

FUNDED BY THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Independent Final/Midterm Evaluation of the Community-Based Innovations to Reduce Child Labor Through Education Project (CIRCLE) in Africa

Winrock International
Cooperative Agreement Numbers—
CIRCLE I: E-9-K-2-0048
CIRCLE II: E-9-K-4-0005



2007

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BP	Best Practice
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCEL	Committee on Children in Exploitive Labor
CCLC	Community Child Labor Committee
CHRAJ	Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CIRCLE	Community-Based Innovations to Reduce Child Labor Through Education
CLAC	Child Labor Advocacy Committee
CLASSE	Child Labor Alternatives through Sustainable Systems in Education
CLM	Child Labor Monitoring
CTA	Community/Teachers Association
CYCLE	Countering Youth and Child Labor through Education
DEO	District Education Officer
ECHOES	Empowering Cocoa Households with Opportunities and Education Solutions
EFA	Education for All
EI	Education Initiative
FSU	Family Support Unit
HQ	Headquarters
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LUTRENA	<i>Lutte contre le trafic des enfants en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre</i>
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OIC	Officer in Charge
RFP	Request for Proposals
RLM	Regional Launch Meeting
RM	Regional Manager
RSC	Regional Selection Committee
SMC	School Management Committee

TIP	Trafficking-in-Person
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPR	Technical Progress Report
UAC	Urgent Action Contract
UN	United Nations
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USDOL	U.S. Department of Labor
W/P	Withdrawn/Prevented
WACAP	West Africa Cocoa Agriculture Project
WCF	World Cocoa Foundation
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labor
WI	Winrock International

NGO Subcontractors

AJA	Association Jeunesse Actions Mali
ANPPCAN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect
APEGS	Agricultural Production Extension and General Services
CARD	Community Action for Rural Development
CRADA	Children Research for Action & Development Agency
EPAG	Environmental Protection Association of Ghana
PACF	Parent and Child Foundation
RAC	<i>Réseau d'Appui et de Conseils aux Initiatives des Artisans du Mali</i>
RADA	Rehabilitation and Development Agency
SDI	Society for Democratic Initiatives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002 Winrock International (WI) signed a five-year cooperative agreement worth US\$5 million with the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) (CIRCLE I) to implement a global Education Initiative (EI) project aimed at withdrawing and preventing children from exploitive child labor by expanding access to and improving the quality of basic education, thus supporting the four goals of the EI, which are:

1. To raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures.
2. To strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school.
3. To strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor.
4. To ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

In 2004 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supplied a further US\$500,000 to support anti-trafficking activities in Sierra Leone and WI signed a second four-year cooperative agreement with USDOL worth US\$3 million (CIRCLE II) for a second phase of the CIRCLE project.

Community-based Initiatives to Reduce Child Labor through Education (CIRCLE) aims to prevent or reduce child labor through education by identifying and promoting innovative, locally developed, and community-based pilot projects and documenting their Best Practices (BPs) and replicable aspects. In addition to contributing directly to the EI's four objectives the project has two specific purposes:

Purpose 1: Community-based educational innovations aimed at preventing child labor are developed and documented.

Purpose 2: At-risk children are prevented from child labor and educated in programs relevant to communities in which they live.

CIRCLE is implemented through a variety of subcontracts signed with national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, which design and implement projects in line with CIRCLE objectives. The evaluation reviewed and assessed the activities carried out under both Cooperative Agreements, particularly the progress of the project towards reaching its stated targets and objectives, and this report concerns the findings in the Africa region. The evaluator visited nine NGO subcontractors in Mali, Ghana, and Sierra Leone and these organizations were responsible for 13 of the 40 projects awarded in Africa. A limited e-mail survey was sent to the NGOs that could not be visited during the evaluation and their responses were integrated into the regional report.

Visits to communities where CIRCLE activities have been or are being implemented demonstrated that CIRCLE is an exciting initiative that has enabled subcontractors to respond to local needs and circumstances and enhanced the capacity and experience of national NGOs. It avoids the “one size fits all” approach of classical subcontracting, enabling national organizations to access funds for projects designed with specific communities in mind, thus creating conditions favorable for empowering both NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). The most exciting aspect of CIRCLE is the model itself and its potential for revolutionizing the relationships between communities, implementing organizations, and funding partners by facilitating a more participatory approach to project design and implementation. In traditional subcontracting and virtually all large scale development projects, there is a fairly “top down” configuration. Power and control tend to be concentrated at the top of a hierarchical management structure, with national NGOs acting principally as intermediaries between international NGOs and communities. CIRCLE succeeds in showing us how this power structure can be changed, giving people who are closer to the communities concerned more influence and opportunity to ensure that local interests and realities are considered and understood. CIRCLE points the way to how international NGOs can play an appropriate role as facilitators, capacity builders, and advisors, providing financial, technical, and administrative management support services to enable community-based initiatives to succeed.

WI developed systems and processes for disseminating requests for proposals (RFPs), subcontract selection, training and orientation of NGO subcontractors, project monitoring, reporting and administration, and the identification and documentation of BPs. The evaluation examines these often creative and original strategies and makes some recommendations based on the experiences, comments, and suggestions of a range of stakeholders. These include modifications to the selection process to ensure that all relevant information is taken into account so that subcontracts with the most potential to succeed are selected, and some ideas concerning the forthcoming Best Practices Compendium.

The subcontracts visited during the evaluation revealed a wealth of innovative and inspiring work largely carried out by committed and experienced development workers. Sierra Leone was particularly impressive due to subcontractors not only implementing several relevant and empowering projects in specific communities but also coming together to organize a national policy conference—thus enabling community advocates to be heard—and promoting networking and collaboration at a national level. This capacity to link local initiatives with national advocacy is something that the other CIRCLE countries could learn from and an aspect that future USDOL grantees need to encourage and facilitate.

Subcontracts in Sierra Leone put particular emphasis on dealing with the post-conflict environment, raising awareness of child trafficking, and implementing strategies to enable communities and law enforcement agencies to work together to monitor border crossing points. Subcontracts in Ghana and Mali were more focused on reducing child labor in agricultural and mining areas and also worked with urban apprentices and child weavers. Nearly 9,000 children were enrolled in formal or nonformal education programs across Africa, and educational quality was enhanced through improved infrastructure, curriculum development, and training for teachers and school management committees (SMCs). CBOs were established and trained to raise awareness of, recognize, and combat child labor and trafficking and the vulnerable children

registered and enrolled in education were monitored by these groups. Particularly effective strategies included implementing kids clubs and the use of peer educators to involve and mobilize young people in alerting and protecting other children. Some of these impressive young advocates attended the National Policy Conference in Sierra Leone, which took place during the evaluation.

Out of the 11 subcontracts touched by the evaluation, two provided some cause for concern. The evaluator had questions about the effectiveness of the strategies being used and the capacity and know-how of the subcontractors concerned. Some children enrolled in education programs dropped out through lack of support and numbers who remained in school said that getting enough money to buy food was their most pressing concern. In one case local children enrolled in school were replaced at work by others brought in from a neighboring region. This latter information was a revelation even to the NGO and CIRCLE has not reacted to the situation, other than acknowledging a need for more work with the employers. Since the evaluation field visits WI has been looking into the possibility of signing an Urgent Action or Commissioned Contract to deal urgently with the situation of the children enrolled in vocational training with inadequate support and the evaluator would reinforce the importance of such an initiative. The NGO concerned has also been encouraged to continue discussions with district authorities to see whether any local resources can be leveraged.

Overall the evaluation found that CIRCLE is successfully fulfilling EI objectives one and two. More networking and advocacy would enable more local initiatives to influence national policy and practice so that EI objective three could be met more effectively. Sustainability, EI objective four, has also been a challenge due to the short duration of subcontracts and the lack of income-generating or microfinance strategies to help families replace income lost when child laborers are enrolled in school. CIRCLE is, however, successfully fulfilling both its purposes and will culminate in the production of the Best Practices Compendium that will share innovations and ideas with a broad cross section of NGOs, CBOs, and others concerned with combating child labor through education.

The principal recommendations of the evaluation of CIRCLE in Africa are:

- Subcontractors in the same country should be encouraged to develop networking mechanisms, share experiences, and work together on advocacy and policy issues at national/regional level, as this will enhance the impact of local initiatives. WI and other USDOL grantees should play a greater role in facilitating and supporting this process thus encouraging shared learning between subcontractors, statutory bodies, national and international NGOs, and other practitioners in a given country or region.
- Subcontracts need to be of long enough duration to enable community ownership and CBO competence to develop and take root (a minimum of two years is proposed). Grantees need to take this into account when deciding the parameters for Requests for Proposals and subcontractors need to tailor their proposals to the resources available and avoid being over ambitious.

- Links to income generation, microfinance, or other strategies to enable families to support the cost of education and replace income lost when child laborers are enrolled in school should be included in all projects unless subcontractors can justify why this is not necessary in a particular situation.
- WI should do everything within its power to enable the implementation of an Urgent Action or Commissioned Contract to deal urgently with the situation of the children enrolled in vocational training with inadequate support to enable them to complete the course in Ghana.
- All available information concerning proposals for subcontracts should be made available to regional selection committee members, including information about implementation of previous subcontracts and any advice that regional office staff can offer based on their knowledge and experience of either the subcontractor or the proposed activities.
- USDOL should consider funding a new CIRCLE-type project that will enable subcontractors to develop further some of the innovations and BPs identified. This new project might be widened to include several grantees to allow implementation of the CIRCLE model with variations in different regions, thus continuing to refine the model and test some of the recommendations made by the evaluation.

This report describes in detail the evaluation of the CIRCLE project in Africa that took place during April and May 2007. The report was prepared by Macro International Inc., according to guidelines prescribed by USDOL, Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT). The evaluation was conducted and documented by Sue Upton, an independent development consultant, in collaboration with USDOL/OCFT staff, members of the project team, and stakeholders in Mali, Sierra Leone, and Ghana.

I PROJECT BACKGROUND

Since 1995, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has received over US\$470 million from Congress to address international child labor issues, which has been administered by its Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB). Within ILAB the Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) supports U.S. child labor policy principally through the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC), and its own Child Labor Education Initiative (EI).

The EI nurtures the development, health, safety, and enhanced future employability of children around the world by increasing access to basic education for children removed from child labor or at risk of entering it. Eliminating child labor depends in part on improving access to, quality of, and relevance of education. Without improving educational quality and relevance, children withdrawn from child labor may not have viable alternatives and may return to work or resort to other hazardous, unhealthy means of subsistence.

In July 2002 Winrock International (WI) signed a five-year cooperative agreement worth US\$5 million with USDOL (CIRCLE I) to implement a global EI project aimed at withdrawing and preventing children from exploitive child labor by expanding access to and improving the quality of basic education and supporting the four goals of the Education Initiative, which are:

1. To raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures.
2. To strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school.
3. To strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor.
4. To ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

US\$750,000 was set aside for a two-year pilot project in West Africa, Child Labor Alternatives through Sustainable Systems in Education (CLASSE), which has been evaluated elsewhere and is not part of this evaluation. In 2004 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supplied a further US\$500,000 to support anti-trafficking activities in Sierra Leone as part of the President's Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Persons and WI signed a second four-year cooperative agreement with USDOL worth US\$3 million (CIRCLE II) for a second phase of the CIRCLE project.

II PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The CIRCLE project aims to prevent or reduce child labor through education¹ by identifying and promoting innovative, locally developed, and community-based pilot projects and documenting their Best Practices (BPs) and replicable aspects. CIRCLE project activities directly contributed to the EI's four objectives and the two specific project purposes identified by WI:

Purpose 1: Community-based educational innovations aimed at preventing child labor are developed and documented.

Purpose 2: At-risk children are prevented from child labor and educated in programs relevant to communities in which they live.

CIRCLE is implemented through a variety of subcontracts signed with national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (and one in Albania), which design and implement projects in line with CIRCLE objectives. The WI office in Arlington coordinates the project through regional field offices on three continents:

Table 1: Countries Managed by WI Regional Offices

WI Regional Offices	Countries Managed from Each Office
Africa—Bamako, Mali	Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Albania
South Asia—Kathmandu, Nepal	Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan
Southeast Asia—Manila, Philippines	Cambodia, Philippines, Vietnam
Latin America—Salvador, Brazil	Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru

A total of 1,200 proposals were submitted for funding by NGOs in response to five solicitations (three global and two for Sierra Leone). Regional Selection Committees (RSCs) made up of specialists in relevant fields worked on a voluntary basis to review the proposals and make funding recommendations for small, medium, and large awards, Urgent Action Contracts (UACs) for small amounts addressing an immediate need and Commissioned Contracts. Individual project funding ranged from US\$9,000 to US\$113,000 and the period of intervention from 6 to 24 months. Regional Launch Meetings (RLMs) on each continent brought successful NGO subcontractors together for orientation and training in CIRCLE systems.

By May 2007, 101 NGO projects had been funded in 23 countries: 42 in Asia, 40 in Africa, 18 in Latin America, and one in Albania. 23,000 children had benefited from educational opportunities as a result of CIRCLE initiatives and thousands of other adults and children had participated in awareness raising, advocacy, and training activities.

¹ Education, for this purpose, includes both educating the public through information campaigns and targeted instruction, such as traditional classroom education, vocational or alternative education, or teacher training (CIRCLE I ProDoc).

As this vast and complex project draws to a close,² the emphasis is increasingly on the identification and documentation of BPs. WI has developed a process of peer reviews of NGO projects on the basis of six criteria: Effectiveness, Replicability, Sustainability, Innovation, Educational Relevance, and Stakeholder Involvement. The BP review process includes 73 outside evaluators and 22 WI staff around the world. Post-evaluation summaries of individual projects will inform the BP document that is due to be completed near the end of 2007.

