



NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT
on
Dirección de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia (DINAF)

SEPTEMBER 2015

**Country Level and Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor
(CLEAR II) Project**

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Needs Assessment Report on Dirección de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia (DINAF), Honduras July 2015

CONTEXT

In September 2014, the US Department of Labor (USDOL) approved a five year grant to Winrock International entitled Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor II (CLEAR II). The purpose of the grant is to “increase capacity of host governments in target countries to reduce child labor, including its worst forms.” Areas of support include but are not limited to improvements in legislation and monitoring and enforcement, and effective implementation of national plans of action on child labor and national and local policies and programs aimed at a reduction and prevention of the worst forms of child labor.

In early April 2015, USDOL and USAID-Honduras discussed the possibility of a needs assessment for the Dirección de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia (DINAF) and possible subsequent technical support. USDOL requested that the CLEAR II project conduct a site visit to determine DINAF’s short and midyear needs. The assessment below, which is based on a five day field visit from July 13-17, 2015 conducted by Carol Michaels O’Laughlin, Senior International Consultant, and Karen Rosales Aguilar, Local Consultant, reviews DINAF’s seven months of operations. During the field visit the consultants conducted interviews in Tegucigalpa with representatives from ten institutions—four international and one local NGO, one network of NGOs, one UN agency, two government Secretaries, two bi-lateral donors (including a team from USAID and the US Consulate in Honduras)—and with three representatives of DINAF—Lolis Salas, Executive Director, Janeth Flores, Chief of Programs, and Pamela Maureen Zamora Martínez, Coordinator of Public Policies. The team also visited Comayagua, meeting with the mayor and the director of DINAF’s regional office, and visiting one attention center for children. (See Annex 2 for list of meetings.) Many interviewees spoke with Winrock on the condition of anonymity, and therefore some comments in this report are not directly attributable to an individual. The team was unable to meet with several key entities and individuals including the Secretary for Development and Social Inclusion, the First Lady’s Office, the Association of Mayors (AHMON), the International Organization for Migration, and DINAF staff from various departments. The principal focus of the consultancy was on DINAF’s institutional capacity, its accomplishments to date, and priorities. The scope did not assess individual program areas within DINAF. (See Annex 1 for scope of work).

BACKGROUND

Honduras has a population of 8.4 million persons, consisting of 1,888,000 households. Of these households, 1,218,000 (64.5%) live in a situation of poverty and 804,000 of this number live in extreme poverty¹. According to the World Health Organization 60% of the population is food insecure and 30% lacks access to permanent health coverage². Violence in Honduras ranks among the worst in Central America. The national rate of homicides reached a high of 88/100,000 in October of 2011 and decreased to 68/100,000 by June 2015. In 2013, of just over 18,000 cases of medical forensic analysis, nearly half of the injuries reported were related to sexual abuse (15.7%), aggression against women (14.9%), child abuse (5%) and other related issues³.

Approximately 48% of Honduras’ population is under 18 years of age. About 23% of 0-5 year olds are malnourished. Honduras has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Central America—24% of 15-19

¹ Data from the Government Strategic Plan 2014-2018.

² USAID Honduras Country Development Cooperative Strategy, 2015-2019.

³ Plan Estratégico DINAF

year olds. Only 40% of 13-15 year olds and 28% of 16-18 year olds attend school, and 800,000 youth between 14-30 years (10% of the total population) neither studies nor works. Only one third of children who complete primary school meet level standards and less than 25% of Hondurans finish high school.⁴

The above statistics offer a glimpse into the life of a Honduran child. S/he most likely lives in poverty, has been touched by violence in the home and streets, and suffers from lack of access to quality, basic services such as health, education, jobs and justice. If the child is from an indigenous community or with disabilities, the situation is even more problematic based on available data for that population.

The Honduran government has demonstrated its commitment to protecting children's rights beginning with Executive (Presidential) Decree 131, approved in 1982, which recognizes the State's obligation to protect childhood. This Decree has been followed by a series of Decrees related to protection of the family, children and adolescents; elimination of trafficking in persons; minimum age for work and elimination of the worst forms of child labor; education; social protection and others. Further, Honduras has ratified all international conventions concerning child labor, including ILO C. 138, Minimum Age, ILO C. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labor, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, along with the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. (See Annex 3 *Ruta Histórica*, a timeline of most laws and conventions approved to protect children's rights in Honduras.)

