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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



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INTERIM EVALUATION

MAKING ADVANCES TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR IN MORE AREAS WITH SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATED EFFORTS (MATE MASIE)

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This report describes the interim evaluation of the Making Advances to Eliminate Child Labor in More Areas with Sustainable Integrated Efforts (MATE MASIE) project. Fieldwork for this evaluation was conducted in August 2023. Research Support Services (RSS) conducted this independent evaluation in collaboration with the project team and stakeholders and prepared the evaluation report according to the terms specified in its contract with the United States Department of Labor. The evaluation team would like to express sincere thanks to all the parties involved for their support and valuable contributions.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCPC	Community Child Protection Committees
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CHED	Cocoa Health and Extension Division
CL	Child Labour
CLO	Chief Labour Officer
CLMRS	Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation Systems
CLFZ	Child-Labor Free Zone
CMEP	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
COCOBOD	Ghana Cocoa Board
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit
DCPC	District Child Protection Committees
DOL	Department of Labor
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GES	Ghana Education Service
HBCC	Hiawu Bisease Cocoa Co-operative
HBCCFMS	Hiawu Bisease Co-operative Cocoa Farmers and Marketing Supply
HQ	Headquarters
HO	Home Office
ICI	International Cocoa Initiative
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
KII	Key Informant Interview
KKFU	Kuapa Kokoo Farmers' Union
KPFA	Kokoo Pa Farmers' Association
MATE MASIE	Making Advances to Eliminate Child Labor in More Areas with Sustainable Integrated Efforts
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MELR	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations
MMDA	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly
MOCA	Mobilizing Community Action and Promoting Opportunities for Youth in Ghana's Cocoa Growing Communities
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
OFFCOP	Offinso Fine Flavor Cocoa Cooperative
PD	Project Director
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PO	Project Officer
POC	Projective Objective Indicators
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
RA	Rainforest Alliance
RSS	Research Support Services

TPR	Technical Performance Report
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labor
WI	Winrock International

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This report presents the findings of an interim evaluation of a Department of Labor (DOL)-funded project to address child labor in cocoa production value chains in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Making Advances to Eliminate Child Labor in More Areas with Sustainable Integrated Efforts (MATE MASIE) began in December 2020 and will continue through December 2024. It is being implemented by Winrock International (WI) in Ghana with support from the home office in Washington, D.C. This report includes an assessment of the project's achievements to date with regards to the two primary outcomes and associated sub-outcomes and an analysis of the factors driving key results in this interim stage of the project. It also provides an assessment of sustainability and recommendations to promote continued success in the project's final year.

The purpose of the MATE MASIE project is to strengthen the capacity of cocoa cooperatives and monitoring and enforcement agencies to monitor child labor and to enforce child labor laws within the cooperatives (Outcome 1) and to increase support to vulnerable cocoa cooperative member households through the strengthening of cocoa cooperatives (Outcome 2) in the Ashanti region of Ghana. To assess the project at this interim stage, evaluators conducted 27 interviews and 8 focus group discussions over the period August 14-25, 2023, in three districts near Kumasi with cocoa cooperative representatives, community child protection committee (CCPCs) volunteers, community monitors, community members, and government and non-government actors across rural and urban implementation districts and at national and regional levels. Evaluators also drew from a review of project documents. The data was examined with regards to the evaluation areas and a rating was assigned from Low to High for achievement and sustainability of each Outcome based on evidence triangulation provided by interviews, focus groups, and the document review.

KEY EVALUATION RESULTS

MATE MASIE is making significant progress on Outcome 1. Efforts were concentrated during the first two years of implementation on establishing relationships, developing the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP), and implementing activities associated with Outcome 1. Project staff have engaged in collaborative work with cooperatives and law enforcement and monitoring agencies, including formation of child protection committees, effective training to increase awareness and capacity to manage child labor in the cocoa supply chain as well as case management and child tracing. There is a strong perception that these activities have made progress towards the goals of strengthening the cocoa cooperatives and sensitizing members to the dangers of and laws around child labor.

On Outcome 2, there has been significantly less progress to date. Much of the status of Outcome 2 can be attributed to delays associated with COVID-19, the CMEP development and implementation, and the planned staged rollout of activities following

establishment of Outcome 1. Activities under Outcome 2 had reportedly begun by the time of April 2023 TPR, but many respondents in the August 2023 focus groups noted the lack of progress in implementation alongside strong demand for additional services for the communities. Thus, the project has been less effective thus far in the strengthening of cooperatives to provide direct support to vulnerable households. However, the project has made progress on several key components that will support this strengthening and the future provision of direct services to vulnerable households, such as completing the development and testing of a child labor risk management tool, forming Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), and the creation of a menu of household support services that cooperatives can offer.

Project Relevance

The MATE MASIE project is relevant to the implementing context and shows strong promise for strengthening cooperatives in their ability to monitor child labor in their supply chains and coordinate with local law enforcement and monitoring agencies. The project has worked closely with government and law enforcement actors at national, regional, district, and community levels. Their advocacy efforts contributed to the renewal of and continued commitment to extant international and national agreements and action plans. The project also has managed cooperative and government expectations through communication on its goals regarding the prevention of child labor within the cocoa cooperatives. However, farmers, community members and even some volunteers were not clear on MATE MASIE's plans to support vulnerable households through the cocoa cooperatives, suggesting there is work to be done to ensure that Outcome 2 activities are relevant.

Effectiveness

On Outcome 1, cooperatives, monitoring and law enforcement agencies, and community members felt confident that they had benefited from trainings. Many of these participants and volunteers were able to clearly explain the purpose of the project, the laws regarding child labor in Ghana and common-sense practices to ensure that children are not engaged in hard labor in the cocoa sector. With regards to Outcome 2, there is evidence that MATE MASIE has made less progress towards effectively strengthening cocoa cooperatives to provide support to vulnerable households who are members of the cooperatives or to the communities at large, at least partially due to delays in implementation. While activities have begun under Outcome 2, such as meetings with cooperatives on remediation services and referrals, and initial trainings, community monitors and child protection committee members noted that they have yet to receive promised remediation services. A key exception to this is the VSLAs, which have been set up and are functioning across communities, with reported success. Cooperatives have received some training on identifying vulnerable households, but as of the time of data collection, focus group participants felt that the project had not resulted in support for families to send to and keep their children in school and off the farms. As of the October 2023 TPR, some services had started to be delivered, such as bags of cement for infrastructure development, though these instances could not yet be triangulated with interview data.

Efficiency

MATE MASIE has used resources in a strategic and efficient way to achieve project outcomes, particularly in delivering around Outcome 1, in improving the capacity and accountability of cocoa cooperatives to monitor child labor in the cocoa supply chain. WI project staff and DOL noted the efficiency of MATE MASIE staff. However, project staff and volunteers raised issues about efficiency regarding the process around the CMEP and noted delays in all activities and outputs, attributed to the time it took to complete the CMEP, the Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS), and to train grantees on these tools. The sequential nature of the project (Outcome 1 the initial focus with Outcome 2 to follow) means that Outcome 2 appears to be more delayed, which is particularly relevant when examining community expectations for remediation services. Relying on unpaid volunteers to be part of the Community Child Protection Committee (CCPC) ensures that resources can be utilized in other ways, but this arrangement is seen by some as unsustainable and thus arguably inefficient as it requires investment in training with unclear long-term benefits. Maintaining the volunteer arrangement will depend on the willingness of these volunteers to continue their work without pay moving forward and once project support from Winrock ends.

Impact

Stakeholders agree that MATE MASIE has made a positive impact on the overall climate and acceptability of using child labor by strengthening the ability of cocoa cooperatives to identify and prevent child labor among their members. However, specifically using cocoa cooperatives as an entry point for project activities was seen as having mixed results. Some interview and focus group respondents observed that working through the cocoa cooperatives was more effective than past projects aiming to reduce child labor, saying those past projects had achieved little to nothing while the current project has made strides. On the other hand, by limiting the project activities to cocoa cooperatives, many farmers and participants in the cocoa value chain are left out, leaving significant gaps in knowledge and monitoring in geographic areas, which provide opportunities for child labor to move into when cocoa cooperatives address it within their value chains. Additionally, structural barriers, such as lack of schools or support for schooling and poverty in participating districts mean that large numbers of children are found in other types of work as well as in cocoa farms.

Sustainability

Community monitors and CCPC members largely agree that the awareness and training around child labor as part of Outcome 1 and the implementation of the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) components of the activity designed as part of Outcome 2 will be sustained after the project ends. However, the probability of sustainability of other components, such as the volunteer committees, the ability of district governments to maintain their efforts, and continued education, among others, is low as they are unlikely to have support from district governments without additional funding – support which is essential for remediation activities, as well as child and social protection.

Equity and Inclusion

MATE MASIE has had variable success in effectively including women, children, and members of marginalized communities in project programming. Although women are often found in the membership rosters of cooperatives, and even make up the majority of one, they are underrepresented in trainings and on Community Child Protection Committees (CCPC). Members of these committees and community monitors note that they were explicitly told to include women and youth in their programming, but WI leadership and staff were not able to speak to a strategy for inclusion of women, youth and marginalized groups and no strategy is outlined in the project documentation – interviews made clear that no clear definition of marginalized groups existed within the project, thus making their inclusion harder. Self-assessments for cooperatives include an indicator for the goal of a strategy for inclusion of women, youth, and other marginalized voices, but these strategies have not been provided or detailed. On a positive note, there have been recent efforts to present trainings in local languages and with pictorial instruction to ensure that participants with varying levels of literacy and specific language preferences can participate in and learn from sensitization efforts.

