

FUNDED BY THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Independent Midterm Evaluation of the Countering Youth & Child Labor Through Education in Liberia and Sierra Leone (CYCLE) Project

International Rescue Committee

Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-5-0048



2008

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Dr. Martina Nicolls

Evaluator

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALP	Accelerated/Alternative Learning Program
ANPPCAN	African Network for the Prevention & Protection against Child Abuse & Neglect
CAFF	Children Associated with Fighting Forces
CARD	Community Action for Rural Development
CBO	Community-based Organization
CD	Country Director
CIN	Child Identification Number
CLMS	Child Labor Monitoring System
CODEPP	Community Development & Empowerment Through Participation Program
CREPS	Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (Sierra Leone)
CTA	Community Teachers' Association
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
CYCLE	Countering Youth & Child Labor Through Education
CYPD	Children & Youth Protection & Development
DDP	Deputy Director Programs
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation
EI	Education Initiatives
EOP	Economic Opportunity Program
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GOL	Government of Liberia
GOSL	Government of Sierra Leone
IGA	Income-generating Activities
IIECL	International Initiative to End Child Labor
ILAB	International Labor Affairs Bureau
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Nongovernment Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRC-NY	International Rescue Committee, New York
LRD	Linking Relief and Development
LTTP	Liberia Teacher Training Project

M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology (Sierra Leone)
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MOE	Ministry of Education (Liberia)
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MVTC	Monrovia Vocational Training Center
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RADA	Rehabilitation and Development Agency, Sierra Leone
SABABU	World Bank/MEYS Project in Sierra Leone to build/re-build schools
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centers
SEARCH	Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Hope
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WAEC	West African Examination Council
WFCL	Worst Form of Child Labor

MAPS OF LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

Liberia:



Sierra Leone:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Countering Youth and Child Labor through Education (CYCLE) program in Liberia and Sierra Leone is a four-year (2005–2009) US\$6 million project, being funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The USDOL’s decision to do so was highly appropriate, given the vulnerability of the youth in both countries, the impetus of the governments towards reforms in education, and the pervasive presence of exploitive child labor; the extent of which remains unknown. As one Child Welfare Committee member said: “The gravity of child labor cannot be underestimated.”

The impact of the CYCLE project, at this midterm point, must be seen in the context of Liberia’s and Sierra Leone’s emergence from one of the most protracted and violent conflicts in Africa’s recent history; characterized by a complete breakdown of society. In initiating the CYCLE program, the USDOL provided the only program in either country that specifically addresses child labor.

The program was designed around a community-driven multifaceted approach, for which the International Rescue Committee (IRC) provided a solid foundation of child labor awareness raising, sensitization, and dialogue. In addition, helping children and youth withdrawn and prevented from child labor to access relevant educational services, providing them with counseling and student materials, has received support at both community and ministry levels. A multi-pronged referral system and student tracking system, accessible by all stakeholders including youth groups, community groups, line ministries, parents, and labor inspectors, has contributed to the success of the program to date.

CYCLE interventions, based upon participatory and inclusive decision-making philosophies, are “leverage for change”—positive change towards the reduction of child labor. The program has also been directly responsible for engendering a cultural shift in way of thinking amongst communities. Essential for continuing the paradigm shift are ongoing sustainable processes at all levels; students, parents, schools, communities, and line ministries at the community level and at the national level.

Although strategically relevant, CYCLE’s various components are not all equally successful in their application. Some communities supported by the program remain inherently weak, thwarted by ineffective leadership, and limited initiative. The CYCLE project can learn from the best practices and successful activities of each country, as both exhibited different strengths. For example; communities in Sierra Leone, through the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), are more advanced in their knowledge and understanding of the need to move towards sustainability. Their successes are largely due to their legal status within the government, respect within the community, and their ability to take the initiative to lead their community towards sustainable child protection interventions. They already have Sustainability and Action Plans in place. Liberian communities are not as advanced, since CWCs are not afforded legal status. On the other hand, ministerial involvement and participation is greatly advanced in Liberia. Parent Teacher Associations in Liberia have the support of the Ministry of Education and are therefore more active than the Community Teacher Associations in Sierra Leone.

Graduates of skills training centers in Liberia are clearly more advanced in considering different and varied options in which to use their skills, start their own business, collaborate with others, work with their skills provider, gain a contract for work, or seek other employment. In Sierra Leone, the skills training providers appear to focus solely on the establishment of cooperatives.

The following table shows the strengths of each country in different areas. An interesting finding is the perception by stakeholders of the benefits of the program. In Liberia, stakeholders perceived the benefits in terms of education, particularly for students and parents. The “healing power of education” permeates not just the classroom, but into the homes of students and parents. Students in Liberia discussed benefits such as being “more peaceful,” “not biting my fingernails anymore,” and “not suffering.” Parents indicated that they were “more free of financial burdens,” “happy that their children were happy in school,” and “more able to talk to other parents about the hardships and problems in the family.”

In Sierra Leone, students, parents, line ministries, and community groups perceived the benefits of the program in terms of community benefits. They included benefits such as the reduction of child labor, child crime, teenage pregnancies, noise, worst forms of school discipline, hardship, financial pressures, bad language, and drug and alcohol abuse. These benefits were expressed in terms of reducing poverty, crime, and conflict within the community. Therefore, the strength of the program in Sierra Leone rests in community spirit and cohesion, and is an example of best practice in community development, community pride, and community ownership.

Table 1: Country Strengths and Best Practices

	Liberia		Sierra Leone	
Government Involvement	3 stars	High commitment & participation in CYCLE; advanced in child labor and educational reforms	1 star	Requires more attention
Communities	1 star	Requires understanding of sustainability & how to implement	3 stars	Highly advanced, with Sustainability Plans documented
Community Structures	1 star	Parent Teacher Associations, due to authorization by government	3 stars	Child Welfare Committees, due to legal status by government
Skills Training Center Graduates	3 stars	Knowledgeable of range of options available to them after graduation; many had started own business and were earning incomes	1 star	Spoke only of option of forming cooperatives; no graduate had yet started their own business
Teachers	1 star	Qualifications and standard of teaching is low	3 stars	Qualifications and standard of teaching is advanced
Primary & Secondary Students	2 stars	Committed to learning	3 stars	Highly knowledgeable of child labor and CYCLE project; more vibrant; less inhibited
Stakeholders' Perceived Benefits	2 stars	Healing power of education (on individuals)	3 stars	More than reducing child labor (community benefits: reduction in child crime, teenage pregnancy, caning in school, financial pressure, drug & alcohol abuse, etc.)

Rating: 1 star—represents good
2 stars—represents great achievement
3 stars—represents excellent, exhibiting best practices

The ratings are based upon comparisons between countries, depth of stakeholder involvement, knowledge and understanding of stakeholders, or specific activities conducted by the stakeholder that stood out as effective practices.

Lessons Learned

The following lessons have been gleaned from the evaluator's visits to communities.

- Effective leadership of community members is a powerful tool towards gaining community respect, motivating communities into participating in common projects and interventions, and promoting a sense of “oneness.”
- Economic empowerment through training in best practice business skills and effective implementation mobilizes communities towards self-sufficiency and sustainability if followed-up and continually encouraged.
- Child labor awareness raising and sensitization are major catalysts for social change within communities.
- Basic functional literacy skills enable community members, particularly youth and women, to converse, write their names, record measurements (i.e., carpentry and tailoring), and document simple requests.
- Basic numeracy skills enable community members, particularly youth and women, to prepare budgets, keep accounts of income and expenditure, and manage finances.
- The capacity of communities was greatly increased through training in child labor, education, healing classroom practices, health, economic, and community development.
- In order for the messages to be fully absorbed and applied, multiple trainings that are repeated continuously over the life of the program are preferable to one-off training session.
- The creation of CWCs is a major catalyst in bringing communities together.
- The more remote a community, the more it focused and committed to self-sustainability and community cohesion.
- Follow up in the field is essential to ensuring that learning is applied at the grassroots level.
- Building the capacity of local nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners greatly improves their ability to implement their mandate within the program, and is critical to the success of child labor awareness raising.
- The concept of empowering local NGO partners through joint and collaborative activities improves motivation, makes them appreciate “equal” partnering, and leads to improved performances.

At its midterm point, the CYCLE program is effective and pertinent to the context of both Liberia and Sierra Leone due to their high rate of exploitive child labor. The extent of exploitive child labor is unknown because neither country has conducted a national survey on child labor, nor have they established a national database to capture this critical information. Targeting select

counties and communities for support and developing quality relationships and partnerships at the community level is a key factor in the success of the CYCLE program.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen CWCs further through additional training and support, particularly in Liberia. CWCs are strong community structures that can facilitate the bonding and binding of communities and are critical for identification, retention, monitoring, and reporting of child labor in their region.
2. Link CWCs and other community groups with relevant line ministries, NGOs, and other donors.
3. Share and impart best practice approaches and strategies for successful community development through community members from model communities. Once trained, they could conduct training and information sessions to members of other communities.
4. Convene a Cross-Border Conference annually to share and impart information, challenges, and best practices across countries.
5. Rehabilitate Ahmadiyya Primary School in Tongo Fields, Kenema District, Sierra Leone to prevent potential collapse. The school has bowed mud-brick walls and a plank of wood holding up a ceiling in one classroom that appears extremely hazardous to children.
6. Manage the expectations of grade 6 and grade 9 (and to some extent, grade 12) graduates who will complete during the program. Consider the provision of support for grade 6 and grade 9 completers where possible.
7. Provide timely support materials (such as uniforms and start-up kits) to beneficiaries. Beneficiaries reported that twice the distribution of materials was delayed and was not received until the second term.
8. Conduct specific and discrete capacity-building interventions for relevant ministries in child labor and education.
9. Conduct capacity building for communities in agriculture, income generation, sustainability planning, business skills, financial management, and/or proposal writing.
10. Monitor skills and vocational training graduates, comparing the formation of cooperatives (particularly in Sierra Leone) with the formation of business and other business/employment options (predominantly in Liberia) after graduation.
11. Monitor cooperatives closely to avoid inequity, poor management, and failure.
12. Establish a national database on child labor in both Liberia and Sierra Leone (to include child trafficking data).

13. Conduct a study in June/July 2008 of income generating activities (IGA) for families in Sierra Leone to assess progress of productivity and profitability.
14. Enhance support for IGA families to ensure productivity and profitability. This may include regular refresher training in technical skills and financial management.
15. Revise the data collection and entry of Question 10 on the Intake Form to avoid data entry clerks having to make arbitrary decisions. Currently, field staff circle three or more options but the database can only allow entry of two options.
16. Where possible, promote the need for more female teachers within both countries. In Liberia, this might be possible through IRC's USAID-funded Liberian Teacher Training Program.
17. Continue to improve the monitoring and evaluation system in both countries (e.g., increasing regular field monitoring visits, streamlining forms and data entry, correcting things such as Question 10 on the Intake Form).
18. Continue to strengthen the importance of the referral system, even as the project winds down enrollments (and therefore referrals) for the last intake (Cohort 4 target of 1,952 enrollments across both Liberia and Sierra Leone).
19. Continue the strong relationships between CYCLE field staff—social workers and education officers—and beneficiaries, schools, and communities.

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I PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, a widespread and intermittent civil war¹ that ended in 2003 has severely decimated their countries' institutional human resource capacity and government systems. In Liberia, following a two-year ruling period by the National Transitional Government of Liberia (2004–2005), their first democratic elections were held in October 2005. As a result, in January 2006 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was inaugurated as President of Liberia, the first female president in Africa. In Sierra Leone in 1996, a multiparty presidential election led to the inauguration of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, the country's first democratically elected president. Leadership instability led to the UN installation in 2002 of its largest peacekeeping force in the country, and the subsequent re-election of President Kabbah in May of that year. At the next election, on September 17, 2007, opposition leader Ernest Bai Koroma was sworn in as the current president.

Both nations have commenced recovery and rehabilitation processes and systems reforms, including education and child protection reforms. Liberia has ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182 but it has yet to be introduced into the national laws. Sierra Leone has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Table 2) but it has yet to sign ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age of Work, or Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

Table 2: Current Child Protection and Labor Laws

Liberia: Labor Law, Title 18, Section 74	Sierra Leone: Child Rights Bill
<p>“It shall be unlawful for any person to employ or hire any child under the age of sixteen years during the hours when his is required to attend school in any portion of any month when school is in session; provided, however, that a person may employ minors under sixteen if he keeps a register and the school certificates of such employees open to inspection, which certificates shall show that each of the said minors listed in the register is attending school regularly and is able to read at sight and write simple sentences legibly.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are eligible for full time employment at the age of 15 years. • Minimum engagement in hazardous work is 18 years. • Minimum engagement in light work is 13 years. • Recruitment into army is 18 years. • Age for marriage is 18 years. • Criminal responsibility is 14 years.

Liberia passed the Education Act in 2001, and in 2005 introduced free and compulsory basic education for all children from age 6 on. Sierra Leone passed the Education Act and introduced free and compulsory basic education in 2004. In both countries, each line ministry is represented at the county/province and district levels; however, enforcement for compliance is limited.

Children and youth in Liberia and Sierra Leone are extremely vulnerable to child labor and exploitation. Immense poverty has put families under extreme economic pressure, with many not able to school their children. In addition, the war left many children orphaned with no means of

¹ In Liberia, intermittent civil war commenced in 1989 and ended in 2003 with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra. In Sierra Leone, the civil war lasted for 11 years, from 1991 to 2002; the Lome Peace Agreement was signed in 1999.

financial support. Both governments are still lagging behind with school rehabilitation and construction; some areas are without nearby secondary schools and vocational education institutions. Many teachers are under-qualified or inexperienced, and not on the government payroll; either volunteering their services or paid a small stipend by the community.

Hence, in October 2005 the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) launched the four-year, 6 million USD CYCLE Project—Countering Youth and Child Labor through Education. CYCLE was instituted in Liberia and Sierra Leone under a cooperative agreement with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). By the end of the project, the IRC aims to have worked with 29,890 children and youth ages 5 to 17, to withdraw or prevent them from engaging in exploitive labor. CYCLE’s interventions target nine communities in three counties in Liberia, with the assistance of three local nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners. In Sierra Leone, CYCLE’s interventions target seven communities in three districts, with two local NGO partners (Table 3).

Table 3: CYCLE Project Sites and Local NGO Partners

Liberia	Sierra Leone
1. Montserrado County (Local NGO = ANPPCAN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHP Community • Red Light Community • Chicken Soup Factory 2. Nimba County (Local NGO = SEARCH) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ganta Community • Tappita Community • Karnplay Community (Not visited by evaluator) 3. Lofa County (Local NGO = CODEPP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voinjama City • Zorzor Community • Foya Community (Not visited by evaluator) 	1. Freetown District (Local NGO = FAWE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberdeen • Waterloo Rural District 2. Kono District (Local NGO = CARD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koidu • Small Sefadu • Manjama • Koardu (Not visited by evaluator) 3. Kenema District (Local NGO = CARD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tongo Fields

ANPPCAN = African Network for the Prevention and Protection of Children against Child Abuse and Neglect;
SEARCH = Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children’s Hope;
CODEPP = Community Development and Empowerment through Participation Program;
FAWE = Forum for African Women Educationalists; and CARD = Community Action for Rural Development.