The Honduran government has created several institutions to regulate and promote the protection of children. First there was the National Board on Social Welfare (Junta Nacional de Bienestar Social). Then, in 1997, Congress established the Honduran Institute for Children and Family (IHNFA). The latter had as its mandate to 1) formulate and execute State policies for children, adolescents and family, 2) promote respect for the rights of children, 3) coordinate participation of state and private institutions in programming and management of actions that provide integral protection of children and families, 4) establish a system of measurement and of alternatives to the institutionalization of vulnerable children, and 5) promote and support participation of citizens and community organizations in the construction of a system of opportunities for children and families.⁵ Little by little IHNFA demonstrated limited institutional capacity, and there was evidence of malfeasance. As a result, on June 6, 2014 via a Presidential Decree, IHNFA was eliminated (*suprimido*). Among the reasons for termination outlined in the Decree were: 1) not carrying out its mission, 2) lack of competence and unqualified staff, 3) inefficient use of resources and excessive number of administrative staff (representing 93% of the institution's budget in 2011), 4) limited coverage throughout the country (operating in only 37 of 298 municipalities), 5) irregularities in the adoption process, 6) poor management of legal disputes over assets, and 7) inhumane conditions in IHNFA residential centers. (See Annex #4 for the Presidential Decree to eliminate IHNFA).

On the same date that President Juan Orlando Hernández suspended IHNFA, he established the Dirección de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia (DINAF) via another Presidential Decree. As per Article 5 of that Decree, the objectives and competencies of DINAF are to:

1. Regulate, formulate, manage, coordinate and supervise the implementation of national policies and norms related to children, adolescence and family
2. Strengthen the capacity of the State to promote, articulate, develop and monitor plans, programs and public services for children, adolescents and family in their different life cycles and spaces
3. Promote at the national level social responsibility and participation in the promotion, defense and protection of the rights of children, adolescents and family
4. Others that are compatible with the above.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <http://www.ihnfa.gob.hn>

Article 6 of the Decree outlines DINAF program areas:

1. Formulate, coordinate, manage, monitor and evaluate public policies, programs and services specialized in children, adolescence and family, which implies the transfer of financial resources to organizations responsible for the direct execution of programs devoted to the attention of this sector, and control and audit the use of resources for this work;
2. Generate guidelines and mechanisms that orient public institutions and civil society organizations in the implementation of public policies, programs and services for children, adolescents and families in an efficient and effective manner;
3. Promote the establishment of local programs for integrated attention to children, especially vulnerable children, in securing their rights; to be done either with their own resources or through public private alliances with government development agencies, NGOs, or networks of NGOs via a reserve of permanent technical assistance, supervision and control;
4. Manage in administrative headquarters transactions related to the declaration of abandonment of children and the vulnerability of their rights;
5. Exercise guardianship due to absence of the parents or legal representatives of a child or due to qualified threat to the child's rights;
6. Safeguard the legal adoption of children;
7. Create adoption registries of vulnerable children and sanctioned children and others which require coordinated efforts among Secretaries of Health, Security, Education, Labor, Social Security and other state and government agencies;
8. Promote municipal actions in the area of child protection;
9. Organize and administer in coordination with Regional Offices and/or Child Sectors programs and specialized services for attention, rehabilitation and social reinsertion of juvenile offenders of criminal law in non-custodial measures in restorative justice. These will count on multidisciplinary teams and specialized services to assure opportune and adequate attention to every child;
10. Coordinate technical and financial cooperation with national and international institutions and organizations that organize and/or finance activities related to children, adolescents and family;
11. Other activities compatible with the purposes and objectives of the current law.

The Decree establishes DINAF as decentralized, attached to the Secretariat for Development and Social Inclusion (SEDIS), and empowered with technical, functional and administrative independence. The Decree also dictates the establishment of regional/sector offices for program operations and an Independent Observatory, consisting of representatives from churches, networks and other members of civil society, to meet monthly to provide recommendations to DINAF. Finally, the Decree mandates that "administrative costs of DINAF cannot exceed 15% of the assigned annual budget". (See Annex #5 for the Presidential Decree).

According to DINAF staff and Director, during the first several months after its creation, there were only a few staff in place, most working as consultants on the transition with IHNFA. DINAF began operations on December 7, 2014 with a small staff.

REPORT FINDINGS

Major Accomplishments

Fully Operational at the National and Regional Levels. Within its first months of operation DINAF was able to set up from scratch a new organization with 137 staff, approximately 45 in the regions and 92

in Tegucigalpa. It has a Program Office with five technical units, including: 1) Special Criminal Justice; 2) Public Policies for children, adolescents; 3) Adoptions; 4) Migration and International Child Abduction (newly created); and 5) Protection of Rights for vulnerable children. Through Regional and Municipal Coordination Committees, DINAF oversees five regional offices. (See Annexes 6 and 7 for DINAF new organizational structure and Geographic Scope.)

Qualified and Responsible Leadership. DINAF was launched under a negative cloud created by its predecessor organization, the Honduran Institute for Children and Family (IHNFA). The population at large was disillusioned and horrified by the abuses conducted by IHNFA. It had mismanaged funds and had not fulfilled its obligation of promoting and defending the rights of children, adolescents and families. According to the NGOs interviewed, the worst result of IHNFA was that rather than empower and promote children's rights, it violated children's rights and established a disempowering approach of control and punishment of children. The Comayagua director of DINAF stated, "parents threatened their misbehaved children with sending them to IHNFA centers!" She further claimed that the IHNFA centers had a reputation of being "holding cells" for "problem" children, orphans, juvenile offenders, and vulnerable children instead of safe and protective spaces where children would receive a variety of supports and services and be reintegrated into their families and communities with new assets.

