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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

# Independent Final Evaluation of the Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Southern Africa (RECLISA) Project: Swaziland Country Report

American Institutes for Research  
Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-4-0046



2008

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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“AIR/RECLISA” has been used to designate the project office (and staff members) in Pretoria, South Africa. “AIR” has been used to designate the American Institutes for Research’s main office in Washington, DC.

This report describes in detail the final evaluation of the project conducted during May 2008. The report was prepared by Macro International Inc., according to guidelines prescribed by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT). The evaluation was conducted and documented by Dr. Bjorn Harald Nordtveit, an independent development consultant, in collaboration with USDOL/OCFT staff, the RECLISA project team, and stakeholders in Swaziland. Points of view or opinions expressed in this document do not represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor.

With thanks to the Save the Children Swaziland team, who greatly facilitated my stay and work in Swaziland.

—*Dr. Bjorn Harald Nordtveit*

*Funding for this evaluation was provided by the United States Department of Labor under Task Order number DOLQ059622437. Points of view or opinions in this evaluation report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.*

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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AIR	American Institutes for Research
CANGO	Coordinating Assembly of Non Governmental Organizations
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CLC	Child Labor Committee
ECOS	Examinations Council of Swaziland
EFA	Education for All
EI	Child Labor Education Initiative
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PACC	Program Advisory Committee on Child Labor
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
RECLISA	Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Southern Africa
STS	Student Tracking System
TECL	Towards the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labor
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labor
WFP	World Food Programme

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Swaziland is a small, landlocked country in southern Africa with a population of nearly 1 million. It is estimated that 69% of the population lives in poverty, and most of the population lives in rural areas that are periodically ravaged by drought. The economy is drained by a rampant HIV/AIDS crisis that is affecting all aspects of community life. In particular, the crisis is putting children at risk of abuse and exploitive child labor. To improve this situation, the Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Southern Africa (RECLISA) project aimed to support 2,000 school-aged children in Swaziland, through the provision of school fees, uniforms, and in some cases, psychosocial follow-up. Moreover, project-created Child Labor Committees (CLCs) aimed to follow up on the welfare and food security of beneficiaries.

At the end of the project, RECLISA has reached—and exceeded—its quantitative targets in terms of enrollment of beneficiary children and provision of services; with a planned target of 2,000, there were 2,030 children enrolled as of June 2008. The direct services of the project include payment of school fees, distribution of school uniforms, and coordination with food aid projects to ensure the beneficiaries' food safety; as well as follow-up, and psychosocial support to beneficiary children by Child Labor Committee members. CLCs provide follow-up on the work status of children and psychosocial support where needed and they also follow-up on the food security of the households.

In addition to its direct services, the project has raised awareness about child labor at community, regional, and national levels; it has also contributed to generating the renewed interest of government, media, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in exploitive child labor and child abuse.

A set of problems related to a project audit has hampered implementation since December 2007, and has led to a budget freeze from December 2007 until the end of May 2008. Also, Save the Children Swaziland has been requested to pay back US\$2,383 for the enrollment of 26 overage beneficiaries (representing less than 1.4% of the total number of beneficiaries). These decisions have lowered the morale of the Save the Children Swaziland's staff and have created a cash flow problem for the organization. They have also negatively impacted RECLISA's project implementation in Swaziland. Further, this situation has dominated the time of the Save the Children Swaziland, American Institutes for Research (AIR) staff, and AIR/RECLISA, leading to considerable energy expended on administration.

The freeze was instigated by AIR because their financial department was unwilling to make additional cash advances before the audit's request for repayment of disallowed funds had been resolved; although they could in fact, according to USDOL, have continued to make such advances.

The sustainability and exit strategies of the project have generally been successful, since the Ministry of Education has agreed to take over the financing of the beneficiary children's schooling. The awareness-raising activities will in all probability be sustainable, since the knowledge and awareness of abusive child labor and child abuse are unlikely to be dismissed by the communities at the end of the project. The CLCs are of various levels of sustainability,

and the exit strategy consists of converting the CLCs into Community-based Organizations (CBOs). However, this conversion is being initiated at the very last moment of the project implementation, and Save the Children Swaziland may not have sufficient time to train members of the CLC/CBOs in organizational management. Training of the CLCs/CBOs in organizational management was never an intended outcome for the RECLISA project. However, because Save the Children will continue to use the CLC/CBO structures for its future engagements with the communities, the organization underlined that necessary training and capacity building will be facilitated accordingly.

The impact of the project can be seen at the school level, where the beneficiaries have increased opportunities for schooling because of the reimbursement of their school fees and/or uniforms. CLCs are following up on the beneficiaries' schooling and on their situations at home, to prevent them from engaging in abusive work. Also, through the action of CLCs, communities and teachers have become more aware of child labor problems. The project has successfully raised awareness and created a debate about abusive child labor at the community, constituency, and national levels.