Other aspects of CIRCLE include networking through the WI website (<http://circle.winrock.org>), spotlight stories from each NGO, and a series of newsletters in several languages. Capacity building has enabled NGOs to cope with CIRCLE financial and administration systems, proposal development, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements. The development of strategies for the sustainability of project initiatives has been encouraged, and site visits from WI personnel at all levels have supported and monitored project implementation.

² CIRCLE I in December 2007, as a result of a project extension approved by USDOL, and CIRCLE II in April 2008.

III EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

CIRCLE I started in July 2002 and is due for final evaluation in 2007. CIRCLE II started in April 2004 and is due for a midterm evaluation in 2007, so the current evaluation covers both requirements. The evaluation reviews and assesses the activities carried out under the USDOL cooperative agreements with WI, particularly the progress of the project towards reaching its stated targets and objectives. Taking into consideration all the activities implemented over the life of the project, the evaluation addresses issues of project design, implementation, lessons learned, reliability, and recommendations for future projects. The evaluation also aims to:

1. Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved.
2. Assist OCFT to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of EI projects within the broad OCFT technical cooperation program framework.
3. Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved.
4. Assess progress in terms of children's working and educational status (i.e., withdrawal and prevention from the worst forms of child labor; enrollment, retention, completion of educational programs).

The evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations are grouped under the five major headings below. Findings are presented according to the specific questions raised in the USDOL Terms of Reference (TOR, see Annex D).

1. **Overall Project Design/Implementation** covers how the project fits with EI objectives, within the WI portfolio, and within national government child labor and education policies and practice. Initial implementation, monitoring, and sustainability strategies are analyzed in the light of experience and progress towards project objectives assessed. The concepts of innovation and BP—key aspects of CIRCLE—are also reviewed.
2. **Subcontract Design/Implementation** examines NGO subcontractors' progress towards meeting the goals of their individual projects and the degree of satisfaction and ownership of activities in the communities concerned. The measurement of USDOL's common indicators is assessed, as is the effectiveness of the selection process and relevance and innovation of subcontract design.
3. **Partnership and Coordination** looks at how WI and subcontracting NGOs have met the challenges of working together and networking at national and international levels, particularly in relation to national (and local) child labor and education policies and practice. The functioning of RSCs is examined, as well as any links with other U.S.-funded child labor initiatives in the project zone.

4. **Management and Budget** assesses how WI has administered technical and financial aspects of project implementation by examining the systems and processes that have been put in place and the level of NGO satisfaction with the orientation, training, and support that they have received.
5. **Sustainability and Impact** examines to what degree CIRCLE-initiated education strategies to prevent and reduce child labor are continuing/may continue after the end of each subcontract and their impact in target communities. Potential for replication or scale-up is assessed, as is the possible tradeoff between short-term projects fostering innovation versus longer-term projects focusing on sustainability. This section will also examine the future potential of the BPs document.

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to learn what is or is not working with the project, which may have implications for the project itself or for the OCFT program as a whole. The evaluation is an objective inquiry that can facilitate any corrective action and encourage the capitalization and reinforcement of successful aspects of the project. Ultimately, the purpose is to assure that children's needs are being met through project interventions and that the best possible use is made of emerging BPs. It is a learning process above all.

IV EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was carried out by three evaluators, one each for Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This document is one of three regional reports which are summarized in a global analysis and synthesis of regional findings. The key stages of the evaluation methodology are outlined below:

- Prior to fieldwork, a **desk review** of key project documents was carried out (see Annex B);
- **Countries and projects to be visited were selected** with input from WI concerning practical considerations such as location and distance. Mali was selected because it is home to the Africa WI office, Sierra Leone because it received significant funding from the President's Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and Ghana because it is an example of a country where WI does not have an office. The regional evaluator visited or talked to 19 members of staff from eight NGOs that were responsible for 13 of the 40 projects awarded in Africa. Visits to 19 project sites took place. Within each country, communities to be visited were selected to include both active projects and those that have finished, CIRCLE I and CIRCLE II projects, and awards of varying amounts (see Annex E for more detail).
- **Interviews in the U.S.:** Prior to the regional field visits in May, the three evaluators came together in Washington and met with WI Headquarters (HQ) staff and past/present Project Managers at USDOL. They also interviewed the consultant developing the BP document and briefly visited a child labor conference on Capitol Hill.³ The visit also allowed the evaluation team to finalize all data collection instruments and ensure coherence in its approach across regions.
- **Community visits:** In the communities that she visited the evaluator facilitated semistructured interviews with small groups of boys and girls, parents, local leaders, and teachers, including school management committees, parents' associations, and other relevant community groups, to discuss child labor and education, the activities initiated by the project, and visions of the future. This process enabled the evaluator to assess the degree of community involvement and ownership of project activities, their level of satisfaction concerning project achievements, and approaches and attitudes concerning education and child labor. Whenever possible project activities were visited in order to observe the gender and general age of participants, the atmosphere and dynamics between staff and young people, the quality and content of the activity they were engaged in, the physical environment, materials and facilities available (i.e., whether the activity seemed appropriate to meet the objectives for which it was designed). Subcontractor personnel acted as interpreters for community interviews. The following table gives the

³ The event brought together former child laborers from Colombia, Ghana, and India with U.S. high school students as part of the Global Campaign for Education's annual week of action.

numbers of boys, girls, men, and women who took part in discussions at community level during the evaluation.

Table 2: Number of Participants in Discussions at the Community Level, by Gender

Children in project	111 boys (43 in one project) and 68 girls
Parents/community members	134 men and 92 women
Teachers	26 men and 6 women
Leaders	40 men and 7 women

Table 3: NGO Subcontractors, Their Projects, and Sites Visited

Country	NGO/Locations Visited	CIRCLE Projects Implemented By Each NGO
Mali	AJA Baco Djicoroni and Banconi (Bamako)	Supporting Child Apprentices in Bamako—Communes II&VI*
	RAC Linguekoto and Sansanto (Kenièba)	Strengthening Education Systems: Child Handicraft apprentices Integrated Project to Reduce Child Labor and Increase Education in Kenièba*
Sierra Leone	RADA Ghon/Liberian border	Strengthening Education Systems: Rural child labor* Borderline Community Anti-Child Trafficking Awareness Creation and Mobilization Project* Community based Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Raising Project
	Freetown	Trafficking Policy Workshop* (with CARD and APEGS)
	CARD Segbewema Gorahun and Gegbewema	Basic Education and vocational skills training for marginalized children* Community Awareness Raising to Enforce the Child Labor/Anti-Trafficking Act*
Ghana	PACF, Kokobriety, near Accra	Strengthening Education Systems: Children at risk of trafficking*
	CRADA: Nyinahin and Aduprie (Atwima Mponua District) Bonkorkor (BAK District)	Strengthening Education Systems: Young Children on and/or of the Street, Orphans & Vulnerable Children*
	EPAG: Kwahu, Asubinga and Brofoyedu (Amansie West District)	Raise Awareness: working children*
	ANPPCAN Krofurom (BAK District), Adanwomase (Kwabre District) Atwede (Amansie West District)	Addressing Child Labor in 4 Districts of the Ashanti Region of Ghana*

* Project sites visited.

- **Interviews with subcontractors:** For each project visited, the evaluator spoke with the NGO staff responsible for the project either individually or in small groups concerning project design, implementation, monitoring and sustainability, the partnership with WI, and the local and national child labor and education context. Any other CIRCLE projects implemented by the same NGO were also discussed.
- **Interviews at national level:** Representatives of government, United Nations (UN) agencies, USAID, US Embassies, and any international NGOs who had collaborated on the project were interviewed to assess the degree to which CIRCLE activities are embedded in or encouraging a national approach to Education for All (EFA) and reduced child labor, progress made on advocacy and relevant local/regional/national policies, and to what degree CIRCLE has successfully networked and collaborated with others working for similar objectives, particularly those using U.S. funds.
- **Interviews at a regional level:** In-depth interviews were conducted with key WI staff in each regional office concerning all aspects of project design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, management, and sustainability. The evaluator also met with members of the RSCs to ask their opinion about the processes involved in selection and BP evaluation.⁴
- **Stakeholders' meetings and debriefs:** The evaluator facilitated stakeholders' meetings in Mali, Ghana, and Sierra Leone to bring together as broad a range of actors as possible who are or have been involved with CIRCLE and/or education and/or child labor. This enabled the evaluator to verify her understanding of CIRCLE projects at the end of the field visits in each country and to facilitate discussion about the broader issues of education and child labor and the potential for ongoing activities in the country concerned. At the end of visits to subcontractors who did not have the opportunity to attend a stakeholders' meeting, the evaluator held a debrief session outlining her general observations during the field visits and asking participants to respond, thus facilitating some discussion about the findings and future possibilities.
- **E-mail survey:** A limited e-mail survey of the views and perspectives of NGO subcontractors which the evaluator was not able to visit consisted of questions concerning issues such as innovation, capacity building, project sustainability, the strengths and challenges of the overall experience of working with WI, and suggestions for the future. Of the 21 e-mails sent out in Africa, five bounced back and seven NGOs responded. The other nine failed to reply. Responses are integrated into the report as they relate to the questions in the TOR and other issues arising during the evaluation. Since the survey was confidential in order to encourage respondents to raise any issues of concern, quotes from replies are not directly attributed to the NGO concerned.

⁴ See Annex A for details of people interviewed.

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V FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section begins with an overview of each subcontract visited during the evaluation. Findings under each of the five headings below will draw and expand on these experiences.

5.1 MALI

Association Jeunesse Actions Mali (AJA) worked with apprentices in two communes of Bamako. Twenty boys aged between 9 and 14 years were withdrawn from apprenticeships and enrolled in school, and 93 apprenticed boys from 15 to 18 years old attended specially-developed basic education courses including literacy and HIV/AIDS awareness. Additionally, they received safety equipment and both the apprentices and their employers received training concerning safety at work and children's rights. As a result, apprentices now work shorter hours under safer conditions and are able to qualify for professional training courses that were previously inaccessible. AJA is advocating for easier and cheaper acquisition of birth certificates on behalf of these young people. This project started in June 2006 and ends in June 2007 with a budget of US\$24,450.

Réseau d'Appui et de Conseils aux Initiatives des Artisans du Mali (RAC) is the first NGO to work in several remote villages around Kenièba in the southwest corner of Mali, an area where traditional gold mining is the principal activity for whole communities. Two hundred and four children have been enrolled in primary school as a result of project activities and a further 125 older children at risk have been identified and channeled towards nonformal education opportunities provided by other organizations. The project has contributed to improving education quality and access through assisting the construction and equipment of eight classrooms built using local materials, training for eight teachers, help to set up children's governments in schools, and the renewal and training of school management committees. RAC is also advocating for children's right to an affordable birth certificate. They are working to ensure the sustainability of their initiative through supporting local authorities in negotiations with a local mining company for provision of ongoing resources for community development. This project started in July 2006 and will end in September 2007, with a budget of US\$60,000.

5.2 SIERRA LEONE

Rehabilitation and Development Agency (RADA) has initiated four subcontracts, one of which was a commissioned contract to coordinate the organization of a national policy conference on child trafficking that took place May 25–26, 2007 with a budget of US\$10,000.

The first subcontract was implemented in Kemokai section of Sorogbema chiefdom, adjacent to the Mano river bridge linking Sierra Leone with Liberia. One hundred thirty-nine of the 150 children enrolled have been maintained in school, of which 58 were children at risk and 81 were child laborers. They included children traumatized by experiences of prostitution, trafficking, being child combatants, and family displacement. RADA constructed and equipped the Vanjama community school (with financial assistance from KerkInActie Netherlands) and six potential teachers were identified from within the community and trained in teaching and

counseling to enable them to meet the special needs of the children concerned. The School Management Committee (SMC) and Community/Teachers Association (CTA) were established and trained and anti-child labor clubs for both adults and children were set up in six schools. Awareness-raising was promoted through training 60 kids' club members as peer educators and 60 adult club members in advocacy. This project ran from May 2005 to August 2006 with a budget of US\$71,000.

The second subcontract built on the first, providing awareness-raising and training on trafficking for 11 communities of Sorogbema chiefdom. An additional 46 children were enrolled in school (41 withdrawn and 5 prevented) and activities concentrated on combating cross border child trafficking with Liberia. An Advocacy Committee was set up to coordinate anti-trafficking activities of kids' and parents' clubs, which monitor children in the presence of strangers and the task force, which monitors border crossing points. All report to the advocacy committee, which liaises with local authorities and the police as appropriate. This project ran from June 2006 to April 2007 with a budget of US\$25,652.

The final subcontract (another Commissioned Contract), "Community-based Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Raising Project," runs from April to July 2007 with a budget of US\$15,000. It was just getting underway at the time of the evaluation.

Community Action for Rural Development (CARD) carried out two subcontracts. The first provided basic education and vocational skills training for marginalized children in Segbewema. Twenty-four girls and 16 boys including ex-child combatants, trafficked children, girl mothers, and school dropouts completed specially designed courses in basic education followed by tailoring, weaving, gara tie and die or soap making, and business management. Training in human rights and HIV/AIDS was also included. The project recruited and trained foster carers to enable the trainees to lodge near the center and day carers were also identified and trained to look after the young children of girl mothers. Thirteen months after the end of the project the evaluator visited half the trainees, who were all managing to make a living through the skills they had learned, either as employees or in their own enterprises. It was reported that the others were also achieving degrees of success in other towns and villages. The project ran from May 2005 to March 2006 with a budget of US\$45,000.

The second subcontract concerned raising awareness to enforce the 2005 Anti-Human Trafficking Act in 29 communities of Tunkia Chiefdom. Activities included training for 180 community authorities and law enforcement agents, 180 peer educators, and 25 focal point teachers. In addition, CARD supported the enrolment of working/trafficked children (17 boys and 23 girls) in primary schools of their choice and organized radio and community discussions on child labor and the trafficking act. A network of the trained groups implements systems to monitor child movement and border crossing points and a series of local bylaws were introduced. The project ran from June 2006 to March 2007 with a budget of US\$24,352.