Most if not all interviewed stated that unlike IHNFA which lacked transparency and ethical management, DINAF, under Director Lolis Salas' leadership, is perceived as a responsibly managed organization. Several reported that the Director, a well-known human rights lawyer specializing in women's issues, is "trustworthy," "holds high ethical standards," and understands concepts of child development and protection. As such, they were confident that DINAF has gained and will be able to keep the public trust. The fact that DINAF's Director has already terminated two Chiefs of Finance for lack of capacity is evidence that she will not tolerate incompetency, especially in management of DINAF funds.

Competent Management of the Transition of children in IHNFA's custody to local service providers. According to many, IHNFA was required to transfer children under its care to appropriate, third party service providers before closing its doors. However, it refused to do this. As a result, DINAF had to take on the task of identifying local shelters, support centers and others; registering the 2,407 children that had been under IHNFA care; transferring them to local support centers and other appropriate agencies; and monitoring the children and centers on a regular basis. While the actual number of children in IHNFA's care was less than that institution had reported, this process has absorbed a majority of DINAF's time since its beginnings and through to today. People applaud DINAF's ability to manage this transition process, especially given that this was not part of its mandate.

Transparency and Efficiency in International Adoption Processes. According to some interviewees, another accomplishment secured by DINAF through this transition process has been the reduction of the time to adopt a child from the six years on average under IHNFA to, on average, one year or less. The corruption that plagued the process under IHNFA appears to have been eliminated as well. The US Consulate in Honduras noted that this change was especially welcome.

Improvements in Child Protection at the Municipal Level. According to Ms. Miranda, DINAF regional director in Comayagua, and the director of one residential center visited, DINAF has been able to establish a different profile from IHNFA at the municipal level. According to Ms. Miranda, "Families know that they cannot bring their children to DINAF offices for detention or punishment." Instead, DINAF now registers the child issue and refers the family/child to the appropriate agency or center for proper attention. According to the director of the residential center visited, "DINAF is respectful; does not threaten or demand bribes (as IHNFA did); and provides technical, financial and material support as needed."

Beyond referrals, the DINAF regional office is beginning to establish alliances with mayors in some of the municipalities. It was reported, for example, that in the municipality of Itibucá, DINAF's regional

office, with assistance from an INGO, is beginning an initiative to assist the mayor to establish a working group, consisting of government agencies and local NGOs, to manage a child protection system that offers integrated support to vulnerable children and juvenile offenders. DINAF has indicated that these municipal roundtables for child protection are the model it would like to replicate nationally.

DINAF provided the consultants the following list of its accomplishments to date⁶:

- Development of Institutional Strategic Plan (developed by Plan International)
- Establishment of a strategic program to support migrant children and their families
- Development of strategies/mechanisms for official Protection of infants
- Transfer of 34 IHNFA centers (CAINES) to 34 municipalities in coordination with the Association of Municipalities of Honduras (AMHON)
- Signing of Agreements with 34 municipalities for support to 2407 children and adolescents
- Development of a proposal for the establishment of the Observatory for Children
- Signing of an Agreement with the Secretary of Education (*Centro de Investigación y Rehabilitación Especial* and *Centro de Capacitación Especial*) for integration into the educational system of all vulnerable children
- Development of Proposal for a program for migrant children and family (developed by International Organization for Migration)
- Development of a workplan with the sector of persons with disabilities to implement a Policy for Children
- Installation of Roundtables for Child Protection in 34 municipalities, and with 9 additional municipalities managed in partnership with World Vision
- Establishment of a conceptual framework of information management (Sistema de Información Nacional de la Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia (SINNAF), developed by UNICEF).
- Completing a study on the investment of public funds in children issues
- Strengthening the technical capacity of DINAF
- Beginning to construct a methodology to develop a composite indicator for DINAF outcomes
- Design of an integrated model for attention to infants (developed by the *Comisión Nacional de Educación Alternativo No Formal*)

The consultants were unable to verify the above accomplishments due to time constraints. A review of select documentation provided by DINAF confirms that many program concepts, strategic plans, child definitions and others have been developed. It appears, however, that few are yet operational throughout the DINAF structure.

Observed Major Challenges

1. Legal and Political

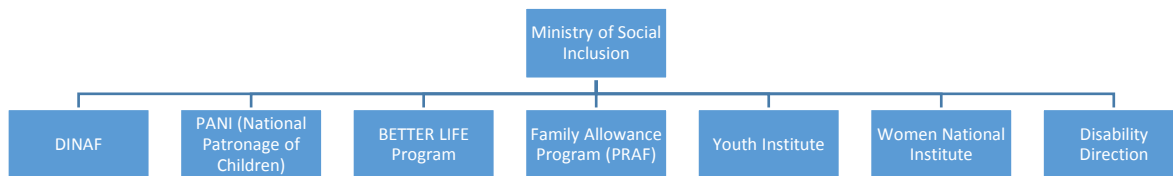
DINAF's creation via a Presidential Decree leaves it politically vulnerable. According to one source, at the time that DINAF was established, the political environment related to IHNFA was quite tense. On the one hand the workers' union within IHNFA and its supporters in Congress were fighting for labor rights and against IHNFA's closing, while on the other hand, the public and NGOs were angry at the lack of results produced by IHNFA in 14 years and with the level of corruption that had occurred. It was suggested by one interviewee that within this reality President Hernández believed that the only effective manner to establish DINAF (and dissolve IHNFA), without long battles with Congress, was through