The CYCLE project’s goal is to sustainably reduce the prevalence of exploitive child labor in Liberia and Sierra Leone, with the purpose of supporting children that are withdrawn or prevented from exploitive labor to access education in targeted communities. The CYCLE project has four expected outputs (and associated activities), as follows in Table 4.

Table 4: CYCLE Project Expected Outputs

Output 1: Project beneficiaries supported to access locally-available education services
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision of materials and rehabilitation support to schools to absorb additional children 2. Provision of learning materials for students, including books, uniforms, school bags, and exercise books 3. Provision of scholarships to expedite entry into secondary school and/or formal vocational institutions 4. Provision of business skills training and income generating production-centered tool kits
Output 2: Improved quality of education (activities to increase retention and completion)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct teacher training in schools where CYCLE beneficiaries are enrolled 2. Collaborate with lead education agencies to advocate for the inclusion of child labor issues into the curriculum 3. Support to mentoring systems within education programs and classrooms 4. Support the development of youth groups and leadership in educational programs 5. Use results from community-based market surveys to enhance the relevance of vocational and skills training 6. Enroll CYCLE beneficiaries in nonformal functional literacy, numeracy, and life skills programs 7. Families provided with business training & income generating production-centered tool kits
Output 3: Relevant stakeholders mobilized to increase knowledge and improve attitudes about the value of education and the negative effects of child labor
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train partners, project staff, and communities on child rights, child labor issues and the importance of education 2. Train partners, staff, and key community groups on leadership and social mobilization techniques 3. Conduct and disseminate findings from baseline needs and resources assessment 4. Support radio programs, dramas, poster competitions, and other community-driven mobilization campaigns 5. Adapt Community Conversations model to be applied by partnering NGOs in Sierra Leone and Liberia
Output 4: Sustainable child labor monitoring strengthened at community & national levels
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train partners and project staff in participatory child labor monitoring, research, and data collection techniques 2. Assist local, provincial, and national partners to become actively engaged in a Child Labor Monitoring System 3. Facilitate development of community-based education and child labor management information systems 4. Hold national level policy workshops and meetings

Source: Adapted from CYCLE Project Document under USDOL & IRC Cooperative Agreement, Final, August 2007.

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II EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

All USDOL Education Initiative (EI) projects funded through cooperative agreements are subject to midterm and final evaluations. The purpose of the independent midterm evaluation is to conduct a systematic and objective assessment of the CYCLE Project in Liberia and Sierra Leone for the USDOL, taking into consideration its design, management, and implementation strategies, activities, and results. The aim is to determine the program's relevance and fulfillment of objectives, to identify challenges and successes, assess progress at its halfway point and provide recommendations for positive change. The Terms of Reference (Annex 1) provides a detailed list of evaluation purposes.

2.2 SCOPE OF WORK

The evaluator conducted the midterm evaluation of the USDOL/IRC's CYCLE project from January to March 2008, with a week of desk review in January and a month in-country from January 21 to February 16. This included two weeks in Liberia and two weeks in Sierra Leone. The evaluation culminated in two stakeholder meetings in each country on February 1 in Monrovia and February 15 in Freetown, with the draft report submitted on March 3. It concluded on March 21 when the final midterm report was submitted to the USDOL. The Terms of Reference (Annex 1) details the evaluation schedule.

The scope of the evaluation includes a review and assessment of all activities conducted under the USDOL Cooperative Agreement with the International Rescue Committee for the implementation period September 2005 to the end of December 2007.

2.3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluator assessed the design, management, strategies, performance, results, and impact of the CYCLE Project in Liberia and Sierra Leone through the following approaches:

2.3.1 USDOL Meeting

The evaluator met with the USDOL on November 21, 2007 in Washington DC to discuss the requirements and Terms of Reference for the midterm evaluation of the CYCLE project in Liberia and Sierra Leone. A telephone interview was also conducted on January 15, 2008 before the evaluator's departure to the field.

2.3.2 Desk Reviews

The evaluator conducted a desk review of documentation on the Liberia and Sierra Leone CYCLE project, supplied by the USDOL and staff of the IRC through electronic access. Documentation included the cooperative agreement, management procedures and guidelines, technical progress report, work plans, and project documentation. The evaluator also collected

and analyzed additional documentation in-field, provided by IRC staff, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Coordinator (including project statistics) and stakeholder documentation (such as Sustainability and Action Plans prepared by Child Welfare Committees).

2.3.3 Interviews, Consultations, and Meetings

The evaluator conducted interviews by telephone and face-to-face. Initial telephone interviews commenced during the desk review, before the country review, with staff from IRC New York (IRC-NY).

During the country reviews, the evaluator conducted consultations and meetings with IRC staff from project offices in Monrovia, Liberia; regional offices in Nimba County and Lofa County, Liberia; project offices in Freetown, Sierra Leone; and regional offices in the Kenema and Kono districts of Sierra Leone. The interviews were coordinated with suggestions and contact information provided by the USDOL and the IRC. (A list of people interviewed appears in Annex 2.)

All interviews were conducted on an independent and confidential basis to maintain objectivity. Hence, the IRC staff accompanying the evaluator while traveling to locations did not take part in the interview or consultation process in order to avoid influencing the interviewees. The evaluator was aware of UNICEF's interview protocols and Save the Children UK's guide to interviewing children. Hence, the evaluator adhered to the protocols to ensure the ethical, responsible, and respectful consultation with children. This included maintaining anonymity and being sensitive to the children's needs and situation.

2.3.4 Field Site Visits

The USDOL and IRC recommended two weeks in Liberia and two weeks in Sierra Leone to visit stakeholders. These included: (1) Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education/Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MEYS), ILO, and the U.S. Embassy; (2) primary schools, secondary schools, vocational institutions, skills training centers, Parent/Community Associations,² Child Welfare Committees, and youth groups; (3) district education offices and civic centers; and (4) local NGO partner offices and sites.

Annex 3 outlines the evaluation itinerary, showing that the evaluator visited seven of the nine communities in Liberia and six of the seven communities in Sierra Leone, thus attending 13 of the project's 16 sites (81%). The evaluator did not visit Karnplay and Foya in Liberia, nor Koardu in Sierra Leone. The evaluator visited 27 (8%) of the 342 educational institutions participating in the CYCLE project in Liberia and Sierra Leone, to include: 8 (5%) of the 151 primary schools, 7 (10%) of the 74 secondary schools, 10 (10%) of the 101 skills training centers, and two (50%) of the four vocational institutes. The evaluator did not visit any of the 12 Accelerated/Alternative Learning Program (ALP) schools.

² Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) exist in Liberia; Community Teachers' Associations (CTAs) exist in Sierra Leone.

In total, the evaluator conducted 259 face-to-face interviews (43% with students), and a small number of larger group meetings (Annex 2). No translator was required in Liberia due to the evaluator's prior experience in the country. IRC hired a translator for the evaluator on the first day in Sierra Leone. However, the evaluator continued without a translator due to sufficient understanding of Krio and Arabic.

In field, the evaluator employed the following approaches:

1. Interviews (predominantly individual and small groups)
2. Observation (community, classrooms, school registries, children's behavior, etc.)
3. Noting CYCLE staff in action (performing daily tasks in office or in field, including data entry from student intake forms).

2.3.5 Stakeholder Workshops

After field visits in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the evaluator held stakeholder's meetings in each country with the following objectives:

- To present major findings and emerging issues
- Solicit further discussions and lessons learned
- Obtain additional information or clarify information gleaned from the site visits.

In Liberia, the stakeholder meeting of approximately 25 participants was held in Monrovia on February 1, 2008 with representatives from the National Commission of Child Labor, IRC, CYCLE project senior staff, local NGO partners, and the University of Liberia, as well as ministry officials, selected representative community leaders, and selected child beneficiaries. In Sierra Leone, the stakeholder meeting of approximately 25 participants was held in Freetown on February 15 with representatives of ministries, IRC, CYCLE project senior staff, local NGO partners, beneficiary school officials, youth groups, representatives of the Lower Bambara Tongo Fields Mining Committee, and beneficiary children. (Annex 4 outlines the meeting agenda and list of participants.)

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III EVALUATION FINDINGS: PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 PROJECT DESIGN

Does the project design complement existing efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor (WFCL) and/or fill an existing gap in services that other interventions were not addressing? How has the project’s design fit into government programs to combat child labor and provide education for all?

The CYCLE project complements existing efforts (Table 5) in reducing child labor and increasing access to education by the governments of both Liberia and Sierra Leone. In addition, it actively works in conjunction with international NGO initiatives. This is particularly evident in Liberia, where the Government of Liberia (GOL) appears to be working more collaboratively and cooperatively with the CYCLE team than the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL).

Table 5: Existing Government Child Labor and Education Programs

Government	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Ministry of Labor • Ministry of Youth & Sports • Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs • Ministry of Gender & Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education, Youth, & Sport • Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, & Children’s Affairs • Ministry of Labor • Ministry of Mineral Resources
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-year Education Master Plan • Education for All Plan of Action • National Policy on Girls’ Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Youth Policy • Education Sector Plan 2007-2015 • National Child Rights Bill
Commissions/ Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Commission on Child Labor • National Coalition for Education for All • National Teachers Association of Liberia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Com/n for War-Affected Children • Trafficking in Persons Action Committee • SL Police Dept Family Support Unit
National Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated Learning Program—funded in part by USAID • Teacher’s Certificate “C” Training • UNMIL Quick Impact Rehabilitation • USAID Community Investment Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IBIS/UNICEF Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools • UNICEF Community Education Investment • Training and Employment Program • Rapid Response Education Program • GOSL/ADB/IDA Sababu Education Project

Source: Adapted from CYCLE Project Document under USDOL & IRC Cooperative Agreement, Final, August 2007.

3.1.1 Liberia

To combat child labor, in May 2004 the Liberian Ministry of Labor (MOL) established a National Commission on Child Labor. However, due to the lack of an adequate operational budget and the absence of political will amongst some government officials, the Commission had been unable to fulfill its mandate.³ The MOL conceded that while it would have gradually and eventually introduced and implemented reforms to child labor, since collaborating with the CYCLE team from the end of 2005 it has fast-forwarded the commencement of policies, procedures, and initiatives. As such, the MOL signed a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2007 to strengthen its capacity and commit to monitoring child labor. It has subsequently established Child Labor Monitoring Committees. There are now 54 trained labor inspectors across the country to monitor child labor. The initial focus is on monitoring the rubber plantations due to ILO's focus on dangerous chemicals and hazardous workplaces within the agricultural sector. Simultaneously, the MOL involved 40 media representatives in the CYCLE's child labor training to improve their knowledge of the worst forms of child labor (WFCL). The media is now active in exposing issues to the public via newspapers and radio.

The CYCLE project also complements existing GOL efforts in the provision of education for all. Evidence of this is that CYCLE has reached its end-of-project target of 1,156⁴ students enrolled in the country's Accelerated Learning Program,⁵ re-established in 2004 by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and UNICEF, with funds from USAID. In addition, CYCLE has actively complemented the MOE's girls' education policy by, to date, enrolling 7,694 girls across all forms of education services in Liberia, representing 53% of CYCLE students. A majority of the girls (77%) are in primary school. The MOE indicated that CYCLE had contributed towards its Education for All policy by enrolling 14,534 students in three years, thus supplementing the 2008 total primary enrollment of 1,087,257; an increase of 82% on 2006/07 enrollment,⁶ as well as enrollments in other educational programs. Hence, the representative of the MOE stated that it was "a great relief" to have the CYCLE project in Liberia, and is encouraged by the number of working youth returned to school in the project's targeted areas. The evaluator noted a high level of cooperation and collaboration by the MOE.

Both the MOL and MOE stated that the CYCLE project is the only current intervention in Liberia that specifically addresses the major child protection and welfare issue of countering child labor through education at the national and county levels, hence filling an existing gap in the provision of services and policy reforms.

³ United Nations, Human Rights in Liberia's Rubber Plantations: Tapping into the Future, May 2006.

⁴ Statistics, as of February 2008, provided by the CYCLE M&E Coordinator.

⁵ The ALP is a program for out-of-school and over-age youth that condenses the six years of primary schooling into three years.

⁶ Much of the increase is due to free education at the primary level.

3.1.2 Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone currently implements the SABABU (World Bank/MEYS Project in Sierra Leone to build/re-build schools and vocational skills training centers; SABABU is Krio for *favor*) basic education project,⁷ and the Disarmament Demobilization and Rehabilitation (DDR) program to reintegrate ex-combatants into vocational education. An NGO implements the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) program in parts of the country, including the Kono District. The nation recently adopted the Education Sector Plan 2007–2015; however, due to elections in 2007, little has been achieved.

The country has a National Commission for War-Affected Children, which is largely inactive. Unlike Liberia, it does not have a National Commission or Unit on Child Labor. A focal person has been approved to facilitate activities of the CYCLE project, and discussions have commenced on the development of a national child labor database. To date, the MOL, the MEYS, and the CYCLE team have collaborated to devise and print a manual for school inspectors. In addition, the MOL has trained 17 inspectors in countering child labor. Hence, existing government efforts are complemented by the CYCLE project and fill a vital gap in services, particularly in child labor reforms.

Does the project design seem to be adequately supporting the five major goals of USDOL-funded technical assistance projects? If not, which ones are not being supported and why?

The USDOL has five major goals to counter exploitive child labor:

1. Withdrawing or preventing children from involvement in exploitive child labor through the provision of direct educational services.
2. Strengthening policies on child labor and education, the capacity of national institutions to combat child labor, and formal and transitional education systems that encourage children engaged in or at-risk of engaging in exploitive labor to attend school.
3. Raising awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilizing a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures.
4. Supporting research and the collection of reliable data on child labor.
5. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

⁷ Estimated to meet only 25% of the country's needs.

Currently, the CYCLE project adequately supports four of the five USDOL goals for technical assistance projects. It partially assists the goal of ‘supporting research and the collection of reliable data on child labor’ at the midterm stage. Within the targeted communities of the three Liberian counties and the three districts in Sierra Leone, the project collects reliable data on withdrawn and prevented students within the project and their prior child labor status. However, it does not collect data within the total community or county/district populations, nor at the national level. During the evaluation, the Executive Director of Liberia’s National Commission on Child Labor indicated that it would appreciate the CYCLE project’s assistance in conducting a national survey on child labor, and in creating a national database on child labor statistics. The CYCLE team has commenced discussions with the MOL to establish a national database on child labor over the next two years of the project, specifically discussing what data needs to be collected, the frequency and method of data collection, and developing the data collection tools. In this regard, USDOL and ILO would require discussions to negotiate assistance through funding or the provision of expertise, if the establishment of a national database were to proceed.

Currently, the Sierra Leone Government has no advisory committee or specific unit addressing child labor that would centralize efforts. However, the CYCLE team has commenced discussions towards the collection of reliable national data on child labor in Sierra Leone.⁸

3.2 PROJECT DESIGN ASSUMPTIONS

Are the assumptions in the project design holding true (e.g., if CYCLE assumed that children would be allowed to integrate into formal schools, is this proving to be the case)? Based on this analysis, what changes need to be made to the project design?