5.3 GHANA

African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) is a well-established, Pan-African child rights organization with chapters in 21 African countries. Chapters in both Kenya and Ghana have implemented CIRCLE subcontracts. The Kenya Chapter organized a Conference on Child Trafficking in August 2006 where they talked about their CIRCLE initiative, and the informative conference report is available online.⁵ Their subcontract was one of the few that addressed national policy/infrastructure issues with regard to child labor. ANPPCAN Ghana is one of the more recently established chapters and the CIRCLE subcontract was one of their first initiatives. They implemented a subcontract addressing child labor in four districts of the Ashanti Region. Two hundred and four children were withdrawn or prevented (W/P) from child labor and enrolled in school and 16 child labor youth clubs were established, with computer training provided for 25 children. Sixteen community and four district Child Labor Advocacy Committees (CLACs) were set up and trained and the project also supported business plan preparation for 18 local people. The project ran from July 2006 to April 2007 and had a budget of US\$31,000.

Children Research for Action & Development Agency's (CRADA) subcontract aimed to strengthen education systems and targeted vulnerable children. One hundred and fifty-four children were W/P from child labor and enrolled in school and 21 older children were sent to government-run vocational training centers. Fourteen Committees on Children in Exploitive Labor (CCEL) and 14 Child Dignity Clubs were established covering 16 communities. CRADA also attempted to initiate complementary activities such as soya bean production in project communities in response to expressed needs, and provision of computers to schools and youth centers. This project ran from July 2005 to December 2006 with a budget of US\$43,712.

Environmental Protection Association of Ghana (EPAG) carried out awareness-raising in 10 communities of Amansi West District of the Ashanti Region and supported the enrolment of 30 children in school in five communities where Community Child Labor Committees (CCLCs) were established. Fifty people involved in the project were trained in identifying hazardous work and strategies for eliminating child labor. The project ran from May to November 2005 with a budget of US\$9,000.

Parent and Child Foundation (PACF) implemented two subcontracts in Kokrobitey, a fishing community just outside Accra, the first being a short UAC in 2004 with a budget of US\$3,000, which was used to improve the school building; and a second that registered 163 children at risk and supported school enrollment for 40 of them (32 orphans, 3 trafficked, and 5 from female-headed households). Thirty-one of these were in attendance when the evaluator visited the school 21 months after the end of the project, three had moved to another community, and the remaining six attended less regularly. Awareness-raising concerning the importance of basic education, the need for the teachers to show interest in the children and parents to ensure that their children remain in school targeted parents; teachers; and school, administrative, and traditional

⁵ http://www.anppcan.org/new/_drop%20in/ANPPCAN%20Report%20of%20the%20Conference%20on%20Child%20Trafficking.pdf

authorities; and children. The activity clearly had its effect, as demonstrated by a lively community meeting during the evaluation visit. The project ran from May 2005 to August 2005 with a budget of US\$10,000.

5.4 OVERALL PROJECT DESIGN/IMPLEMENTATION

5.4.1 Findings

Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR

- 1. Even though CIRCLE's goals are closely associated with the four EI goals, does the project design seem to be adequately supporting the four EI goals? If not, which ones are not being supported and why not?*

Each NGO subcontractor was asked to indicate which EI goal its project would primarily aim to address. The breakdown of the 40 African subcontracts shows that 18 aimed to reinforce educational systems, 18 focused principally on awareness-raising, and only one sought to strengthen national policy. Three identified sustainability as their primary aim but this was also a crosscutting objective for all projects. Most projects, while identifying a primary EI objective, also contributed to others through their activities. The project design adequately supported the EI goals of awareness raising, educational strengthening, and sustainability, whereas strengthening national institutions and policy was not covered as well.

The reason that NGO subcontractors did not identify national level advocacy as their primary objective is that their efforts were concentrated at community level, as CIRCLE specified that projects should be “community based.” There are examples of subcontract activities resulting in local bylaws regulating child movement, school attendance, and child labor, but only isolated attempts to influence directly national policy. One subcontract that did was the National Policy Conference in Sierra Leone on the theme, “Child trafficking and exploitive labor—the need for a coordinated approach within the context of the National Plan of Action,” which was organized and funded through a CIRCLE Commissioned Contract and brought together local and national stakeholders to improve and facilitate implementation of the Human Trafficking Act of 2005.

But some subcontractors ensured that their community level research contributed to national policy:

“The knowledge, attitude, and perception research that we carried out has been shared with some partners working towards elimination of child labor, including the Ministry of Labor. The ministry is one of the stakeholders who are actively involved in national policies on child labor and education and therefore some of the findings will be used in the upcoming draft bill to address child labor in Kenya.”

From the e-mail survey of subcontractors not visited by the evaluation

While it was difficult for subcontractors to cover EI Goal 3 to the same degree as the other EI objectives, this was not identified as a role for WI's regional hub, which might have been in a better position to link local CIRCLE activities to the national context. Although appropriate ministries were invited to key events, regional staff could have been more proactive in keeping them informed and developing strategies to ensure that subcontractors were aware of national policies and practice. If contact between subcontractors, appropriate ministries, and others working on related issues in the same countries had been facilitated and encouraged, it would have helped CIRCLE's local experiences to feed into and influence national policy and networking.

2. *Is the project on track in terms of meeting its stated purpose and outputs in the project documents? If not, what seem to be the factors contributing to delays?*

The project is largely on track in terms of meeting its two stated purposes. First, community-based educational innovations aimed at preventing child labor are being developed and documented through spotlight stories (68 of the predicted 78 are either finished or underway) and the BPs document is in progress and due for completion by September 2007. Secondly, at-risk children are being prevented from child labor and educated in programs relevant to communities in which they live. By March 2007 CIRCLE had reported 23,383 children W/P from exploitive work and enrolled in education across the world and 8,941 of these were in Africa. Field visits, subcontractors' progress reports, photos, and spotlight stories bear witness to enthusiasm at community level for the education programs concerned. In Africa 75 percent of subcontractors met or surpassed their targets with regard to the number of children educated, resulting in the overall enrolment of 103 percent of the total number targeted in subcontract project documents.

CIRCLE is also on track with regard to the outputs identified in the project logframe:

1. Subcontracts in Africa have largely been implemented as planned. Nineteen were completed on time; 11 requested and received no-cost extensions of two to six months to allow them to complete their activities; three were suspended, canceled or incomplete⁶ due to financial and/ or communication difficulties; and seven ongoing projects are in line to complete on time. Some subcontracts have taken slightly longer than planned, sometimes due to late reporting leading to late arrival of funds or activities taking longer than expected. In March 2007, 92 percent of all subcontracts had been implemented as planned (91 percent in Africa).
2. The March 2007 TPR reports 84 percent of community-based organizations (CBOs) having increased capacity to manage and report on educational innovations, against a targeted 80 percent. It is not clear exactly how this has been calculated, as regional offices did not systematically report on the contributing criteria, but it is in line with evaluation findings in the field, where most subcontractors said that WI helped them to understand CIRCLE indicators and reporting procedures, which had built their overall

⁶ African Centre for Human Development in Ghana—subcontract cancelled November 2005; Students for Rural Youth in Development Club in Malawi—subcontract suspended; Nkhoma Synod HIV/AIDS Community Programme in Malawi—subcontract incomplete, ended April 2006.

capacity as an organization. It should be pointed out that subcontractors are national NGOs rather than CBOs, although they initiate community-based projects.

3. *Were the project purpose and outputs realistic?*

Broadly speaking, the project purposes and outputs were realistic, but in a project such as CIRCLE they are necessarily fairly general since the details of the subcontracts are not known when the project document is being written. In addition to reporting progress towards CIRCLE's stated purposes and outputs, WI attempts to measure the project's overall contribution to each EI objective by assigning each subcontract's individual indicators to the most appropriate EI objective. Similar objectives from different projects are combined so that overall results from three continents roll up in an attempt to give a meaningful indication of CIRCLE's global contribution to the indicator concerned. So, for example, we get an indicator in the TPR reports that tells us that a total of 65 infrastructure improvements appeared in various subcontract plans across the world and up until March 2007, 101 such improvements had been completed.

We have no idea if these improvements represent new schools or new toilet blocks or how, in this case, subcontractors have managed to exceed the target so greatly. This is but one example of 17 such indicators, some of which are considerably more nebulous. While WI has made creative efforts to represent aspects of CIRCLE that are not taken into account through other indicators, perhaps more qualitative reporting would be more informative concerning much of this information.

Table 4: Targeted and Actual Project Performance, by Indicator

EI Objective 2

Indicators	Entire Project Target	Project Period 9/2006–3/2007	Actual Project Total to Date (excluding present documentation period)
1. Number of infrastructure improvements	65	13	88
2. Number of Parent Teacher Associations formed	8	34	32
3. Number of vocational courses offered	42	20	56
4. Number of teachers/school administrators trained in improved teaching methods/school management/child labor	267	541	1,254
5. Improved curriculum modules developed or adapted	33	35	153
6. Monetary value of national resources leveraged or leveraged to improve and expand education infrastructure (estimated monetary value if in kind)	n/a	US\$0	US\$1,552

EI Objective 1

Indicators	Entire Project Target	Project Period 9/2006–3/2007	Actual Project Total to Date (excluding present documentation period)
1. Number of individuals receiving training or sensitization on child labor and education	17,364	5,232	60,489
2. Number of media or public awareness materials produced-brochures, radio programs, etc.	29,779	514	52,121
3. Number of people reached through radio or TV programs	1,510	55 450	26,735
4. Number of people reporting an increase in child labor awareness	38,631	9 822	37,760
5. Number people reached by public awareness campaigns/theaters/rallies	81,206	51,622	601,760
6. Increased enrollment (withdrawal/prevention) because of awareness (non-direct beneficiaries)	3,861	91	19,032

EI Objective 3

Indicators	Entire Project Target	Project Period 9/2006–3/2007	Actual Project Total to Date (excluding present documentation period)
1. Number of stakeholders meeting to discuss child labor policies and issues affecting child labor/policy makers/school management	5,051	519	3,749
2. Number of individual new birth registrations for school enrollment (withdrawal/ prevention)	4,000	287	8,545

EI Objective 4

Indicators	Entire Project Target	Project Period 9/2006–3/2007	Actual Project Total to Date (excluding present documentation period)
1. Number of action plans for project or community	20	64	503
2. Number of civil society and private organizations taking up issues to reduce child labor	3,094	499	2,954
3. Number of blockades removed in policy	14	4	48

One observation is that in nearly all cases, the achievements vastly outstrip the targets, which either poses questions about the effectiveness of subcontract planning and budgeting or suggests enormous creativity in the face of need—or a mixture of the two. While exceeding targets may be a great achievement for the project, the degree indicated by CIRCLE reporting suggests that many initial targets were set too low and that more information or planning was needed in the beginning phase of the project to assist subcontractors in designing more realistic targets.

4. Is the project able to accurately measure results in terms of USDOL common indicators (withdrawal, prevention, capacity building)? If not, why not?

Data before August 2005 is not disaggregated by gender or W/P because at the time of reporting, subcontractors did not report their data in this structure and many of the projects closed out before USDOL introduced this reporting format. When the format changed, CIRCLE established reporting systems for W/P and while one case of children withdrawn being reported as prevented and some confusion over definitions came to light during the evaluation, the majority of subcontractors had a reasonably good understanding of how to report on the indicators. The availability of a French translation was a great help to those working in francophone countries. When subcontractor reports are received the regional team has the chance to verify that children are being classified in a way that is consistent with the narrative report and their knowledge of project activities, so errors or misunderstandings can be corrected before figures are forwarded to the head office in the U.S. With so many diverse projects, data collection is bound to be complex but mistakes have been corrected as subcontractors understand better the indicator definitions and there is every reason to believe that the reported results are an accurate representation of what is happening on the ground.

CIRCLE report formats ask subcontractors to report on each element identified as an indicator of national capacity building so the project as a whole is in a good position to accurately report on this common indicator.

5. Did USDOL technical assistance on project design and monitoring help the project staff enough to warrant its cost and continued implementation in future projects?

WI HQ appreciated the Management Systems International workshop, but the resulting logframe focuses solely on EI Goal 2, “To strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school,” without specific reference to the other three EI goals even though they are stated as project objectives in the project document. This makes it difficult to capture certain aspects of project activities within this format and resulted in the necessity to develop other indicators outside the logframe, which rather defeats its purpose. To some extent, the Juarez & Associates workshop on the USDOL common indicators was superseded, as some of the definitions changed during the course of the project. In spite of these issues, the technical assistance workshops provide an opportunity for the staff to develop and refine important aspects of the project with some outside assistance and those who attended felt they warrant continued implementation for future projects. Unfortunately, CIRCLE regional teams did not participate, probably due to cost and logistics.

6. *Can increased educational quality be measured within the project framework? What has been its impact, if any, on project common indicators (withdrawal and prevention of children from child labor)?*

The only mechanism for measuring educational quality within the overall project framework is the rolled-up subcontract indicators mentioned above. These give overall figures for:

- The number of infrastructure improvements
- The number of CTAs established
- The number of teachers and SMCs trained
- The number of improved curriculum modules developed

There was a wide variation in the emphasis given to the quality of the education on offer within the individual subcontracts visited during the evaluation. CARD and RADA of Sierra Leone probably top the list for attention to quality. The community school that RADA developed in Ghon, on the Liberian border, offers not only well-equipped classrooms and a pleasant learning environment, but also teachers trained to meet the special needs of the children they work with. Extracurricular activities, counseling, and peer education have developed the self confidence of traumatized children to the extent that they can express themselves in public, formulate their hopes, influence their peers and the wider community, and plan for the future. The only aspect that RADA has not managed to overcome is the loss of the only female teacher, reducing the availability of female role models, which may have implications for girls attending the school after the project ends. RADA said the local education authority, which is in the process of taking responsibility for the school, often takes visitors to see the school and takes credit for its achievements.