⁶ DINAF Powerpoint Presentación CONEANFO

Presidential Decrees. While that may have been the case, DINAF currently operates without being a body created through legislation. As such, many fear that the organization can be easily politicized and dissolved at any point in time, especially under a newly elected president. They argue that DINAF needs to be legislated by Congress to ensure its endurance. As further evidence for this need, DINAF’s Comayagua director explained that local government agencies in the region initially refused to recognize DINAF, because it is not included in the government manual of agencies responsible for child protection. After much convincing and hard work, the regional director has been able to work well with local government officials. Nevertheless, DINAF should not have to convince peers to work with them, especially given its role as the regulatory agency.

DINAF informed the consultants that it has discussed its legal status with the Presidents’ Office and believes that with time- once DINAF demonstrates results - it may be possible for DINAF to be legally constituted via Congressional legislation.

DINAF Stature as a Directorate may lessen its authority. Most NGOs interviewed argue that as a regulatory agency responsible for developing and integrating child protection policies that affect the work of several Secretaries, (such as the Secretaries of Human Rights and Justice, Development and Social inclusion and Labor, Health, Education, and others), DINAF should have the same level as a full Cabinet Secretary. Otherwise it will not have the authority to ensure necessary changes in institutional policies and programs among the different Secretaries, and it may not have the stature to convene/lead an inter-agency body on child protection. There are opponents to this perspective however, who argue that the Presidential Decree established DINAF with financial and administrative autonomy. Furthermore, President Hernández has sought to consolidate his administrative structure, collapsing the previous 35 Ministries into seven Cabinets. DINAF falls under the purview of the Secretary of Development and Social inclusion (SEDIS), along with social related institutes and directorates including the National Directorate for Youth, the National Institute for Women, the National Directorate for Indigenous and Afro descendants and three national programs—*Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* (PRAF), the conditional support program to vulnerable families who receive 10,000 LPS/year; *Programa Vida Mejor*, a national housing improvement program, and *Programa de Asignación Familiar* (PANI), the national lottery. According to one government official, this streamlined government structure allows President Hernández to better align and coordinate activities among Cabinets.



While recognizing President Hernandez’s intentions to streamline government, it is questionable whether DINAF has the appropriate level of authority to be able to influence programs and budgets of its peers and superior agencies.

Being capped at 15% administrative costs is unrealistic. According to the Presidential Decree, DINAF cannot spend more than 15% for “administrative costs”. Subsequent to the Decree, according to DINAF the Treasury Department further clarified that the 15% refers to all administrative costs, including salaries. As a regulatory agency whose role is to develop and implement policies, strengthen government

capacity, facilitate coordination and monitor the engagement of and provision of services by stakeholders connected to children, adolescent and family issues nationwide, it could be argued that the majority of DINAF expenses would be salaries. Thus, this restriction placed on DINAF is not viable if it is to successfully achieve its objectives.

Possible contradictory statements of work within the Decree. DINAF's three objectives as stated in the Presidential Decree confirm that it is a regulatory and coordinating agency and not an implementing agency. With that said, some persons interviewed pointed out contradictions in Article 6 which outlines key activities. Some, such as those related to adoption and regional offices, may be interpreted as requiring DINAF to operate programs. Unless this contradiction is resolved, DINAF may disperse its efforts too broadly and dilute its impact on national policies and programs.

DINAF annual budget. The Honduran Treasury approved 90 million Lps (about US \$4.1 million) for DINAF's 2015 budget. Additionally, GOH allocated 80 million Lps (about US \$3.7 million) to DINAF out of PANI, the national lottery. In its last year of operations IHNFA's annual budget was almost double this total amount. While DINAF is not expected to directly operate programs and, as such, may not require a budget at the level of IHNFA, most interviewed argue that its budget is too small. DINAF's mandate covers almost 50% of the Honduran population. It has the responsibility to develop national policies, build the capacity of central and local governments and establish and monitor children protection systems in all 298 municipalities of Honduras. Having a confirmed government budget of only 90 million Lps and depending on the lottery for additional funds raises concerns regarding government's commitment to DINAF and its long term viability. Budgets should be determined by DINAF workplans, activities, outputs and outcomes tied to its strategic objectives.