3.2.1 Program Assumption 1: Special Emphasis Placed Upon the Withdrawal of Children (25% withdrawn)

The CYCLE project design viewed the withdrawal of children and youth from the worst forms of child labor and exploitive labor with the utmost importance. This includes child trafficking, children associated with fighting forces (CAFF), forced or bonded labor, prostitution and pornography, and illicit or illegal activities. Exploitive child labor prohibits children from accessing, persisting in, or benefiting from education. Hence, the project design set a target of 25% of children and youth withdrawn (and 75% prevented).

At the midterm point of the project, with 95% of the targeted students in Liberia enrolled, 21% are in the ‘withdrawn’ category. In Sierra Leone, with 92% of the targeted students enrolled, 45% are withdrawn. Across both countries, 33% are currently withdrawn,⁹ thereby exceeding the project’s target of 25%. Hence, the assumption that special emphasis will be placed upon withdrawing students has held true. This is due, in particular, to the prevalence of WFCL, such as mining and stone crushing, in Sierra Leone; whereby the CYCLE project placed special emphasis in placing these severely affected groups of children in relevant education services.

⁸ Discussions on the establishment of a national child labor database have also commenced in Liberia.

⁹ Statistics provided by CYCLE M&E Coordinator.

3.2.2 Program Assumption 2: Targeted Children Will Be Able To Integrate Into Formal Schools

An expected outcome of the CYCLE project is that beneficiaries will be supported so as to access education services that are available to them within their local community, and that they will integrate into formal schools and government programs, such as the ALP in Liberia. In both countries, there remains a shortage of schools, at all levels. Many of the available schools require rehabilitation, water, or latrines. In some rural and remote areas where the evaluator visited, primary students generally were unable to enroll in secondary school due to the distance, some as far as a three-hour walk away. However, in all formal government schools participating in the CYCLE project, including community schools seeking government status, CYCLE students were in the same classes as non-CYCLE students. Due to the non-segregation of students, CYCLE students felt that they were able to integrate easily within the school, even if they had never been to school before. However, there were teachers, particularly in Sierra Leone, who felt that some CYCLE students were finding it difficult to assimilate due to wearing slippers to school because they had no shoes, thus feeling stigmatized. Some beneficiaries were without food, and therefore were weak during the day; too listless to concentrate on schoolwork or to play with their friends at break-time. Nevertheless, the assumption has generally held true, as students have been placed in appropriate programs, integrate well with other students, are praised by their teachers for their commitment to schooling, are appreciative of the opportunity for education, and are receiving support of school materials and uniforms.

3.2.3 Program Assumption 3: Addressing the Needs of Beneficiaries' Families

The CYCLE project design aimed to “provide for the protection, education, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of children engaged in or at-risk of exploitive child labor while addressing the needs of their families.”¹⁰ The extent to which the needs of the student’s family are addressed varies between Liberia and Sierra Leone. There is a closer involvement of CYCLE staff with families of participating students in Sierra Leone due to the implementation of income generating activities for families, and evidenced by many parents appearing at schools during the evaluator’s visits. Hence, while the assumption holds true for Sierra Leone, it is less evident in Liberia. The evaluator makes no recommendations to change the project design, but rather to enhance family needs in the implementation of project activities in Liberia. (Details appear in Section 4.4 on Income-generation Activities.)

3.2.4 Program Assumption 4: Provision of Materials and Rehabilitation Support to Schools

An assumption of the project design is that materials and rehabilitation support will be provided to schools to assist them in absorbing additional children. The project design states that “CYCLE will increase access to education by augmenting school capacity and increasing the quality of education provided through provision of desks; important classroom materials (chalk boards, furniture, teaching materials, attendance ledger books, etc.); and carrying out minor repairs

¹⁰ CYCLE Project Document under USDOL & IRC Cooperative Agreement, Final, August 2007, p27.

needed to facilitate enrollment in schools close to children’s communities.”¹¹ CYCLE staff identified a number of schools that needed rehabilitation and materials. Principals also requested minor repairs and benches. USDOL stipulates that not more than 10% of the total budget should be dedicated to construction. The Sierra Leone CYCLE project has no further funds in its budget to support schools in offering extra grade 6 classes, and continues to lobby the Government of Sierra Leone to address this issue. However, at the project’s midpoint, all allocated USDOL funds have been expended. Rehabilitation was more costly than anticipated, and renovation projects requested by schools and communities were larger than anticipated. With no rehabilitation funds remaining, to date; only 25% of learning spaces have been created in Liberia, and only 27% have been created in Sierra Leone. Hence, the project will remain significantly under-target towards the goal of creating learning spaces to improve the quality of education (less overcrowding) and absorb the intake of CYCLE students, unless matching funds are allocated towards this outcome. Therefore, the project design assumption has not held true due to unanticipated rehabilitation costs.

Due to the exceptionally high level of infrastructure devastation caused by the civil wars, the 10% USDOL budget allocation for infrastructure rehabilitation was insufficient for nations recovering from conflict. The evaluator proposes that matched funds may need to be sought if a minimal amount of further (and essential) rehabilitation is undertaken by the project (refer also to Section 6.5 on School Infrastructure).

3.3 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Is the CYCLE Project being implemented according to its design and work plans? What are key stakeholders’ (IRC leadership, project staff, and partners) perspectives about how and why implementation has been challenging and/or successful? Based on this, what changes should be made to the project’s implementation plans?

The CYCLE project is being implemented according to its design and work plans. The CYCLE teams in both Liberia and Sierra Leone are aware of project objectives, selection procedures, work plans, activities, expected outcomes, and targets. This is largely due to the constant, regular flow of information and communication between all staff, including from the head offices to the regional offices, and between countries. The team has devised standardized forms and procedures across both countries, including data entry of student profiles and information. The evaluator reviewed a range of internal documentation and interviewed an array of personnel, questioning them on procedures and CYCLE information. Staff provided consistent information and documentation to the evaluator. The evaluator also noted that issues, concerns, and challenges were addressed and followed-up on promptly by project staff and implementing partners. Challenges included the following:

- The establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system (detailed in Section IV)
- Working with ministries in Sierra Leone, due to a change of government in 2007

¹¹ Ibid., p32.

- Overcrowded schools and inconsistent quality of education (detailed in Section VI)
- Timely supply of support materials and the payment of fees
- A lean CYCLE team to support a large number of students

Despite these challenges, the CYCLE team has been creative and innovative, as well as determined and committed to meeting project targets and, above all, supporting the access, retention, and completion of students in relevant education services.

3.3.1 Transition of CYCLE Beneficiaries from Primary to Secondary School

A major challenge to implementation has been the transition from the end of primary school (Year 6), or Alternative Learning Program, to junior secondary; from junior secondary (Year 9) to senior secondary; and at completion of senior secondary school (Year 12). Firstly, as with all other donor programs that support secondary education, support for students completing Year 12 and wishing to continue further education (such as college or university) is generally not a component of the program. The evaluator is not aware of any donor programs in Liberia or Sierra Leone that support students through the transition from senior secondary to tertiary education. However, students, parents, and community members have an expectation that CYCLE will support their children for the full four years of the program to September 2009, including if they complete a level of schooling during that time. Hence, the challenge is to manage expectations.

CYCLE does not automatically provide support to students completing primary school before 2009 who wish to enter junior secondary school. Likewise, students completing junior secondary are not automatically supported into senior secondary. Students are required to reapply for additional support and are considered on a case-by-case basis.¹² Hence, it has been a challenge for staff, teachers, and community members to handle such cases, particularly as they want to avoid disappointment or the relapse of children returning to labor; yet there may be limited spaces available for continued support. In some situations, especially where parents may be able to provide some funds, the CYCLE team discusses cost sharing with families so that support can be continued. In Liberia, the cost sharing strategy for payment of secondary tuition fees commenced in 2006 as part of the program's sustainability plan. However, in many situations, especially where families have several children supported by the CYCLE program, or child mothers, child-headed families, and orphans, it is almost impossible for them to accept a cost-sharing option.

The maximum number of potential cases of students completing Year 6 or Year 9 by September 2009, and expecting to continue to the next level, is 2,198 in Liberia (from the current 14,534 enrollments; i.e., 15%) and 1,825 in Sierra Leone (from the current 13,404 enrollments; i.e., 14%).¹³ The total represents 49% of girls in Liberia, evenly spread throughout the three

¹² If supported, the child continues with the same Child Identification Number (CIN).

¹³ Statistics provided by the CYCLE M&E Coordinator.

counties, and 47% of girls in Sierra Leone, predominantly in the Kono District. Hence, the challenge in project implementation is for CYCLE staff to manage the expectations of these students and their parents; particularly if there is no provision for cost sharing arrangements or other support. Disillusionment in the expectation of continued support throughout the program requires management to mitigate any negative effects on the program.

3.3.2 Timely Supply of Support Materials and the Payment of Fees

A Liberian secondary school principal indicated that the tuition fees for CYCLE beneficiaries were late due to IRC bureaucracy. This caused an inconvenience for the school and students as it delayed their registration by a few weeks. Others in Sierra Leone mentioned that school supplies to beneficiaries (i.e., uniforms) were late twice. Instead of receiving them in the first term of the school year, both times the schools and beneficiaries received them in the second term. Hence, the urgent challenge now for the CYCLE team is to ensure the timely supply of support materials to all schools and beneficiaries.

3.4 COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF CONCEPTS

Assess the degree to which project staff, implementing partners, and other stakeholders have a clear and common understanding of the concepts for identifying a child as withdrawn or prevented.

All stakeholders have a clear and common understanding of the concepts for identifying a child as withdrawn or prevented from exploitive labor. CYCLE students are also fully aware of the terminology, evidenced by the skits and dramas presented to the evaluator by all primary and secondary schools visited throughout the field review. The evaluator also noted that the student beneficiaries of Sierra Leone appeared to be more knowledgeable of CYCLE, its aims, terminology, selection procedures, ILO Conventions, and human rights issues, than were Liberian beneficiaries. This was also the case for all stakeholders. Stakeholders in Liberia confused some CYCLE and child labor concepts and information, although were clear about the conceptual difference and selection of withdrawn and prevented students. A challenge for the CYCLE team is to continue amplifying program and child labor messages to stakeholders in Liberia, so as to clarify some misconceptions and erroneous information.

3.5 PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING BENEFICIARIES

USDOL considers direct beneficiaries to be those children that are both: (1) withdrawn or prevented from engaging in exploitive child labor, and (2) provided with direct educational services through the project. Please evaluate the process for identifying beneficiaries for the project.

Beneficiaries are identified for the project against a selection criteria checklist. This checklist includes factors identifying exploitive child labor, children at risk of engaging in exploitive child labor, age requirements (in general and for vocational or skills training), and targeted communities. The CYCLE team has devised a referral form for use by community stakeholders. The CYCLE social workers convene a community meeting with employers, leaders, Child

Welfare Committees (CWCs), CTAs/PTAs, teachers, and youth groups to discuss CYCLE objectives, child labor issues, the importance of education, available educational services within the community (including targeted schools), the importance of community involvement, the selection criteria, and the referral process (written and verbal). CYCLE staff interviews identify beneficiaries as a crosscheck to validate that they meet the selection criteria, complete an intake form, make home visits, and meet as a group to finalize the selection.

Originally devised to alleviate the workload of CYCLE staff, the referral system has bound communities into a cohesive network, working determinedly towards the same goals with commitment and enthusiasm. In one interview session with a group of secondary students, a CWC member had referred all of the students to the CYCLE program. The students also confirmed that a CYCLE social worker had spoken with them and sought the approval of their parents or guardians. At the midterm point, in Cohort 3, community members had referred approximately 90% of beneficiaries to the project, mostly in Sierra Leone. This is evidence of the communities' acceptance of the program, and their roles and responsibilities. Hence, the evaluator considers the referral system as a major strength of the program.

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IV EVALUATION FINDINGS: PROJECT MONITORING

4.1 PROJECT MONITORING

What is the quality of CYCLE's monitoring data? Is the project able to accurately measure results in terms of DOL common indicators (withdrawal and prevention)? If not, why not? Is CYCLE monitoring the program effectively, and what changes can CYCLE make to its monitoring systems?

The current M&E Coordinator commenced in June 2007, one year and nine months after the commencement of the project, and at the time of the midterm evaluation has been in office for seven months. Prior to the appointment of the permanent M&E Coordinator, the CYCLE project hired temporary M&E consultants and data programmers. To monitor child labor, a Child Labor Monitoring System (CLMS) was established as a pilot process, from December 2006 to July 2007, and involved local NGO partners, line ministries, and the community. Interviews during the midterm evaluation indicated that this process had mixed reviews, with some communities performing satisfactorily and others needing strengthening. Since 2005 (from the beginning of the project), IRC hired an M&E Officer who worked for 10 months with CYCLE partner International Initiative to End Child Labor (IIECL) to start project monitoring activities. He initiated the intake, follow-up and enrollment forms; the filing cabinets; and the CIN and other monitoring systems. At the 2006 project review meeting, the M&E Officer indicated that the forms were too long and social workers had problems using them. He left the program before addressing the problems. The hiring process to replace him took longer than expected and in the interim, the Project Director decided to improve the system and hired a Data Design Consultant and two M&E Consultants to work on redesigning the database and improving the related data collection forms and filing system. The objective was to make the database easy to use, and to make forms shorter so that they took less time to enter into the database. The process was continued and enhanced with the hiring of the current M&E Coordinator, who completed the process and trained the data entry personnel on the new plan and the new tracking processes for the CYCLE project. He went further, to develop the current data protocol that the CYCLE project is using. The evaluator interviewed regional data entry clerks, closely observed the computerized data entry, and inspected the filing systems within IRC CYCLE regional and headquarter offices. The evaluator also inspected student registers in each school, training center, and vocational institute, and examined the procedures for data collection at targeted project sites.

While the system is in continual development and improvement, the temporary M&E Consultants, and subsequently the new M&E Coordinator, made significant and positive changes. This is evidenced by the following:

- A newly devised database to capture child profiles, child labor information, and follow-up information (whereby the M&E Coordinator was able to produce statistical charts and tables at the evaluator's request).
- The hire of data entry clerks for each county/district to enter Cohort 3 data (almost complete) and to reenter Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 information.

- Manila folders for each CYCLE student, containing forms and relevant information, kept at regional offices.
- Filing cabinets designated for the CYCLE project in each field office, and in Monrovia and Freetown (where the M&E Coordinator is based).
- The instigation of spot-checks on schools conducted by the M&E Coordinator and other CYCLE staff, community volunteers, and CWCs.
- Strengthening of the Child Labor Monitoring System.
- Stakeholders commenting that they monitor the progress of the program according to specifications and checklists (sighted by the evaluator) provided by the M&E coordinator.
- Revised and simplified intake, enrollment, and follow-up forms.
- Attendance registers and performance records maintained by all schools, skills centers, and vocational institutes, for each student.
- In some instances, particularly at the primary and secondary schools, a designated registrar personally conducted the attendance roll.¹⁴

Finding 1 (*Performance Reporting*) of the Examination Report (referred to as the Auditor's Report) of September 25, 2007¹⁵ noted inaccuracies in the reporting of *withdrawn* and *prevented* students, and a duplication of beneficiaries entered in the Student Tracking System. After the report, the CYCLE team indicated that it had addressed the issues and had commenced taking photographs of beneficiaries to avoid duplication. The evaluator viewed student lists at each educational institution, noting that students were clearly marked *withdrawn* or *prevented*. In a random inspection of manila folders to crosscheck student profile data, and through interviews with students themselves, the evaluator saw evidence of the use of student photographs and believes that the two categories were understood and that students were categorized appropriately. Hence, the project appears to be able to measure results accurately in terms of USDOL's common indicators, *withdrawn* and *prevented*; however, a comprehensive examination of performance reporting was not conducted by the evaluator.