CARD provided vocational training for a similar, but older group of young people and went to exceptional lengths to provide an environment conducive to learning. They provided lodging, daycare for babies and toddlers, and food and materials for the trainees, in addition to developing a curriculum tailored to the needs of the group concerned. This holistic approach paid off in that virtually all of the ex-trainees are now making a living from the trades they learned in spite of facing various challenges and constraints.

At the other end of the scale some children and young people enrolled in school and vocational training through CRADA's subcontract in Ghana said that they were finding it difficult to get enough to eat. On several site visits this emerged as a major preoccupation as their families no longer benefit from their income and have additional expenses linked to supporting them in education. Children were in schools where there was no lunch provision and often did not eat breakfast before leaving home to walk several miles to school. A small child recounted how he left home at 7:00 a.m. after doing household chores, arrived in school around 9:30 a.m., and left again at 1:30 p.m. to go home to eat, do more chores, and any homework before going to bed. The school itself was built of bamboo and mud in an isolated location where it was hard to attract and maintain teachers. There were virtually no teaching or learning materials in evidence, other

than a blackboard, and the quality of the education offered is questionable. Several of the older children had dropped out of vocational training due to an inability to support themselves and a lack of support from anywhere else. CRADA is one of the subcontractors that exceeded their targets with regard to the number of children enrolled in education (175, against the targeted 100) and in retrospect it may have been better for the children concerned if CRADA had put more emphasis on quality and less on access.

The quality of education has a greater impact on retention and completion than on enrolment because once children are in an education program they are more likely to stay if it is meeting their needs and both they and their parents sense they are making progress. Withdrawal and prevention are initially more related to access to education because once parents decide they want education for their children, their concern is to find a place and they are often not in a good position to judge either the quality of what is on offer or to have any alternative to choose from.

To increase the impact and more effectively assess the quality of education interventions, future CIRCLE-type projects could develop mechanisms that go beyond the use of broad quantitative indicators. Orientation for such projects would include discussion and analysis of educational quality and the development of common project criteria and categories. For example infrastructure improvements could be subdivided into toilets (particularly important for girls), classrooms, and teacher accommodation/administrative blocks and then rolled up indicators would be more informative. The number of functional CTAs/SMCs could be measured, with agreed criteria for functionality and the introduction of participatory tools for performance measurement. Common criteria for good teacher performance could be established, alongside standardized observation protocols. The primary purposes of such strategies are to have a greater impact on the quality of education and to enable those concerned to measure their progress for themselves and be able to implement self-correcting strategies when they do not meet their desired objectives (hence contributing to sustainability). The secondary purpose is to enable the project to assess the quality of its interventions more effectively.

7. How does the project's design fit into overall government programs to combat child labor and provide education for all?

The CIRCLE design is in line with government programs to combat child labor and provide EFA and has the potential to be still more effective in supporting and encouraging these programs. Many subcontracts support the implementation of national EFA policies through their contribution to education infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum development, support for literacy, and work with SMCs. In the subcontracts visited the links with government programs to combat child labor are less tangible, with the exception of Sierra Leone where several subcontracts specifically supported recent legislation.⁷ However, a number of other subcontracts have made links with government programs, as for example in Kenya, Mali, and Ethiopia. While WI did not make connecting with or knowledge of national programs a priority and links with government ministries were limited, some subcontractors successfully integrated their work into government programs through collaboration and cooperation with local administrative and

⁷ The Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2005 and the Child Welfare Act awaiting final government approval.

education authorities. There is real potential to expand this aspect of any future project to encourage greater cooperation with national and regional authorities so that subcontractors' local initiatives become more visible and are better connected to ongoing national development programs. This would improve options for sustainability and develop the capacity of NGOs and governments to share information and cooperate. Any grantee organization in WI's position has an important role to play in encouraging this cooperation at all levels as part of national capacity building.

8. What other major design/implementation issues should be brought to the attention of the implementing organization and USDOL? —issues emerging

The duration/budget of subcontracts is probably the most important issue to come out of the evaluation in that it is the issue that most greatly affects children and their communities. Due to its objective of identifying innovations CIRCLE chose to implement a large number of subcontracts of relatively short duration, the two longest subcontracts in Africa being 18 and 24 months and many were a year or less. In visit after visit to communities during the evaluation there were requests for project extensions and additional funding for the continuation of activities. While such requests are to some extent inevitable as there is always more to be done, when they are justified with well reasoned argument they deserve to be taken seriously. The most common issue raised was that more training or time was needed to assimilate and disseminate new knowledge and implement activities. For example, it was rare to find CBOs able to implement good advocacy and planning strategies in short-term projects. NGO staff frequently echoed these sentiments, while appreciating the opportunity provided by CIRCLE, at the same time regretting that it only enabled them to go so far. Some were finding it difficult to cope with the raised community expectations that remained after the end of the subcontract.

Some subcontractors (e.g., CARD in Sierra Leone) set up an extremely effective nonformal education program for a limited number of young people, which then closed because the subcontract came to an end, in spite of the fact that the trainees could have benefited from ongoing support and their experience would have led to refinements in the training program. Large numbers of similar young people still require access to quality training and though the subcontract successfully addressed CIRCLE's principle objective, it was less useful in terms of sustainable development.

Similarly, subcontracts (e.g., PACF in Ghana) raised awareness about child labor and registered large numbers of at-risk children. The budget only supported the enrolment of about a quarter of the registered children in school and then the subcontract ended. While that particular cohort of children was largely still attending school nearly two years later, little had happened to empower the community concerned to develop strategies to enable them to support all their children in education. Again, the subcontract was successful in terms of CIRCLE's immediate objectives but did not have time or money to tackle issues requiring longer-term community development.

One further example concerns the many subcontractors that set up community child labor monitoring/advocacy committees of one kind or another. (e.g., RAC in Mali, ANPPCAN and CRADA in Ghana, and CARD in Sierra Leone). Each of these CBO's is expressing or demonstrating that they need more support and/or ongoing training before they are likely to be

able to continue their activities in the longer term. Once again, the existence of such CBOs contributes to the achievement of CIRCLE objectives but the time, effort, and money invested would undoubtedly have more impact if the subcontracts had been of longer duration.

“We were excited to mobilize, strengthen and create structures to address child labor but the biggest weakness was that the project put a lot of emphasis on members instead of the process. The strategies included withdrawing children from child labor and supporting them in school and vocational training. This happened for one year and the children were abandoned because the project was short (one year). This was an abuse to children. For projects to succeed they need to be owned by communities, but the process of ownership takes time, definitely more than a year.”

Subcontractor remark from e-mail survey

RADA of Sierra Leone tackled the challenge by implementing three successive subcontracts in the same communities and linking activities with those funded by other partners, which proved to be a successful strategy. Their impressive results are partly due to their holistic and participatory approach and their community development expertise but also to the fact that they worked consistently in the same communities over a number of years.

The conclusion to be drawn is that while withdrawing/preventing and enrolling any children in education is of benefit to them as individuals, sustainable change benefiting successive generations involves community development, which is a process of empowerment that takes time. Any future CIRCLE-type projects need to take this into account by supporting subcontracts of longer duration—probably a minimum of two years would be wise, with the possibility of extending subcontracts that are working well.

The need to support income generation emerged from many site visits during the evaluation. It is fairly obvious that if children are working and providing family income and they are then withdrawn from work and sent to school—which inevitably involves additional expenditure—there is likely to be a problem. While USDOL does not allow funds to be given directly to communities or fund training for adults, that does not mean that subcontractors cannot work with communities to facilitate an analysis of income and expenditure (which is sometimes enough in itself) and/or develop strategies for income generation and resource mobilization. Two subcontractors who tackled this issue were RADA (Sierra Leone) and CRADA (Ghana). RADA successfully supported the establishment and planting of cassava farms and the processing of the cassava to be sold, thus helping parents support their ex-child laborers in school. CRADA identified the need and encouraged farmers to invest in growing soya beans. Unfortunately, the first crop failed and the farmers felt somewhat let down but CRADA are continuing their efforts in this direction.

Networking and sharing experiences between subcontractors and others working on similar issues was another issue emerging from the evaluation. The experience of meeting other subcontractors during RLMs was universally seen as important and useful. However, one subcontractor regretted the limited time made available for learning from each other. Others

mentioned the need for CIRCLE to facilitate greater networking between subcontractors and other organizations working on child labor/trafficking issues within the same country to encourage shared learning and collaboration on advocacy issues. Subcontractors in Mali, Ghana, and Sierra Leone had all initiated some degree of networking between themselves and it would be worthwhile for any future CIRCLE-type projects to build networking into the project design and budget for subcontractors as well as other organizations, particularly other USDOL-funded projects.

WI did attempt to develop networking among partners through the e-newsletter, but the reasons why few subcontractors contributed articles as requested is a matter for conjecture. It may just have been a lack of time and other priorities or it may have been a question of ownership or the approach itself. One way of resolving this is to involve the partners themselves in developing networking strategies. It is also important to bear in mind that effective networking doesn't just happen as an optional extra—specific funds, time, and responsibilities need to be clearly allocated for maximum success.

9. Was the community-based approach successful?

CIRCLE provides a particularly successful approach to implementing community-based projects because it enables subcontractors to initiate projects specifically tailored to the needs of individual communities. The CIRCLE project document describes potential subcontractors as “community-based organizations,” which is misleading as subcontractors are national NGOs, usually based either in the capitol city or in regional towns. The common understanding of CBOs is more applicable to the various CLACS, CCELS, SMCs, and CTAs that subcontractors helped to establish. This question is answered in more detail in the following section as the details concern subcontract implementation.

10. Did the project result in sufficient innovation?

The CIRCLE strategy of supporting a broad range of fairly small projects did result in a range of different approaches to reducing child labor through education in a cross section of African countries. Innovation was defined as an activity that was new to the community concerned and, while common themes inevitably resulted in similar strategies in different subcontracts, many different examples of ways to support and encourage the principal objectives emerged. Examples that spring to mind from evaluation visits are:

- Provision of day care for children of girl mothers so that they can enroll in education (CARD- Sierra Leone).
- Recruitment and training of foster carers so that young people can lodge safely near their place of education (CARD-Sierra Leone).
- Specially designed courses tailored to the needs of particular groups of learners (AJA Mali, CARD-Sierra Leone, RADA-Sierra Leone).

- Creative ways of discouraging child labor (CARD-Sierra Leone where peer educators write the names of offending community members in big black books, which proved to be a strong deterrent in discouraging people from breaking local bylaws set up to combat child labor and trafficking).
- Kids clubs for peer education, advocacy, child labor monitoring (RADA-Sierra Leone).
- Theatre and role play to assist awareness-raising and peer education (RADA-Sierra Leone, CRADA, Ghana).

“The concept of community radio listening groups is one that can be replicated in other programmes. The concept creates a multiplier effect in the sense that once certain core groups have been sensitized they act as agents of change and of sensitization to the wider community. For example, the children’s rights clubs in some schools held listening sessions for the whole school. This meant that a group of 25 pupils is creating awareness to a school population of about 650 pupils and teachers. In addition, the information is further diffused to outside the school to other children from other schools and their parents. The same about community groups some of which have been invited to public meetings and other forums to sensitize the community on child labour issues.”

Subcontractor remark from e-mail survey

Overall, it can be said that the project resulted in innovation. Whether there was “sufficient innovation” is difficult to assess without a clear definition of what this might be. The CIRCLE definition of innovation would also hold true even if every subcontract implemented the same activities—if they were new to each community concerned, so it seems most useful to accept innovation in a general sense, without enquiring too deeply as to what exactly was meant in the CIRCLE context.

11. Is there any other foreseeable mechanism for achieving innovation?

Two separate stakeholders mentioned that CIRCLE subcontractors need to have fairly highly developed administrative capacity in order to be selected and they thought that this might exclude organizations that are competent and creative in the field but less focused on administration. To make it viable to work with such groups WI would need to be able to undertake more regular field visits to understand the value of what was being done and to help the organization concerned cope with administrative requirements.

A more ambitious strategy would be to take the CIRCLE concept one step further and ask subcontractors to work with CBOs to design and develop projects based on community suggestions. This would require not only experienced and competent subcontractors with a track record of successful community development, but also a grantee with a developed understanding of the importance of community ownership, empowerment and the processes necessary for this to emerge, and a funding environment supporting such an initiative.

12. Assess the compilation of the best practices compendium. How is it progressing and how could it be improved?

As subcontracts conclude they are assessed by evaluators drawn from a group of over 80 volunteers, which includes WI staff, academics, representatives of national and international NGOs, and other agencies and specialists in child labor and education. Reviewers receive a pack of documents including bimonthly progress reports, spotlight stories, and site visit reports for each project. They identify elements of the project they consider to be BPs and score them against six criteria: effectiveness, innovation, educational/vocational relevance, stakeholder involvement, replicability, and sustainability. Their reports are used by the consultant engaged by WI to identify the BPs that will make up the compendium and to enable him to understand why they are BPs.

WI has succeeded in developing an evaluation process that involves a range of different people with varied perspectives and experience, without incurring vast expense. One missing element was the participation of subcontractors in this “peer evaluation” but WI is now involving some of them in visits to other subcontracts to encourage shared learning. At the time of the evaluation it was not clear how these visits would feed into the peer review process but NGOs have now also been invited to carry out some peer reviews, which are currently underway. The results of the visits will be used to describe in some detail how NGOs have made practices work and be a useful part of the BP document.