Relationship with the First Lady's Office. Traditionally in Honduras, the Office of the First Lady has focused on children and family as her principal public role. This continues to be the case with the First Lady Ana García Carías. In fact, during the summer of 2014 this First Lady's Office assumed leadership over the crisis involving Honduran child migrants being deported from Mexico and the USA. At that time, DINAF was in the process of being established and the government opted to manage the migrant issue through the First Lady's Office. Since then, the Office of the First Lady has continued to coordinate the child migrant issue as well as other programs connected to children and youth. While it is appropriate for the First Lady's office to promote and raise awareness on child protection, it seems equally appropriate that it acknowledge and promote DINAF as the lead regulatory and technical agency to manage this program area. To date, this has not been the case. In fact, the First Lady's Office continues to convene meetings and work directly with a variety of INGOs and the UN system, signing Decrees and advancing programs for children without involving DINAF. This has tended to undermine DINAF's authority. To ensure that the issue of child protection is not politicized and that proper technical expertise is devoted to development of all national policies and programs, it is advisable that DINAF and the Office of the First Lady agree on its proper technical and leadership role.

DINAF's Profile. As indicated above, the first seven months of DINAF operations (December 2014 – July 2015) have been primarily devoted to direct implementation, i.e., the transfer of children formerly under IHNFA's care to proper attention centers, addressing repatriation of deported children and numerous other daily emergencies related to child protection. According to Director Salas, DINAF continues to receive 39 requests per day for assistance on children cases and emergencies, and Comayagua confirmed that it alone manages on average seven cases every day. While this activity was not mandated in the Presidential Decree, DINAF had to take on the implementer role to ensure that every child under IHNFA care was secure and supported.

All interviewed recognize that DINAF's greatest accomplishment to date has been the transfer of children to local NGOs and municipal care. At the same time, most expressed concern that DINAF has not been able to advance its mission and strategies nor has it had time to establish standards or certify the above centers. They expect and await DINAF leadership to develop a child protection policy that integrates all current policies under one piece of legislation. They also await development of an integrated case management approach, especially at the municipal level, that ensures that every child is afforded comprehensive support. In all, they expect DINAF to get back on track and to take leadership of its current mandate.

A general rule of thumb for new organizations, like DINAF, is to demonstrate its direction/intentions and make changes within the first six to nine months so that staff and stakeholders alike are clear about its vision and mission. Stakeholders are becoming skeptical of DINAF's ability to change gears and direct a new vision and set of policies and regulations for child protection. If DINAF does not begin to assume its leadership, DINAF's reputation is at risk; the sector is at risk of becoming further fragmented; and the opportunity to develop an integrated child protection policy and standards at the national level may be lost. Finally, it is worth noting that in the Presidential Decree to dissolve IHNFA, one of the arguments for dissolution was its failure to move beyond childcare to beginning a regulatory agency. DINAF must stake care not to fall into the same pattern as IHNFA and fail to fulfill its primary mandate.

2. DINAF Structure and Capacity

DINAF staffed-up quickly, hiring mostly lawyers and psychologists, to transfer children under IHNFA management to appropriate care. As a result most of DINAF program staff appear to be best qualified to support children then to develop policies, programs, systems and inter-institutional networks for child protection. According to one interviewee, "DINAF built a staff to carry out IHNFA's work rather than to lead the three objectives outlined in the Presidential Decree." Another remarked that DINAF staff "are not strategic planners or managers capable of advancing its mandate." Staff interviewed in the regional office took pride in the psycho-social and legal support provided to children and families as well as the transfer of children to local NGOs. According to the regional director, "we are aware of DINAF's mission as a regulatory agency and await direction and training on how to manage those areas." Such direction has not been forthcoming. In all, the strategic and managerial capacity of DINAF resides primarily with Director Lolis Salas and her senior staff. This results in DINAF's top leadership handling daily emergencies rather than focusing on DINAF's strategic direction.

DINAF's Director explained that she is in the process of restructuring its central organization, grouping programs into two strategic areas: technical and geographic. (See Annex 6 & 7). She also plans to increase staff from 137 to 165 persons to reduce the enormous workload that current staff endure and to establish professional ranges and pay scales to ensure equitable payment among staff. She further stated that she is in the process of terminating several staff for unsatisfactory performance.

However, the proposed recommendations for new staff appear to increase the number of psychologists and lawyers and to add social workers and a few medical staff to central and regional teams. These profiles suggest that DINAF may be hiring more staff to implement direct service programs rather than to support its larger mission. According to UNICEF and DINAF staff, UNICEF has been contracted to assist DINAF to further refine its institutional profile and direction. Based on that exercise, it will then assist DINAF to develop job descriptions that are aligned with its strategic mandate. It is unclear whether this effort will also focus on assisting DINAF to modify its organizational structure. It is advisable that before launching its newest organizational structure and filling new positions, DINAF complete the

exercise planned with UNICEF and devote time and resources to structuring itself and contracting qualified staff who can lead DINAF in reaching its strategic goals.