Finding 2, (*Child Monitoring*) of the Auditor's Report indicated that daily attendance records were not adequately maintained in a number of schools visited. After the report, the CYCLE team provided schools with attendance roll books. The evaluator visited 27 educational institutions participating in the CYCLE project in Liberia and Sierra Leone (eight primary, seven secondary, 10 skills centers, and two vocational institutes) and requested to see the register and attendance books. Of the 27 institutions, three (11%) could not provide the documentation. In one school, the registrar locked the attendance books in his room and the principal did not have a key, and in another school where the evaluator interviewed the registrar, he had locked

¹⁴ In one school, the roll was called in the second of the last lessons of the day, to ensure that students attended for the whole day.

¹⁵ The Auditor's Report of September 25, 2007 was for the period September 30, 2005, to December 31, 2006.

the roll books in the principal's room. The principal was not in the vicinity at the time of the visit. In one skills training center, the principal could not readily find the attendance book in a pile of papers. One registrar was in the hospital, although the register was in the principal's office and therefore sighted by the evaluator. In all cases sighted, the daily attendance records were up-to-date and neatly presented, clearly recording attendance, absence, and sickness. Only one registrar indicated that it was onerous to maintain the student attendance roll, contrary to all others who said that there were no problems in keeping it up-to-date. While some institutions kept separate rolls for CYCLE students, some included CYCLE and non-CYCLE students on the one roll, although the teachers/principals could specify which students were CYCLE participants, knew them personally, and had visited their homes.

Finding 3 (*Performance Measures and Matching Funds*) of the Auditor's Report noted that, in Liberia, over-aged students supported by matching funds were accepted into the program, recommending a cut-off age be strictly imposed. The age criterion is between age 5 and 17. The evaluator requested that the M&E Coordinator provide student lists for random institutions. The ages listed were all within the criterion. However, the evaluator noted three over-aged students listed on one institution's register and raised the issue with CYCLE staff, who are following up on the discrepancy.¹⁶ At intake, CYCLE personnel verify the beneficiary's age with parents, guardians, or school authorities and record it in the database.

Overall, the evaluator noted that the student monitoring and tracking system had greatly improved since the arrival of the recent M&E incumbent, responding to the concerns of the auditor, and ensuring the effective monitoring of the program.

The evaluator recommends one change to the monitoring system: Question 10 of the CYCLE Intake Form (Identification of Barriers) indicates circling five significant barriers in each category (A: Child's barriers; B: Family's barriers; and C: Work barriers). On another form, it indicates circling two significant barriers. The computerized data entry system can only accept two (2) choices. The M&E Coordinator instructed CYCLE staff to circle three barriers and instructed data entry staff to make a selection of the three circled to only enter two for each category. Hence, the data entry officers consider the weight of the choices against the other variables and factors on the Intake Form. The evaluator recommends that CYCLE staff circle *only two* significant barriers for each category, thus alleviating the data entry clerks of making the choice since they are not directly involved with or knowledgeable of student beneficiaries.

The evaluator notes that 93% of target enrollments have occurred in Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 (Intake 1, 2, and 3), leaving only 7% of the target enrollments remaining over the next two years. Hence, the last intake of the program, Cohort 4, will target only 1,952 enrollments. Since the referral system has been strongly adopted by communities, especially CWCs in Sierra Leone, this has bound them together for a common cause; therefore, while winding down enrollments, the CYCLE team needs to be mindful that the importance of the referral system as a critical factor in the program's sustainability not be diminished. The CYCLE team may want to target

¹⁶ The over-age students may have been enrolled two years earlier, thereby meeting the cut-off age criterion, or they may have been removed but not taken off the institution's registry. In the absence of birth certificates, incidences of incorrect age are common.

specific enrollments in specific communities that require strengthening, or target only children in the worst forms of child labor, or set targets for each community or education service.

V EVALUATION FINDINGS: PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

5.1 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

What have been some of the challenges and issues in working with local NGOs and other local organizations? Evaluate the project's success in cultivating the support of local partners for the project, including partners such as teachers, parents, district officials, and local governments in each of the target countries.

The CYCLE project design placed “high value on participatory methods, based on real partnership, and reflective of people’s rights and the contexts in which they live.”¹⁷ CYCLE expected to work closely at the community level with children and youth, families, community leaders, employers, community-based organizations and local NGOs. Community-based groups include Community/Parent Teacher Associations, Child Welfare Committees, faith-based organizations, youth clubs, and women’s groups. At the national level, CYCLE expected to work in participation with government line ministries. This assumption has held true due to CYCLE involving all levels of stakeholders in the enrollment, monitoring, retention, counseling, and completion of children in the program. Stakeholders have a deep understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as a commitment, to ensure that the CYCLE project delivers a holistic and integrated approach to services. The strong sense of ownership by all stakeholders and the project’s use of existing networks have greatly facilitated project implementation, especially student identification and monitoring. The evaluator considers this a major strength. It also augurs well for the transferability of skills and sustainability.

Implementing a participatory community-driven approach has its challenges. A major challenge was the initial sensitization of community members to the project’s aims and processes; particularly, the issues of child labor, including the differentiation between *child work* and *exploitive child labor*.

Some staff indicated that initially it was difficult to convince some individuals, often parents and employers, of the importance of education and/or, as a consequence, to reduce the hours and intensity of their children’s work. In some cases, collaboration with the chiefdoms or community leaders cultivated the support of wider community groups. This, coupled with the awareness-raising activities conducted by local NGO partners, facilitated the strength, to date, of the project’s participatory approach. One representative confirmed that the impact of partnering with local NGOs has built the capacity of the organization through workshops and close collaboration.

A further strength is its use of IRC’s other country programs, as well as other donor programs, in the form of referrals to other services. These include IRC’s country core programs on Child and Youth Protection and Development (CYPD), Education, Economic Opportunities Program (EOP), Health, and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The CYCLE project was also able to capitalize on IRC’s education program with a component on school rehabilitation, by using rehabilitated schools as CYCLE participating schools. However, the education grant finished in

¹⁷ CYCLE Project Document under USDOL & IRC Cooperative Agreement, Final, August 2007, p25.

September 2007. CYCLE was also able to capitalize on IRC's EU-funded Linking Relief and Development (LRD) program, which has also finished.

In some cases, children who did not meet CYCLE selection criteria were referred to other donor programs, or vice versa. For example, World Vision's child protection program referred students to CYCLE. The CYCLE team also attended and made presentations to the USDOL-funded project on child trafficking in Sierra Leone, implemented by Winrock. Staff in Sierra Leone also met with implementers of the USAID-funded Integrated Diamond Management Project (now finished). Hence, the CYCLE team has established and tapped into a network of IRC support, other international nongovernmental organization (INGO) support, NGO support, and other donor support in both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

VI EVALUATION FINDINGS: IMPACT OF EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS

6.1 DIRECT EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

Please evaluate the project's direct educational interventions—formal education, accelerated learning/nonformal education, and vocational training programs. Assess changes in enrollment and dropout rates, as well as changes in the quality and availability of educational programs. What role has the project played in bringing about these changes? To date, what has been the impact of the project on quality of education and accessibility (according to children, parents, and teachers)? Are the project's programs successful at removing and preventing children from work and providing them with future opportunities?

The CYCLE project supports the access of children, withdrawn or prevented from child labor, into relevant and appropriate education services available within the beneficiaries' communities. These include primary and secondary schools, ALP, skills training centers, and vocational institutes. Table 6 charts the current enrollment into each education program (i.e., Cohorts 1, 2, and 3) for both Liberia and Sierra Leone, showing that end-of-project targets have nearly been achieved at the midterm point.

CYCLE has withdrawn and prevented 27,938 children and youth (48% males and 52% females) from child labor through access to education in 151 primary schools, 12 ALP schools, 74 secondary schools, 101 skills training centers, and 4 vocational educational institutions. Of these, 33% of beneficiaries were withdrawn (exceeding the target of 25%) and 67% were prevented from child labor.

Table 6: Summary of Education Enrollments

Education Programs	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Both		% Enrolled
	Total	Target	Total	Target	Total	Target	
Primary	11,335	11,911	11,358	12,596	22,693	24,507	93%
Junior Secondary	922	995	717	792	1,639	1,787	92%
Senior Secondary	487	541	555	635	1,042	1,176	89%
ALP	1,156	1,156	-	-	1,156	1,156	100%
Skills Training	517	517	649	452	1,166	969	120%
Vocational	117	170	125	125	242	295	82%
Total	14,534	15,290	13,404	14,600	27,938	29,890	93%

Source: CYCLE M&E Coordinator, as at February 2008.

The enrollment rates, to date, indicate a great demand for the CYCLE project and the opportunity to access education through a supportive program. Students interviewed unanimously indicated that they would not be in school if it were not for the CYCLE project, due

to the inability to afford school materials, uniforms, or fees, and due to their entrenchment in work to provide support for their families and themselves.

The CYCLE team also organized summer classes in Liberia in 2007 for project beneficiaries in eight communities: 350 children (49% girls) took part in the summer classes, which involved 32 teachers in eight schools across the targeted counties, to ensure that children were kept occupied in order for them not to return to labor.

6.2 FORMAL EDUCATION & ALP: ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, ACCESSIBILITY, & QUALITY

CYCLE places beneficiaries into formal and nonformal (ALP) programs as close to their homes as is practical. These schools include government schools, community schools (seeking government status), and religious schools. To date, there have been three intakes of students: Cohort 1 (October 2005 to August 2006); Cohort 2 (September 2006 to August 2007); and Cohort 3 (September 2007 to August 2008). The first cohort was slightly under enrollment target for both Liberia and Sierra Leone; Cohort 2, the largest intake of students, was also slightly under enrollment targets; and Cohort 3 exceeded targets (Table 7).

Table 7: Education Enrollments (Liberia and Sierra Leone) by Cohort

Cohort	Intake	Target
Cohort 1: Oct. 2005 to Aug. 2006	5,058	5,437
Cohort 2: Sep. 2006 to Aug. 2007	13,751	14,227
Cohort 3: Sep. 2007 to Aug. 2008	9,129	8,559
Cohort 4: Sep. 2008 to Aug. 2009	n/a	1,667
Total	27,938	29,890

CYCLE supports beneficiaries by providing school materials, uniforms (every two years), tuition fees, and WAEC¹⁸ examination fees.

6.2.1 Enrollment and Dropout Rates

The majority of CYCLE beneficiaries are placed in formal primary and secondary schools, or nonformal ALP programs. Of the 12,630¹⁹ students supported in formal and nonformal education in Sierra Leone, 195 students (2%) have dropped-out since commencement of the program in September 2005. Of these, only males dropped-out of junior secondary school, whereas more females dropped-out of primary school (59% of dropouts). No student had dropped-out of secondary school. The predominant reason for dropping-out was due to a move away from the community into one that was not close to a CYCLE-supported school. The low dropout rate is a remarkable achievement to date, largely due to the commitment of CYCLE social workers and education officers, as well as community members (specifically, members of Child Welfare

¹⁸ WAEC = West African Examination Council.

¹⁹ As of February 2008; statistics provided by the CYCLE M&E Coordinator.

Committees) who had worked tirelessly to retain students. Many students indicated, to the evaluator, that CYCLE staff and CWC members regularly checked-up on their attendance.

Disaggregated figures for Liberia are not currently available as not all cohort data has been entered into the new database. However, anecdotally, the dropout rate of the 13,900 students supported in formal and nonformal education appears to be similar. The evaluator, during interviews with principals, requested dropout rates and the figures were low. Some school principals indicated that there had been no dropouts since commencement of the program in Liberia. Total figures for all retained students in Liberia and Sierra Leone show that 93% were retained in Cohort 1, and 97% were retained in Cohort 2, to date. All beneficiaries recently enrolled in Cohort 3 are still in school. Teachers, particularly in Liberia, believed that training in healing classroom practices also contributed to the increased retention rates.

In Sierra Leone, 1,115 students have completed formal primary, junior secondary and senior secondary education, which represents 9% of all enrollments. Slightly more males (53%) had completed than females. Anecdotally, some have continued their education under the support of CYCLE. For example, some of the 963 students who completed primary school (Year 6) have continued into junior secondary. Sixty-four (64) students completed senior secondary school (Year 12) in Sierra Leone and were no longer eligible for CYCLE support. Of these, 63% were males. No disaggregated completion figures were available for Liberia. However, 1,898 of all students have completed formal, nonformal, skills, and vocational training (13% of all enrollments).

6.2.2 Quality and Accessibility of Formal Education

The standard of teaching is not high in Liberia; many teachers are without formal qualifications. More teachers in Sierra Leone have substantial teacher training qualifications and experience, and hence the quality of teaching is higher. In addition, in both countries, many teachers are not on the government's payroll. Some work in community schools and may be paid by the community (predominantly in Sierra Leone) while others work on a volunteer basis. A District Education Officer in Lofa County, Liberia, revealed that of the 363 teachers in his district, only 174 (48%) were on the payroll.²⁰ In addition, only 23 of these teachers were female (6%) and only nine of them were on the government payroll. These figures are alarming and inhibit the access to role models for girls.

In D. Gborgboe Primary School, Tappita, Nimba County, there were 599 CYCLE students, comprising 57% of the school population. The school was built to cater to 300 students. With the CYCLE students, it was now at 100% over capacity; with no CYCLE rehabilitation support to supply benches or classroom extensions. However, in a previous project, IRC constructed a three-classroom building to accommodate 135 students, which prompted CYCLE to select D. Gborgboe PS as a participating school. In Manjama RC Primary School, Kono District, CYCLE students comprise 64% of the school population and are severely overcrowded.

²⁰ On January 30, 2008, the evaluator, while traveling, listened to the national radio station ELBC. The Common Ground program interviewed a Lofa Country teacher. He was praising the teacher training component of the IRC CYCLE program.

Overcrowding to this extent adds to teachers' workloads, further lowering the quality of teaching.

In terms of accessibility, the average walking time to school is between 20 and 40 minutes, with some students walking up to one hour. The difficulty in accessing formal schooling is predominantly at the secondary level in rural areas where often the nearest school is three hours away.

6.2.3 Impact of Formal Education Interventions

"CYCLE is our mother and our father; we are no longer orphans."

Most notably, all students participating in the CYCLE project, with no exceptions, indicated that they wanted to continue with schooling: primary students wanted to go to junior secondary school; junior secondary students wanted to complete senior secondary school; and secondary school students wanted to attend college or university. They aspire to be medical doctors, lawyers, journalists, nurses, teachers, principals, engineers, and even the president.

The major forms of child labor in Liberia include farming, working on rubber plantations, selling on the streets, begging, prostitution, charcoal-making, brick-making, domestic help, and selling firewood. In Sierra Leone, the major forms of child labor include mining, stone-crushing, prostitution, farming, selling on the streets, begging, fish selling, and fishing. Hence, beneficiaries have all greatly valued the CYCLE program for the opportunity to have a better life.

