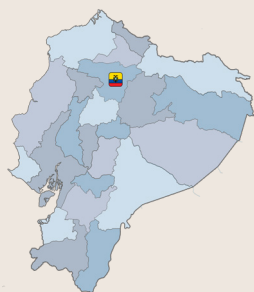




**IMPAQ**  
INTERNATIONAL

# RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL

IMPACT EVALUATION OF YOUNG POTENTIAL  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN ECUADOR



## PROGRAM NAME

Closing the Child Labor and Forced  
Labor Evidence Gaps: Impact Evaluations

Randomized Control Trial of the Young  
Potential Development Program in  
Ecuador

## EVALUATION LOCATION

Quito, Ecuador

## STUDY SAMPLE

806 adolescents, ages 15–17

## TIMELINE

October 2016 – January 2018

## FUNDER

United States Department of Labor  
(USDOL), Bureau of International Labor  
Affairs (ILAB)

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- Young Potential Development  
Program Ecuador
- Quito Secretariat of Education

## INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR

IMPAQ International, LLC. (IMPAQ)

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## BACKGROUND

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 152 million children around the world are victims of child labor; with almost half of them, 73 million, performing hazardous work daily.<sup>1</sup> In Ecuador, it is estimated that over 200,000 children 5–14 year olds were working in 2018, more than twice as many reported in 2014.<sup>2</sup> Ample evidence documents the detrimental effects of child labor on children's health, education access and attainment, and economic outcomes.<sup>3</sup> However, we still lack sufficient evidence on the types of policy interventions that are most effective in mitigating harmful practices and in eliminating child labor.

IMPAQ International worked together with the Young Potential Development (YPD) Ecuador and the Secretariat of Education in Quito (SEQ) to conduct a randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact evaluation of the YPD program during 2016–17. The key research question of the evaluation seeks to measure the impact of YPD on the likelihood of student participation in hazardous child labor (HCL). The evaluation contributes to the expansion of the evidence base on child labor interventions by investigating the role of socio-emotional skills on the program impacts on child labor and other outcomes. This summary brief presents the program, as well as the main findings of the evaluation.



## INTERVENTION

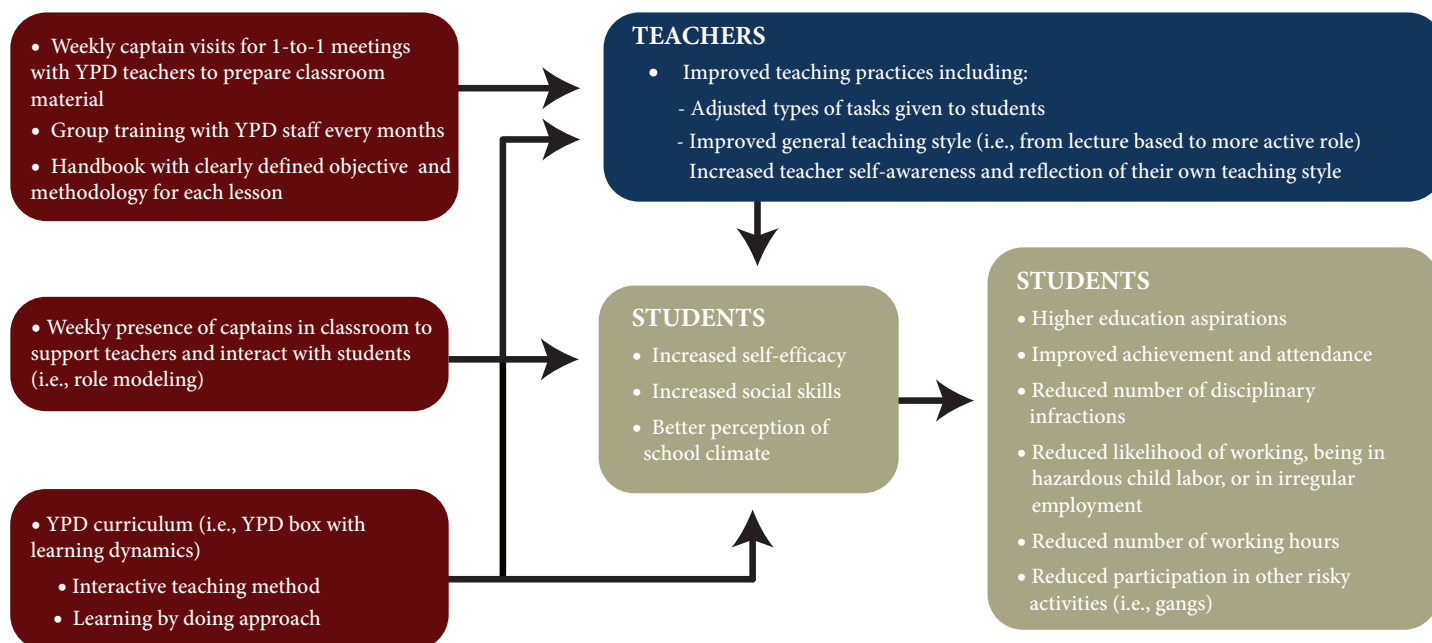
The YPD program is an add-on curriculum and professional development initiative that seeks to develop youths' interpersonal, career-oriented, and socio-emotional skills to prepare them for higher education, productive work, and entrepreneurship. The program focuses on building and sustaining productive relationships between students and teachers, and helping teachers integrate the development of student socio-emotional skills into their daily classroom practice and subject expertise. The expected outcomes are changes in socio-emotional skills, which can, in turn, lead to changes in other youths' outcomes, including labor market educational aspirations and academic outcomes.