In November 2006 WI held a BP retreat to work on all aspects of the Compendium. A BP was defined as “an aspect of a project that has been effective in preventing or reducing child labor and is an inspiration to others.” It was decided that the Compendium will primarily be aimed at national NGOs and CBOs, with international NGOs and other organizations as secondary targets. The document will focus on practicality and hence be divided into a number of themes including crosscutting aspects such as Sustainability, Challenges, Gender, Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL), and Creating Synergy. Frameworks and presentations were discussed together with a potential timeline and process for completing the final document. Subsequently, an introduction was developed and longer and shorter versions of a sample chapter were prepared.

WI decided to keep the term “Best Practices” because it appears in the original CIRCLE proposal and cooperative agreement. The BP Compendium is actually providing examples of models that have worked in a particular environment and with a particular group and while they represent good practice, there is a question about who defines what is “best.”

The draft version of the BP Compendium is due to be completed by the end of September 2007 to enable translation, printing, and delivery to USDOL by the end of the year. This is a tight timeline considering the volume of work and the current state of evolution of the document. As both CIRCLE I and CIRCLE II BPs will be included, it is necessary to allow as many CIRCLE II projects as possible to be assessed before defining the final content of the Compendium to ensure representation of both parts of the project. Finalizing the content too soon could lead to elements from CIRCLE II being “slotted in” wherever they fit rather than helping define the overall structure.

While dissemination of the document needs to be completed before the end of CIRCLE II in April 2008, extending the time available for the writing process by a further two months (until the end of November) would contribute to the quality of the final document and still leave time for translation and dissemination before the end of the project. Meetings of subcontractors on each continent are planned to launch the document and these meetings could also serve as an opportunity for subcontractors to discuss ongoing work to combat child labor/trafficking and encourage education in their respective countries and regions.

5.4.2 Conclusions

The CIRCLE project design emerges as an exciting new approach to subcontracting that is relevant not only to future USDOL EI projects but also worthy of the attention of other U.S. development agencies. If it is possible to refine the model in the light of experience while maintaining the basic concept of supporting national NGOs to develop and implement projects tailored to the needs of communities where they work, it will be an enormous step forward in encouraging sustainable development initiatives and facilitating access to U.S. development assistance by national organizations. CIRCLE avoids the ‘one size fits all’ approach of more classical subcontracting and is moving towards a model of project design that values difference and innovation and passes greater responsibility to national organizations working at community level.

5.4.3 Recommendations

- While subcontracts of relatively short duration assisted WI to meet the CIRCLE objective of discovering innovation, any future subcontracts of this sort should be long enough to enable community development initiatives to become sufficiently well established so they benefit more than the children directly affected during the life of the subcontract.
- Income generation or microfinance strategies should be included in all subcontracts unless subcontractors can justify why this is not necessary in a particular situation.
- Subcontractors should be more involved in the identification of BPs in each others’ projects to increase their ownership of the resulting Compendium and the shared learning resulting from CIRCLE.
- The deadline for completing the writing phase of the BP Compendium should be extended by one or two months to avoid unnecessary rush in producing the document that is the principal deliverable of more than five years of work around the world.
- The BP Compendium should be translated into as many of the project languages as possible, distributed to all subcontractors, and made available online and through any other channels that will ensure that it can really be of use to NGOs and CBOs.
- WI should consider replacing “Best Practices” with “Good Practices” in the title of the Compendium because it is more accurate and sounds more modest.

- Grantees should have a greater networking role in any future CIRCLE-type projects to encourage and facilitate collaboration and shared learning between subcontractors, statutory bodies, national and international NGOs, and other practitioners in a given country or region.

5.5 SUBCONTRACT DESIGN/IMPLEMENTATION

5.5.1 Findings

Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR

- 1. Are the projects in the region on track in terms of meeting stated outputs in their proposals? If not, what seem to be the factors contributing to delays?*

The subcontracts visited in Mali and Sierra Leone have met the stated outputs in their proposals and several of them have exceeded their targets. The same is true for EPAG and PACF in Ghana. ANPPCAN is probably on track, with a short, no-cost extension. More of a question mark hangs over CRADA because, while the project has vastly exceeded the number of children it planned to enroll, it is not succeeding in supporting and maintaining the predicted 95 percent in education or successfully supporting livelihoods enhancement for families of child laborers as planned. If these subcontracts are taken as a representative sample of all projects in the region it is reasonable to assume that the overall majority have successfully met their outputs, as is indicated by CIRCLE Technical Progress Reports (TPRs).

A number of subcontracts have had short, no-cost extensions to enable them to complete activities and, in one case, to allow the project to continue until the end of the school year. Delays were principally due to communication constraints, banking system limitations, and, in some cases, late reporting and poor communication on the part of the subcontractor.

- 2. Were sub-contract purpose and outputs realistic?*

While the majority of subcontract purposes and outputs were realistic within the CIRCLE framework the need to respect CIRCLE selection parameters meant that subcontracts were often awarded with much reduced budgets. The maximum budget for the category of small subcontracts was initially only US\$10,000 (although this was subsequently changed to US\$25,000) and a number of subcontracts were implemented on budgets that were too small for activities to have long-term impact.

After widespread awareness-raising subcontractors and communities were forced to choose which of the children identified as at-risk should receive the limited support available for places in education and PACF vividly describe this dilemma in one of their reports. Subcontractors had to decide whether it was best to work intensively with a few children or to try to meet more of the enormous demand for educational support and infrastructure with the limited funds available. The fact that many subcontractors exceeded their targeted number of children suggests that they did the best they could, but on at least one occasion they spread themselves too thinly, resulting in reduced impact and children let down through lack of support.

During the evaluation children in several education programs in Ghana said their greatest difficulty was getting enough to eat and others had dropped out for the same reason. Project designers need to be aware of the potential negative impact or side effects of strategies designed to achieve a specific objective such as innovation. Above all, subcontract designers need to be realistic in the commitments they make to communities and to do everything possible to ensure that they do not set children or adults up to fail, with all the physical and psychological distress that failure may entail. The most effective way to avoid this is to empower communities to make their own decisions based on accurate and reliable information, including the attendant risks of any proposed initiative. Ultimately, communities are responsible for their own development and for the well being of their children and no agency should take on that responsibility in their place. Some communities in Ghana thought that as subcontractors had assisted their children's school enrollment they would also take responsibility for the children's ongoing needs. Effective NGOs facilitate, enable, and empower; they do not assume responsibilities that do not belong to them and that they cannot fulfill.

3. Are subcontractors able to accurately measure results in terms of USDOL indicators?

The majority of subcontractors are able to measure accurately results in terms of USDOL indicators and some have succeeded in developing Child Labor Monitoring (CLM) systems in the communities where they are working, so student tracking has been integrated into the regular activities of CBOs and/or schools. WI conducted a survey of how subcontractors were approaching this issue and offered guidance and training during RLMS. Some subcontractors have developed their own forms and reporting tools and others use those suggested by WI. In most cases initial data collection is carried out by community members and information is then collected by NGO field staff and transferred to the bimonthly CIRCLE reporting format.

The evaluation did reveal some confusion concerning definitions of the common indicators and understanding was not helped by the fact that USDOL made some changes midway through the project. However, by the time results arrive at WI HQ, regional offices will have corrected most inaccuracies, as explained in the previous section. The measurement of "completion" provoked some questions from education authorities about why a child "completes" automatically when the subcontract finishes, regardless of whether he or she has completed the particular education program being undertaken.

4. Was the community-based approach successful in the region? How did projects meet challenges through community participation, ownership and child labor monitoring interventions?

The response to this question is an unequivocal "yes," in spite of the fact that project duration was often too short for community ownership, confidence, and competence to be sufficiently developed to ensure sustainable change. Some of the numerous examples of subcontracts that successfully met challenges through community participation, ownership, and CLM interventions are mentioned below:

- EPAG in Ghana supported the enrollment of 30 children across five communities and created and trained five CCLCs through some extremely competent and solid community development work with a budget of only US\$9,000, an impressive achievement. After nearly two years the CCLCs are still operational, involved in school management, and demonstrating awareness of child rights, clear evidence of community ownership. EPAG have continued to support these committees and monitor the children.
- RADA-Sierra Leone set up numerous CBOs: kids clubs, parents clubs, SMC/CTA, an advocacy committee, and a task force; and developed community monitoring of border crossing points and communal areas to protect children from trafficking. Peer education, child rights training, and support for vulnerable children in school were strategies developed to reduce child labor. The evaluator was privileged to see community ownership developing before her very eyes during a meeting bringing together members of the various CBOs at the school. The discussion turned to the future of the school, which was built during the first CIRCLE subcontract. The current subcontract will soon finish and while RADA will still be working in the community, they will no longer be responsible for the school. When the question was first raised people talked about “not abandoning a baby when it had only just learned to walk” but by the end of the meeting the “baby” had become “a young girl that everybody wants” as the group realized that they had a school to be proud of and did not need to hand over responsibility for supporting it to just anyone, because they had power to negotiate and bargain to get the best management support available.
- CARD-Sierra Leone worked closely with the Catholic parish, which provided the premises for its vocational training center, supported the trainees throughout the project, and continued to support them after it finished.
- PACF in Ghana set up a community selection committee that established a database of 163 vulnerable children, of which 40 were enrolled in school. The evaluator visited the project nearly two years later and was met by an enthusiastic group of parents, traditional leaders, SMC representatives, and other community members keen to bear witness to their understanding of the dangers of child labor/trafficking and the importance of education.
- AJA in Mali encouraged artisans to take more responsibility for the safety and education of their apprentices. Many were initially dubious about the benefits of literacy classes but soon changed their minds when they found out that a literate apprentice was actually more use than one who cannot read and write. As the subcontract comes to an end the representatives of the Artisans’ Association took time off to meet the evaluator and showed every intention of continuing the initiative themselves. This will come as a relief to the participating apprentices whose most pressing question was, “Will we still have classes after the project ends?”
- RAC in Mali raised awareness through public meetings and training for SMCs and village reflection groups, resulting in a ban on children working in traditional gold mining and a significant increase in the numbers of children wishing to enroll in school,

to the extent that there are not enough places in spite of new classrooms that RAC has helped to build.

- ANPPCAN Ghana established and trained 16 community and 4 district CLACs that now monitor local mining areas to ensure that children are not working there and that the children enrolled in school continue to attend.

On the whole, subcontractors who had experienced community development fieldworkers who worked closely with communities were more successful than those who visited less frequently and relied on training local authority staff and community members to do the bulk of the work, possibly more than either of them were ready or able to cope with, judging from their requests for help during the evaluation.

The RADA-Sierra Leone project manager explained behavior change as a process with three components. First, one needs the knowledge, which can lead to a change in attitude, which finally has an impact on practice. A sustainable project needs to be long enough for these three stages to take place. This process needs to be taken into account when planning future projects so activities such as those described above have the opportunity to become sustainable.

Exchanges in various communities gave an indication of the different degrees of understanding of child rights issues in Ghana. Discussion turned to the question of disciplining children. One member of a CLAC explained that he and some other members had approached the teachers to ask them to cane the children to discourage them from wandering out of school, as their parents were away on their farms and could not keep an eye on them. In another community members of the CCLC had approached teachers to ask them to stop caning the children as it was seen as inappropriate. In a third community a CCLC chairman said that on occasion children were deprived of food as a form of discipline, while a teacher in the same community favored temporarily banning children from a favorite occupation such as football or giving them weeding to do. The NGO fieldworker was opposed to weeding as discipline in case it conveyed a message that farming meant punishment. All these CBO's had received training concerning child labor and child rights and the various comments demonstrate that the journey from knowledge and understanding, through attitude change, to behavior change takes time.

5. *Assess the strategy used to publicize funding opportunities and to reach out to local NGOs in target countries. Did RFPs truly reach remote, local NGOs capable of implementing project activities? Were the RFP dissemination techniques appropriate?*

Requests for Proposals (RFPs) in Mali, where the regional office is based, generated a lot of proposals but dissemination in other countries depended on personal contacts with knowledge of appropriate web sites and NGO networks in the country concerned, and the funds budgeted. Most commonly, dissemination was via the Internet because use of the press is costly in many countries and regional staff did not know which publications would be most effective in which country. Some countries remained underrepresented in spite of special efforts to generate proposals. Better knowledge of appropriate outlets and more funds would have enabled wider, more effective dissemination across most African countries. Sierra Leone was an exception in

that “everyone knew,” as RFPs were distributed through NGO networks, the press, and a special workshop.

It is questionable whether remote NGOs were reached and if they had been, whether they would have been capable of implementing project activities since Internet access was essential for reporting and receiving funds on time and this is still limited to urban centers in most African countries. CIRCLE RFPs generated 289 subcontract proposals in Africa (excluding UACs), of which 37 projects were funded in 9 African countries,⁸ hence about 13 percent of proposals actually received funding.

6. Do the communities benefiting from the project feel that CIRCLE is meeting a previously unmet need in a new way?

Communities undoubtedly appreciate the project and many of them said that its approaches and ideas were new to them. The most common reaction to the question was along the lines of, “We never knew that children had rights or the importance of education. Through the training we now understand this and we are committed to protecting children in our community from labor and trafficking and [an] NGO is helping us to do this, but we are poor and it isn’t easy. Where/how will we find the resources?”

Communities spoke of how they are mobilizing and cooperating with local administrative and law enforcement authorities to monitor and protect their children and still others spoke of their pride that their children have the opportunity to go to school, which they never had themselves, and the hope for the future that this has given them. A blacksmith, reputedly a very hard man, spoke out at one of the community meetings during the evaluation to explain that he had decided to stop his young son working alongside him and send him to school. When asked what exactly had made him change his mind he said that he just saw that there was something better in it for his son.