Table 1. Performance Summary

Performance Summary	Rating
Outcome 1 – Improved accountability of cocoa cooperatives to monitor child labor in the cocoa supply chain	
<p>The project has made significant progress towards this Outcome by training cocoa cooperative leadership and members, strengthening links with law enforcement and districts and through the development of the CLMRS. Sustainability of the activities is in question especially where districts will require funding that they do not have to maintain progress and where volunteers are a primary source of labor.</p>	<p>Achievement: Above-Moderate Sustainability: Moderate</p>
Outcome 2 – Increased support to vulnerable cocoa households within cocoa cooperatives	
<p>Due to the sequential nature of activities–CMEP development, Outcome 1 and then Outcome 2–many activities under Outcome 2 began late or were just getting started at the time of data collection, with a notable exception being the establishment of VSLAs, which were seen as both useful and largely sustainable by participants. While many activities are on track as outlined in the CMEP, community members were frustrated with the delays in promised services that resulted from a delay in project activities. Due to the ongoing nature of many Outcome 2 activities, it is difficult to assess sustainability of these activities and we leave that for the final evaluation.</p>	<p>Achievement: Moderate Sustainability: Moderate</p>

PROMISING PRACTICES

- The CMEP development practice was collaborative and detailed, resulting in a document and process that provides direction to the project staff and volunteers.

Additionally, it has been useful for monitoring and responding to challenges that arise;

- The self-assessment tool for the cocoa cooperatives that also asks them to indicate whether they have a plan for diversity, equity and inclusion can help the project achieve greater inclusivity;
- WI has developed strong relationships with government actors, cooperative and community members and facilitated cooperation well across various actors, and promoted collaboration among these actors that has heretofore not been present in child labor projects in the region;
- WI has trained significantly more people than planned on child labor laws and practices. Provided this was done without sacrificing other project goals, the expansive trainings have the potential to magnify the impact of the project by sensitizing more individuals;
- Trainings have been offered in local languages and with pictorial learning materials, which appear to heighten the understanding and retention of key material with trainees, particularly those from migrant, low-literacy, and other vulnerable populations; and
- Community monitors are using their skills to sensitize other farmers to the dangers of child labor, not just entering children into monitoring systems.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The project was successful in raising awareness among community members and created a system to monitor and report child labor cases, components of the project that are likely to be sustained past the sunset of the activity, and potentially continue to have an impact on reducing child labor, which indicates that trainings such as these are a useful tool in combating child labor;
- While the intent of the project was not to directly reduce child labor in the community, the project's theory of change posited that these reductions would occur if cooperatives' accountability to monitor CL was increased and support to vulnerable cooperative households was increased. But the lack of schools and other alternatives to labor for children puts the theory of change to test and may signal the need for more comprehensive programming that will help address these systems-level challenges;
- Forging new relationships with government representatives, assemblies, and cocoa cooperatives, and communicating the nuances of a capacity strengthening project versus a direct services project is extremely challenging and ample time and care should be allocated to these efforts;
- Expanding the number of people trained needs to be approached with caution to ensure that trainees are given the appropriate resources to be able to take in the information

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The MATE MASIE project is regarded as relevant given the implementing environment, effective in sensitizing key community members and other stakeholders about child labor and how to monitor it, and as having positive impact within grantee cocoa cooperatives. The project has been collaborating closely with government actors to further the Government of Ghana's aim of eliminating child labor. MATE MASIE's impact has also been particularly noted in the capacity-building trainings of grantee cocoa cooperative representatives. It has successfully developed a monitoring system for reporting of child labor. However, the project's limitations in addressing community and household level needs have implications for the project's impact. In interviews and focus groups with parents and children, it became evident that entrenched poverty affects their lives in ways that the project cannot address in its current scope, including financial barriers that result in child labor across sectors and affect households' ability to access educational and other opportunities for their children. The evaluation's recommendations are as follows:

Systematize outreach to better include marginalized groups including women and youth in leadership positions and offer cocoa cooperatives training on inclusion.

WI should delineate a specific and detailed outreach and inclusion strategy for supporting cocoa cooperatives to better include women, youth, and other marginalized groups in leadership positions and in the processes to prevent and address child labor. WI should work with cocoa cooperatives to assess the current status of inclusion, such as the number of women in leadership positions, as well as the current C-PAT indicators on gender, to determine what other steps may be necessary to expand inclusivity.

Collaborate with districts on medium-term development plans, including costing, budgeting, and planning for future expenditures to increase the project's sustainability prospects.

WI should work directly with districts on their medium-term development plans, including costing, budgeting, and planning for future expenditures as this capacity-building will be key to sustainability once the MATE MASIE project ends. DCPCs, law enforcement, and other stakeholders recognize the importance of the sensitization and education efforts of MATE MASIE but will need support in building skills to appropriately budget and plan for its continuation – training on cooperative members on how to access other funding sources may be useful and increase the chances of the project being sustained. Ideally, this would be accomplished within the project timeline by WI but may need to be taken up by USDOL in subsequent projects.

Collaborate with partner organizations to improve case management for sustainability, ensuring children removed from child labor have the sufficient resources to attend school.

Parents repeatedly noted the need for support in sending their children to school and their own poverty as barriers to pulling their children out of labor. It is clear that the needs in these areas are high and likely cannot be met by direct services from cooperatives alone. WI should work to strengthen cocoa cooperative capacity to engage more closely with

partner organizations on referrals and remediation for their farmer members and potential members. Collaboration and referral for vulnerable cooperative households could improve case management and service delivery to ensure that children who have been removed from child labor have the appropriate funds and supplies to attend school.

Alongside, USDOL can collaborate with other actors in the region to identify areas of gap and overlap to build stronger systems and ensure that programming is sufficient and efficient to meet project goals.

Expand training of trainer programs to increase the project's impact and sustainability.

There is strong demand for the type of training that MATE MASIE is offering, but the information is not always translating into higher levels of knowledge. Expanding and refining training of trainer opportunities could grow the network of volunteers and ensure that trained individuals are grasping the material and are able to pass that information on to others. WI should encourage and train community monitors and CCPCs to engage in their own education by expanding training of trainer programs and equipping them with additional resources to magnify the impact of the project and support the continuing education and information access that will be necessary to maintain the project.

Planning for scale to expand the project's reach and impact to more farmers and vulnerable households by identifying which project components are scalable.

WI should take advantage of the next full year of implementation to determine which, if any, of components of the project are scalable in order to expand the benefits to a larger group of farmers and families. The CLMRS has been identified for scale as part of the workplan. WI and USDOL may also consider a plan for future projects at scale to include some of the following: expanding participation in the program, increasing the capacity of more farmers to conduct trainings themselves inside and outside the cooperatives, by including more districts, by identifying non-cooperative households for inclusion, or expanding successful components of support to vulnerable households, such as the VSLAs, to more communities.

Consider incentivization schemes for volunteers to prevent burnout and ensure they continue their project activities.

CCPC members are volunteers, and so by definition, they are not paid. Many of these volunteers noted that without payment or incentive, such as income-generating activities, e.g., corn mill work, or in-kind offerings, including certificates and t-shirts, volunteers would experience burnout and would not continue their work on the project. MATE MASIE, in conjunction with the districts, should consider implementing ways to formalize volunteer commitments to increase volunteer adherence to the project activities as a sustainability measure.

Devote time and resources to managing community expectations and communicating project aims clearly to ensure buy-in and community involvement.

MATE MASIE is a project with a complex theory of change and set of activities that deviate from perhaps better-known models of direct services provision, in hopes of reducing child labor through poverty alleviation. Due to this complexity, it is important to present project

activities and aims to stakeholders in a way that is accessible –in local languages, broad-based, and with appropriate framing– to successfully manage expectations and ensure community buy-in and commitment to volunteer or other arrangements where community members are needed and are expecting support. In the future, USDOL should ensure that ample time and resources are allocated to repeated management of expectations and WI should devote time during trainings and meetings to ensure the same.

1. PROJECT CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION

The Making Advances to Eliminate Child Labor in More Areas with Sustainable Integrated Efforts ([MATE MASIE](#)) project receives funding from the DOL's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) under the mandate to combat child labor. Working in four districts in the Ashanti region of Ghana, MATE MASIE takes a multi-pronged approach to reducing child labor in the cocoa supply chain through engagement with cocoa cooperatives, farmers, governments, and other stakeholders. Namely, the project seeks to strengthen capacity, connections, and accountability across child labor enforcement and monitoring within cocoa cooperatives; build the capacity of cocoa cooperatives to provide support to vulnerable households and access to social protection; and pilot a farm-to-cooperative cocoa traceability system to incentivize the reduction of child labor in the cocoa value chain. MATE MASIE supports a locally developed and driven farm-to-cooperative traceability system for child labor; supports cocoa cooperatives to develop a replicable pathway for child labor monitoring and the provision of remediation services in order to pave the way for wider adoption across farming communities; and builds the capacity of government enforcement authorities at the district and community levels and improves the coordination and referral systems of local service providers so that these organizations can mutually reinforce one another to become more effective in eliminating harmful child labor in the cocoa sector. The project is being implemented by Winrock International (WI).

2. EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of interim performance evaluations includes the following:

- Assessing the relevance of the project within the current cultural, economic, and political context in the country, as well as the validity of the project design and the extent to which it is suited to the priorities and policies of the host government and other national stakeholders;
- Determining whether the project is on track toward meeting its objectives and outcomes, identifying the challenges and opportunities encountered in doing so, and analyzing the driving factors for these challenges and opportunities;
- Assessing the effectiveness of the project's strategies and the project's strengths and weaknesses in project implementation and identifying areas in need of improvement;
- Providing conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations; and

- Assessing the project’s plans for sustainability at local and national levels and among implementing organizations, and identifying steps to enhance its sustainability.

The evaluation provides OCFT, the grantee, and other project stakeholders, working to combat child labor more broadly, an assessment of the project’s performance, its effects on project participants, and an understanding of the factors driving the project results. The evaluation results, conclusions and recommendations will serve to inform any project adjustments required, and to inform stakeholders in the design and implementation of subsequent phases or future child labor elimination projects as appropriate.

2.1. METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Fieldwork for this study was conducted over a period of two weeks during August 2023. It was preceded by a site visit¹ to the WI Offices in Kumasi and to select cocoa cooperatives and communities to finalize respondent selection and to better understand the context before data collection. Preliminary findings were shared during a stakeholder validation workshop² on September 5, 2023 in Kumasi, Ghana.



Stakeholders discuss findings at a validation Workshop, August 2023

Credit: Winrock International

¹ See Annex B for a site visit summary.

² See Annex D for a list of participants and agenda for the validation workshop.

Qualitative data collection and subsequent thematic analysis was complemented by a review of documentation shared by the implementer. Instrument design and data analysis were guided by the research questions outlined in a table in Annex G. The table also details the sources that were provided as inputs into the evaluation questions.