Teachers commented on the exceptional appreciation of students for the opportunity to access schooling and the provision of school materials, particularly uniforms, as it eased the financial burden on their families. They were also extremely proud of their uniforms. However, in Liberia, they asked for shoes to wear with their new uniforms, and in Sierra Leone beneficiaries requested shoes and hats to complete the uniform. Many, unsurprisingly, asked for recreational items such as footballs and volleyballs.²¹ Other requests were for scholarship programs into college and university, academic awards for excellence, and an extension of the CYCLE program.²²

Many students demonstrated their appreciation of the program by sweeping classrooms and picking up rubbish in the schoolyard of their own accord. One student heard that the principal was sick, so he went to the principal's home to offer his sympathy. When the evaluator asked students what their roles and responsibilities were, they stated the following:

- To accept the opportunity of educational support
- To attend school regularly

²¹ In England in the 1860s, students were enticed into school (from day laboring) with the promise of football in State schools and, as a consequence, learning to read about football was a major incentive in learning to read in general.

²² The evaluator asked 30 randomly selected students in Liberia and Sierra Leone to rate CYCLE out of 100; the average score was 85.

- To study hard
- To ask teachers questions
- To wear the uniform supplied by CYCLE
- To respect parents and guardians
- To make “good” use of time (i.e., a time for play and a time for work)
- To be a good person
- To impart knowledge of child labor and the importance of education to other children

Teachers and principals reported positive changes in students; from minor changes to “dramatic changes.” Such changes included not engaging in activities that “degrade themselves and the community.” Schooling had changed their lives. Parents, teachers, district education officers, and beneficiaries maintain that the program has lifted their moral standards, reduced their hostility and resentment towards others, increased tolerance, reduced bad language, reduced teen pregnancy, and reduced drug and alcohol use. Students also indicated that “work was strenuous” and they were “suffering.” Education had instilled the importance of attending regularly and working hard to achieve passing marks.

An example of a dramatic change is the enrollment of a Year 2 boy in Liberia whose father is blind and his mother is disabled. He used to make charcoal and now walks 40 minutes to attend school every day. His older brother was also a CYCLE beneficiary but passed away from sickness in 2007.

A young, single parent with a 4-year-old boy attended a girls’ secondary school in Koidu, Sierra Leone as a CYCLE student and, upon graduating, gained a part-time teaching position at the same school. Before CYCLE, she was selling in the market and had attempted schooling several times previously but dropped-out each time due to a lack of funds. She wouldn’t be a teacher today, aspiring to go to a teacher’s college, if it weren’t for the CYCLE program.

6.2.4 Kosovo and American Groups

Two youth groups in Small Sefadu, Kono, Sierra Leone, have made “dramatic” changes in their lifestyles. Kosovo was a gang of boys with the motto “Boffcase,” meaning that nothing and no authority could touch them; they were above the law and could do as they wished, working in the mines during the day and stealing, knifing, gambling, raping, and taking drugs at night. The boys interviewed ranged from 12 to 16 years of age. Kosovo was operating for two years before they heard of the CYCLE program. A CYCLE staff member “promised” to help them: “CYCLE kept its promise,” a member said. One beneficiary used to cut and injure himself, but he no longer does this. When the evaluator asked what he was proud of, he remarked:

“Look at us now. We are washed and we wear clean clothes and look good. I am so proud that I learned English because now I can understand you and you can understand me and we can talk together. I can tell you my concerns and talk like an adult.”

The other, American Group was a gang of young girls between 14 and 16 years, with the motto “Jambo” (prostitution). Before CYCLE, they were operating for 5 years prior, to support themselves since the death of parents and family members. Now, they aspire to be bank managers, lawyers, journalists, and doctors. Many are still homeless, have no shoes, and eat little, but they want more education, beyond secondary school, and they want to assist other vulnerable youth in the community. They believe that income generating projects and business training will lead to their stability and prevent them from relapsing into their past lifestyle.

Seventy-seven (77) members of both groups (46% females) are now CYCLE beneficiaries attending secondary school, largely due to CYCLE’s social worker in Small Sefadu. Some walk as much as an hour to attend school. The building they previously frequented was torn down, at their request, symbolic of leaving the past behind. They’ve vowed never to go back to “jambo-ing” and “boffcasing,” saying “CYCLE is our mother and our father; we are no longer orphans.” On 1 December 2007, they changed the name of the two gangs into a unified group called “Future Planners,” and now regularly monitor the mines and the streets at night to amplify the messages of the CYCLE program.

6.3 SKILLS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING: ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, ACCESSIBILITY, & QUALITY

Skills training programs are generally less than 1 year, while the duration of vocational training courses are usually 18–24 months. CYCLE supports beneficiaries throughout the course (including functional literacy and business skills), provides a start-up kit on completion, and provides follow-ups for six months after completion. Skills training courses include tailoring, masonry, carpentry, bike mechanics, tie dying, and cosmetology. Vocational training includes electrical courses (refrigeration, air conditioning, and electronics), mechanical courses (welding and auto-mechanics), construction courses (carpentry and plumbing), graphic arts, driver training, hairdressing, tailoring, and drafting. The start-up kit comprises a few essential items for graduates to commence their own business. For example, a tailoring start-up kit includes a pedal-driven sewing machine, cloth, thread, scissors, and tape measure.

6.3.1 Enrollment and Dropout Rates

In Liberia, 634 beneficiaries have been placed in skills centers or vocational training institutes. Of these, 69% are female. In Sierra Leone 774 were enrolled in skills or vocational training, 68% of whom were female; this is largely due to the high number of girls in tailoring courses. In a Liberian carpentry skills training center, while enrolling 20 students for Cohort 3, another 15 males were referred for enrollment but will need to wait until the Cohort 4 intake.

Disaggregated figures for dropouts are not available for Liberia; however, in Sierra Leone there have been 40 dropouts to date (5%). All of the dropouts were from skills training courses and 70% were female. The evaluator heard of one girl who dropped-out of skills training due to the hour-long walk over rough and mountainous terrain. Other reasons for dropping-out included pregnancy and illness.

6.3.2 Quality and Accessibility of Skills and Vocational Training

In Liberia, 1,018 skills and vocational training students have graduated. Eighty-nine (89) beneficiaries have completed skills or vocational training in Sierra Leone; 84% were female.²³ Interviews with graduates and current students indicate a high quality of training, evidenced by the amount of conceptual information students were able to impart. In addition, students were able to demonstrate their skills to the evaluator. For example, tailoring students were able to demonstrate how they lay out paper patterns, design a template, cut material, thread a sewing machine, oil the machine, measure clients, write measurements in their notebooks, and sew pattern pieces together. They could also demonstrate how to sew on collars, insert zippers, sew inside and outside pockets, sew on buttons, and make frills or decorative edges. Carpentry students were able to demonstrate the selection of woods, the use of clamps, sawing techniques, various methods of nailing joints, measuring squares, measuring and marking pieces of wood, applying hinges, and how to construct a window frame.

Of the goods and services that students exhibited while the evaluator visited skills and vocational training centers in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the services and goods made in Sierra Leone appeared more advanced in their design, attention to detail, and techniques. These included garments, tie dying, weaving, hairdressing, and carpentry. However, the trainers indicated that all students were improving and were dedicated in their lessons for acquiring more skills.

Functional literacy and numeracy was a component of skills and vocational training. Hence, the evaluator asked students to write their name and perform simple sums (such as measurements). Of the 259 students interviewed, only two girls from the rural western district of Freetown, Sierra Leone, were unable to write their name. With assistance from the evaluator and fellow students, they could write their first name.

6.3.3 Impact of Skills and Vocational Training

The skits performed for the evaluator by older beneficiaries showed great sensitivity and understanding of the child labor situation, particularly in Sierra Leone. The performances amplified messages about the plight of young single parents, lack of food, child trafficking, WFCL, negative influences by peers, poor families, assistance by the community, school renovations by CYCLE, their joy at the opportunity to attend skills training centers, and the potential for other youth (“strugglers”) in the community to be “rescued” from exploitive labor.

In interviews with Child Welfare Committees, particularly in Sierra Leone, they indicated that many youth were “uncontrollable on the streets” before the CYCLE program, and were now

²³ The students in Sierra Leone graduated on December 15, 2007; more will graduate on February 16, 2008.

undertaking skills training. Students themselves said that CYCLE social workers were the strengths of the program because they had taught them about a better lifestyle. Beneficiaries were also taught how to take responsibility for themselves. Several female students had been working “on the track” (prostitution) and were now making more money from selling the items made in their tailoring classes. All indicated that they would never go back to the “track.”

The impact of skills and vocational training provides livelihoods for students and their families, contributing to a productive community, and thereby building a skilled nation. The evaluator observed two carpentry graduates in Liberia who had formed a business and were currently supplying all the doors and window frames for a house under construction. The homeowner pays for the wood, hinges, nails, and varnish, as well as for the carpentry services. A tailoring student had already begun to make and sell items of clothing while studying. A female student in Liberia indicated that she earned “big more” money from tailoring than farming. Another female student in Sierra Leone had already sold some children’s clothes at the market, thus enabling her to buy a dress, “fine sandals,” and food for her family. However, most graduates are just commencing businesses and indicate that they can support themselves but they cannot yet support their families, although they expect to be able to within six months.

In Liberia, graduates had already commenced some form of successful transition, from studying to work, including the following:

1. Started their own sole business enterprise.
2. Commenced a business with one or more fellow graduates.
3. Commenced paid work with a skills training provider.
4. Secured a contract with IRC to sew uniforms.
5. Commenced other employment with an established business.

For example, two CYCLE beneficiaries in Sierra Leone who undertook a computing course from April to October 2007 commenced as Community Volunteers with the CYCLE program in February 2008, working in the office headquarters to assist entering data into the database for three months. They were excited to use their computing skills while learning office procedures, data processes, and working in a team environment.

Some Liberian students were considering forming a cooperative but had yet to establish one. In contrast, graduates in Sierra Leone appeared to only be considering forming cooperatives. During interviews with the evaluator, no graduate mentioned other forms of employment or the notion of establishing their own business. All graduates interviewed in Sierra Leone had not yet received their start-up kit. They were retained by the skills training provider pending the establishment of a cooperative (in a “few weeks”). Start-up kits would be issued to graduates after formation of the cooperatives, as one provider said, “to prevent them from selling the kits in the market.”

Students and skills training providers indicated that the demand for their skills is strong within their community and in nearby communities. The evaluator made an unscheduled visit to bike mechanic graduates in Sierra Leone who were working for a skills provider. The young boys were repairing two motorbikes and two generators, confirming that there was plenty of work—as the major form of transport in the rural area is by motorbike, due to the poor condition of the roads. Generators, they said, always needed fixing and they were on a tight deadline, as people were highly dependent upon them. The only difficulty they perceived was in obtaining spare parts, as they were difficult to get within their community. They would need to travel to Kono (47 miles/76 kilometers) or Kenema (27 miles/43 kilometers) to get some spare parts. Tailoring students indicated that dressmaking was always in demand in rural areas as “fine” clothes were difficult to purchase in the markets. Tie-dyeing and weaving students (who work with cotton fabrics) also indicated that they could team with the tailoring students to produce garments.

6.4 IMPACT ON PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Community/Parent Teacher Associations were in existence before the CYCLE project. However, due to CYCLE activities and their workshops,²⁴ some PTAs are more active and involved in school decision making, particularly in the monitoring of CYCLE students. In one Liberian Lofa County community, the PTA built a school with funding from IRC’s previous education program. However, the school was not completed and subsequently has two classrooms instead of three. The strength of the PTA school is a reading room with a supervising librarian where students can research assignments, read books, or work quietly, away from the regular overcrowded classrooms. The librarian had attended CYCLE training and adopted child-friendly approaches and healing classroom practices.

In addition, individual parents interviewed “wholeheartedly” embraced CYCLE. One parent said of her 14-year-old grade 4 daughter that “going to school was her dream.” Another male parent with five children in the CYCLE program said that he would never have been able to support his children through school if it weren’t for the program. Parents, in addition to beneficiaries and all other stakeholders, have expressed a strong desire for the CYCLE program to be expanded so that many other children can benefit.

6.4.1 Income-generating Activities for Families

The CYCLE project identifies three areas of income-generation activities (IGA) as follows:

1. Subsidies to beneficiary children and youth (uniforms, school materials, counseling, fees, etc.)—in both Liberia and Sierra Leone (that relieves the financial pressure on families).
2. Support to beneficiary youth (skills and vocational training, business training, and start-up kits)—in both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

²⁴ Some parents indicated that they attended workshops on child labor three separate times

3. Subsidies to families (grants²⁵ for tools and equipment to establish an economic activity, business training, and monitoring of progress)—in Sierra Leone.

(Models 1 and 2 above appear in detail in Sections 6.2 and 6.3.) The objectives of model 3 above is to provide a means of supporting vulnerable families so as to replace income lost due to withdrawing their children from exploitive labor. It is designed to alleviate poverty, and sustain the families when CYCLE phases out. The support is in the form of technical skills and capacity building through basic micro-business training; identification and purchase of suitable materials or tools²⁶ to start a small business or agricultural venture; monitoring and follow up; and documenting lessons learned. Activities may include vegetable gardens, trading of food items, or the provision of services (such as catering), and small animal husbandry.

Currently, there are 188 IGA projects in Sierra Leone, commencing from May 2006. Most are table markets of dry goods; i.e., petty trading (76%) or agricultural farms and gardens (13%). CYCLE's Regional Education Coordinator documented their progress²⁷ a year later and revealed that although petty trading was the most prevalent activity, it was the least successful. Upland and rice farming was the most successful, as well as gara tie dying/weaving and catering. Most of the successful IGAs occurred in Small Sefadu. Only 11.7% of projects were deemed to be "doing well."²⁸ Hence, the evaluator proposes that another study be conducted in June/July 2008 to determine progress. The evaluator also strongly proposes that the CYCLE team enhance training of technical and/or business skills, and closely monitor the IGAs to assist them in improving productivity.

6.5 IMPACT ON TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

To date, the CYCLE team has trained 752 teachers in Liberia, and 556 teachers in Sierra Leone;²⁹ primarily on child labor issues but also teaching methodologies, such as child-friendly teaching, and advice on how to reduce dropout rates. They were also provided with notebooks to assist with lesson planning. Teachers greatly appreciated the training, although they felt it was too short (two days) and only once a year. Many of them would appreciate further training. However, in Liberia the three-year IRC LEGACY program commenced implementation of the USAID-funded Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP) in September 2007, which aims to capture most of the CYCLE teachers. For example, in Sierra Leone, LEGACY will link with 12 junior secondary schools.

²⁵ Grants for tools and equipment do not involve the provision of funds to beneficiaries, as USDOL-funded projects are not authorized to provide beneficiaries or families with direct cash transfers.

²⁶ About US\$100.

²⁷ David Walker, Family Income Generation Status Review: Sierra Leone Projects, May 2007.