In another community a woman member of the CCLC was asked how she addressed parents with working children to convince them to send their children to school. She stood up and assumed a hunched position, as if carrying a heavy load. She said that she explained that she could remember as a child carrying a very heavy burden on her back and then someone had come and removed it. As she said this she straightened up and threw her arms wide and a broad smile creased her face. She said that the training about child labor had made her remember the enormous relief she had felt and she tries to evoke the same memories in other parents, so that they understand what their children are currently experiencing and that this is her starting point. This is an example of a successful training initiative that enabled and empowered a woman to work within her community on the basis of her own experience in the light of new knowledge and understanding.

⁸ Subcontracts signed: Mali—8, Ghana—8, Sierra Leone—10, Senegal—3, Morocco—1, Malawi—3, Kenya—5 and Ethiopia—2 (including three UACs).

7. How satisfied are the community members with the design and quality of the CIRCLE project's intervention?

Most communities visited expressed satisfaction with the design and quality of CIRCLE interventions with two notable exceptions. A common complaint was, "...but projects end too soon. If a baby is just learning to walk, you don't just turn away and leave him" and secondly, "We don't have the resources. If the project could help us to establish an ongoing source of income we could do a lot more..."

In two communities in Ghana it was virtually impossible to carry out the business of the evaluation because the people concerned were quite angry with the subcontractor, in relation to broken promises and failed commitments. In fairness to the subcontractor it should be mentioned that they have chosen to work in remote cocoa farming communities where no other NGOs have ventured. This was ambitious as they do not possess transport and in trying to respond to enormous demand they appear to have completely overstretched their resources and seemed unable to say no to any request, however unlikely it is that they will be able to meet it. This is mentioned as a reminder that community development is a skilled operation, and the subcontractor selection process may need to be refined to try and find a way of assessing this.

8. What are the capacity building elements of the project for subcontractors?

Principal elements that subcontractors mentioned as having helped to build their capacity included reporting, financial procedures, and proposal development. CIRCLE capacity building focused on enabling subcontractors to implement CIRCLE administrative procedures and the added value was that organizations will continue to benefit from this in their future work. Subcontractors were also keen to express how useful they found field visits from regional staff as these not only contribute to their understanding of formats and procedures but also enable them to see their various projects in a more objective fashion, sometimes making them aware of aspects that they had not noticed previously or analyzed in depth. This increased understanding helped them to appreciate their own work and the achievements of the communities where they were active. RLMs, training materials, and field visits enhanced knowledge and understanding of child trafficking and child labor issues that were new to many subcontractors. The fact that CIRCLE funded and trained project accountants was important not only for the smooth running of the subcontract but also for ongoing organizational capacity building. Without exception, subcontractors praised members of the WI regional team during the evaluation, principally for their patience, persistence, and nonhierarchical approach.

5.5.2 Additional Findings

The National Policy Conference in Sierra Leone

It is impossible to complete the section on subcontract design and implementation without giving special mention to the outstanding work being carried out in Sierra Leone, which culminated in subcontractors coming together to organize a two-day national policy conference that took place during the evaluation period. The conference focused on the theme, “Child trafficking and exploitive labor: The need for a coordinated approach within the context of the National Plan of Action” and built on subcontractors’ experiences of developing strategies and raising awareness to implement the 2005 Anti-Human Trafficking Act at community level. The act defines human trafficking as an offense and criminalizes all forms of human trafficking. The conference was chaired by the Minister of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children’s Affairs, assisted by Dr. Fofana, the chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. It was opened by the U.S. Ambassador and attended by about 80 representatives of the police, the judiciary, the military, local education authorities, national and international NGOs, traditional chiefs, trafficked children and young people, and community advocacy groups. After a range of statements condemning child trafficking and child labor and presentations describing current initiatives to combat them, participants worked in groups to discuss various aspects of the National Plan of Action prepared by the Trafficking-in-Person (TIP) Task Force responsible for the implementation of the act. Recommendations for improving and implementing the plan came out of these discussions, which will be available in the conference report.

The conference was organized with the support and participation of task force members and provided an opportunity for them to deepen their consultation and discussion of the issues concerned. The conference also provided an opportunity for members of civil society organizations to express their frustration at the slow progress being made towards full implementation of the act and to offer some practical suggestions as to how speed things up. Overall, the event complemented the apparently limited public consultation that took place before the signing of the act.

As the President’s Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Persons provided CIRCLE with funding for its activities in Sierra Leone, it is appropriate that such funds have been used at both community and national level to raise awareness and develop and implement strategies to encourage the implementation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act. Moreover CIRCLE activities have encouraged and been coordinated with local government initiatives to combat child trafficking and have complemented the government’s efforts to promote basic education and reintegrate ex-combatants. Subcontractors have a clear understanding of trafficking, forced labor, and child labor and are doing an effective job of communicating these concepts to the communities where they are working. A particularly impressive aspect of the work in Sierra Leone is cooperation between subcontractors and the police force, particularly the Family Support Unit (FSU) that has officers based in many communities. One such officer on the Liberian border described his handling of a current child abuse case, where he seemed to be playing the role of law enforcement, social worker, and community liaison all at once. Several FSU officers are members of local CBOs set up to combat child labor and trafficking and offer invaluable support and enhanced credibility to such groups.

Gender

One aspect that needs to be mentioned is a general lack of evidence of gender awareness and policy in many of the subcontracts visited. While there was a good gender balance among the children enrolled in education, project personnel at community level were overwhelmingly male and there was little to suggest that this was considered a challenge to be overcome. On occasion field staff failed to include women in community discussions and, in one case, an NGO worker even facilitated the meeting with his back to the women who were attending.

While gender is a complex cultural issue, NGOs have an important role to play in ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups influence their policy and practice and they can provide useful role models in the communities where they work. One approach to this is for NGOs to make every attempt to employ both men and women at all levels, hence going some way to ensuring that the organization as a whole reflects the interests and perspectives of both groups. This is particularly important at community level where having project staff of both sexes not only sends a message to community members that they are included, but also helps women in particular to have opportunities to speak freely, and both men and women to see that they both have the potential for public speaking and leadership. A developed understanding of gender issues will result in the analysis being applied not only to men and women but also to other marginalized groups experiencing power inequity. Grantees can play a role in flagging gender as an important issue by including discussion around the issue in project orientation and training.

5.5.3 Conclusions

The evaluation revealed that subcontracts in the same country tended to have certain common characteristics and something of a common flavor that probably reflects a combination of national culture and the range of qualities and styles of NGOs found within the national context.

In Ghana the government has strong education policies that are being implemented to some extent (e.g., the capitation grant covers school fees but parents still need to pay for uniforms, supplementary books, materials, infrastructure maintenance, and in many cases lunch, as many schools have no feeding programs.) Two subcontractors implemented short programs, carrying out effective community development initiatives resulting in the formation of community groups to combat child labor/trafficking and the enrollment of a certain number of children in school. These were both effective as far as they went but were unable to take full advantage of the interest generated to empower communities with sustainable strategies, due to the short period of intervention. Both these initiatives relied on intensive contact with communities during the period concerned and both subcontractors have continued to monitor progress since the end of the projects. Neither of the other two subcontractors used fieldworkers but based their interventions on encouraging and supporting local authority workers to do their jobs better, providing training and then relying on them to train and monitor local Community Child Labor/Advocacy Committees. While this strategy was directed towards sustainability, it perhaps underestimated the degree of commitment and the capacity of local authority workers to empower and motivate local people. Both CBOs and local authority personnel felt that they needed more support to be effective and children were enrolled in education without the support they needed. Though these were ambitious initiatives that needed more time, the NGOs

concerned did not demonstrate a high degree of community development knowledge or competence.

The two subcontracts visited in Mali were both impressive and effective initiatives. Both NGOs demonstrated competence and implemented the projects they had proposed in an efficient and professional manner. Both had feasible plans for sustainability and both were finding innovative ways of meeting the needs of their client groups. Subcontractors such as these are ideal for CIRCLE-type subcontracts in that they are well-established organizations with a clear sense of their own purpose and objectives which, once pointed in the right direction, can implement the job with minimal guidance. They work from a knowledge base of the needs of young people and the importance of participatory and child-centered approaches.

The subcontractors visited in Sierra Leone have succeeded in going that step further that changes good projects into exceptional ones. They understood both the potential and the constraints of CIRCLE and worked to get the very best out of the opportunity it presented. Working in the difficult post-conflict environment of the Liberian border region, they are empowering damaged communities and traumatized young people through highly participatory and innovative approaches. Their particular strengths include creating synergy with initiatives funded by other partners, networking and sharing information and experience between themselves, and a perceptive analysis of the impact of their work and the ongoing needs of the communities concerned. Their staff consistently demonstrated enormous personal commitment to the work that they are doing, which is certainly a major factor in their success. These partners successfully worked together to tackle policy-level issues through the National Policy Conference described above, hence fulfilling objectives linked to all four EI goals. The CIRCLE model can be expanded and developed through partnership with such organizations, which know where they are going and have sufficient self confidence to offer constructive advice about how to work effectively with them and in their areas.

5.5.4 Recommendations

- Future subcontracts need to be of long enough duration to enable community ownership and CBO competence to develop and take root.
- Subcontractors need to take full responsibility for their project proposal, tailoring their initiatives to the resources available and avoiding overstressing themselves. They should have the courage and professionalism not to continue with a subcontract if they believe that the budget awarded is insufficient.
- Subcontractors need to think about how communities will face the challenge of loss of family income and increased expenditure when child laborers are enrolled in school and include strategies to tackle this in their proposals.
- Subcontractors in the same country should be encouraged to develop networking mechanisms, share experiences, and work together on advocacy and policy issues at regional/national level as this will enhance the impact of local initiatives.

- More developed mention of the importance of gender and gender analysis when working with communities should be part of the capacity building offered to subcontractors during project orientation.

5.6 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

5.6.1 Findings

Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR

- 1. What have been the major issues and challenges of initiating partnerships in support of the project at local, national, and/or regional levels?*

For the regional office, the principal challenge in initiating and maintaining partnerships at local and national levels has been communication, which is hardly surprising in a project covering subcontracts in places that do not often have reliable high speed Internet connections. Poor or intermittent connection has resulted in delays in receiving reports and difficulties in maintaining contact with some subcontractors, but over the course of the project WI has succeeded in streamlining its administrative systems, thus eliminating some of the blockages. Some subcontractors said they sometimes felt WI did not appreciate how difficult it was to send reports when the connection was down, sometimes requiring time-consuming journeys on poor roads. WI in its turn voiced the opinion that poor connection was sometimes used as an excuse for late reports.

Another issue is the virtual absence of linkages between the CIRCLE regional office and relevant government departments and other agencies, particularly in those countries other than the regional hub. One disadvantage of working from a regional office is that it is more difficult to establish connections in countries where there is no official organizational presence. An example of this emerged during the evaluation when the U.S. Embassy in Ghana had no idea that CIRCLE existed and as a result organized a meeting to enable several people, including a USAID representative, to meet the evaluator and the Regional Manager (RM). Several points of common interest were revealed—better late than never!

WI has had considerable success in initiating partnerships with members of the RSC and BP reviewers from across the region, relying on personal contacts and national specialists to complement WI personnel.

- 2. What have been the major challenges and opportunities, if any, of implementing coordination with ILO-IPEC, other international organizations, and national governments (if applicable)?*

Due to the fact that networking was not a stated objective of the CIRCLE project, there was no budget allocated for related activities. While the Africa regional office acknowledges the importance of coordination with other national and regional child labor/trafficking initiatives, it did not have detailed knowledge of their activities or the means to go further than inviting representatives to attend key events. However, during the course of the evaluation,

subcontractors revealed a number of incidental links and connections to various other child labor/trafficking initiatives, often without knowing they were also funded by USDOL. While these cannot be described as “coordination,” they are interesting in that they give an indication of how largely uncoordinated programs impact the same communities or organizations at different times.

- PACF in Ghana is linked to national anti-child labor/trafficking networks. The Department of Social Welfare assisted parents in Kokobriety to acquire income-generating skills under the ILO-IPEC LUTRENA Project, which also enabled the anti-child trafficking club to be established in the school. One of the children enrolled in school under CIRCLE was a 10-year-old orphan who had been trafficked to another fishing community and brought home during a sensitization campaign by PACF under the ILO-IPEC LUTRENA Project.
- CARD in Sierra Leone, in addition to being a CIRCLE subcontractor, is also an International Rescue Committee (IRC) partner on the USDOL-funded Countering Youth and Child Labor through Education (CYCLE) project, which aims to decrease the overall number of children engaged in exploitive child labor and promote their access to quality education in selected areas of Liberia and Sierra Leone. CYCLE project staff made a presentation at the National Policy Conference funded by CIRCLE, but that is the extent of the collaboration between the two projects.
- RAC in Mali is working in communities where ILO-IPEC worked from 2001 to 2003 and described CIRCLE activities there as consolidating ILO-IPEC’s achievements. RAC reported that IPEC had withdrawn 102 children from the WFCL and that their focus had been on supporting nonformal education rather than encouraging community participation and primary education. One of the reasons RAC gave for their strategy of initiating community groups for reflection and training SMCs was to try to make their intervention more sustainable than that of IPEC.
- CRADA and ANPCCAN in Ghana are working in some communities that have previously benefited from ILO-IPEC’s West Africa Cocoa Agriculture Project (WACAP).

WI developed an important relationship with the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) through the cross-border Mali/Côte d’Ivoire CLASSE project that was part of CIRCLE I, and has continued this collaboration, leading to the announcement in May 2007 of “...a significant, multi-year partnership to provide greater opportunities and a brighter future for young people living on cocoa farms in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The new partnership, known as the ECHOES (Empowering Cocoa Households with Opportunities and Education Solutions) Alliance, brings together the WCF and its member companies with the USAID Africa Education Initiative. Through teacher training and curriculum development, agricultural and life skills training, the ECHOES Alliance will improve access to quality, relevant education for thousands of children living in cocoa farming communities in West Africa... The ECHOES Alliance will build upon

and expand programs sponsored by the WCF and led by WI and the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH).”⁹

As previously discussed, links with national governments have been limited as a result of the emphasis of the project design on community-based initiatives and the constraints to developing such links inherent in the regional administration of the project.