Since 2014, the SEQ integrated the YPD program into its Ciclo Basico Acelerado (CBA) municipal initiative targeting school dropout youth, ages 15–25, with the goal to reintegrate them in the education system. These young people were often engaged with street gangs, prostitution, and drugs, activities considered among the worst forms of child labor. The CBA was designed to allow at-risk youth to catch up and complete middle school in an accelerated 11 months. Teachers selected to participate in the YPD program received professional development training and support from YPD captains throughout the school year. The YPD captains also provided in-class support to help teachers complete YPD activities with their students according to the YPD curriculum.

## PROGRAM THEORY

### YPD Activities

### Outcomes



## ? RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This evaluation addresses the following research questions.

### Confirmatory:

- What is the impact of YPD on the likelihood of student participation in HCL?

### Exploratory:

What is the impact of YPD on student:

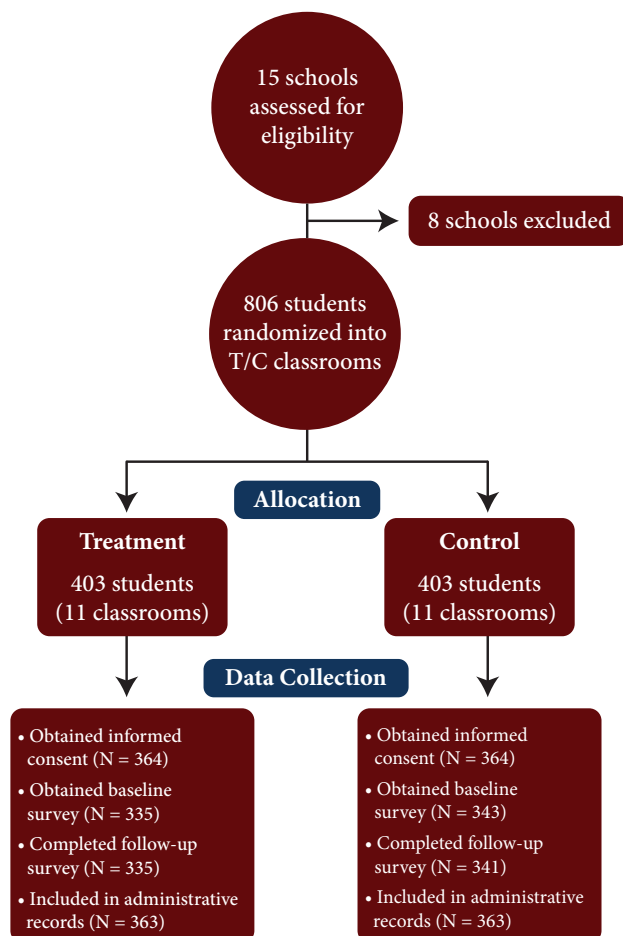
- Likelihood of working, being in irregular employment, and number of hours worked?
- Socio-emotional skills?
- Achievement, attendance, and behavior in school?
- Education and career aspirations?
- The types of activities students are involved in outside the school, including potentially risky and illicit activities?

## EVALUATION DESIGN

IMPAQ randomly assigned 806 students, ages 15 to 17, into classrooms within seven municipal schools in Quito. Treatment students were taught by a YPD-trained teacher, while control students were taught by a regular teachers.

At the end of one year, the evaluation team compared the student outcomes in treatment classrooms to those in control classrooms to measure the impact of YPD.

An implementation study complemented the impact evaluation to assess whether the program was implemented as intended and provide contextual understanding of the changes resulting from the program.



## QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE DATA

IMPAQ designed a project-specific survey questionnaire administered to the treatment and control group students at the beginning of the school year (2016) and at the end of the school year (2017). The survey included sections on student's socio-emotional skills (self-efficacy, social-skills, and perception of school climate), educational and career aspirations, as well as labor market activities and household chores.

In addition to the student survey, IMPAQ also gathered school administrative data (test scores, behavior grades and attendance) from SEQ, YPD's implementation records, as well as conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with program implementers and focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers and students after program completion.