²⁸ Having US\$144 in the bank after a year (investment of US\$100 plus savings of US\$44)

²⁹ As of February 2008; statistics provided by the CYCLE M&E Coordinator:

6.5.1 Impact on Teachers

Many teachers have been teaching in the community for many years. For example, the principal of a Liberian secondary school had taught in that school for 12 years, the registrar for 15 years, and the vice principal for 25 years. Hence, many teachers and principals in participating schools personally know their CYCLE students. Due to close collaboration with CYCLE social workers and education officers, and visits to students' homes and families, school personnel were able to recite backgrounds, histories, and progress of most of the CYCLE beneficiaries.

One interviewee from a Liberian primary school attended the CYCLE training workshop and was able to describe, in detail, the contents of the program; stating that he is now using the methodology every day. Teachers have indicated that they write lesson plans now.³⁰ Personally, teachers indicated that classroom management training was extremely beneficial because it has reduced the likelihood of using severe discipline measures in the classroom. Many of the teachers with more years of teaching experience admitted to having previously used the stick to discipline children. The evaluator noted that some teachers visited, particularly deputy principals, were carrying a stick in the yard at break-time; however, the evaluator did not see evidence of teachers using a stick as a form of discipline in the classroom.

Teachers indicated that they felt a part of the program and appreciated the inclusion. They have a close association with CYCLE staff, saying that they are “part of the school” and “help us run the school.” One primary school principal proudly announced that “there are a lot of schools around, but CYCLE selected us.” In that school, the principal from a nearby non-CYCLE primary school attended the evaluation interview to “feel a part of the community process” towards reducing child labor through education. Teachers, principals, and education ministry staff expressed the need to train and empower School Management Committees beyond the current training, in child labor issues. They indicated that this would assist with monitoring and ensure sustainability of the program.

6.5.2 School Infrastructure and Rehabilitation

Finding 4 (*School Conditions*) of the Auditor's Report indicated that water and sanitation were poor within CYCLE targeted schools, and furniture was not appropriate or was limited. The Auditor was concerned for the safety of school infrastructure and the security and health of student beneficiaries. The Auditor recommended regular inspections of schools to identify those that may place students at risk of injury, and to seek funds to alleviate conditions.

The evaluator acknowledges that poor school infrastructure, limited furniture, and overcrowding are commonplace in both Liberia and Sierra Leone; with the latter appearing to have the worst school infrastructure. Since the project commenced, there have been no reported cases of injuries to CYCLE beneficiaries and it is clear that students greatly appreciate the opportunity to attend school and are working hard within sub-standard conditions.

³⁰ The CYCLE in-service teacher training program includes healing classroom practices, child centered methodology, keeping registries, classroom management, child rights and international child protection laws.

Within a restricted and limited budget, CYCLE has provided benches to some schools and rehabilitated a small number of classrooms. Rehabilitation has taken the form of repairing or replacing roofing, painting, expansion to existing classroom blocks, and the construction of additional classroom space. Of the 27 institutions visited by the evaluator, nine (33%) had received support from the program. School building extensions were of particularly good quality, providing extra learning spaces. In addition, new roofing enabled students to be accommodated in classrooms all year round.

The evaluator noted one school that may potentially collapse in the rainy season. Ahmadiyya Primary School in the Tongo Fields, Kenema District of Sierra Leone, requires urgent rehabilitation. Alternatively, another accommodation must be located. The community provided the mud-brick four-classroom school. It has no water well, nor latrines.

One of the classrooms completely collapsed last rainy season, forcing students into the existing three overcrowded classrooms. Of the existing classrooms, one has a bowed wall that may eventually create a hole and cave in the room. Another classroom has a large plank of wood supporting the ceiling rafters, at a diagonal across the room. Students sit underneath the plank. If the plank gives way, many students will suffer severe injury or death.

Section 3.2 highlights the restrictions to spending on rehabilitation, and demonstrates that all USDOL allocated funds have been expended. The evaluator therefore proposes that matching funds be sought to consider the rehabilitation of Ahmadiyya Primary School, and other schools identified as being hazardous to the health, safety, and welfare of students. To date, the CYCLE team has commenced negotiation discussions regarding the rehabilitation Ahmadiyya Primary School with recently awarded matching funds.

Despite the limited budget, the impact of CYCLE's school rehabilitation has manifested itself through easing the substandard infrastructure of many schools. In some instances, tarpaulin has often provided shelter, as well as creating a space for learning. Extra benches have meant that some students are not sitting on concrete floors. Rehabilitation of schools has provided some comfort from overcrowded classrooms, unhygienic conditions, and safety against the weather, particularly in the wet season.

6.6 IMPACT ON PARTNERS ORGANIZATIONS—LOCAL NGOS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

The CYCLE project collaborates with five local NGO partners: SEARCH, CODEPP, and ANPPCAN in Liberia, and CARD and FAWE in Sierra Leone. In both countries, the CYCLE team has focused on capacity building to improve their skills in planning, report writing, procurement, financial management, and community mobilization strategies. The mandate of the local partners is to work with existing community structures, such as Child Welfare Committees and youth groups, to raise awareness of child labor in their designated region. This includes promoting the importance of education, especially the girls' education policy in Liberia, and the role of parents and community members in monitoring child labor through drama, songs, street parades, and media spot messages. They also assist with the referral process.

6.6.1 Impact on Partner Organizations—Local NGOs and Community Groups

The awareness raising and training programs provided by local NGO partners has benefited not only CYCLE beneficiaries and stakeholders but also the wider community, while simultaneously building their own capacity. The staff of NGO partners attended CYCLE's Cross-Border Conference in October 2007, benefiting from the shared knowledge, fresh ideas, and networking. Individual NGO partners convened their own internal meetings to share information with their staff and to implement activities that had proven successful across the border. NGO staff found the conference to be "very rewarding."

In Sierra Leone, the Lower Bambara Tongo Fields mining committee has intensified their effort to combat child labor through campaigns and sanctions. In Small Sefadu, the community agreed to impose a fine of US\$167 to any mine license holder who employs children below 17 years of age. Proceeds from the fines are paid to the Community Development Committee for developmental activities in their locality. Through sensitization and campaigns, the Tongo Fields employers referred 90 child laborers to the CYCLE program.

Youth groups (such as Girls Clubs and Boys Clubs) have had a substantial role in the CYCLE project. As one group indicated, before CYCLE they only advocated against family violence or drug abuse, and began to include child labor when the CYCLE team sensitized them on the issue, which they now put in practice every day. They perform songs, drama and slogans in *all* schools within their community, not just the CYCLE participating schools. Hence, at the community level, youth contribute significantly to awareness raising and provide role models for their contemporaries. However, they mentioned that when the INGO supporting the HIV/AIDS campaign left the region, it was difficult to continue the message due to the limited number of authoritative mentors to sustain the campaign.

6.6.2 Child Welfare Committees

Child Welfare Committees are community-driven groups formed to advocate on behalf of children in their community, working "hand-in-hand" with PTAs/CTAs, schools, chiefdoms, and youth groups. The average size of a CWC is 10 to 25 members. CWCs are significantly more advanced in Sierra Leone; taking the initiative to advance CYCLE within their communities, build and support schools, activate the referral system to its maximum capacity, and establish Sustainability Plans in conjunction with the CYCLE team. In Liberia, on the other hand, while CWCs are extremely active and supportive of CYCLE, the majority of them have yet to take the initiative to move towards sustainability.

Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the law³¹ recognizes Child Welfare Committees as legal structures that should operate in communities to help promote the rights and welfare of children. Membership comprises a government-nominated social worker, traditional leaders, parents, youth, service

³¹ Child Rights Act 2006.

providers, an NGO Community-based Organization (NGO /CBO) representative, and religious leaders. The CWCs assist the Government of Sierra Leone and CYCLE to identify CYCLE beneficiaries, monitor their progress, and follow up to ensure retention in educational programs. Specifically for the government, they inspect, monitor, and report on child laborers and employers throughout the country. There are approximately 20 CWCs and 10 youth groups participating in CYCLE in Sierra Leone. Through the sensitization and training on CYCLE referral and the work status monitoring approach, some employers have started to realize the impact of worst forms of child labor. For example, the Lower Bambara Tongo Fields employers referred 90 child laborers to the CYCLE program. CWCs in Sierra Leone also have their own volunteers, adding to their strength. Hence, CYCLE has fewer of its own community volunteers in Sierra Leone (7) than in Liberia (36).

The CWCs in Sierra Leone now meet more regularly than previously, and are committed to monitoring vulnerable children in the community to reduce child labor. Not only does each CWC meet once a month, but all the CWCs within a district likewise meet once a month to work collaboratively in covering the entire region. Each CWC has identified a Task Force that identifies and monitors beneficiaries. They will work with line ministries, chiefdoms, schools, the mining community, and other stakeholders to sensitize community members. CWCs in Sierra Leone believe that further training from the CYCLE team, in areas such as monitoring (and devising follow-up forms), income generation, and agricultural techniques/projects, could enhance their ability and capacity to not only counter child labor, but to also generate income that sustains development projects, school rehabilitation, payment for teachers, feeding for the vulnerable, and supporting children into education programs.

Liberia

In Liberia, the CYCLE team participated in discussions led by the Ministry of Gender and Child on how to make CWCs self sustaining without government or NGO financial support. The project is working with 9 CWCs and 10 youth groups in the three target counties. However, CWCs do not have the same legal status as in Sierra Leone, thus making it more difficult for them to impose any degree of authority. For example, the Liberian CWCs expressed more concern than CWCs in Sierra Leone about financial and mobility constraints, as well as some lack of respect from line ministries, employers, and community members. For this reason, many have requested an identifying jacket, t-shirt, or badge that may provide a form of recognition and status.

In general, CWCs in Liberia require more strengthening and a greater understanding of the need to move towards sustainability and take initiative in community development and empowerment. This may require more training, constant monitoring to ensure messages are understood, or the CYCLE team facilitating meetings to discuss strategies for moving forward towards greater cohesion, networking, and decisionmaking.

6.7 IMPACT ON GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

6.7.1 Impact on Government Structures—in Terms of System-wide Change on Education & Child Labor

CYCLE has created a significant impact on the Ministry of Labor in Liberia. After collaborating with the MOL via the National Commission on Child Labor since September 2005; through workshops and focus group discussions with employers and workers groups regarding child labor awareness materials; CYCLE's partnership with the ministry culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2007. The ministry found this collaboration to be "timely" and "meaningful." There has also been close collaboration between the MOL and the Ministry of Education due to a commitment towards moving children from labor into education. The MOL commends USDOL on a program where changes are visible within a short timeframe, though conceding that there is much to be done across the country.

The MOL will focus on rubber plantations and other hazardous workplaces, and capacity building within the ministry. In 2006, the MOL trained 55 labor inspectors to monitor child labor across the country and established Child Labor Monitoring Committees. Forty (40) media staff were also trained, resulting in regular radio exposure on child labor issues. In February 2008, the ministry submitted a Plan of Action to CYCLE staff for discussion. The MOL is currently working towards ratification of ILO Convention 138 on minimum age and it is hoped that legislature will ratify the convention after the agriculture break.

The ministry would have eventually and gradually implemented child labor policies and inspection procedures, but admits that CYCLE fast-forwarded the process. Hence, the momentum for change is firmly entrenched in Liberia's Ministry of Labor, and they are confident of further progress on child labor laws and reforms.

The Ministry of Education in Liberia, through the Directorate of Planning and Research, indicated that the free primary education policy has resulted in significantly increased enrollments since its introduction in 2005. In 2006/2007, primary school enrollments were 597,316 countrywide; an increase of 40% from 2005/2006. The 2007/2008 enrollments were currently 1,087,257; representing an increase of 82% from the previous year. School rehabilitation and construction has not increased in proportion to the increase in enrollments; hence schools are excessively overcrowded. Despite overcrowded schools, the MOE supports the role of the CYCLE project and expresses the need for an expanded program into other counties or communities. The MOE firmly believes that the CYCLE program contributes to the reduction of conflict in communities through access to education and reduced child labor.

In Sierra Leone, the impetus of the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports to collaborate closely with the CYCLE team has recently commenced.³² Initially, they were not fully involved, and commenced their participation by their interest in CYCLE's needs assessment in Sierra Leone. Their involvement gained momentum with their collaboration on the development of a training manual for child labor inspectors. The manual was then delayed due to

³² Since the change of government during the elections of September 2007.

a lack of electricity, and in February 2008 is being reviewed before the MOL commences in-service training of inspectors. Further momentum would be ensured, they believe, by the empowerment at field level of district education officers and school management committees, and the establishment of a national survey and database on child labor, including child trafficking information. Progress towards ratification of ILO Conventions 138 and 182 are underway and, therefore, the MOL anticipates further involvement with the CYCLE team on gradually improving the level of compliance. With these changes and advances in progress, they believe it is timely to establish a unit or focal office explicitly for the implementation of child labor reforms.

VII EVALUATION FINDINGS: SUSTAINABILITY

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY OF INTERVENTIONS

What steps have been taken to promote and ensure long term sustainability and continuation of education strategies for combating child labor beyond the life of the project? What lessons could be learned of the project's accomplishments and weaknesses in terms of sustainability of interventions?

The CYCLE team has clearly discussed and implemented activities for long-term sustainability from commencement of the program, as evidenced in documentation and interviews with stakeholders. Documentation includes a CYCLE Project Exit Strategy,³³ a Sustainability Plan,³⁴ and regular references to sustainability in other materials, such as the Project Document. In the Project Document (the project design), the assumption was that “sustainability is...defined as partner institutions and communities developing the commitment, skills, systems, resources and community support necessary to sustain or increase project achievements after the end of DOL funding. Achieving this sustainability depends on two fundamental processes: capacity-building and community ownership.”³⁵

CYCLE documentation outlines a four-pronged approach to sustainability: (1) government line ministries, (2) local NGO partners, (3) community partnership, and (4) improving education systems.

In Liberia, the ministries at the national level understand the need to move towards sustainability, and in Sierra Leone, the strategies are more clearly evident in communities, particularly with Child Welfare Committees. Hence, in Liberia, communities require a clearer conceptual understanding that CWCs, PTAs, line ministries, youth, and other interested groups have been put in place to carry the program forward. They need assistance in developing strategies on how to work together, take initiatives, write proposals, and work together more cohesively towards decision-making. In Sierra Leone, the communities have the conceptual understanding and now require further strengthening to begin sustainability activities before the program concludes. Stakeholders in both countries generally believe that sustainability commences from September 2009, rather than it being a gradual implementation of lessons learned, structures in place, networking, and taking action towards child labor, development, and income generating initiatives.

7.1.1 Government Line Ministries

The project design made the assumption that capacity building for government line ministries is imparted through routine involvement with the Ministry of Labor; Ministry of Education (Liberia); Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (Sierra Leone); Ministry of Gender (Liberia); Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Child Affairs (Sierra Leone), and other associated

³³ CYCLE Project Exit Strategy, October 2006.

³⁴ CYCLE Project Sustainability and Phase-Out Plan – Liberia & Sierra Leone, September 27, 2007.

³⁵ CYCLE Project Document under USDOL & IRC Cooperative Agreement, Final, August 2007, p64.

ministries, such as Health. The involvement at national, county/province, and district levels in planning, project implementation, monitoring, and reporting would increase knowledge of child labor issues and, therefore, government employees would be better able to monitor child labor programs in the future.