3. How well have the Regional Selection Committees functioned?

The Africa RSC functioned well, within the parameters that it was given. It provided a relatively objective process for selecting subcontractors and overcame potential bias, such as differences in scoring between Anglophone and Francophone members. The committee was made up of an interesting cross section of people including education, development, and child labor specialists from a range of countries.¹⁰ They were happy to donate their services and said that they benefited from the experience.

There are, however, aspects linked to the selection process that might be improved. In order to maintain their anonymity and impartiality, committee members had no ongoing connection with the projects which they helped to select, whereas they could have played a monitoring role, providing useful advice and guidance and hence gaining valuable insight to help them in future selection rounds.

WI regional staff exerted no influence and offered no advice to RSC members beyond pre-selecting projects that complied with basic selection criteria. They only added their comments to the projects selected by the RSC before they were forwarded HQ. Therefore, when considering projects that were applying for a second subcontract, RSC members had no information about their performance during the first subcontract, which might have assisted them in making the best choices. This question occurred to the evaluator in Ghana, where an early subcontractor with a very small budget performed extremely well but failed to attract ongoing funding, whereas other subcontracts with much larger budgets were subsequently awarded to untried and, in the view of the evaluator, less competent NGOs in the same country.

A desire to enable fair competition between NGOs should not override the responsibility to communities to select the best possible partners and subcontractors. To do this, all relevant information should be made available to selectors, including information about any previous performance within the project and any advice or input from the WI regional office. We have to trust the integrity and professionalism of RSC members not to give preferential treatment to one NGO over another and give them all available information to assist their selection.

It is also questionable how useful it is to emphasize the aspect of competition between NGOs applying for subcontracts. These are organizations in countries that need to develop dynamic and effective civil societies and it might be more useful to encourage cooperation and collaboration

⁹ From a World Cocoa Foundation press release on May 23, 2007.

¹⁰ Ghana, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Kenya, and Sierra Leone.

between them. One way that this could be done is by giving points for aspects of proposals that concern collaboration, partnership, and networking.

4. How did regional launch meetings, best practice peer review teams contribute to project networking?

All subcontractors saw RLMs as very useful. The orientation and training offered were very important in the successful implementation of subcontracts, but some participants would have liked more time devoted to sharing experience and developing networking between themselves and within each country.

BP peer review teams did not greatly contribute to project networking, as they worked largely in isolation on the documents which they were sent, the results being compiled by the regional office. However, the fact that such a large number of people took part no doubt widened knowledge of CIRCLE within the development community. Subcontractors who are now being asked to visit other projects will have a greater opportunity to contribute directly to project networking and capitalize on their combined experience during the project.

WI made steps towards encouraging networking by establishing the CIRCLE website and periodic newsletters, which have fostered information sharing but have not stimulated much concrete action in terms of promoting networking among partners.

5. What have been some of the challenges and issues in working with local NGOs and other local organizations?

The varying capacity of NGOs meant that some needed a lot more support than others. Distance made communication difficult, particularly if an NGO was not responding to messages. Staff changes also created problems, particularly when they concerned accountants who had been trained during RLMs, who did not pass on their expertise to their replacement. In some cases, reports did not conform to the requested format and some subcontractors wrote long and rambling accounts of their activities that were difficult to understand and assimilate.

It is difficult to assess the level of technical competence in the field of an organization that may only be visited once during the course of the subcontract. Despite the fact that references were checked on a number of occasions, a few subcontractors with questionable technical capacity slipped through the net and received funding.

It is also important for grantees to remember the challenges which implementing organizations are facing on a daily basis and develop strategies to support and encourage them. On the whole, WI did this successfully through field visits and the more of these that can take place, the more support can be offered, particularly to less competent subcontractors. Another strategy mentioned in the previous section is to use RSC members to support subcontracts in their home countries. Covering their costs or paying a consultancy fee would often be cheaper than the travel costs of a field visit from the regional office.

“One main challenge that we are facing is that there are expectations that the target group holds for the implementing agency which are beyond its scope. This makes the implementing agency feel powerless and overwhelmed by the arising issues which need to be addressed either directly or indirectly. The suggestion here is that working with other organisations and stakeholders eases the burden as it is shared. The other suggestion is that the need for interventions will always be there and whatever effort, however small, that seeks to address such needs always makes a difference in the society and therefore organisations should never give up.”

Subcontractor remark from e-mail survey

5.6.2 Conclusions

The majority of the partnerships between WI and CIRCLE subcontractors were very successful, helped by the tools and processes set up to facilitate this aspect of the project. There were a limited number of less effective relationships that could be analyzed further to try to avoid similar difficulties in the future.

RSC members and peer reviewers made valuable contributions to the CIRCLE project, but more strategic networking with governments and other organizations, which could have contributed to sustainability and advocacy, was lacking. The notable exception is WI’s impressive work with the WCF in the United States, Côte d’Ivoire, and Ghana.

A greater emphasis on networking and partnership would help future CIRCLE-type projects contribute to broad-based capacity building within the countries where they work and efforts should be made to keep the bigger picture in view and avoid too sharp a focus on project implementation.

5.6.3 Recommendations

- USDOL and its grantees should play a more proactive role in promoting and facilitating cooperation, collaboration, networking, and sharing experience between USDOL funded projects and other partners with similar objectives in the same countries. USDOL should initiate this contact by providing information about projects active in the same country/region to grantees at the beginning of any new cooperative agreement. This information would help to value and capitalize on the wealth of experience and knowledge available among NGOs and others at a local level and result in a more integrated approach to combating child labor.
- All available information concerning proposals for subcontracts should be made available to RSC members, including information about implementation of previous subcontracts and any advice from regional office staff.
- Strategies to enable RSC members who are available to offer ongoing support to subcontracts should be investigated.

- Future proposals for subcontracts should be scored for cooperation, collaboration, and networking.
- More networking and sharing of experience between subcontractors, particularly those in the same country, should be built into future CIRCLE-type projects.

5.7 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

5.7.1 Findings

Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR

- 1. What are the management strengths of this project (both at the global and regional level)?*

WI has developed and refined efficient management systems that enable a wide-reaching and complex project such as CIRCLE to operate relatively smoothly. Initial use of expensive courier services has been reduced and subcontractors are generally satisfied with the administrative practicalities of financial reporting and disbursement of funds. WI's greatest strength with regard to management is its capacity to develop appropriate and flexible systems and its openness and responsiveness to suggestions for improvement. A midterm evaluation recommendation resulted in increased field visits from both global and regional WI personnel, which have supported subcontractors and improved project monitoring. The change from monthly to bimonthly reporting was clearly a step in the right direction, although some subcontractors still find that they are repeating the same information in subsequent reports. WI regional staff has tried to make it clear that only new information needs to be reported, and this could be emphasized still further in future projects to counteract the tendency to think that 'more is better' where reporting is concerned.

At regional level, division of the primary responsibility for different countries between the Africa RM and her deputy worked well. It enabled each to develop more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the countries which they covered and closer relationships with the subcontractors concerned. The fact that the same person has filled the post of accountant in the regional office since the beginning of the program has been a great advantage, as she has become extremely proficient in training and assisting subcontractors to operate CIRCLE financial procedures without too many problems.

Systems and implementation for selection, orientation, and documenting BPs have been discussed elsewhere, often with suggestions for improvements, but the processes developed by WI were generally original and creative and as such, provide a solid basis for ongoing learning in the light of experience.

The fact that the Project Director and the Africa RM have both been in post throughout the project is a further strength, particularly in light of the frequent changes in Project Manager at USDOL. Having six different Project Managers over five years is not ideal.

2. Assess the quality and nature of the communication and coordination between headquarters and field offices.

The relationship between headquarters and the Africa regional office worked well with no apparent blockages or serious difficulties, which enabled head office to coordinate the project effectively. WI used a fairly centralized management style with all major decisions being made in Washington, and there is probably room for more autonomy for regional offices within overall CIRCLE parameters. If the role of the regional office in any future CIRCLE-type projects was developed to include supporting national and regional networking, it would strengthen the impact of project activities. Thus, regional staff could be more than a midway point for collecting and disseminating information and could be encouraged to develop a regional data base and regional statistics that would support advocacy initiatives.

“The challenge that faced the Child Labour Committees and the child help desks was ownership because the program was very short. Development problems take long and need to be owned by communities where they are. Structures that are created also require a lot of investment in capacity building and monitoring. Continuous investment in terms of resources is required if these structures are to be fully effective. It is necessary to continuously monitor them and keep upgrading their skills which is not possible now. The concept was good but more investment was required.”

Subcontractor remark from e-mail survey

3. What are management areas, including technical and financial, that could be improved?

The reporting format used by CIRCLE subcontractors was based on the standard USDOL TPR template, which enabled subcontractor reports to be transferred to WI reports with little difficulty. However, this format focuses primarily on data concerning project impact and less on the details of project activities (i.e., how they were implemented and factors contributing to their success or otherwise). In a project looking to highlight and document BP and innovation, the processes and the ‘how to’ aspect are crucial and more of this practical and useful information would enhance subcontractors’ reports. In retrospect, WI should have added another section to bimonthly report forms to capture more detail on project content.

Due to the fact that WI could not know in advance how many small, medium, and large subcontract proposals would be received, there had to be some juggling of projects and funds in order to respect the categories defined in the cooperative agreement. This resulted in sizeable reductions in a number of subcontract budgets, which inevitably affected the scope of the projects concerned. In recognition of the problem, some changes were made to the categories of subcontract, increasing the budgets for small projects from a maximum of US\$10,000 to US\$25,000, but only 5 out of 40 subcontracts exceeded a budget of US\$50,000, which limited their scope and their potential to be sustainable and hence cost effective.

CIRCLE subcontract budgets include varying components of NGO administrative costs or overheads, but overall this component is under budgeted in that it is not a realistic representation of the actual overhead costs of NGOs. This under budgeting is a reflection of generally low budgets for the work undertaken, but it effectively means that CIRCLE is being implemented on the backs of subcontractors' other funding partners, who are supporting more than their share of overheads. Organizations that want to build the long-term capacity of national NGOs beyond that of simply their ability to implement the project concerned should be prepared to pay a minimum of 10 percent of project costs as a contribution to the subcontractors' overheads. National NGOs cannot exist and develop as professional organizations if funding partners are not prepared to cover these costs, which provide the basis for building capacity and independence.

One subcontractor said that it would have liked to procure items such as school uniforms from within communities, hence putting money into the local economies where they were working. However, they were under the impression that WI requirements for official receipts could not be met as local artisans do not possess headed paper or official stamps. When asked about this, WI staff thought that it would not have been an insurmountable obstacle and it is clearly a desirable strategy for strengthening local economies, which should probably be actively promoted and encouraged in future projects.

4. *If the implementing organization did not have legal presence in the country prior to award, what impact did that have on project implementation? And if they were legally present?*

In countries where WI has an office communication with subcontractors was easier and regional staff had more knowledge of the country's national policies and other child labor/trafficking initiatives. In countries where WI was not present subcontractors had less support and the possibilities for national networking were reduced. The regional organizational structure of CIRCLE did present enormous challenges and most subcontractors and the regional office personnel felt that in future it would probably be better to concentrate on fewer countries with either national or subregional offices.

5. *Was the management structure (U.S. headquarters and three regional offices) able to provide sufficient oversight (site monitoring) and capacity building of local organizations?*

Site monitoring certainly improved after the midterm evaluation and the majority of subcontractors implemented their projects well with the level of support which they received. There is a question concerning the selection procedure, which allocates either US\$10,000 or US\$100,000 with the same levels of knowledge and documentation, where the latter carries a much greater degree of risk. The possibility of a site visit before awarding large amounts of money might be worth considering. There is a further question concerning the degree of supervision and support that is reasonable to aim to provide to subcontractors who do not perform as expected. While site visits are expensive, they are more revealing and can yield much more information than e-mail and telephone exchanges. National or subregional offices and fewer subcontracts with larger budgets would facilitate both oversight and capacity building.

Another strategy might be to use a limited number of consultants to support subcontractors in countries where the grantee does not have an office, either on a regular or trouble-shooting basis.

6. How satisfied are the NGOs with the orientation, training and support received by CIRCLE project staff?

NGOs were generally very satisfied with the orientation, training, and support they received. These aspects have been largely covered elsewhere in this report (principally under question 8, page 21).

“The CIRCLE orientation process is holistic in that it covers the monitoring, evaluation, reporting guidelines and financial aspects of the programme. It generally takes the organization through what is expected of them and provides a platform for the implementing organizations to share and discuss. Another notable strength is the timeliness in the disbursement of funds. Implementing organizations are also kept up to date with what others are implementing in the programme through the e-newsletter. A post implementation review meeting, which brings together all the implementing partners in the project, would greatly open new opportunities for further strategies towards elimination of child labour.”

Subcontractor remark from e-mail survey

“The CIRCLE orientation was a good process because the launch meetings brought together different organizations who originally did not know each other. By discovering each other they could combine their different strengths to address the issues of child labour, which requires collective effort.”

Subcontractor remark from e-mail survey

5.7.2 Additional Findings

Project Cost-Effectiveness

One of the questions that WI asked the evaluators to look at was the overall cost effectiveness of CIRCLE. While any detailed analysis is beyond the scope of the current evaluation, some general comments can be made on the basis of conversations with WI and USDOL.

