

U.S. Department of Labor OCFT Monitoring and Evaluation Division

Final Performance Evaluation

Youth Pathways Central America (YPCA) Project



PROJECT INFORMATION

Implementation Period
July 29, 2015 – September 30, 2020

Budget
\$16,478,000

Geographical Coverage
El Salvador and Honduras



Implementing Partners

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Fe y Alegría, Glasswing International, National Foundation for the Development of Honduras (FUNADEH)

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Quantitative
Sources: YPCA Comprehensive Evaluation Plan (CMEP), Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System (DBMS), Longitudinal Survey Data (FUSADES)



Qualitative

91 total participants

57 34

31 Key Informant Interviews (KII)
9 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
5 Small Group Interviews (SGI)

Secondary sources: ILO, World Bank, Government Agencies of Statistics from Honduras and El Salvador.

Due to COVID-19 outbreak, most qualitative KIIs, FGDs and SGIs were collected remotely through online platforms such as Skype, WhatsApp and Zoom



The evaluation team discussed interview notes, coding schemes, codification, categorization, and conclusions to ensure inter-rater reliability

KEY FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

YPCA Theory of Change (TOC) is relevant to the needs of at-risk children and youth in both countries. YPCA adequately addressed barriers to obtaining decent work by providing the necessary vocational and soft skills required to get their first jobs. The Career Connect Clubs component motivates students to stay in the educational system.

EFFICIENCY

Providing administrative and technical follow up on a single project instead of two reduced the administrative burden on USDOL, and reduced CRS administrative costs. Project organization and staffing was adequate. CRS Home Office and Regional Office support was an added value. High staff turnover, late start of activities on the field, and M&E system procedures limited efficiency.

SUSTAINABILITY

Evidence shows that positive behavioral changes in children and youth and the knowledge gained through project services, including insertion to employment and startup of self-employment, are durable, sustainable outcomes. Implementing partners and stakeholders will continue implementing YPCA methodologies in El Salvador and Honduras, although only partially.



Evaluate – Learn – Adapt



KEY FINDINGS (continuation)

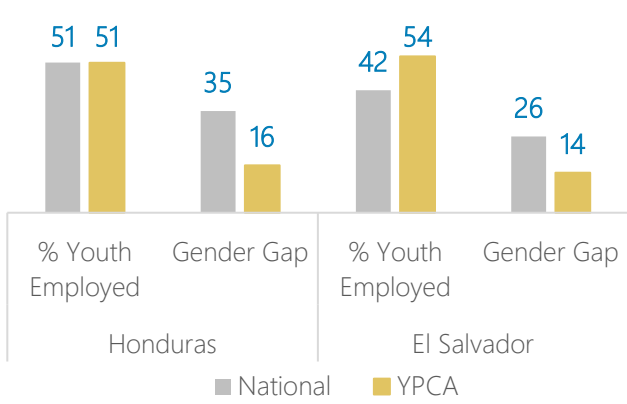
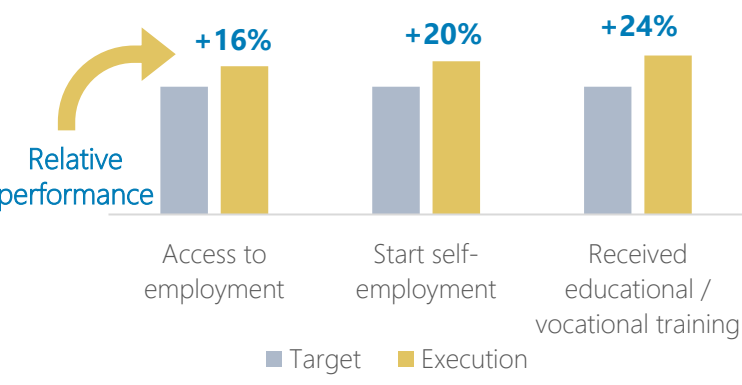
OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

YPCA was effective in reaching its numeric targets:

- 17 out of 24 performance indicators with 100% or higher execution
- 4 out of 24 performance indicators between 90% and 99% execution
- 3 out of 24 performance indicators below 89% execution

YPCA matched the national youth employment rates in Honduras, and surpassed them in El Salvador, while targeting at-risk youth with low education.

YPCA reduced gender gaps on beneficiary's employment rates in both countries: from 35 to 16 in Honduras, and from 26 to 14 in El Salvador



SUCCESSES, PROMISING PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

VOCATIONAL AND SOFT SKILLS TRAINING

Providing support in job searches is an added value and a highly successful and positive aspect of the methodology compared to other workforce development projects in the area. The promotion of soft skills is more relevant to employers and youth beneficiaries than vocational training to enter the labor market.

FIRST JOB

A successful way to insert youth with no work experience into the local labor markets is informal jobs. The longitudinal study provides evidence that after gaining some experience, skills and abilities in their "first job," project-graduated youth progressed to better, acceptable jobs.

LESSONS LEARNED

YPCA results could have been better if it had addressed more-relevant desertion causes in the Clubs component given the economic and security concerns in both countries.

Development of the M&E systems and plans as central components of the CMEP took about one year, delaying project implementation and affected effectiveness and efficiency efforts.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS (to DOL)

- Include economic and security issues as primary causes of attrition rates in schools in the Theory of Change.
- Streamline the Comprehensive Evaluation Plan process, make it less time-consuming, conduct an external data quality assessment at the early stages of the project to identify recommendations to the PMP.
- USDOL should consider activities in future programs aimed at addressing gender gaps beginning with the request for applications.
- Efforts toward sustainability should be organized in a detailed work plan with indicators that can be monitored to measure progress toward expected sustainability results.