The assumption has held true, in part. In Liberia, particularly through the National Commission on Child Labor where the involvement and participation of line ministries is strong, effective, committed, and passionate, demonstrates that constant and regular collaboration has formed a partnership that has the impetus and momentum to continue reforms and compliance beyond the CYCLE program, within the usual limitations of nascent governments and budgetary considerations. The ministries have identified discrete activities for capacity building that will increase their skills and abilities. In Sierra Leone where the momentum is embryonic, frequent meetings are required to facilitate the identification of capacity-building activities. To date, it is not yet evident that all levels of the GOSL/MOL are ready to take responsibility in some areas of child labor reforms, particularly in compliance. However, the upcoming in-service training of child labor inspectors will be a springboard for the implementation of compliance requirements. Both countries have held discussions relating to building the capacity of the MOL by establishing a database on child labor. In Liberia, the discussions started in August 2006, whilst in Sierra Leone the discussions commenced January 2008. If the CYCLE team actively pursues this, as is evident, the CYCLE program has the potential to leave a lasting legacy through the sustainability of the program in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

7.1.2 Local NGO Partners

In the project design, the assumption was that training of local NGO partners in outreach, resource mobilization, financial management, and reporting in relation to child labor activities would increase their capacity. This assumption has held true. The local NGO partners, through previous experience and through further capacity building by the CYCLE team, are implementing their mandates effectively and with commitment. However, financial management continues to be an area where they request further training, particularly as budgets are limited. Collaborative budget-setting, resource sharing, and planning would also increase their skills in establishing expected outcomes.

7.1.3 Community Partnership

The project design assumed that community partnership will be fostered through community sensitizations and workshops aimed at effecting long-term changes in attitudes and behavior related to child labor among parents, teachers, CWC, women groups, youth groups, children, and the youth themselves. This assumption has held true in Sierra Leone. In Liberia, community partnerships, while established and functioning, require facilitation in the implementation of sustainability activities. The structures are in place in both countries, hence the groundwork has been firmly laid, though Sierra Leone has grasped the concept of initiative and ownership more fully.

7.1.4 Improving Education Systems

The project design made the assumption that improving the skill base of teachers would have a lasting impact on student performance, hence improving the learning environment, which would increase student participation and commitment to continuing their education. This has held true in part. Students have definitely, and outstandingly, increased their participation in and commitment to continuing their education. All students interviewed, without fail, expressed a passion to continue their education. However, it is ambitious for the CYCLE project to assume that the two-day training conducted for teachers will have made a lasting effect. It requires a great deal of skill and experience to implement child-friendly, healing classroom practices, and other innovative teaching and learning methodologies in classrooms that are severely overcrowded, in schools that have limited resources and equipment (especially science and mathematics equipment), and where a significant number of teachers are not on the government payroll.

It is believed by all stakeholders interviewed that teachers are “trying their best.” In Sierra Leone, where generally teachers are more qualified, the standard and quality of teaching is more advanced. They are more aware of techniques for teaching large numbers of students, and more aware of discipline and classroom management techniques, as well as educational content. Regardless, the CYCLE project has advanced the use of registers, lesson plans, classroom management strategies, and the use of drama, songs, and other traditional learning methods to impart knowledge and to retain understanding of key child labor concepts.

7.2 COMMUNITY AGENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Assess the extent to which the various local level community groups with which the project has worked—teachers, parents, child labor communities, district officials—can act as agents for the initiative’s sustainability.

Child Welfare Committees in Sierra Leone are already acting as agents for the sustainability of the CYCLE program, and should be encouraged to commence activities over the next two years to put in place strong and effective strategies to reduce exploitive child labor in their regions.

Each CWC in Sierra Leone has identified areas to strengthen within their community as they move towards sustainability. Some have commenced writing funding proposals to the government, specifically for agriculture projects, and would appreciate training on proposal-writing. Some have taken initiatives to introduce, or at least consider the implementation of income-generation activities, particularly in agriculture and business. Many have devised initial Sustainability Plans and are working collaboratively with the CYCLE team to establish action plans and a monitoring system that ensures their progress. The driving force behind the effectiveness of the CWCs in Sierra Leone, as well as other individuals and groups sporadically within the CYCLE program, is the deep conviction of preventing the return of beneficiaries to child labor. It is feared that returning to child labor would dash their expectations, create resentment and mistrust, and cause them to permanently spiral towards a degraded lifestyle in which they might not be able to recover.

The Sustainability Plans shown to and discussed with the evaluator outline the roles and responsibilities of CWCs and CYCLE for the next two years. The roles and responsibilities of the CWC include the following:

- Absorbing the existing CYCLE case loads.
- Continuing to monitor children in school and at home through the use of simplified forms.
- Convening regular meetings.
- Soliciting funds through proposal writing.
- Opening a bank account to receive funds from income generating activities.
- Embarking on sensitization activities.
- Developing bylaws on child labor.
- Writing an appeal for the extension of the CYCLE program, from September 2009 for an additional four years.

The CWCs have outlined three major areas of responsibility for the CYCLE team to action their Sustainability Plans: (1) capacity building, (2) CWC empowerment, and (3) linkages and collaboration.

The capacity building required by CWCs includes detailed training on child labor with manuals, joint school visitations with ministry inspectors and CYCLE staff, and the development of forms and sensitization material that can be used by CWCs to sustain the program. In terms of empowerment, CWCs propose the provision of cameras, bicycles, and rain equipment; assistance to establish income generating activities (for parents, school management committees, CTAs, families, and other community groups), and the provision of storage to accommodate program documentation and equipment. The CWC Sustainability Plans also suggest that the CYCLE program facilitates linking the CWCs and appropriate community groups with line ministries. The evaluator would add that links should also be made with local NGOs, Community-Based Organizations, and other donors operating within the CWCs regions.

To this end, the evaluator emphasizes the need for training in income generation, proposal writing, and business skills, as well as the facilitation of linkages to enable collaborative ventures and partnerships.

VIII EVALUATION FINDINGS: MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

8.1 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

What management issues arose in implementing the program? How were these handled?

The CYCLE project had a total budget of US\$5,999,980 from the U.S. Department of Labor to cover the management and implementation costs of the project in Liberia and Sierra Leone from October 2005 to September 2009. The IRC will match the grant with a contribution of US\$855,854 from other sources.

CYCLE supports beneficiaries by providing school materials, uniforms, tuition fees, and WAEC examination fees. The costs per beneficiary are dependent upon the education services supported:

- A primary child costs US\$14 per student, per year (excluding WAEC fees, and no tuition fees are provided due to both countries' free education policy).
- Junior secondary students cost US\$50 per year (includes tuition but excludes WAEC fees).
- Senior secondary students cost US\$90 per year (includes tuition and textbooks but excludes WAEC fees).
- Skills and vocational training students cost between US\$250–750 per year (depending upon their start-up kits).³⁶

Through cost-sharing with other IRC programs, CYCLE has been able to implement the program within its financial constraints. For example, in Liberia CYCLE operates in three counties with two vehicles, and has been able to share vehicle arrangements with IRC's core programs. The CYCLE team has also elicited the assistance of community volunteers, and has aggressively sought matching funds to meet their target.

To date, 53% (US\$415,686: US\$223,193 in Liberia and US\$192,493 in Sierra Leone)³⁷ of the budgeted US\$780,177 matching funds (91% of the target) has been expended at the midpoint of the program. As the evaluator was leaving Sierra Leone in mid-February 2008, the program had recently received matching funds from another grant worth US\$60,000, reducing its match fund target requirement to US\$256,877.

³⁶ Skills training cost US\$274 and vocational education training costs US\$741, both including start-up kits.

³⁷ Figures provided by the CYCLE M&E Coordinator, as of February 2008.

8.1.1 Management Structure

Thirty-nine (39) CYCLE personnel are assigned 100% to the program: three expatriate regional management staff; 16 national staff in Liberia, and 17 national staff in Sierra Leone.

The CYCLE management team (or regional team) comprises the CYCLE Regional Project Director, the Regional Education Coordinator (both based in Liberia) and the M&E Coordinator (based in Sierra Leone). The management team is the human resource and communications link between countries.

Each country has a National Coordinator. If the CYCLE Regional Director is out of country, the National Coordinator reports to the IRC Child Youth Protection Department Director (one in Liberia and one in Sierra Leone). The CYPD Director has approximately 10 to 25% CYCLE involvement. This connection was not obvious during the midterm evaluation; however, the Regional Project Director clarified the situation and amended the organograms for each country.

Reporting to the National Coordinator in Liberia are three County Project Managers (Montserrado, Nimba, and Lofa). In each county, there is one education officer, two social workers, and a data entry clerk/analyst. In Sierra Leone, reporting to the National Coordinator are two District Managers (in Freetown and Kono/Kenema). In each district, there are two education officers and a data entry clerk. In Freetown, there are three social workers, and in Kono/Kenema there are five social workers.

The evaluator noted the commitment and dedication of all staff to the CYCLE project and was impressed by their enthusiasm and passion. The lean team in each country has an onerous workload supporting beneficiaries, liaising with line ministries and local NGO partners, and working collaboratively with targeted communities. The 21 education officers and social workers service 342 institutions (approximately 16 each) and are currently supporting 27,938 students (approximately 1,330 each) with follow ups twice a year (although many students require continual follow ups). To counter this workload, staff initiated the use of community volunteers³⁸ (36 in Liberia, four in each of the nine communities; and seven in Sierra Leone, five in Kono and two in Tongo Fields).

8.1.2 Cross-Border Conference

CYCLE management's greatest strength was the organization of a Cross-Border Conference on October 17–19, 2007 between Liberia and Sierra Leone CYCLE staff and stakeholders. Eleven staff and stakeholders from Sierra Leone came to Liberia to meet with their counterparts (23 participants from Liberia and 1 from New York) at all levels; from local NGO partners to ministerial staff. The auditor's report was discussed and solutions were raised on how to address the concerns and issues. For example, the CYCLE team introduced the solution of beneficiary photographs for each file as a means of avoiding double-counting.

The Liberian MOL also raised the issue of simple forms or checklists for labor inspectors to assist them with child labor monitoring. The Sierra Leone MOL wanted training content devised

³⁸ Community volunteers are not paid but receive a transport allowance.

so that the ministry could conduct in-service training for labor inspectors. Since the October conference, the CYCLE team collaborated with the Sierra Leone MOL to prepare a training manual and work is continuing. CYCLE in Sierra Leone is also working jointly with the MEYS to prepare a training manual for teachers, which is currently being finalized. The Cross-Border Conference was an excellent means of sharing ideas, information, progress, challenges, and solutions as well as a way of facilitating the sustainability of the program. The evaluator recommends that the Cross-Border Conference be held annually.³⁹

8.1.3 Management Issues

Management has dealt with a number of issues as they arise, involving requesting all staff to elicit suitable and relevant solutions. The evaluator considers the relocation of one of the management teams (the M&E Coordinator) from Liberia to Sierra Leone as an appropriate move in order to balance the management team across both countries. However, there exists a continual and regular flow of management teams from one country to another; with the management team spending 30 to 40% of their time across the border. This helps to alleviate issues and problems in a timely manner. For example, data issues and child labor monitoring are being addressed through the visits of the M&E Coordinator not only to the headquarters of the neighboring country, but also to the regional offices.

Examples of issues addressed by management over the course of the first two years include—

- The slow enrollment rate of the first year
- Logistics, especially the use of vehicles
- The need to document the support to children through individual files
- The need to document best practices
- Forming closer collaboration with specific groups, such as UNICEF and the ILO
- Introducing the requirement to attend district coordination meetings with education and child protection government and community officers
- Ensuring that teacher training forms are completed so that figures can be recorded
- Documenting training reports

The evaluator proposes that the management team capitalize on the strengths of the program's staff and activities in each country to enhance practices across both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

³⁹ Another Cross-Border Conference is being arranged after the Midterm Evaluation.

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IX LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The CYCLE project can learn from the best practices and successful activities in each country. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, due to factors like the political situation, the character of CYCLE staff, and the opportunity for the CYCLE team to meet regularly with stakeholders, each nation has, in many cases, exhibited different strengths. For example, collaboration with the line ministries in Liberia is a strength of the program, while the collaboration of community structures in Sierra Leone, especially the Child Welfare Committees, is also a strength.

In Liberia, the most cohesive community was Zorzor in Lofa County. It was the only community visited by the evaluator in which there was strong networking between district education officers, community leaders, PTAs, MOL labor inspectors, and other groups. In addition, the PTA in Zorzor had taken the initiative to use other donor funds to provide a school for the community. This may be due to PTAs in Liberia having more status than CTAs in Sierra Leone. Zorzor was the only school with a full time librarian; supporting the education of children.

While other communities had reading rooms and textbooks provided by CYCLE, the Zorzor school library was functioning well and was successfully managed. Students using the reading room appreciated the quiet study area. In the interview with the district education officer in Zorzor, many other members of the community also attended, including parents. This is evidence of the community's interest and participation in the CYCLE project.

In Sierra Leone, the evaluator found it difficult to isolate communities for best practice since the CWCs were strong in each community. It was, however, apparent that the driving force of the CWCs were due to their legal status within the government, respect within the community, and their ability to take the initiative to lead their community towards a sustainable child protection intervention.

Graduates of skills training centers in Liberia are clearly more advanced in considering different and varied options in which to: use their skills, start their own business, collaborate with others, work with their skills provider, gain a contract for work, or seek other employment. This is despite the quality of training; seemingly below that of skills training centers in Sierra Leone. Yet, despite the lower quality of technical expertise, the skills providers in Liberia are more creative and supportive of facilitating their students into different options upon graduation. In Sierra Leone, the skills training providers appear to focus solely on the establishment of cooperatives.

Table 8 shows the different areas of strength within each country. One interesting finding is the perception held by stakeholders of the benefits of the program.

In Liberia, stakeholders perceived the benefits in terms of education, particularly for students and parents. The “healing power of education” permeates not just the classroom, but into the homes of students and parents. Students in Liberia discussed benefits such as being “more peaceful,” “not biting my fingernails anymore,” and “not suffering.” Parents indicated that they were “more free of financial burdens,” “happy that their children were happy in school,” and “more able to talk to other parents about the hardships and problems in their family.”

Table 8: Examples of Best practices in Liberia and Sierra Leone

	Liberia		Sierra Leone	
Government Involvement	3 stars	High commitment & participation in CYCLE; advanced in child labor and educational reforms	1 star	Requires more attention
Communities	1 star	Requires understanding of sustainability & how to implement	3 stars	Highly advanced, with Sustainability Plans documented
Community Structures	1 star	Parent Teacher Associations, due to authorization by government	3 stars	Child Welfare Committees, due to legal status by government
Skills Training Center Graduates	3 stars	Knowledgeable of range of options available to them after graduation; many had started own business and were earning incomes	1 star	Spoke only of option of forming cooperatives; no graduate had yet started their own business
Teachers	1 star	Qualifications and standard of teaching is low	3 stars	Qualifications and standard of teaching is advanced
Primary & Secondary Students	2 stars	Committed to learning	3 stars	Highly knowledgeable of child labor and CYCLE project; more vibrant; less inhibited
Stakeholders' Perceived Benefits	2 stars	Healing power of education (on individuals)	3 stars	More than reducing child labor (community benefits: reduction in child crime, teenage pregnancy, caning in school, financial pressure, drug & alcohol abuse, etc.)