2.2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

WI, the implementing partner, provided RSS with a list of stakeholders from which to select respondents for qualitative data collection, and shared project documents. RSS conducted a multi-stage sampling process with the support and advice of WI. During the site visit, WI assisted RSS in selecting geographies and cooperatives for inclusion, first by intending to select from both rural and urban settings. At the municipal level, RSS selected Atimwa Mponua and at the district level, Adansi South was selected, both with WI's support. At the rural level, Hiawu Bisease was the only relevant participating community and thus was included as part of the sample. From these geographies, RSS selected respondents purposively from a list provided by WI to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of multiple stakeholders –from the household up to the national government –and across partners (e.g., cocoa cooperatives, civil society, etc.). WI additionally facilitated the selection of parents and youth community members – parents and youth were interviewed individually as it was logistically challenging to bring them together at a common place at a common time for a focus group discussion.³

Table 2: Interviews and FGDs by composition and location

Stakeholder	Location	Composition	KII or FGD
CCPC	Kyebi	10-15	FGD
CCPC	Abofour	7-10	FGD
CCPC	Amoawi	12-14	FGD
CCPC	Amaning	10-15	FGD
CCPC	Ayaasu	5-7	FGD
CCPC	Agortime	10-12	FGD
CCPC	Asarekrom	10-15	FGD
CCPC	Essongkrom	11-15	FGD

³ The relevant instrument for parents and youth is the focus group discussion guide, even when interviews were conducted with only one individual.

CCPC	Ahomahoma	7-12	FGD
Community Monitor	Offinsu	2	FGD
Parent/Children	Kyebe	2/1	KII
Parent/Children	Kyebe	2/2	KII
Parent/Children	Hiawu Bisease	2/1	KII
Parent/Children	Hiawu Bisease	1/2	KII
Parent/Children	Essongkrom	1/1	KII
Parent/Children	Essongkrom	2/3	KII
MCPC/DCPC	Offinso Municipal Adansi South District	2	KII
Cocoa Cooperative Representatives	Kumasi	4	KII
WI Project Team	Kumasi Remote	6	KII
National/Regional Government/COC OBOD	Remote	2	KII
District Government	Offinso Municipal Adansi South District	4	KII
Development Partners	Accra	2	KII
Private Sector	Kumasi	1	KII

*numbers of parents and children are listed consecutively separated by a "/" in column 3

Interviews and focus groups were conducted over a period of two and a half weeks, from August 14-31, 2023, were recorded and transcribed, and then were translated from local languages into English where necessary. Each data collector performed a quality control review of the translated transcript for each interview or focus group they led. Documents were reviewed and categorized by their content vis-à-vis the evaluation questions and objectives. Transcriptions were reviewed by the co-lead evaluators and research staff for

evidence pertaining to each of the evaluation questions and objectives using thematic analysis.

WI provided RSS with documentation related to implementation and planning for the project including workplan documents, periodic reports, CMEP screenshots, annexes, and more through October 2023. These documents were reviewed and triangulated with the interview transcripts to present evidence for the midterm evaluation detailed below.

Evaluation Limitations

The data collection for this study occurred over a short period (two weeks) and access to stakeholders was facilitated by the implementing organization. Although this facilitation made communication and planning significantly easier and thus the data collection feasible within the short time frame, the role of the implementer should be noted as it is possible this process could have resulted in a sample that favored the implementers, even if there was no intent to sway the sample. The short time frame meant that we were not able to assess all implementation areas or cooperatives or to differentiate project implementation outcomes between cooperatives or communities. We are confident that we have been able to gain a holistic picture of the project across communities, but do not assert how implementation might have differed across geographies or cooperatives.

It is difficult to assess impact — and particularly attributable impact — because the evaluation and project were not designed to identify causal impact at the population level. There is no baseline, midline, or endline surveying planned and no relevant existing datasets that could be used to paint a quantitative picture of the state of child labor in cocoa production in the region. Also, as this is an interim evaluation, we do not expect to understand the full extent of the project’s effects at this stage. Thus, we assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and inclusiveness of the project using qualitative accounts from stakeholders.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

This section is divided by evaluation area. Each section details the data, analysis, and supporting evidence for the interim evaluation.

3.1. PROJECT RELEVANCE

EQ1. To what extent is the MATE MASIE (MTM) theory of change valid and coherent given the implementing environment?

EQ2. To what extent does the MTM project strategy reflect the needs and priorities of diverse stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, cocoa cooperatives and their members, vulnerable households and purchasing clerks?

EQ3. To what extent does the project manage community expectations from its various engagement strategies?

MATE MASIE seeks to increase the number of cocoa cooperatives in Ghana demonstrating the capacity to reduce child labor in the cocoa supply chain through two outcomes and four sub-outcomes, listed here as in the CMEP.

1. Outcome 1: Improved accountability of cocoa cooperatives to monitor child labor in the cocoa supply chain
 - Sub-outcome 1.1: Strengthened capacity of monitoring and enforcement agencies to enforce child labor laws within cooperatives
 - Sub-outcome 1.2: Strengthened capacity of cocoa cooperatives to monitor child labor
2. Outcome 2: Increased support to vulnerable cocoa households within cocoa cooperatives
 - Sub-outcome 2.1: Strengthened capacity of cocoa cooperatives to provide sustainable assistance and support to prevent child labor
 - Sub-outcome 2.2: Increased access to social protection and child labor remediation programs

The project is predicated on a theory of change with three key elements. First, that investments in the capacity of enforcement agencies and cocoa cooperatives to enforce child labor laws and to identify child labor violations, respectively, will result in increased accountability within cocoa cooperatives to reduce child labor. Second, that if cocoa cooperatives are given assistance and training to support vulnerable households and there is increased access to social protection, then vulnerable households will experience increased support to reduce their child labor practices. Finally, if both of these intermediate outcomes are met, then an increased number of cocoa cooperatives will be successful in reducing child labor among their members, ultimately reducing child labor in the supply chain.

Through our evaluation, we find that the MATE MASIE theory of change is valid and coherent in the context. Specifically, MATE MASIE's project objective of strengthening cocoa cooperatives supports the commitments made in international treaties, agreements, and conventions; government policies and action plans; and the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour 2023-2027 administered by the Child Labor unit of Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations. Annex G provides a full listing of these policies.

MATE MASIE has effectively managed government and cocoa cooperative expectations and communicated the aims of the project with respect to strengthening cooperatives and communities to reduce child labor. According to one cocoa cooperative representative:

“Their goal is to help build our cooperative to be able to function well... Their work is of great value and we appreciate it. Some time ago, they held a meeting or had a gathering of all households at the market, which included both women and men. At that gathering, they told us about all their goals. They also told us about the reasons

for their presence. And then they also told us about issues that were both good and bad.”

Cocoa Cooperative Representative

During the drafting process of the revised Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour 2023-2027, MATE MASIE was discussed extensively both at the sub-committee and national committee levels and was found relevant to the Accelerated Action against Child Labor plan, 2023-2027. The committee endorsed the continuation of the MATE MASIE project in the cocoa sector in the Ashanti Region. A review of documents also revealed that MATE MASIE collaborated with national and district government representatives by providing the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations (MELR) in 2021 World Day Against Child Labor (WDAKL) with in-kind financial and technical support. MATE MASIE's contributions included the submission of an action pledge for MELR's social media platforms as well as financial support for press releases on WDAKL. This allowed several districts to celebrate World Day Against Child Labor in districts where previously they had not been able to, according to one Community Child Protection Committee member.

There is less agreement that the project has been relevant to meet the needs of communities and households through the project activities. Initially, the project was perceived to be relevant at this level; document review reveals that during community entry visits in February 2022 in which project staff, social welfare, planning, senior, and field officers provided community members with an overview of the project, they accepted the project and were enthusiastic about implementation. In particular, many respondents to interviews expressed enthusiasm for the “remediation” services that were forthcoming and it was clear to project staff that expectations for these services were still high in July 2023. Focus groups and interviews in August 2023 revealed that expectations for these services remained high and may have been more expansive than what the project was able to provide, suggesting some confusion between stated project aims (strengthening cooperatives to provide referral and limited direct services) and community expectations (direct provision of books, uniforms, transportation, new and improved infrastructure, etc., complementary to or even replacing other services). We provide one example of the mismatch in understanding, though almost all community monitor interviews included similar statements:

“The government used to provide uniforms and books but now that Mate Masie will support in that aspect, it will relieve the government of this burden. It will also help the parents to get to work because they made the parents aware that if they want to learn a trade themselves, they can help a child above 15 years who have completed school and can't continue, they can send the child to learn a trade and start them up, so the government benefits a lot.”

Community monitors

In addition to their expectations of direct support, many respondents felt that the project, as they understood it, was not sufficient to improve their situations and reduce child labor in the supply chain. Some community monitors and community members interviewed expressed their desire to have schools built closer to their communities to reduce travel times and make schooling more accessible. Others expected livelihood interventions and vocational training for their unemployed community members. Other community members were of the view that the project should be expanded to cover the whole community and not just cocoa cooperative members. Some vulnerable farmers expressed their desire to receive support with respect to fertilizers and chemicals to spray their cocoa trees to improve yields.

“Now we’re limiting child labour [reduction efforts] to only the cocoa co-operatives, but in other circumstances you will see other children who are involved in more hard work which they normally sell in beer bars, but because we focus on supply chain, we ignore those people and they also need help as well, so you see them frying at 12:00am and their parents will be asleep. So I believe they shouldn’t limit this project to cocoa cooperatives, but we should extend it to other people who are not involved in cocoa at all.”

Community Monitor,

As mentioned above, the desired services and activities are largely outside the scope of the project. Outcome 2 activities will work to strengthen cocoa cooperatives to support households, particularly in the identification of vulnerable household members, referrals and connection to social protection systems and some direct services. Due to delays in the activities under Outcome 2, it is yet to be seen whether the strategy of strengthening the cocoa cooperatives in providing appropriate services to vulnerable households will clarify MATE MASIE’s role and be relevant to the community and to addressing the structural barriers to education and reducing child labor experienced by cooperative members. Early evidence from the October 2023 TPR report suggests that these are at least initially being well-received.

