labor in the agricultural sector in the provinces in which the Project intervenes or, alternatively, a study that measures the impact of the campaign "Throw your dart against child labor." (For ILO and ML / High priority / Very short term).

(3) Regarding the strengthening of the Inter-Union Committee to Combat Child Labor, it is recommended: (a) to train the representatives of the trade union associations in prevention and eradication of CL: human rights, youth, migration, social security, ILO Conventions 138 and 182, Sustainable Development Goals and government commitments; (b) increase their capacities to prepare project proposals and access financing sources; and (c) support them with the use of social networks and the creation of web pages, so that they are able to carry out awareness-raising campaigns directed at workers. (For ILO and workers' organizations / High priority / Short term)

(4) Establish alliances with other institutions to generate greater effectiveness and efficiency in the

*intervention of the Project in the prevention and eradication of CL and the materialization of the pilot program for employability of vulnerable families. (For ILO and ML / High priority / Short term).*

*(5) For a better response to the context of the pandemic, it is suggested: (a) adjust the content of the training for inspectors and analysts of the DGHS with regard to OSH; (b) training for DGHS analysts and output 1.2.2 activities may place emphasis not only on the agricultural sector but on others such as textiles or tourism; (c) the CL Training Program for CDL prioritizes the provinces selected by the Project that have been most affected by COVID 19; (d) supply and demand mappings for the pilot program for employability, to identify sectors with rapid growth potential in the context of a pandemic, and (e) to adjust Module 5 of the SCORE (OSH) for when it is implemented again in companies, after the end of the Project. (For ILO and ML / High priority / Short term).*

*(6) To incorporate the gender equality approach in the Project, it is suggested: (a) to establish strategies aimed at reversing the main vulnerability factors of girls and female adolescents to CL; (b) in the implementation of the campaign "Throw your dart against child labor" and in carrying out other activities of the third intermediate result, consider the key role that adult women can play in the prevention and eradication of CL, especially mothers of families where CL exists or at risk of CL; (c) in the pilot program for employability, incorporate strategies that address the main restrictions faced by women in obtaining and keeping employment, specifically those linked to being almost the only ones responsible for domestic tasks and caring for household members; and (d) carry out training actions on the incorporation of the gender approach, aimed at the Project team. (For ILO and ML / High priority / Short term).*

*(7) When defining the thematic scope of any future ILO intervention in the Dominican Republic, take into account the priorities identified by the Project team, specialists from the ILO Office in Costa Rica and by the constituents in the field of inspections, provision of material resources to the ML staff in the provinces, prevention and eradication of CL, legislation, employment and strengthening of trade union associations. (For ILO, ML, employers' organizations, workers' organizations, USDOL / High priority / Medium term).*