3. DINAF Leadership in Child Protection

As indicated above, DINAF has devoted a majority of its efforts on managing direct services to children and addressing emergencies. It appears to be contracting stakeholders to advance its strategic work of developing policies, program models, and others and to administer its budgets and programs in some regions. For example, Plan International led the development of DINAF's Strategic Plan. Plan is also developing a child protection system in municipalities where it works, and it administers the finances of the DINAF Comayagua office. World Vision assists DINAF in training staff on children's rights, developing the national law on adoption and extradition, and developing a municipal, child protection system where WV operates. UNICEF has prepared multiple documents on child protection and rights, juvenile justice, adoption, cycles of life and others. The International Organization on Migration (IOM) is developing guidelines for child migration.

While DINAF says it is lowering its administrative costs through the support of these partners and it is acceptable for it to contract others to develop key tools, systems, and strategies, it is unclear if DINAF is leading/managing this process. Based on discussions with staff and other stakeholders, many strategies and documents are produced with limited leadership or input from DINAF. There also appears to be duplication of efforts among stakeholders eager to promote their individual approaches for national scale-up without overall control by DINAF. More importantly, the documents produced by stakeholders do not appear to have been distributed to all DINAF staff, incorporated into staff training, or advanced to the level of policy or regulations. In fact, it appears that strategic direction is being outsourced to others and that DINAF may not own and lead its direction. This may be due, in part, to DINAF's lack of internal capacity as a regulatory agency. DINAF should be working with its staff to define its direction/strategies and then contracting others to work under its direction to further elaborate key tools, standards, etc. Results need to be internalized among all staff so that DINAF, as per its mandate, can develop national level policies and programs that meet necessary standards and can avoid one off and fragmented initiatives.

Finally, DINAF appears to have neglected its public image and the sharing of information internally and externally about its mission, activities, accomplishments, child protection models and other relevant information. Having a sound strategic communications plan, using the press, written materials, meetings, websites, blogs, and/or other means, is important at this point in time. Such a strategy could generate increased knowledge and change in behaviors and attitudes about child protection among the general population while also laying the groundwork for the public and political will to support the policies and programs that DINAF plans to propose. It could assure stakeholders of DINAF's direction and progress.

Recommendations

The consultants shared with DINAF Director Salas the challenges listed above. She subsequently met with her senior staff and shared with the consultants her list of the gaps, and priority strategic areas of need to remedy DINAF's current shortcomings. They include:

1. Strengthen mechanisms for the coordination of a National System for Integrated Child Protection in order to build capacity and influence standards in different spaces from local to national levels.
2. Modify DINAF's organizational structure and operations to advance its strategic and operational strategies in alignment with its mandate.
3. Design a strategy for information, education and communication within DINAF and with outside stakeholders that communicates DINAF's role as regulating agency on child protection and coordinating body among institutions.

4. Generate a plan to strengthen the State's capacity for planning budgeting and measuring national investment in children.
5. Create a Central American network that links each country's regulating agencies for child protection and strengthens information systems to reflect specific problems of each country and inform potential solutions, thus generating information useful to governments for decision making.
6. Establish mechanisms that allow greater levels of children and youth participation in decision-making.
7. Link with academia to promote and develop scientific and social research and to develop specialized training on children, adolescents and families.
8. Create a Technical and Inter-sectoral Consultative Body that can provide technical and institutional advice to DINAF.
9. Generate a strategic advocacy approach to raise awareness among decision-makers to their acceptance of DINAF as the agency responsible for regulation and budgeting all issues related to children.

The consultants agree with DINAF leadership's list of critical needs for the short and longer term. Below we underscore priorities as we see them.

Short-term Priorities (August-December 2015)

1. **Institutional Alignment.** DINAF should proceed to review its profile and direction, its strategic plan and work plans for 2015 and 2016, and realign its organizational structure as needed. It should then develop staff positions, job descriptions and requirements and recruit qualified staff to implement its program. DINAF should also continue review of current staff and determine their capacity to implement against the revised plan and strategic direction. Once the alignment is completed, DINAF should develop staff training on its mission, program areas, concepts on child protection, etc. Training must be more than a short workshop. DINAF staff must fully understand their roles and work against personal performance objectives to advance DINAF as the regulatory agency for child protection. Training must be continuous and conducted at the central and regional levels. Staff, in turn, must share their training with appropriate stakeholders, such as local mayors and institutions. To make the type of changes that DINAF seeks regarding child-centered, comprehensive support to children, the change in mindset must begin with its staff and then move to other stakeholders.

DINAF has already contracted UNICEF for short term support in defining its direction and realignment of job descriptions. Our recommendation is that this support be immediate with continuation throughout the year(s) until DINAF is able to firmly establish its strategic direction.

2. **Development of a Communications Strategy.** The consultants agree with DINAF on the priority need to develop a communications strategy. This strategy must focus internally, among its staff, to educate them on the institutional vision and direction as well as on concepts and best practices in child protection. It should also target external stakeholders including — government agencies that work on children and youth issues, donors, private sector, NGOs and the public. Specific strategies and tools should be adapted to the needs of each audience and should reinforce DINAF's role as the regulating agency; transmit child protection concepts, tools, standards, best practices; and indicate actions being taken by DINAF and results regarding laws, standards and programs. The immediate focus should be to communicate DINAF's role, activities to date, results, and plans. Mid-term, DINAF should have a sophisticated communications system via public and social media, written documents, the internet, events and other forms. DINAF mentioned the launch of a campaign called, "Soy DINAF" (I am DINAF), to introduce DINAF to the public. This is an excellent first step.