3.2. EFFECTIVENESS

EQ4. To what extent do project activities contribute towards the achievement of project outcomes?

EQ5. Are there some activities that have made more progress than others?

EQ6. Is the project likely to achieve the outcomes by the end of the project?

EQ7. Has the project had unintended effects on its target communities and participants?

EQ8. How effectively are the CMEP data being collected and used?

Despite a slow start due to ongoing restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which WI clearly documented and shared with DOL/ILAB in regular status reports, MATE MASIE has made significant progress in meeting its objectives under Outcome 1 and even exceeded its targets on some project performance indicators:

“I’ll say the project is doing very well from my opinion. For all these objectives, there are activities that have been done towards achieving them. And from that field a lot of work has gone on. There are other aspects that I will say there are delays especially with the remediation, the entire project has [been] delayed because of COVID. I think one whole year was wasted.”

WI Project Officer

Interviews with those implementing the project also show that MATE MASIE is making significant progress on Outcome 1. MATE MASIE has worked closely and extensively with the cocoa cooperatives and communities to build trust through transparency and accountability. At the project outset, there was some confusion about the specifics of the project activities and its aims. We also noted some initial trepidation and lack of trust from the cooperatives regarding what could be accomplished and defining the role of the cooperative within the project at the outset. Despite the initial challenges, deep collaborative work on the part of MATE MASIE staff resulted in better relationships with stakeholders and the ability to implement trainings, case management, and other programming effectively. A particularly bright spot mentioned by several interviewees is the collaboration between various project actors fostered by MATE MASIE.

“The coordination and collaboration, especially between Winrock, the DCPC and the cooperatives, it has been fantastic for me.”

WI Project Officer

“What is working best for the project is the involvement of the district child protection committee. And then the committee chair Protection Committee. So these committees collaborate with MATE MASIE, let's say in the middle. Yes, you know, bringing these two bodies together.”

CCPC member

A key component of building the capacity and accountability of cooperatives was training delivered to cooperative members, law enforcement, and monitoring agencies to increase knowledge of child labor laws and the ability to address child labor within the cooperatives.

As revealed in document review, as of October 2023, 213 individuals in participating communities had received training to improve enforcement of child labor, forced labor and other workers' rights. The target was 74, so the training reached almost three times the expected number of individuals. MATE MASIE has also exceeded its targets in supporting the creation of district-specific capacity strengthening action plans and the creation of grantee cooperative capacity strengthening action plans.

“There is the capacity building aspect. Where the cooperative did a CPAT, Cooperative Participatory Assessment, and that has helped the cooperatives assess their finances, administrative issues -and how we go about child labor issues, our data-- that too has been good. Through the training, we know how to make our accounting or finance robust. It's been done. Our HR Manual is being developed and we reviewed. Our constitution for the cooperative-- where we have to ensure that every member is really-- at every aspect or level is really considered. So now the constitution has also been reviewed and that has been good. So the cooperative-- we've also got our own benefits with the capacity.”

Cocoa cooperative representative

Stakeholders believe that the capacities of the monitoring agencies such as CCPCs and M/DCPCs have been built by the MATE MASIE project in the various districts and municipalities to handle child labor issues. Enforcement agencies such as Department of Social Welfare, Ghana Police Service's Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Ghana Education Service (GES), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) were interviewed and offered their perspective on the trainings. Representatives from these agencies acknowledged that their capacity to handle child labor issues had been enhanced in their respective districts and communities. At District and Municipal level, these enforcement agencies are part of the M/DCPCs and these officers have felt empowered following the training.

“Through the Project, Social Welfare now refers cases of child labor to us at DOVVSU”.

DOVVSU station officer

“...Before the MATE MASIE Project, we were virtually operating individually, but now we have greater coordination amongst us. I had a project in my department, social welfare and just a phone call away, I invited my colleagues in DOVVSU, and GES and they embraced the occasion which was never the case before the coming into force of the MATE MASIE project. There is better collaboration than before”.

DOVVSU station officer

As seen in our document review, despite exceeding targets on the number of people trained, retention of the information provided did not meet targets. Only 68% of participants demonstrated an increase in understanding of child labor and related laws. This figure is close to the target of 75% (anticipated figure by project end), but indicates that there may be tradeoffs in expanding the number of people trained with the effectiveness of that training. It may be preferable to have longer, more in-depth training sessions and in smaller groups to ensure participants have adequately grasped the content presented in lieu of training a larger number of people. Another possibility is that the trainings were not appropriately designed to reflect the learning styles, base knowledge, or context of participants. In recent trainings, the project has incorporated pictorial learning aides and instruction in the local languages, practices that should be assessed and continued if they are found to be effective at increasing retention of the knowledge imparted. Despite not meeting the learning target, the project came close to achieving the target, and many respondents correctly noted elements of the trainings provided by MATE MASIE.

Where parents and volunteers were informed about the MATE MASIE project and had received training, they had a good understanding of the risks of child labor and ways to include and care for children while they are on the cocoa farms.

“The education purposely talks about parents not taking children to farm on schooling days. So, we have received the education that students have to help their parents. But not during school days. So, mostly the students will go to school during the school days. Then they will help their parents during weekending.”

CCPC member

“Whatever they teach us we are to learn and also teach others. We are to ensure that we don’t engage our child in hard labor, we should not give them work that is beyond their capacity or strength, we should not also ask them to carry loads that are more than their strength or ability, it does not matter whether they are our children or other people’s children. Once they are not up to 18 years old, we should not let them work more than two hours.”

Community Monitors FGD participant

On case management and child tracing, there is a strong perception of success and effectiveness. Many participants could recall a case of removing a child from hard labor and returning them to school or their families. Some of these participants cited direct support from MATE MASIE in working with the district and the cooperatives – support that was key

to their child labor mitigation activities that they mentioned included help with coordination of activities, logistics support such as with the provision of vehicles and more.

“The work of MATE MASIE is successful. An example is that it has helped in getting many children back to school unlike before.”

Community Monitors FGD participant

At the time of data collection, Outcome 2 activities had begun, but many were still in initial stages of implementation, so it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the project here. At the community level, MATE MASIE has helped to set up Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) in some communities, which have been well-received. Community monitors, CCPC members, and government representatives cited the benefits of the VSLAs and that they did not think they would have been able to organize such projects on their own, highlighting the effectiveness of the MATE MASIE intervention.

As of the time of data collection, the project had developed a menu of services that cooperatives can offer, reviewed and shared with cocoa cooperatives, and action plans for three cooperative plans had been developed. Still, cooperative members had yet to be trained in delivering these services and vulnerable households are yet to receive services that would help them pull their children out of labor and support school enrollment. The October 2023 reporting period and associated report indicate that more progress has been made on these activities.

Delays in implementing activities can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, the intensive effort that went into the creation of the CMEP and the planned sequential timing of Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 activities. While the CMEP is very detailed and has been helpful in guiding project activities, it should be noted that delays in finalizing the CMEP were largely due to finalizing the strategy and activities that would help achieve the outcomes, which are key inputs into the CMEP.

Perceptions of the effectiveness of the CMEP were mixed. For some project implementers and volunteers, the CMEP is a helpful document that guides the project and reduces unnecessary data collection. For other project staff, the frequency of data collection and need for reporting against the CMEP feels burdensome and that the focus on it has slowed project delivery. Most feel that the CMEP reporting is productive and is being implemented well.

“It’s good to monitor what we are doing. But when you monitor like every single day, it becomes stressful, like you can’t move on because you are not allowing me to work to get you something to monitor.”

WI Project Officer

On a more structural level, respondents who were government representatives noted that the project not disbursing funds directly to districts was preventing capacity building for districts with regard to financial management that could then be used to support the project going forward. One government representative suggested that working with districts on their medium-term development plans to cost, budget for, and ultimately fund a continuation of the project would help to lay the groundwork for sustainability, but would require initial capacity building as well as direct support to draft and cost the plans.

On the cooperative side, increasing compliance with farmer dues could provide funding for the project going forward. One stakeholder noted that at the beginning of the project, only 15% of cooperative members were paying their dues, but if compliance were increased, there would be an income source to pay CCPCs, fund training programs, etc. Sustainability of the project, though, largely relies on internal will from within the cooperatives, whether or not they are able to collect dues. Although there are some indications that they are already trying to expand training and other activities, particular efforts should be made in the latter part of the project to ensure that cooperatives have the tools to continue and even expand the project once funding runs out.

3.3. EFFICIENCY

EQ10. To what extent are resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve project outcomes?

Although our ability to assess efficiency is limited by a lack of detailed financial data, resources appear to have been allocated strategically and efficiently in the MATE MASIE project in light of the delays and challenges in implementation. Resources have been delivered in a timely manner to take productive interim steps towards project outcomes, especially with regard to Outcome 1, or in improving the accountability of cocoa cooperatives to monitor child labor in the cocoa supply chain. Project staff and DOL noted the efficiency of the MATE MASIE staff in the project. However, project staff raised issues about efficiency regarding the CMEP and Outcome 2, regarding the strengthening of cocoa cooperatives to engage in service delivery, referrals, and overall support to vulnerable households.

WI has been responsive to observed needs to reallocate resources within the budget in order to ensure that it meets targets. By way of example, in October 2022, WI submitted a project revision request, including a budget revision summary sheet. WI increased resource allocation for both Outcomes 1 and 2 while lowering other costs of the project, including supplies, contractual and monitoring and evaluation expenses. Specifically, WI

increased expenses for Outcome 1 from \$59,679 to \$156,625 and from \$7,740 to \$29,715 for Outcome 2.

A review of project documents reveals that time was also used efficiently, as documents were submitted on time, including technical progress reports and their associated annexes. An example of efficiency was demonstrated when DOL approved a MATE MASIE request that the DOL waive direct service indicators, under the justification that the resources required to collect data for the indicators would be too costly given that the project was designed as a capacity-building project. A review of the work plans also demonstrates that consistent progress is being made with regards to the targets and over time revealed fewer delays across work plans. Much of these resources have been used to generate progress around Outcome 1, or in improving the accountability of cocoa cooperatives and law enforcement to monitor child labor in the cocoa supply chain.