Stakeholder  
KIIs



Teacher and  
Students FGDs



Student Survey



Administrative  
Records

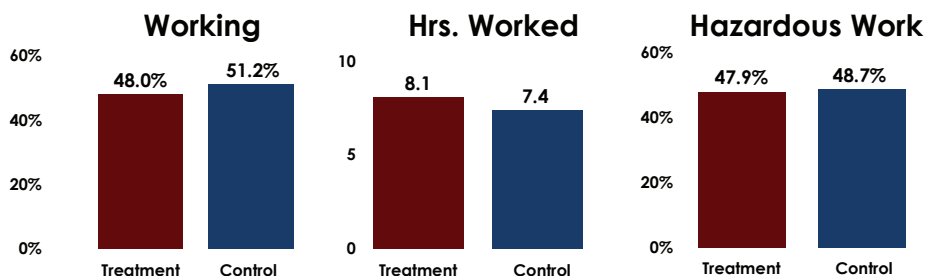


Implementation  
Tracker

## FINDINGS

### Child Labor

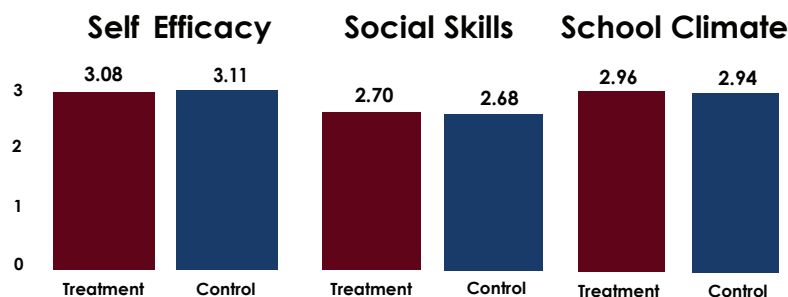
- The findings show no statistically significant effects on treatment student's likelihood of engaging in HCL, nor on the various HCL components, such as students working at night or being exposed to dangerous substances at work. We also found no statistically significant differences in the likelihood of working and number of hours worked.
- According to the logic model, the main mechanisms through which labor market outcome changes were expected to occur is through changes in students' socio-emotional skills. The next sections show that we generally found no impacts on socio-emotional skills that could translate into changes in labor outcomes.



### Socio-emotional Skills

Both treatment and control students reported similar levels on all three scales of socio-emotional skills at follow-up: self-efficacy, social-skills and perception of the school climate.

- In contrast to the small but positive results for social-skills and school climate, results were surprisingly negative for self-efficacy.
- An exploratory analysis of the data by gender revealed a statistically significant lower self-efficacy score for boys in the treatment group relative to boys in the control group.
- Overall, the results for girls and boys in all three scales were of the opposite sign. These findings provide some suggestive evidence that the socio-emotional skills of girls and boys may have been impacted differently by the intervention. However, these results need to be interpreted with caution given the small sample sizes (only 40 percent of students in the sample are female).





main goal of CBA is to reintegrate these students into the education systems, the administrative data may have been subject to “inflation” in measuring achievement, attendance, behavior, and graduation and may thus lack sufficient variation to capture meaningful differences between treatment and control students.

- The findings show no statistically significant difference in the likelihood of participating in other risky or illicit activities like being part of a gang or using drugs.

### Other Exploratory Outcomes

The effects on student’s educational aspirations, academic outcomes or avoidance of risky behavior were not statistically significant.

- The lack of effects on educational aspirations can be partly explained by the qualitative findings. Student participants in the FGDs reported that, although they wanted to continue their education, they had these aspirations before returning to school; that is, their aspirations were not a result of YPD. Instead, the YPD acted as additional support and reinforced motivation.
- The findings show no statistically significant effect on academic outcomes such as graduation, test scores, behavior marks, and attendance. This is expected since we found no effects on socio-emotional skills, which were hypothesized to drive changes in school outcomes. Furthermore, as the



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Although students perceived the YPD program as a positive experience and felt YPD helped keep them motivated to pursue their objectives, the one-year impacts suggest that the program had not generated the anticipated significant positive effects in the student outcomes of improved socio-emotional skills, school and labor outcomes, educational aspirations, and youth avoidance of other risky activities.

### Recommendations for future evaluations:

- Perform initial needs assessment with descriptive quantitative and qualitative data analysis.
- Randomize at the school level if feasible to minimize contamination.
- Include subgroup analysis by gender to further explore the initial evidence that boys and girls may be impacted differentially by the intervention.
- Measure the impacts on teacher instructional outcomes since teachers were the main vehicle to transmit the intervention to the students.

### Recommendations for program implementation:

- Restructure the teacher-training component of the intervention to provide more support before teachers are expected to implement the YPD learning dynamics with students.
- Incorporate YPD into other subjects of the school curriculum to show teachers how the YPD intervention can be applied across subjects.
- Prioritize mastery experiences that are familiar to teachers.
- Deliver the intervention directly to students as an alternative approach if teachers do not have the time to participate in additional trainings.



### References:

- <sup>1</sup> Child Labour. (n.d.). Retrieved November 27, 2019, from <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang-en/index.htm>
- <sup>2</sup> Entre 2014 y 2018, el trabajo infantil se duplicó en Ecuador. (n.d.). Retrieved December 4, 2019, from El Comercio website: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/infantil-ecuador-cifras-aumento.html>
- <sup>3</sup> Guarcello, L., Lyon, S., & Rosati, F. C. (2008). Child Labor and Education for All: An Issue Paper. The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth 1(2), 254-266