3. **Establishment of the Independent Observatory.** Per the Presidential Decree, this body will consist of one representative each from the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, one representative from the Association of Municipalities of Honduras (AHMON), one representative from civil society organizations devoted to protection of children and adolescents, and one representative from organizations that promote family integration and other agencies related to the children, adolescent and family sector that are registered with the Secretary of Development and Social Inclusion (SEDIS). The Observatory will meet monthly with the Executive Director of DINAF to review programs and make recommendations. The consultants recommend that DINAF establish a transparent process to select members of the body, draft its regulations, and convene its first meeting no later than January 2016. The Observatory's first responsibility will be, as per the Decree, to develop the regulations of the Observatory. We further recommend that a major task of the Observatory be to develop and monitor the strategic outcome indicators to which DINAF will be held accountable.
4. **Establishment of an internal technical, inter-institutional advisory body.** DINAF has prioritized the creation of this technical group to assist it in advancing its three objectives. We recommend that this body be established immediately, with representatives from academia, NGOs and government institutions working in child protection. This group would be available, as needed, to provide specific technical advice on program and institutional issues. This body would be distinctive from the Independent Observatory in that the latter plays an oversight role, while the former would provide on-going technical support.

Mid-term Priorities (January – December 2016)

1. Coordination with Key Stakeholders.

One of the DINAF three objectives per the Presidential Decree is Coordination/Leadership (“*articulación*”) with strategic stakeholders engaged in child protection, adolescents and families. The consultants recommend that no later than the end of the first quarter of 2016, DINAF establish two groups:

- a. **Inter-institutional committee among government agencies responsible for children, adolescents and families.** Through this committee DINAF will be able to regulate government services and programs in this sector, ensure consistent practices, and gather critical information on child, adolescent and family programs, budgets, and other needs.
- b. **Civil Society Consultation Network among adult and children and youth organizations, private sector, religious groups, academia and others.** Through this body DINAF can collect best practices in child protection and its various program areas on which it can develop an integrated policy on child protection. This body can also assist DINAF to test approaches for child protection and other issues at the municipal level and work with DINAF to advocate before Congress for an integrated national child protection policy and for an increase in operating budget from Congress.

2. Knowledge Management

To successfully develop policies, guidelines, and tools in the various areas of child protection, adoption, child migrant, juvenile justice, DINAF needs to establish a knowledge management and structured learning unit and system with a data base to house information on best practices, programs, implementing partners, research, etc. Further, this unit should collect data from appropriate government agencies on the status of children, adolescents and families; government budgets directed to these issues and others. It must also conduct ongoing research on relevant issues and collect information on DINAF work and impact. This unit would be expected to generate data on all DINAF

objectives as well as to provide relevant information on which to develop policies and programs and publish reports to stakeholders on its work and the status of Honduran children. Data collected would generate information to be communicated through DINAF's communications strategy. A key piece of work that DINAF should execute by no later than the end of the first quarter of 2016 is a **mapping of organizations, programs, tools, and budgets devoted to children, youth and families**. This information is essential for DINAF to develop its policies and programs and identify strategic partners throughout the country. According to DINAF, the Inter-American Development Bank will do such a mapping and will develop standards and a certification process for child service centers. They expect this activity to be completed by mid-2016. UNICEF also mentioned working with DINAF in a mapping process. DINAF should seek to integrate these two exercises.

3. Policies and Programs. DINAF should begin to draft priority policies and programs that will guide the children, adolescents and families sector. Key among these are:

- a. Development of the National Framework or policy for Comprehensive Protection of Children's Rights.** Currently there are a series of policies on specific issues, including a policy on violence against children and youth in Honduras, a policy on social protection, adoption, and others. DINAF needs to develop an overarching and integrated policy that provides the highest level of guidance and a clear mandate for children's rights and protection. Much material already exists within Honduras and within the region. It is a matter of pulling information together into a national policy. According to DINAF, the Canadian Embassy may provide assistance in development of this policy.

Once that overall policy is developed, DINAF can adapt specific policies and programs, for example for child migrants, juvenile justice, adoption, and others, and develop new programs.

- b. Development of a children and adolescent case management system for municipalities with guidelines and tools and creation and training of Municipal Round Tables.** There are two new mandates from President Hernandez that can support DINAF to achieve its goal to establish child protection systems at the municipal level. The first is the creation of municipal Round Tables for improved collaboration and implementation on a variety of issues at the local level. The second is the presidential mandate that earmarks 5% of the federal budget transferred to municipal government to child protection. Most mayors and local agencies do not have a child protection plan. As such, DINAF has an opportunity to train and advise these Round Tables on the child-centered approach to development and the importance of coordinated services for vulnerable children with a goal of reintegration with families and self-reliance. It can provide them with guidelines and tools for a case management approach, and assist them in properly investing municipal budgets in child protection.