Human resources have been used efficiently to achieve project outcomes. Both ILAB and WI staff noted the efficiency of staff which they attribute to having worked previously in similar projects with ILAB. In doing so, the staff has increased their knowledge of the sector and are able to more effectively communicate within WI and with ILAB.

“Winrock has experience working on past projects and our office has a long-standing engagement with Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in this sector. As a result, some of the staff have worked on other projects. With that I think is really the asset for us to work on the CMEP process but also overcoming any of the speed bumps that [DOL staff] has referenced...[the WI staff member] has been involved in the Mobilizing Community Action and Promoting Opportunities (MOCA) project. [The staff member] has long experience, history with not just with the sector but also with the way our office operates. That certainly helps...His knowledge helped us to move the conversation more smoothly and facilitate that conversation in Winrock team.”

DOL/ILAB Staff

One WI staff person reported that the nature of the CMEP data collection process hindered their ability to complete certain project activities. Additionally, initial delays in project implementation were a result of CMEP development, and not only COVID and other contextual issues, reducing the efficiency of the project. They remarked that the CMEP's onerous process and DOL/ILAB's strict level of requirements to approve aspects of the system, compared to other US agencies, felt disproportionate to the size of the project. Staff noted that if DOL included developing some of the CMEP as part of the proposal instead of during implementation, that would save time with determining indicators. Project staff explained that the project had many more indicators than it needed,

potentially leading to staff being driven by compliance over focusing on a “few important things.” They also commented that while the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) is most used, its formatting makes it difficult to read. Project staff expressed a desire to turn the PMP into indicator reference sheets which are easier to understand and spend more time on other aspects of the project with DOL’s approval. This suggests that a conversation between DOL and WI regarding the CMEP in future projects might contribute to further efficiency, especially because DOL has these requirements for the CMEP currently in place. Project staff also noted that requiring fewer workshops and exchanges on CMEP components would be helpful for the project.

“I think the flipside, what can be hindering sometimes is that it is quite an onerous process, it takes a long time, far longer than projects that I’ve worked on funded by other U.S. agencies and projects that are much bigger. It seems disproportionate to the size of the project to be quite honest and the level of requirement that DOL approves so many aspects of the MEL system down to the DCIs and everything which generally in other programs of course we want strong DCIs that are laid out, planned, but we also need to be adaptable enough to improve them, and contextualize them and make modifications to them, too. It is far more strict than I’m used to with USAID, and the fact that it’s mandatory, that it takes an entire year to write a CMEP is crazy, quite honestly. I think that’s what I would say.”

WI Staff

“I think putting a little bit more towards the proposal stage would really help projects during implementation because you don’t have to spend so much time on deciding what our activity is going to be, what our indicator is going to be. And maybe streamlining the process a little bit, not requiring so many workshops, so much back and forth on each specific component would be really helpful, just in getting the project off the ground because these are only four year projects... There’s a lot that goes into it. So I feel like on all the DOL projects I’ve been on this has always been an issue and I know on other evaluations it’s always come up in terms of the CMEP causing some delays.”

WI Staff

While resources have been allocated efficiently to deliver on Outcome 1, there is little financial information provided and less evidence to provide a full evaluation of Outcome 2 due to timing in activities. The project’s final evaluation will need to more completely assess the efficiency of these activities. As discussed elsewhere, project staff explained that this

delay was partly due to the time it took to complete the CMEP, develop the CLMRS, and train grantees.

3.4. IMPACT

EQ 11. What is the observed outcome and impact on project stakeholders, according to the targets established by the project?

The overall impact of the project should be assessed holistically following completion. However, in this interim period, we can see that there is a shared perception among different stakeholders that MATE MASIE is on track to meet its objectives by 1) helping to pull children out of cocoa work through the formation of groups to monitor and report child labor and 2) fostering cooperation between these groups and the cocoa cooperatives, who are ultimately to be held accountable for child labor in their supply chains. All interviewed individuals and groups with direct project knowledge believe that this sensitization at the cooperative and law enforcement/monitoring level and cooperation and collaboration between actors is effective at strengthening the cooperatives and their abilities to reduce child labor in their supply chain, and at creating conscientiousness in the community with respect to children in the target households no longer working in the cocoa farms and attending schools.

“So, the CCPC, they are there in the communities, so they know the farmers and they know what is going on there. So usually, they are able to tell or they identify children who are at risk or actually in child labour, or if some parents are engaging children in activities that are classified as child labour. The CCPCs will identify it, they try to address it, in most cases they are able to address it by some few cases that they are not able to address, then they refer those issues to the cooperatives. So, the CCPC are actually monitoring the child labour situation in the community. And they are also doing sensitization in terms of educating the communities.”

WI Project Staff,

“The Mate Masie projects has help, now if you're working around the community, you can hear parents asking their children to go to the farm but they refuse, saying is child labour, they are supposed to go to school. So this has helped a lot of children that used not to go to school; now they go to school.”

Community participant

In support of these stakeholders' perceptions, the April 2023 Technical Progress Report revealed that the project had high impact for CCPC members who participated in trainings for cooperative representatives and child labor monitoring and enforcement in October

and November 2022. They expressed learning what child labor was and commitments to ensuring awareness of the perils of child labor in their communities.

Among CCPC and community monitors, there is a strong sense that children and parents have been sensitized to the risks of child labor by the project. Community monitors and members of the CCPCs say that they have learned about child labor practices and how to ensure that children stay in school, even if they are helping out on the farm.

“They made us understand that, we are not supposed to engage the children in some work or work more than 2 hours and also we shouldn’t make our child sit at home or work instead of going to school. Parents shouldn’t indulge their children in hard labor.”

FGD with CCPC

“So mostly they give them education on how and the kind of works children can help their parents on. You know, as a child, you can help your parents on the farm. It shouldn’t be all days and not all kinds of works. So the MATE MASIE project has been educating us on the kind of works children can do to help their parents on the farm and not ignoring their schools for the farm.”

Community Monitor

“So for that area the parents are aware and they know what to do and what not to do. Because if they know the child is engaged in child labour, and as the leaders keep on reminding them and they refuse, then they know the consequences of that. So they have refrained from it.”

Community Monitor

Other respondents noted how children now refuse to carry heavy loads and how they assert themselves, saying they cannot work more than a certain number of hours. This intergenerational sensitization bodes well for the impacts of the project stretching beyond the current generation, though it is difficult to tell how widespread these actions by children are outside of the anecdotal evidence from interviews.

“In this current dispensation, when you ask a child to work after a few minutes, they will tell you that today child labor is not allowed and they will refuse to work...After

working for a short time, they will tell you that we have been asked not to be engaged in hard labor.”

FGD with CCPC

All of these efforts translate to real change within the cocoa cooperatives and suggest a strong potential impact from the completed project. Some cocoa cooperatives are trying to scale up the work to reach additional farmers, without additional resources, because they see the demand for it is high within the communities and the external factors promoting change in cocoa farming and production practices are pushing the sector towards reducing hazardous chemicals and eliminating child labor. Without these changes, they face bans on their products by Europe and Japan, who have strict standards for cocoa value chains and the labor that goes into producing cocoa products.

At the individual level, parents and community monitors and CCPC members and stakeholders feel a lack of support from MATE MASIE and from other service providers when it comes to keeping children in their communities in school and out of work. Parents want their children to be able to attend classes through secondary school, but they do not have sufficient resources for both the direct costs of attending school and the indirect costs of not having help at home or additional hands to work. In many communities and especially as children progress, the appropriately leveled schools (secondary schools in particular) are located far away from the communities and require fees for exams, books, uniforms and other expenses that are out of reach for many parents. Many participants expressed hope that MATE MASIE could provide them with school supplies, transportation to school, or resources for fees.

“When you see those who skip and ask them, they say their mother doesn't have money to give to them, ‘that's why I didn't go’. There's a school feeding project here but the food given to them is very small and they eat at 12:00, so if the mother doesn't get money for the child in the morning, she doesn't allow the child to go to school. Some too don't have books, they will be in the school for the whole year without writing because the parents couldn't afford to buy books for them. So that's why some of them don't come regularly and some too because of sickness.”

FGD participant

“For example, you go to a hamlet, children of school-going age they're not in school. You find out why they don't have school kits. They don't have books, they don't have uniforms and footwear, and in some cases, they feel they have outgrown a level in the classroom. So, they just stop school.”

DCPC member

Some children spend many hours working on the farms, do not get paid, and are not able to go to school. In an interview, a 14-year old child from Tufleni who worked at the farm all day on Saturdays said he wanted things to change, because “we get tired when we work.”

Some participants in the interviews felt that they had been promised backpacks and other supplies by the MATE MASIE project, but cited delays in receiving these items and an inability to respond quickly to support school-going in the communities.

“Now when we ask them about the help, they’re always saying they will bring it but they keep asking their shoe size and what items they need, they keep promising the children, so as of now they’ve lost hope in getting those items. So, if they could let it come quickly it would have helped in achieving their goals.”

FGD participant

As noted previously, direct remediation services provided by the MATE MASIE project were not an explicit part of the project, though cooperatives are to be trained to identify and support vulnerable households. Statements such as these, which were many among the community monitors and CCPC focus groups, may represent confusion as to MATE MASIE’s activities, showcasing a need for better communication and expectation management. These statements may also reflect the delay in activities associated in implementation and such services are forthcoming through the cooperatives. Poverty and structural barriers are significant drivers of the supply of children working and MATE MASIE is not equipped or resourced or even intended to address these issues directly. However, they present real threats to the potential of the project to promote sustained and lasting change on the presence of child labor in the cocoa supply chain that should be considered when designing and implementing the final year of programming. Some of these issues might be ultimately somewhat mitigated when the project accelerates implementing activities designed to address Outcome 2, on which the project has been delayed and was just getting started at the time of this evaluation.

Finally, the strategy of working through cocoa cooperatives is viewed as having mixed results when it comes to the impact of the project. MATE MASIE is filling a need by engaging in activities that are not being conducted by other actors or elsewhere in the region and were not being done before by previous projects. A wide variety of respondents noted that building cooperation, providing logistical support, providing funding for community and district activities, providing support to the districts and to the government to incorporate committees and celebrate World Day to End Child Labor were all noted as

high-impact strategies. Past and other projects to reduce child labor in the region were not seen as effective by CCPC members and community monitors and many elements of the cocoa cooperative strengthening strategy are.