WI calculated the cost per child W/P as follows:

$$\text{CIRCLE I \& II} - \text{US\$8.5 mil} / 23,500 \text{ W/P} = \text{US\$362}$$

This figure compares favorably with USDOL’s current target for new EI projects, which is US\$600–US\$700/beneficiary.

However, if we factor in the time element, a rough estimate of the average time that each child is actively involved with a project is one year for CIRCLE and around three years for standard country EI programs. This difference gives us comparative costs of CIRCLE US\$362 per child

per year and a USDOL target of US\$200–US\$233 per child per year. In addition, all the evidence suggests that impact will be more sustainable in longer interventions.

However, not too much importance should be placed on this as CIRCLE was designed as a knowledge-generation project and USDOL saw the related costs as worthwhile in relation to the expected results.

5.7.3 Conclusions

The fact that CIRCLE I was extended into CIRCLE II and has completed three rounds of RFPs and subsequent subcontract implementation attests to its effective and efficient management, so recommendations made in this report should be seen in the light of learning through experience, to refine a system that already works well. As CIRCLE is drawing to a close, points concerning its management are now largely redundant but possibilities for improvement are mentioned in the hope that the CIRCLE model will be adopted for future projects.

5.7.4 Recommendations

- A reporting format should be developed that puts more emphasis on process and “how to” aspects of a project and this aspect should be emphasized during RLMs, site visits, and project evaluations.
- A minimum of 10 percent of project costs should be paid as overhead to support subcontractors’ administration costs, in recognition of their importance in building the capacity of sustainable national NGOs.
- Local procurement of items such as school uniforms should be actively promoted alongside instructions as to how to obtain local receipts that meet USDOL requirements.
- Grantee regional offices should support a limited number of subcontracts to maintain the quality of their input and leave time for national networking. Consideration of national or subregional offices and/or the use of consultants should contribute to the design of future CIRCLE-type projects.

5.8 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT

5.8.1 Findings

Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR

- 1. What steps have been taken so far to promote sustainability and continuation of education strategies for combating child labor beyond the life of the project?*

Subcontractors were asked to think about the sustainability of their projects from the beginning and have generally worked in collaboration with CBOs, local administration, education authorities, and traditional leaders throughout the implementation of their initiatives in the hope that these structures will be able to continue activities after the end of the project. The strategy

adopted by most subcontractors includes training and raising awareness concerning the dangers linked to child trafficking and child labor and the importance of education, aiming to sensitize CBOs established during the project so that they can continue and expand project activities. Steps such as teacher training and curriculum development are investments in human capital and resources that will remain after the end of the project. Subcontractors are also looking for ongoing funding to continue nonformal education initiatives begun by the project and support income generation to enable communities to continue to enroll their children in school.

2. *Was the project's initial strategy for sustainability adequate and appropriate?*

While strategies outlined above are proving effective to some degree, in many cases the overriding messages coming from partner NGOs and communities are that:

1. The length of subcontracts needs to be significantly increased to enable community ownership of initiatives to have time to become established. A minimum period of two years is suggested.
2. Strategies and support for income generation/resource mobilization need to be an integral part of initiatives to combat child labor and promote education if they are to be sustainable.

While shorter time frames were justified with regard to the project purpose, the evaluator would argue that it is only ethical to use communities as testing grounds for possibilities if their needs are also being met.

3. *What appears to be the project's impact to date, if any, on (a) individual beneficiaries (children, parents, teachers, etc.), (b) partner organizations (local NGOs, community groups, schools, etc.), and (c) government and policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child labor issues?*

The impact of CIRCLE on the lives of children who have had the opportunity to be W/P and enrolled in education is significant. For many it has changed the course of their lives, opening up choices that they would probably never have had if it was not for the project. For some this has not been an easy experience, as the loss of family income has made it difficult to obtain adequate food and hence to study. For those that have dropped out of school, the impact has been less positive. For a few it has shaped their future and put them on a path to fighting child labor and trafficking as young activists of whom we will almost certainly hear more in the future.

Parents and teachers who have become members of CBOs to combat child labor and trafficking have realized that they can make a difference to their children's future and influence life in their communities. For many this has been a time of personal growth and development and some have become teachers or developed leadership skills beyond their previous imaginings. Others are still on the way to such achievements and rest for the moment in a more dependent state, believing that they can do little without outside assistance and unaware of their own power and potential.

Many organizations including subcontractors, schools, and CBOs have learned more about issues around child labor and trafficking, which will continue to influence their future work. Sometimes

awareness-raising has resulted in increased enrollment beyond the capacity available, highlighting the enormous need for educational infrastructure, materials and equipment, teachers, and other learning resources in most of the African countries where CIRCLE operates. However, CIRCLE has also helped to meet these needs by supporting classroom construction, teacher training, and curriculum development, in addition to providing nonformal education opportunities for vocational training and basic education for older children. Probably CIRCLE's biggest impact in this sense is that it has signaled possibilities that exist, which now need to be further developed and expanded.

As already discussed, CIRCLE has not had a great impact on government and policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child labor issues, but such a project has the potential to influence these issues through collaboration and networking with others working for the same objectives in the countries concerned.

4. Are local organizations able to secure resources to sustain activities?

There are some good examples of subcontractors visited during the evaluation that are supporting communities to secure resources to sustain activities.

- In Mali, RAC has accompanied local administrative authorities in approaching TAMICO, the principal mining company working in the district. TAMICO already supports a program of community development in a neighboring area and has indicated its willingness to replicate this in the area where RAC has implemented its CIRCLE subcontract. Negotiations are continuing.
- In Sierra Leone, CARD has made funding applications to enable it to reopen its successful vocational training center and is awaiting results.
- In Mali, AJA is hoping that the artisans association will fulfill its commitment to support the costs of continuing basic education classes for their apprentices.
- In Sierra Leone, the SMC of the community school created during the life of the CIRCLE subcontract has secured government agreement to take official responsibility for the school and is waiting for the process to be finalized and an organization to be confirmed as the body who will oversee the school on behalf of the government.

“Resource mobilization by the community groups and the DCLCs is a great practice by communities. In spite of poverty they have different resources both financial and non-financial that can be harnessed to assist vulnerable children and even their families. The fact that after the listening sessions, the groups are able to critically discuss issues and come up with strategies on how to deal with the emerging issues is a good aspect.”

Subcontractor remark from e-mail survey

There are other examples where there are no resources for ongoing support for CIRCLE initiated activities and where it seems optimistic to hope that activities will be sustainable even in the short term. In Ghana, CRADA and ANPPCAN have both encouraged communities to approach members living outside the community for funds and have initiated local fundraising, but with limited success.

5. What lessons could be learned to date in terms of the project's accomplishments and weaknesses in terms of sustainability of interventions?

Lessons in terms of sustainability from CIRCLE's accomplishments:

- NGOs that implemented successive subcontracts in the same communities produced sustainable results through training and empowering CBOs to combat child labor and encourage education.
- NGO subcontractors have an enormous capacity to initiate and develop creative solutions and innovations within the communities where they work. The commitment, imagination, and energy of their workers empower local people to believe in themselves and develop their potential, which is ultimately what makes projects sustainable.
- Involving young people in resolving issues that directly affect them and their peers is a powerful and effective approach to combating child labor/trafficking that directly benefits the young people themselves and indirectly, those with whom they work.

Lessons in terms of sustainability from CIRCLE's weaknesses:

- Short project duration makes it difficult for new community groups to become sufficiently confident and competent in their roles and responsibilities.
- Income replacement strategies to promote income generation or resource mobilization are essential if communities in sub-Saharan Africa are to be able to consistently support ex-child laborers in education.

Lessons in terms of sustainability from CIRCLE's overall implementation:

- Awareness-raising concerning education needs to be accompanied by support for increased availability of quality education (infrastructure, teachers and teacher training, materials, and equipment) because of the gap between supply and demand for education in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Significant achievements for individuals can be made with small sums of money over relatively short periods, but sustainable community change takes longer and costs more.

6. Could projects funded be scaled up for funding by the government or another donor?

Many subcontracts could be scaled up for funding by the government or another financial partner. These tend to be the ones that were implemented on a scale appropriate to the project

period and the available budget and that consequently can demonstrate an impact. Whether existing projects will in fact be scaled up depends to a large extent on the capacity and commitment of the subcontractor to do the necessary work to attract the attention and interest of a subsequent partner.

WI could have worked more with subcontractors to support them in securing ongoing resources, perhaps through a workshop or training pack on fundraising or by contacting or researching potential partners. Such a workshop would be a useful addition to capacity building and could help to secure ongoing funding for CIRCLE-initiated activities.

7. How effective has the project been in documenting and communicating good practices? Could this and other materials be used in the wider community?

The reporting format for 6-month technical reports encourages identification of good practices at subcontract, regional, and central levels. This format has collected a wealth of ideas and reports that feed into the BP reviews and thus contribute to the identification and scoring of BPs. It is difficult to respond definitively to this question until the BP Compendium is finished and disseminated, but it does provide an opportunity to look at the website, the spotlight stories, and the newsletters, as well as the materials developed by different subcontractors during the course of the project.

The CIRCLE website carries a lot of information and is easy to navigate to find whatever you are looking for—if you speak English. While it makes sporadic attempts at translation into different languages, it could have gone much further in enabling non-English speakers to access information. The site does not exploit its potential for networking as there are no links to other organizations or resources concerned with child labor/trafficking, or links to subcontractors' websites. While subcontract descriptions are available, it would have been interesting to have some updates on each initiative. The spotlight stories and newsletters provide some insight into different subcontracts and are informative and useful as far as they go, but as they tend to focus on successes, we do not hear so much about the more problematic aspects of the work or how/if challenges are being overcome.

The newsletters were appreciated as a means of sharing information and experience and it would have been interesting if more subcontractors had contributed articles in addition to those by WI. Sharing the publicity and training materials developed by different subcontractors via the website would encourage cross fertilization and mutual inspiration.

WI is investing significant thought, time, and resources in the BP Compendium, so it will be important that this document is made widely available among subcontractors, on the Internet, and to other stakeholders combating child labor/trafficking. It is planned to share the document with subcontractors in meetings bringing them together on each continent and these meetings could serve as a dynamic opportunity for experience sharing, particularly regarding the sustainability of initiatives and plans for ongoing work and future networking. Even if CIRCLE is coming to an end, the issues and challenges remain.

5.8.2 Conclusions

CIRCLE's initial strategies for sustainability can be expanded in the light of experience. The benefits of longer subcontracts have been demonstrated both through the significant successes where several subcontracts have been implemented in the same communities and through subcontracts where activities have not been maintained. National NGOs and communities have an important role to play in initiating, testing, and refining creative solutions to identified challenges and CIRCLE has provided them with an opportunity to do this. Many initiatives have proved themselves through their impact on individuals and communities and now need to be implemented more widely. Doing so requires support from governments and technical and financial partners, and perhaps WI needs to consider how it can assist subcontractors in attracting such support.

5.8.3 Recommendations

- The length of subcontracts needs to be increased significantly to enable community ownership of initiatives to become established.
- Strategies and support for income generation/resource mobilization need to be an integral part of sustainable initiatives to combat child labor and promote education.
- The common responsibility of grantee, RSCs, and subcontractors to ensure that project proposals are feasible within the time and budget available should be recognized and emphasized.
- CIRCLE-type projects should do more to influence government and policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child labor issues through encouraging and promoting collaboration and networking with others working for the same objectives in the countries concerned.

VI LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICE

The good practice part of this section can better be left to the BP Compendium because with so many subcontracts, it is difficult to cover all the many good practices that CIRCLE represents. However, it is worth identifying some good practices common to many subcontracts and mentioning the CIRCLE model itself as a good practice because it has found a way to fund projects tailored to the needs of specific communities and support national NGOs in implementing them.

Examples of common good practice observed during the evaluation included strategies and activities that:

- Empower young people so that they develop the self confidence to express their ideas and formulate plans and strategies for advocacy and action—this is inspiring every time.
- Identify, train, and support community members who become leaders and educators.
- Invest in and value individuals and groups so they begin to value and believe in themselves.
- Present information in a way that is accessible and interesting for the target group—often through starting from their own experiences and knowledge.
- Are holistic in their approach, taking into account the overall context, needs, and expectations of the group concerned.
- Are based on making communities responsible for their own choices.

Some of the many lessons learned:

- With limited resources, more impact can be achieved by working intensively with fewer people in a smaller area than through spreading resources more thinly.
- When one group of children is removed from exploitive labor, vigilance is needed to ensure that another vulnerable group does not take their place. In the kente weaving town of Adamwomase in Ghana, local children are now sent to school but the chief informed us that other children from the Volta region are being brought to fill their places at the looms.
- Most CIRCLE subcontracts used NGO fieldworkers to initiate and coordinate community activities through training and supporting CBOs. A few subcontractors used the strategy of training and empowering local authority staff to do this work with varying degrees of success. For this strategy to work, there needs to be a reasonable certainty that these staff members have the time, the resources, the expertise, and the commitment (and the commitment of their bosses) to do the work. If they do, this strategy could be successful and sustainable. If they do not, it probably will not.

It is fitting that this report should end by congratulating WI for piloting and coordinating this exciting initiative. It is to be hoped that the evaluation has succeeded in capturing the important issues and that the ideas and suggestions expressed will be taken in the spirit in which they are offered—in support of stakeholders' common objective of making life a better experience for more children, increasing their choices and opportunities through education, and putting an end to suffering through exploitation.

The evaluator would like to thank sincerely all those with whom she worked during the evaluation and all who contributed to logistical arrangements, particularly the Africa regional staff of WI and staff from the NGOs RADA, CARD, Agricultural Production Extension and General Services (APEGS), CRADA, ANPPCAN, PACF, EPAG, RAC, and AJA who found time to organize interviews, discussions, and site visits during their busy schedules. Particular thanks goes to all interpreters who did a difficult and tiring job with unfailing good humor.