Based on interviews, it appears that DINAF may be piloting different approaches to case management systems at municipal levels through separate partnerships with UNICEF, PLAN International, Save the Children International, and World Vision. It is advisable for DINAF to convene these groups, together with mayors and children and youth representatives, and to develop a consistent and comprehensive model rather than implementing different models in each region. The design work should begin in 2015 with pilots occurring in 2016.

- c. Certification of service centers for children, adolescents and families.** DINAF transferred children under IHNFA care to multiple organizations. This was done without the ability to

establish standards of care and without certifying those centers and future ones. There is an urgent need for DINAF to develop standards for institutions, such as daycare centers, residences, detention centers and others that support children, and systems to certify them. Once the certification process is in place, DINAF can assume its appropriate role of certifying and monitoring compliance of the centers.

- 4. Establishment of core indicators to track DINAF impact and an internal committee to conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation.** Establishment of indicators for DINAF and of a monitoring and evaluation system will allow DINAF to assess its impact over time. According to DINAF, the European Union is supporting development of a composite indicator for child protection. Once the composite indicator is developed, DINAF should establish strategic indicators against which it will be evaluated over time. The Independent Observatory should be involved in the selection of indicators.
- 5. Amend the DINAF Decree to ensure its sustainability.** As indicated above, there are several contradictions and restrictions within the Presidential Decree of DINAF that should be reviewed, including having it legislated through Congress, eliminating the 15% budgetary limitation for staff salaries, and ensuring that all activities relate to the three objectives. The revised Decree should eliminate any roles connected to direct services to children and families. Finally, the consultants learned that IHNFA continues to exist and can only be dissolved by Congress. Once DINAF is officially legislated by Congress, IHNFA should be terminated.

Donor Support and Partnerships

DINAF provided the consultants with a list of its current and potential (i.e., under discussion) donors and partners. This list includes a basket of ten projects, operating from one to five years from 2015 to 2021 and totaling US\$7,066,402. Of this amount six projects, valued at US\$555,081, are approved with EuroSocial, the Inter-American Development Bank, Save the Children Spain and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Two large grants, representing 92% of the total budget, are under consideration—one from a consortia of the Embassy of Canada, Plan International, ICBE and UNICEF and the other under the *Plan de Alianza por la Prosperidad* recently proposed by the Governments of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. All but three of the projects focus on building DINAF capacity together with building an inter-institutional committee; establishing a child protection network among government, civil society and private sector; and/or strengthening child protection capacity among municipal governments and programs. The Inter-American Development Bank has an 18 month commitment with DINAF to do a mapping of organizations engaged in child protection and to develop criteria for a certification process for organizations responsible for managing children in their custody. EuroSocial, a project of the European Union, is assisting in the development of the composite indicator that will drive the outcomes that DINAF aspires to reach. (See Annex 8 for Matrix of donors and partners).

These donors and partners appear to be supporting areas of critical need within DINAF. The latter might consider convening partners to coordinate and sequence the support to achieve and sustain the desired results. For example, It is unclear whether UNICEF's support to DINAF to refine its vision and direction and then to determine job profiles and descriptions is part of the support from the consortia of partners. It is our opinion that defining positions and hiring qualified staff is a necessary first step to all others. Also, it appears that several partners—Save the Children Spain, IOM, the consortia of donors, and World Vision (not included in DINAF's list)—will work on building municipal capacity in child protection. It is recommended that before launching these initiatives, DINAF and partners develop and agree upon an overall model so that there is one approach and system for all municipalities.

The mapping and certification process is also a critical element of DINAF's work to ensure that all child care centers meet minimum standards. Once completed, DINAF will need to train staff on tools,

disseminate them broadly, and integrate them into DINAF's overall child protection framework and system. Equally important is the development of the composite indicator that will drive all of DINAF's work. This should be drafted so that the Independent Observatory can review it in one of its first meetings and that DINAF can develop a set of outcome indicators to track on an annual basis.

It is difficult to know what activities are included in the proposed capacity building support for DINAF. Based on priorities listed by DINAF and the consultants' recommendations above, areas of clear need include:

- Creation of the advisory body within DINAF
- Development of a communications strategy
- Development of the Knowledge Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
- Ongoing staff development and training in general as well as in specific child protection areas
- Development of the Integrated Child Protection Policy and indicators
- Development of the models for each program area, e.g. child migration, adoption, vulnerable children's rights, and youth offenders, along with criteria, standards, guides and tools for both staff and implementing partners.

While the visit of the consultants did not specifically review DINAF work related to child labor, clearly elimination of the worst forms of child labor falls within the purview of DINAF. In fact, in discussions with the Sub Secretary of the Ministry of Labor and staff, the Ministry of Labor welcomed support from DINAF in the areas of prevention and social protection. This may be where the CLEAR II program can add value. The funder statement of work that will follow will contain more details on the role for CLEAR II and other funders.