“Previously without MATE MASIE, we had other organization coming in, up and down, but the advocacy and other things for child labour wasn’t that effective.”

Community monitor KII

As noted earlier, MATE MASIE has brought together distinct stakeholders to cooperate and to ensure the formation of the DCPCs, which was much needed. Acting as an intermediary between the cooperatives, government, and law enforcement and monitoring, has helped these bodies to form and to function better.

However, some cocoa cooperatives’ members, volunteers, and government representatives believe the project would have been more impactful if it had been directed at the community rather than the cooperatives. Reasons for this belief were varied. Among volunteers and cooperative representatives, these concerns primarily centered around how the number of included cooperative members is low compared to the number of people who need the training, and going through the cooperatives limits the reach. Even within a cooperative, MATE MASIE is currently only working with 10,094 farmers based on the cooperatives and communities chosen and the allocated budget. But the cocoa cooperatives are much larger, representing 10 times the number of farmers currently served, leaving many community members out, one WI staff member noted.

Among government representatives, DCPCs feel they cannot respond fully to cases involving children whose parents are not part of the cocoa cooperatives, so cases within the cocoa sector but outside the cooperative are often missed.

“The project has to support the CCPCs because whenever you go to the field you will realize that they always demand for the support financially and also, you see, the project is designed in such a way that those who belong to the cooperatives or registered member in the cooperative... they are the people getting benefits from this program. But here lies the case when you go to the area, there are some people, they are also in the community, they are not farmers, but you see those that are in vulnerable households that they need to be supported.”

DCPC member

Additionally, it is possible that working through communities as opposed to cooperatives could have been a more sustainable approach.

“It would have been good if it was community based, where it is not about cooperative members but the entire community...when they leave, we as the cooperative, we are not sure we can foot the logistics bill for the district to be visiting the communities.”

Community monitor

Community monitors also provided anecdotes regarding how children in target communities were found in other types of work of varying levels of danger to the child’s health. MATE MASIE, in collaboration with law enforcement and communities, was perceived as helping to pull children out of dangerous cocoa work, but their families remained impoverished and in need of their income support.

Several participants in focus groups with community monitors and CCPCs noted that even if children are not in cocoa work, they are working in markets, “wheeling wheelbarrows” for harvesting rice. The substitution of cocoa work for other work by children requires a community-level response, which is difficult when the entry point is the cooperative. These cases are anecdotal and should be verified as there are discrepancies in the discussion of these cases but highlight the challenge in reducing child labor through the strengthening of cooperatives.

3.5. SUSTAINABILITY

EQ12. Per the outcomes, to what extent are the MATE MASIE activities likely to yield sustained results?

The goal of this interim review was to assess how far the Mate Masie project has progressed, and whether or not it is moving in the right direction and at the right pace to be completed by the end of the project. A key concept for ILAB-sponsored projects is that of *sustainability* of the progress achieved by the projects it is sponsoring after their activities come to an end. We reviewed existing data, and collected new data, keeping in mind the extent to which project activities are geared toward sustainability.

Several elements in the project design aimed at sustainability of successful outcomes. A major outcome of the project (see CMEP, Sub-outcome 2.1) is the strengthened capacity of cocoa cooperatives to provide sustainable assistance and support to prevent child labor. Project plans included training grantee cooperative representatives on monitoring child labor and traceability systems. These plans had several different elements to ensure a broad approach to training. They include: providing on-going coaching (technical support) and mentoring to grantee cooperatives on strengthening their organizational operations;

measuring and monitoring child labor; and establishing and operating a cost-efficient and sustainable CLMRS and traceability system.

To achieve these project goals and maintain them after the project ends, the project is working to strengthen the capacity of cocoa cooperatives to provide sustainable assistance and support to prevent child labor and to increase access to social protection and child labor remediation programs. As part of these efforts, WI is supporting the cocoa cooperatives to administer the Cooperative Participatory Assessment Tool (C-PAT). The (C-PAT) is a self-assessment tool for the cooperatives to identify gaps and required capacity development support for reducing child labor in the cocoa supply chain and to measure progress against initial target benchmarks. The tool's overarching objective is to improve cooperatives' organizational capacity in relation to reducing child labor. Cooperatives and other stakeholders will continue to use the C-PAT beyond the end of MATE MASIE, to leverage increased capacity in reducing child labor, identify opportunities to implement new child labor-prevention and remediation activities, and establish a baseline to monitor progress and performance on reducing child labor.

According to plans in place, the continued self-assessment process will build consensus and increase cooperative staff and member buy-in, given its participatory nature. WI also anticipates that the process will encourage cooperative staff ownership of results, increasing the success and sustainability of any capacity development interventions.

In this evaluation's primary data collection efforts, both key informant interviews and focus groups, the topic of sustainability was discussed. Participants were asked to what extent they thought the project, or elements of it, could be sustained beyond the end of the grant. Responses were mixed.

In interviews with the funders and the implementer, key informants focused on the plans for sustainability and, particularly, in the capacity-building aspect.

“The project does have a pretty decent sustainability strategy... Insofar as the project is providing technical assistance to cooperatives, that those cooperatives can implement on their own, assuming they're able to finance those, the project is quite sustainable from that perspective. If we're talking about child labor system, piloting farm to coop traceability, building more robust networks with social service providers, I think all of these kinds of interventions can be sustained in principle. I think the project is building the capacity of the cooperatives to sustain them.”

DOL/ILAB team member

“...building capacity, information, knowledge, skills, and tools can be left with cooperatives and, if work is done well and they see the value, those are things they can take up and continue to use.”

WI staff

“...CLMRS can be helpful, integrating child labor as [a] focus area in coops. The fact that we’re in their operations is helpful and hopefully allows interventions to be sustained. The CCPC and DCPC can hopefully continue their mandate, though that is donor dependent. Training them on child labor is helpful; training of trainers, helpful. Those are key sustainability activities.”

WI staff

Participants strongly agreed that the project is building community capacity for the cooperatives and others involved in the cocoa by helping put in place tools that can be used to monitor progress in reducing child labor, first, through community awareness and also through the continued use of the CLMRS. This is one aspect of the project that will likely be sustained beyond the end of funding.

“The reason why I say we can sustain what is going on now is that we have been trained in what we didn’t know before which has made us masters in good farming practices. And so when they leave we can sustain what we have learnt...”

Cooperative chairman

“The project has set up CCPC and DCPC; these people have been trained. So at the end of the project in 2024 these DCPCs and CCPCs will still remain in the district and the community. They will still be functioning [with] the knowledge that has been given to them they still have so that aspect will be sustained(...) At the end of the project they would have understood everything about child labour, the monitoring the referral, what to do when they identify a case and all of that. The cooperatives have been empowered, and resourced, and some of the resources that they got and the training that they got from the project will still remain with the cooperatives so that aspect to be sustained for a reasonable period of time.”

WI Project Officer

Some respondents spoke about the integration of monitoring and procedures into every cooperative’s and monitoring agency’s regular operations as key to sustainability. On the other hand, most stakeholders believed that some project activities, such as the volunteers providing monitoring and support to vulnerable households, considered essential for

sustained progress in child labor reduction, cannot continue without project funds that will no longer be available at the end of the grant. As one WI staff person noted:

“Obviously the things that are directly funded would have to stop and realistically unless there’s a commitment for additional government allocation or coop resources or partnerships that maybe will end. That’s why that particular part of the project hopefully is a big focus for the team in the coming years because that would be the most abrupt part that would end, as opposed to building capacity, information, knowledge, skills, and tools can be left with coops and if work is done well and they see the value those are things they can take up and continue to use. But investment in services provided directly to people may not be as easy to sustain.”

WI Staff

In a review of the stakeholder assessment report in October 2021, there were concerns that the voluntary nature of CCPC work would lead to burnout without incentives to continue the work. These concerns were also present in the October 2022 Technical Progress Report, where participants in the August 2022 CLMRS/PSE dissemination workshop suggested that CCPC members needed to be incentivized via income-generating activities or other certificates to ensure the long-lasting effects of their work.

Key informants had expectations that at the community level some project activities will continue now that stakeholders know each other and have worked together towards a common goal. Referrals for services for children in need are expected to continue. They were skeptical, however, about activities continuing at the Assembly level, without additional funding.

“If the project is not sustained, I will not associate the blame to MATE MASIE, it will be government’s usual way of doing things that it will not be sustained. Just as I said, for me, the way it [the project] worked closely with district assemblies, the line agencies, giving them their roles to play and then the way they were reporting, I think when Winrock is gone, with a little push from the district assembly, they will be able to sustain it.”

Ghanaian Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations

District government key informants mentioned child protection and social protection and remediation activities as things that cannot be sustained at the current level without more funds. Others expanded further on this:

"[As to] remediation support, we can [sustain it] but not to the extent that the project would have the number of beneficiaries will be limited although we will identify them but looking at our annual income, we may not be able to provide remediation support for all the vulnerable households that we identify."

Cooperative Manager

"But when it comes to remediating identified cases, those are where we would have to look for other donors to come in and also to support those particular children."

COCOBOD staff

Some informants spoke of specific activities that require funds:

"...when the assembly gave us [a] car we used our T&T [Travel and Transport funds] to buy fuel into it, so assuming if there is no money to buy fuel into the vehicle the project will collapse. So, maybe, unless government sets up a special fund to cater for this child labor issue. Different account all together not giving it to the district assembly because I don't trust them."

NCCE Director

In some CCPCs, members had already been thinking about sustainability and – in some cases – looking for sources of steady funding such as community projects that would yield funds.

"We need a project that we can get involved [in] that would sustain us financially so that we don't have to keep appealing for funds for a lot of things. Example we could get a community bore hole or water supply source that money can be collected and used for the community."