Rating: 1 star—represents good
 2 stars—represents great achievement
 3 stars—represents excellent, exhibiting best practices

The ratings are based upon comparisons between countries, depth of stakeholder involvement, knowledge and understanding of stakeholders, or specific activities conducted by the stakeholder that stood out as effective practices.

In Sierra Leone, students, parents, line ministries, and community groups perceived the benefits of the program in terms of community benefits. They included benefits such as the reduction of child labor, child crime, teenage pregnancies, noise, worst forms of school discipline, hardship, financial pressures, bad language, and drug and alcohol abuse. While they could be perceived as benefits to the individual, the evaluator noted that in Sierra Leone they were expressed in terms of reducing poverty, crime, and conflict within the community. The community spirit and cohesion is therefore the strength of the program in Sierra Leone, and an example of best practice in community development, community pride, and community ownership.

Stronger, more successful communities generally had the following characteristics:

- Committees with strong motivational leadership and well-respected members.
- Proactive members with a sense of direction.
- Respect for each member of the community and its neighbors.
- Community-initiated projects for the benefit of the community, such as building schools and establishing a community farm.
- A sense of “oneness,” whereby all community members were working together for the common goals of peace and prosperity for its members, as well as the reduction of child labor through education.

- Transparent and accountable financial management.

The following lessons have been gleaned from the evaluator's visits to communities:

- Effective leadership of community members is a powerful tool towards gaining community respect, motivating communities into participating in common projects and interventions, and promoting a sense of “oneness.”
- Economic empowerment through training in best practice business skills and effective implementation mobilizes communities towards self-sufficiency and sustainability, if followed-up and continually encouraged.
- Child labor awareness raising and sensitization are major catalysts for social change within communities.
- Basic functional literacy skills enable community members, particularly youth and women, to converse, write their name, record measurements (i.e., carpentry and tailoring), and document simple requests.
- Basic numeracy skills enable community members, particularly youth and women, to prepare budgets, keep account of income and expenditure, and manage finances.
- The capacity of communities was greatly increased through training in child labor, education, healing classroom practices, health, economic, and community development.
- Multiple training that is repeated continuously over the life of the program, in order for the messages to be fully absorbed and applied, are preferable to one-off training sessions.
- The creation of CWCs is a major catalyst in bringing communities together.
- The more remote a community, the more it was focused and committed to self-sustainability and community cohesion.
- Follow up in the field is essential to ensuring that learning is applied at the grassroots level.
- Building the capacity of local NGO partners greatly improves their ability to implement their mandate within the program, and is critical to the success of child labor awareness raising.
- The concept of empowering local NGO partners through joint and collaborative activities improves motivation, makes them appreciate “equal” partnering, and leads to improved performances.

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X CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, according to stakeholders and beneficiaries interviewed during the midterm evaluation, the strengths of the program overwhelmingly outweighed its weaknesses (Table 8), with all highly valuing the objectives, activities and impact of the program. Stakeholders praised the CYCLE personnel for their expertise and commitment, saying that their relationship was indeed a “cordial,” “timely,” and “useful” partnership. The referral system and the student tracking/monitoring system were particularly praised, as they provided a means of ownership and a strong sense of participation and involvement in the program. Stakeholders maintained that the program was a vital part of their nation’s recovery process, filling many of the gaps that the governments could not immediately fulfill.

Providing beneficiaries with access to education, school materials (particularly uniforms and start-up kits), skills and vocational training, teacher training, local NGO partnering, and capacity building of line ministries were CYCLE’s greatest strengths, especially as these were largely visible and immediate. The evaluator adds that CYCLE’s main strength is the constant, regular, and compassionate maintenance of community and ministerial relationships over time. Many aid programs aim for quantity of community contact rather than quality of relationships. The CYCLE program has aimed for, and achieved, quality over quantity, partnering over advice, and strategic planning over quick-impact random interventions.

Stakeholders expressed program weaknesses in terms of the grade 6 and 9 graduates (who do not automatically receive support into the next level of schooling), and the limited number of CYCLE staff to assist ministries, communities, and students. Stakeholders also viewed the scope of the program, in terms of the limited number of communities and counties/provinces targeted, as a weakness. They would prefer a wider coverage of targeted areas, but with the same quality as currently provided.

The above strengths and weakness were country-wide core areas across both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Similarly, particular strengths and weaknesses appeared to predominate in one country rather than the other. These have, in part, been provided in Section IX on best practices. However, Table 9 documents common themes as well as themes specific to each country.

For example, stakeholders in Sierra Leone maintain that the CWCs are a strength, as are the improvements to the moral standards of students within the communities, the instigation of income generating activities for families, the manuals for labor inspectors, and school rehabilitation.

In Liberia, stakeholders document the specific strengths of the program as being the government’s involvement in the program, the dedication of the students, communications between CYCLE staff and stakeholders, access to education for over-aged children and youth, and the training of labor inspectors. Many of them also noted that the IRC was often the first or only international NGO engaged in supporting their community.

Table 9: Stakeholder Summary of CYCLE Project Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Cycle Project Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support (uniforms, tuition fees, etc.), lifting economic pressure from families • Expertise of implementers and social workers, despite constraints • Girls in education • Referral system • Community involvement and increased participation & commitment of stakeholders • Building capacity of stakeholders & NGO partners • Cross-border conference • Student retention • Contract to sew school uniforms to community businesses, benefiting local economy 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of government • Hard-working students • Regular two-way communication between IRC and stakeholders • Vulnerable children have a future • Funding from USDOL • Available institutions • Links with agencies and IRC programs • Wide interest in the project • Often IRC/CYCLE is the first or only international NGO in the community • Start-up kits for skills training students • Project caters to over-aged students – students who missed schooling and are over the average age of the class • 55 labor inspectors trained • CYCLE staff commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All CWCs have their own volunteers • Ownership of program by communities & initiatives (i.e., building schools) • Students learn to be responsible • Changing attitudes towards child labor • Training for teachers • Awareness raising • Kono students have highest exam passes • Moral standards of students improving • Reduced teenage pregnancy • Less corporal punishment in schools • Families starting own businesses • Other NGOs are asking for training • School inspectors manuals developed • Child crime reduced in community • School rehabilitation • Met challenges in difficult conditions • 92% enrollment

	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Cycle Project Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 6 and 9 completers do not automatically continue education • Not enough CYCLE staff • Limited stakeholder training, particularly in financial management • Awareness of child labor still low across country • Limited government support to schools (i.e., buildings, teacher pay) • Scope of project—limited communities in a limited number of counties 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of adequate child labor legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family businesses (IGAs) not successful • IGA start-up capital very low • Delayed supply of student materials • The project ending in September 2009 • Ambitious project with low budget • Low/no budget for line ministries
Opportunities For Cycle In Next Two Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for involvement of ministries, training institutions, and community. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased children in schools • Reduced child labor in communities • Improved economy • More girls in education • Increased learning spaces • Improved quality of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness of CWCs to own CYCLE • Sustainability of the program • Determination by community groups to move on with the project
Threats To Cycle In Next Two Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest in the project • Overcrowded schools • Limited capacity of government and institutions 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty of country • Compromised security • Undeveloped institutions • Lack of funding • Lack of accountability • Students dropout • Awareness raising messages not heard, particularly by employers and parents • Lack of mobility to reach students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If students continue work and don't go to school • No support from the community • Targeted IGA intervention • Staff turnover

Source: Stakeholder and beneficiary interviews, and stakeholder meetings of 1 February and 15 February 2008

The evaluator also documents a list of CYCLE program’s major strengths and weaknesses (Table 10).

**Table 10: Evaluator’s Summary of CYCLE Project Major Strengths and Weaknesses
(In Priority Order)**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills training centers & start-up kits • CYCLE social workers and education officers • Community initiatives in Sierra Leone • Cross-border conference • MOL Liberia calendar • Healing power of education • Child labor awareness beyond CYCLE communities • Partnerships between CYCLE team & stakeholders • Commitment of students • Youth groups, particularly in Sierra Leone • Child labor knowledge by students in Sierra Leone • Synergies with other IRC and donor programs, particularly in Liberia • Manuals for school inspectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited initiatives towards sustainability in Liberian communities • Limited productivity of income-generating activities for families • Skills and vocational training centers limited approach to employment and business options for graduates • Teacher quality • Limited budget/outputs for small school rehabilitation activities • Delayed delivery of school materials & fees • Delayed distribution of start-up kits

Over the next two years of the program, USDOL and IRC should therefore make the strongest efforts to address the following:

Weaknesses: In the immediate term, the CYCLE project should address: (1) the delays of the distribution of start-up kits and school materials (uniforms, etc.); and (2) improving the productivity of the income generating activities for families. In the longer term, the CYCLE project should improve sustainability initiatives, at the community and line ministry levels.

Opportunities: In the immediate term, the CYCLE project should capitalize on the efforts of the CWCs and community groups, particular in their adoption of the referral system, the monitoring system, and their enthusiastic involvement to strengthen communities by commencing to implement sustainability plans and actions. In the longer term, the CYCLE project should assist the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone to establish a national database on child labor through capacity building and advice.

Threats: In the immediate term, the CYCLE project should address: (1) the limited capacity of line ministries through specific, focused, discrete activities, training, workshops, or mentoring; and (2) closely monitor and assist families undertaking income generating activities to improve their productivity and sustainability.

The evaluator also provides a list of stakeholders’ requests for support; or rather, more support than originally provided (Table 11). These are documented for the CYCLE project’s consideration only.

Table 11: Examples of Stakeholder Wants

Stakeholder wants (more of*)

	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Ministries/ Government Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CYCLE to be implemented in more locations (counties and communities) • Capacity Building • National Survey/Database on Child Labor (to include child trafficking data) • IRC Cross-border Annual Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission/Unit on Child Labor • Study tour for labor commissioners
School Authorities/ Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More learning spaces, furniture (benches), and textbooks • Training on child labor & related issues – for teachers, CWCs (more frequent) • Identifier (badge or t-shirt) for CWC members and community volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IGA support for families • Skills training centers in regional areas • School feeding • Link CWCs with line ministries, NGOs • Mobility for CWCs • Project proposal writing skills
Direct Beneficiaries (Students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More schooling/education • Shoes • Recreational items (soccer balls, volleyballs) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College/university scholarships • Academic achievement awards • Tools (and sheltered work areas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School supplies on time • Start-up kits (not to be delayed) • Hats

* Stakeholders offered these suggestions during interviews. The evaluator documented them for consideration and noting only.

Communities expressed a greater desire for best practice agricultural information and practical skills, and greater financial management skills for income generation. Hence, activities that would have benefited from strengthening throughout the program for sustainability include the following:

- Agricultural best practices and demonstration sites
- Business development
- Income-generation skills
- Management skills
- Financial management skills

Extension of the CYCLE Program

Without a doubt, stakeholders praised the CYCLE program and expressed the desire for an extension. As one Child Welfare Committee member said: “The gravity of child labor cannot be underestimated.”

When considering an extension, the evaluator sought clarification on what aspects of the program to extend or expand. Stakeholders listed the following:

- Expansion of the number of students supported
- Expansion of the number of counties targeted
- Expansion of the number of communities targeted
- Expansion of the creation of learning space
- Expansion of support for targeted ministries
- Expansion of school material support

XI RECOMMENDATIONS

The CYCLE program at its midterm point is effective and pertinent to the context of both Liberia and Sierra Leone due to their high rate of exploitive child labor, the extent of which is unknown because neither country has as yet conducted a national survey on child labor, nor have they established a national database to capture this critical information. Targeting select counties and communities for support and developing quality relationships and partnerships at the community level is a key factor in the success of the CYCLE program.

Interventions that provided discrete short-term and repeated capacity building to ministries or government agencies were the most effective throughout the CYCLE program. The most effective activities had the following characteristics:

- Activities and support that were synergistic and coordinated, providing monitoring and follow-on, such as the referral system (including support by CYCLE field staff, social workers, and education officers).
- Awareness-raising campaigns that amplified the messages of child labor.
- Activities that embedded a lasting memory or impact within the public consciousness, such as skills and vocational training, the cross-border conference, the MOL Liberia calendar, the provision of start-up kits, and training in healing classroom practices.

Hence, fewer interventions with synergy and follow-on activities are preferable to a multitude of randomly scattered interventions. The introduction of income generating activities was highly praised by stakeholders who requested further IGAs for their communities. However, IGAs have yet to produce significant outputs and impacts.

11.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen CWCs further through additional training and support, particularly in Liberia. CWCs are strong community structures that can facilitate the bonding and binding of communities and are critical for identification, retention, monitoring, and reporting of child labor in their region.
2. Link CWCs and other community groups with relevant line ministries, NGOs, and other donors.
3. Share and impart best practice approaches and strategies for successful community development through community members from model communities. Once trained, they could conduct training and information sessions to members of other communities.
4. Convene a Cross-Border Conference annually to share and impart information, challenges, and best practices across countries, provided funds are available.

5. Seek funding and rehabilitate Ahmadiyya Primary School in Tongo Fields, Kenema District, Sierra Leone to prevent potential collapse in the rain season. The school has bowed mud-brick walls and a plank of wood holding up a ceiling in one classroom that appears extremely hazardous to children.
6. Manage the expectations of grade 6 and grade 9 (and to some extent, grade 12) graduates who will complete during the program. Consider the provision of support for grade 6 and grade 9 completers where possible.
7. Provide timely support materials (such as uniforms and start-up kits) to beneficiaries. Beneficiaries reported that twice the distribution of materials was delayed and was not received until second term.
8. Conduct specific and discrete capacity building interventions for relevant ministries in child labor and education.
9. Conduct capacity building for communities in agriculture, income generation, sustainability planning, business skills, financial management, and/or proposal writing.
10. Monitor skills and vocational training graduates, comparing the formation of cooperatives (particularly in Sierra Leone) with the formation of businesses, and other business/employment options (predominantly in Liberia) after graduation.
11. Monitor cooperatives closely to avoid inequity, poor management, and failure.
12. Establish a national database on child labor in both Liberia and Sierra Leone (and include child trafficking data).
13. Conduct a study in June/July 2008 of IGA for families in Sierra Leone to assess the progress of productivity and profitability.
14. Enhance support for IGA families to ensure productivity and profitability. This may include regular refresher training in technical skills and financial management.
15. Revise the data collection and entry of Question 10 on the Intake Form to avoid data entry clerks having to make arbitrary decisions. Currently field staff circle three or more options but the database can only allow entry of two options.
16. Where possible, promote the need for more female teachers within both countries. This might be possible through IRC's USAID-funded Liberian Teacher Training Program.
17. Continue to improve the monitoring and evaluation system in both countries (such as increasing regular field monitoring visits and streamlining forms, as well as data entry—Question 10 on the Intake Form; adjust to circle only two significant barriers for each category, as the database can only accept two choices).

18. Continue to strengthen the importance of the referral system, even as the project winds down enrollments (and therefore referrals) for the last intake (Cohort 4 target of 1,952 enrollments across both Liberia and Sierra Leone).
19. Continue the strong relationships between CYCLE field staff—social workers and education officers—and beneficiaries, schools, and communities.