CCPC Focus Group Participant

The biannual Technical Progress Report of April 2023 also revealed various suggestions made for sustainability in the Pause and Reflect workshop in November 2022 with representatives from the three grantee cocoa cooperatives. They are listed verbatim here below:

- *"considering an area-based approach to reducing child labor. In many cases, child labor does not originate from the producers, but from the family. Cocoa cooperatives only form a small part of the cocoa community and child labor extends beyond cocoa as well."*

- *taking steps to align with the Government of Ghana’s CLFZ concept [Child-Labor Free Zone concept, an initiative in which local governments, including area or zonal councils, will implement Child Labor Free Zones]*
- *promoting greater engagement by the cooperatives with the district agencies.*
- *The cooperatives should present their capacity strengthening action plans to the assemblies so they can receive their support*
- *integrating child labor monitoring activities into medium-term development plans*
- *reviewing and strengthening cooperatives’ existing training mechanisms*
- *continue empowering the DCPCs*
- *strengthening trust between the private sector and certification bodies and the cooperatives.”*

Technical Progress Report April 2023

In sum, stakeholders agree that community empowerment through awareness and training will have long lasting effects that will be sustained after MATE MASIE. However, they are acutely aware that, without new funding, they are unlikely to have support from local or national governments, whose support is essential for remediation activities and to expand and repeat education and awareness-raising activities with new cooperative members, and new staff at law enforcement and monitoring agencies. In short, the project has had moderate success in effectively training and raising awareness on child labor within the community and among stakeholders, but the long-term prospects of sustaining remediation and continued formal awareness-raising activities are low.

3.6. EQUITY AND INCLUSION

EQ13. How did the projects incorporate elements of inclusion and equity into their design and implementation?

EQ14. To what extent does the project address gender and social inclusion?

While ensuring that programming was gender-aware or inclusive of youth or marginalized groups was not a key requirement of the project, ILAB required the project to monitor inclusivity by disaggregating indicator information by gender and age to assess its inclusivity. One way to evaluate inclusivity is to see to what extent programming involves women, youth and marginalized communities. Based on interviews with parents, cooperative members, community organizers and project staff, it is clear that quotas were set aside for women to be on the child protection committees and women were recruited to fill these roles. As one project officer said,

“Okay, so women involvement has been very key to the Mate Masie project and in all the committees that the project constitutes there is always an allocation for women. So if you take the CCPC there is a women rep within the same CCPC there is a youth rep just to ensure that the youth represented, the woman represented and then when it comes to the support to the vulnerable household, the adult female in the household is given priority. The project is looking at what support they can give to the woman in the house so that she can be making additional income to support the children.”

WI Project Officer

Although not all CCPCs had women and youth representatives, as per the document review, most of them had representation from these groups.

According to project staff, the women’s role was mainly to liaise between the committee and other women’s groups. One female committee member acknowledged that she learnt about child labor and was able to bring that knowledge back to her community. Another woman noted that the women in her community had come together to plant their own cocoa farms so they could support their children.

In some communities, VSLAs were set up and women were the sole beneficiaries of these programs. One project staff noted that if women had the resources, then those resources were spent on the family and not on non-family activities. Men, one local coordinator noted, became supportive of women engaging in these groups when they saw the benefits of them. Still, the data show that not many women farmers were members of cooperatives, and beyond those acting as representatives on the committees, not very many other community women were involved in the project. Even those working on committees may have been included because of requirements and it is unclear that their voices are actually being heard. For example, while 16 men were trained on child labor, gender, child labor monitoring and remediation and traceability, composition and functions of the DCPCs and CCPCs for the district-level child protection committee, just eight women were also trained in these topics.

A review of documents reveals that other trainings and meetings had similar skewed sex ratios. In the April 2023 reporting period, only 24% of individuals trained to improve enforcement of child labor and on other workers’ rights were women. Women also only constituted 25% of trained monitoring and enforcement agency staff who demonstrated an increase in understanding of child labor and related laws and policies. Similarly, 26% of grantee cocoa cooperative representatives and district and community level child labor monitoring representatives trained were women. While the number of women trained was substantially lower than men, it should be noted that numbers of women who could have

been trained but were not trained were not available from the project data. In the documents it was also evident that the project was not taking steps to address the incorporation of additional women.

Youth, those between 16 and 24 years of age, as per DOL's definition, and children, those under 18 years of age, were also recruited to represent other youth and children on the child protection committees, but one local coordinator noted that the youth and children rarely spoke up in meetings involving elders, as it is culturally inappropriate for them to speak their minds in front of their elders. He noted that when he had a one-on-one conversation with one of the children, he obtained a lot of useful information on issues impacting children, but when the child was in a meeting with adults, the child refused to say anything.

Cooperatives and other community members are supportive of youth self-organizing and offer support in the case of alternative income sources (a mushroom farm, for example) but there is little systematic organization of youth on a large scale. It seems that while the project is rightfully desirous of involving youth and children, it may not have been very effective in doing so due to existing cultural mores or the failure to create youth-friendly spaces. The project should explore ways to incorporate these cultural mores in its programming so that children and youth are more comfortable participating. Additionally, parents and youth interviewed as a part of the evaluation noted that both girls and boys drop out of school to work, though they are not always involved in cocoa farming activity, helping also with growing rice, maize and other crops, and with other household activities. Some of the youth noted that they turn to mothers to pay for books and other schooling expenses and if mothers do not have the resources to pay for these, then it is not possible for the child to continue attending school. This indicates a key role women play within their household and in their children's upbringing and re-emphasized the critical need to empower these women – the VSLAs may be one way to do so.

When it came to marginalized communities, most interviewees defined them as either very poor people, which one community member said they all were, or as being disabled. One project officer identified migrants and noted that all cocoa farm laborers are migrants. Ethnic, religious or members of other minority communities were not deliberately considered or involved in the programming.

Overall, when it came to involving women, children and members of underrepresented communities, the project's effectiveness was low, as some women and children were recruited and involved in the CCPCs, but members of underrepresented, marginalized communities were not identified and involved in the programming; and even when they were, they did not appear to have much agency.

Given that the project has not effectively included women, children and members of underrepresented communities, the probability of sustaining what little involvement there

has been is low. More intentional involvement of these community members with clear delineated roles and leadership positions is necessary to allow for their voices to be heard.

4. LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

In this section, we identify lessons learned and promising practices of the MATE MASIE project. Lessons learned comprise information learned through the evaluation process that can inform the future success of the project. Promising practices are strategies enacted by the implementer that have been identified as contributing to the project's success thus far.

Throughout the first stages of implementation, WI has garnered many of its own lessons and reinforced good practices. With regards to lessons learned, the cocoa cooperative as an entry point and the project's theory of change reflect a need for some review towards a consideration of more comprehensive programming. Continued work with government, cooperative, and community members stakeholders at all levels, and adherence to the CMEP and reporting are all bright points identified in this interim evaluation. WI has developed strong relationships and a strong reputation that are both proving key to implementing MATE MASIE at a high level. Continuing to build and reinforce the trust and transparency that undergird those relationships will serve the project well moving forward.

4.1. LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON LEARNED 1 – Forging new relationships with government representatives and assemblies, and cocoa cooperatives, and communicating the nuances of a capacity strengthening project (compared to a direct services project) is extremely challenging and ample time should be allocated to these efforts to ensure there is buy-in and understanding from affected communities.

LESSON LEARNED 2 – Increasing the number of people trained needs to be approached with assessment and compensatory measures to ensure that trainees are given the appropriate resources and adequate instruction to be able to retain and apply the information from sensitization trainings.

LESSON LEARNED 3 – The cocoa cooperative as an entry point is a double-edged sword. While it was largely seen as effective at strengthening the cooperatives and improving collaboration between actors, farmers felt that it excluded many of their neighbors and there was confusion around how the project would support vulnerable households if not through direct services.

LESSON LEARNED 4 – Although the intent of the project was not to directly reduce child labor in the community, the project's program's theory of changes posited that these reductions would occur if cooperatives and law enforcement were strengthened in their capacity and accountability to monitor child labor, awareness was raised and vulnerable families were supported. Structural barriers such as the lack of schools and alternatives to labor for children, and the persistence of poverty put the theory of change to test and may signal the need for more comprehensive programming that will help address these systems-level challenges.

4.2. PROMISING PRACTICES

The evaluators identified five promising practices that can be used as a guide for the project through its final year.

Promising Practice 1 – The CMEP is detailed and comprehensive. It has been implemented with high fidelity and enjoys the confidence of those who have interacted with it. In addition, insights from the CMEP have provided support in monitoring and adapting the project, such as changing the content of the trainings and offering them in local languages.

Promising Practice 2 – Awareness-raising. Awareness raising through training in local languages is a promising practice, particularly when conducted in local languages and pictorial instruction.

Promising Practice 3 – Self-assessment tool. The self-assessment for the cocoa cooperatives, particularly the element that asks them to assess their strategy for inclusion, is a useful tool for cocoa cooperatives moving forward. In order to ensure its efficacy, the tool should be prescriptive and detailed when it comes to representation of women and other marginalized groups.

Promising practice 4 – MATE MASIE has cultivated strong relationships with many government actors, cooperative and community members and successfully brokered collaboration between these groups that have historically not worked closely together. WI staff noted the project's close coordination in particular with government bodies such as MELR and COCOBOD, private sector organizations including the Rainforest Alliance and Fair Trade, and community organizations like the DCPCs and CCPCs.

Promising practice 5 – Community monitors are using their skills to sensitize other farmers to the dangers of child labor, as well as helping to identify and refer cases of child labor. That farmers are engaged enough to share the information suggests that aspects of the project may be sustained through networks.

5. CONCLUSION

The MATE MASIE project has made significant progress towards meeting its objectives within the constraints of the project. Despite initial challenges with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, communication of project goals and aims, trust between cooperatives and community members and the project, implementers have successfully put in place a project that is respected in the community and seen as supplying valuable services and information with respect to reducing child labor in the cocoa supply chain. MATE MASIE faces significant constraints in achieving broad, sustained impact in the communities due to the limited scope of the project (in terms of participating communities and cooperatives) as well as structural barriers to impact such as the distance of communities from school, enduring poverty, and other challenges. Some of these problems lie outside of MATE MASIE's scope and so continued transparent communication with community and cooperative partners is necessary to ensure that the project continues to operate successfully with its network of volunteers.

Moving forward, MATE MASIE faces significant challenges in putting in place practices and programs that can be sustained after funding runs out. Many participants have expressed their desire and willingness to share information with other farmers who may or may not be part of participating cooperatives, but the small initial scale of the project will limit those network effects. Following on, the ability to monitor progress towards project outcomes and to effectively address cases of child labor will be hampered by the lack of resources to incentivize participants, to provide transportation, and to track efforts via tablets and computers when resources to maintain and replace these tools that have been provided by WI are no longer available, or additional communities or cooperatives attempt to implement without these resources.

There are several ways that MATE MASIE can adjust in hopes of addressing these eventualities and moving towards a more sustainable project whose effects can persist past this pilot stage. An extension of the project's timeline, top-up funding, or even a scaled up project might be necessary to achieve these goals.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following, we outline recommendations for USDOL/ILAB, WI, and other actors that we have deemed as critical changes or additions necessary for successfully meeting project objectives in the remaining year of the project or for sustainability and future programming.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT TEAM

Recommendation 1:

Systematize outreach to better include marginalized groups including women and children in leadership positions and offer cocoa cooperatives training on inclusion.

Though there have been some concerted efforts towards inclusion of women and marginalized groups, WI does not have a written, delineated strategy for inclusion and staff were not able to speak to the efforts being made in this area. Moving forward, WI should delineate a specific and detailed outreach and inclusion strategy for supporting cocoa cooperatives to better include women, youth, and other marginalized groups as members and in leadership positions and in the processes to prevent and address child labor. WI has made explicit efforts to include at least one woman and youth in CCPCs and in trainings and to deliver trainings in local languages and with accessible materials. However, participation by women and youth remains low and the project does not define who are the marginalized groups of interest; nor does it outline any specific strategies for outreach and training of cocoa cooperatives on inclusion. An outreach and training strategy would allow MATE MASIE to ensure that efforts are consistent across implementation areas and that progress can be measured against activities while fostering a more inclusive project and

environment. Implementing lessons learned from existing efforts to revise instruction to better meet the needs of various groups should be applied to create more youth-friendly spaces, which could result in better inclusion of their voices.

Recommendation 2:

Collaborate with districts on medium-term development plans, including costing, budgeting, and planning for future expenditures to increase the project's sustainability prospects.

District governments are a key actor for sustaining efforts to monitor child labor, keep it out of the supply chain, and to keep cooperatives accountable for the reduction of child labor moving forward. However, they lack the technical skills, funding, and materials to carry out this work. Working directly with districts on their medium-term development plans, including costing, budgeting, and planning for future expenditures will be key to sustainability once the MATE MASIE project ends. DCPCs, law enforcement, and other stakeholders recognize the importance of the sensitization and education efforts of MATE MASIE but will need support in building skills to appropriately budget and plan for its continuation – training on cooperative members on how to access other funding sources may be useful and increase the chances of the project being sustained. These may include funding for children's schooling, school lunch programs, apprentice programs and other child-friendly policies and funding geared towards providing children an affordable alternative to labor.

Recommendation 3:

Collaborate with partner organizations to improve case management for sustainability, ensuring children removed from child labor have the sufficient resources to attend school.

Parents repeatedly noted the need for support in sending their children to school and their own poverty as barriers to pulling their children out of labor. As WI continues to strengthen cocoa cooperative capacity, they should focus on how to engage more closely with partner organizations on referrals and direct services in order to improve targeting and service delivery. The development of partnerships and, subsequently, strong systems supported by commitments to collaboration should ensure that children who have been removed from child labor have the appropriate funds and supplies (books, clothing, shoes, food, exam fees, etc.) to attend school and thus improve child outcomes.

Recommendation 4:

Expand training of trainer programs to increase the project's impact and sustainability.

Interviews with community members and document review indicate there is a strong demand for the type of training that MATE MASIE is offering, but the information is not always translating into higher levels of knowledge. Expanding and refining training of trainer opportunities could grow the network of volunteers and ensure that trained individuals are grasping the material and are able to pass that information on to others.

Encouraging and training community monitors and CCPCs to engage in their own education by expanding training of trainer programs and equipping them with additional resources can magnify the impact of the project and support the continued education that will be necessary to maintain the project.

Recommendation 5:

Planning for scale to expand the project's reach and impact to more farmers and vulnerable households by identifying which project components are scalable.

WI should take advantage of the next full year of implementation to determine which, if any, of the components of the project are scalable in order to expand the benefits to a larger group of farmers and families. The CLMRS has already been identified for scale as part of the workplan. WI and USDOL may also consider a plan for future projects at scale to include some of the following: expanding participation in the program, increasing the capacity of more farmers to conduct trainings themselves inside and outside the cooperatives, by including more districts, by identifying non-cooperative households for inclusion, or expanding successful components of support to vulnerable households, such as the VSLAs, to more communities.

Recommendation 6:

Consider incentivization schemes for volunteers to prevent burnout and ensure they continue their project activities.

CCPC members are volunteers, and so by definition, they are not paid. Many volunteers noted that without incentives, such as income-generating activities, e.g., corn mill work, or other incentives, including certificates and t-shirts, volunteers would experience burnout and would not continue their work on the project. MATE MASIE should consider implementing ways to formalize volunteer commitments to increase volunteer adherence to the project activities as a sustainability measure.

Recommendation 7:

Devote time and resources to managing community expectations and communicating project aims clearly to ensure buy-in and community involvement.

MATE MASIE is a project with a complex theory of change and set of activities that deviate from perhaps better-known models of direct services provision in hopes of reducing child labor through poverty alleviation. Due to this complexity, it is important to present project activities and aims to stakeholders in a way that is accessible—in local languages, broad-based, and appropriate language—to successfully manage expectations and ensure community buy-in and commitment to volunteer or other arrangements where community members are needed and are expecting support. WI should devote time during trainings and during project implementation to managing community expectations with respect to project activities to ensure buy-in.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ILAB

Recommendation 8:

Collaborate with partner organizations to improve collaboration for sustainability, ensuring children removed from child labor have the sufficient resources to attend school.

Just as the implementing agency should work with cocoa cooperatives to strengthen ties to organizations with aligned missions, USDOL can work at a high level to coordinate efforts with regional, local and national governments to ensure that projects are supportive of stronger systems. Systems should be collaboratively designed and implemented such that they will support school-going. Key components include household access to resources for transportation, books, school uniforms, and school fees. Additionally, school buildings, associated infrastructure, thoughtful classroom environments and teaching materials, and support linked to the CLMRS to support children who have left work stay in school, are important to communities and enrollment. Projects like MATE MASIE fill some gaps in the provision of these services, but are not sufficient to combat the systemic issues of underinvestment in schools resulting in limited access to classrooms and a broader approach is needed to give children sufficient support to stay in school. Collaboration on programming can help to identify gaps and areas of overlap to use funds more efficiently and work to create stronger systems.

Recommendation 9:

Planning for scale to expand the project's reach and impact to more farmers and vulnerable households by identifying which project components are scalable.

One limitation of the project is that it works in a very small number of communities and through cocoa cooperatives, limiting the reach of the project and impact on larger communities and the supply chain. This limitation was part of the project's design and budget, and it was not intended as a pilot, but USDOL should encourage that projects include considerations of scale. In future projects, USDOL should require projects to assess which activities are scalable and whether such efforts would be cost-effective and beneficial for extant and evolving programmatic goals. For MATE MASIE, an assessment of scaleable activities should be included as part of the final evaluation.

Table 3. Recommendations and Supporting Evidence

Recommendation	Page #	Supporting Evidence	Responsible Party
<p>1. Systematize outreach to better include marginalized groups including women and children in leadership positions and offer cocoa cooperatives training on inclusion.</p>	<p>38-40</p>	<p>The project has not effectively identified or targeted affected marginalized groups, including women and children. It is not evident that the project is successfully addressing the inclusion of these groups in project activities or increasing the skills and sensitization of cocoa cooperatives around inclusion in leadership structures.</p> <p>Partially due to disproportionate representation at the leadership level, women also received disproportionately less training on child labor enforcement and monitoring than men. WI should assist the cooperatives in assessing their own inclusivity, for example, with respect to number of women in leadership roles and systematic outreach to marginalized groups, in addition to the C-PAT indicator on gender.</p> <p>Youth were reluctant to share their views in group settings where they were the youngest members.</p>	<p>WI</p>
<p>2. Collaborate with districts on medium-term development plans, including costing, budgeting, and planning for future expenditures to increase the project’s sustainability prospects.</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>One path to sustainability of the project may be to expand the capacities of district assemblies and district representatives to effectively manage funds, the CLMRS, and other project outputs in support of medium-term development plans that are owned by the districts. Stakeholders</p>	<p>WI</p>

		proposed that the project engage in capacity building for districts and disbursing funds.	
3/8. Collaborate with partner organizations to improve coordination for sustainability, ensuring children removed from child labor have the sufficient resources to attend school.	30	<p>Due to poverty, many families lack the financial resources to afford putting their children through school. Children removed from cocoa labor are at risk of working in other sectors.</p> <p>Coordination to ensure children can access education could be improved in collaboration with other organizations already doing this work.</p>	WI and ILAB/DOL
4. Expand training of trainer programs to increase the project's impact and sustainability.	23	Community monitors and CCPCs discussed the value of training programs on child labor reduction, including training of trainer programs. However, the reach is currently limited as only 5 communities of 580 in Atimwa Mponua were targeted.	WI and cocoa cooperatives
5/9. Planning for scale to expand the project's reach and impact to more farmers and vulnerable households by identifying which project components are scalable.	32	The project is currently limited in working through cocoa cooperatives. Many farmers that are not cooperative members and other vulnerable household members that should be supported are not receiving project benefits.	DOL/ILAB and WI
6. Consider incentivization schemes for volunteers to prevent burnout and ensure they continue their project activities.	36	CCPC members and government interviewees expressed concerns that CCPC members currently working as unpaid volunteers would experience burnout without incentivization, negatively impacting sustainability. Income-generating activities were suggested.	WI

<p>7.Devote time and resources to managing community expectations and communicating project aims clearly to ensure buy-in and community involvement.</p>	<p>19-20</p>	<p>Many interview respondents have high expectations for the project’s limited direct service components, including direct provision of school supplies, livelihood interventions, and new infrastructure. Many of these community members appear to understand the project more as a direct provision project than one working to strengthen cooperatives.</p>	<p>WI</p>
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