The following main recommendations are made to USDOL as a result of the findings of the evaluation:

1. That USDOL work with lead grantees, such as AIR, to explore ways in which subcontractors and partners, such as Save the Children in this case, can effectively implement exit strategies in the context of a budget freeze.
2. That USDOL, in new projects, require grant applicants to use participatory approaches in the conception phase.
3. That USDOL, in new projects, carefully examine overhead and administration costs, and compare them with the actual costs of activities, to ensure that the budget strikes a balance between effective administration and sufficient funding to implement project activities adequately.
4. That USDOL, in its new projects, emphasize and prioritize a high-quality approach, instead of requiring quick numeric returns.

Main recommendations to AIR and AIR/RECLISA are as follows:

1. That AIR centralizes all communication through AIR/RECLISA (and not provide simultaneous instructions from Washington, DC and Pretoria).
2. That AIR/RECLISA provides written documentation to Save the Children Swaziland about crucial administrative matters and ensure that the communication or documentation is understood (e.g., on budget freeze, method of calculation of disallowed funds).

Main recommendations to Save the Children Swaziland and AIR/RECLISA are as follows:

1. That Save the Children Swaziland initiate the management training of the CBO/CLCs as soon as possible.<sup>1</sup>
2. That Save the Children Swaziland provide written documentation to AIR/RECLISA about any budgetary, administrative, and implementation difficulties the organization faced during the closing phase of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> It is recommended that USDOL, AIR, and Save the Children Swaziland investigate alternative financing possibilities if the activity cannot be financed by the existing RECLISA budget.

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# I      **CONTEXT**

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## **1.1      INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT**

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) funds international labor projects through its Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB). The Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) is the office within ILAB that administers grants and contracts to organizations engaged in efforts to eliminate child labor and raise awareness about child labor issues. Since 1995, the U.S. Congress has appropriated more than US\$595 million for USDOL, which has been used to combat child labor in more than 75 countries around the world.

USDOL-funded projects seek to achieve the following five major goals:

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 on 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.

Towards such goals, in addition to some smaller initiatives USDOL supports two specific programs:

1. **The International Labour Organization’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC):** Since 1995, ILO-IPEC has received US\$330 million from the U.S. Government, the leading donor to the program. Most ILO-IPEC projects include “direct action” components that are interventions to remove or prevent children from being involved in exploitive and hazardous work, and a major strategy is to increase children’s access to and participation in formal and non-formal education. Most projects also have a capacity-building component to assist in building a sustainable base for long-term elimination of exploitive child labor.
2. **The Child Labor Education Initiative (EI):** EI projects are designed to ensure that children in areas with a high incidence of child labor are withdrawn and integrated into educational settings, and that they persist in their education once enrolled. Concurrently, the program seeks to avert at-risk children from leaving school and entering child labor. The EI is based on the notion that the elimination of exploitive child labor depends, to a large extent, on improving the access to, the quality of, and the relevance of education. Funds under the EI are competitively bid and support cooperative agreements with international, nonprofit, for-profit, and faith-based entities.

In addition to these two initiatives, in 2007 the USDOL allocated US\$60 million for other child labor elimination projects, and provided US\$2.5 million for additional awareness-raising and research activities.

## **1.2 SWAZILAND CONTEXT**

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a small, landlocked country in southern Africa with a population of nearly 1 million (the population declined to 954,000 at the latest 2007 Census).<sup>2</sup> With a per capita income of US\$1,553 (2004), the World Bank reclassified Swaziland as a lower middle-income country in the 1990s. However, the disparities in the country are biasing the positive outlook of the country; its Gini Index is 60.9%, among the highest in the world, and it is estimated that 69% of the Swazi population lives in poverty.<sup>3</sup> Most Swazis live in rural areas that are periodically ravaged by drought; overgrazing, soil depletion, and floods are also persistent problems in the country. Further, the economy is drained by a rampant HIV/AIDS crisis that is affecting all aspects of community life. In particular, the crisis is putting children at risk of abuse and exploitive child labor.

### **1.2.1 HIV/AIDS**

Swaziland has one of the world's highest HIV prevalence rates, affecting some 220,000 people (CSO, 2007), or about 23% of the entire population (2007 Census).<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, life expectancy fell from 60 years in 1997 to 31.4 years in 2004—the world's lowest. In all regions of Swaziland, the mortality rates are now in excess of the international standards for emergency.<sup>5</sup> As a result, there is an estimated 130,000 orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC), representing 31.3% of all children; a number that is expected to increase to 200,000 by 2010. The impact on community life is important, since 43.4% of households are currently hosting orphans.

The severity of the crisis is partially masked by the existence of a generation of grandparents and older family members that has been less affected by HIV/AIDS and that has taken up the role of caregivers. As the older generation dies, the children will no longer benefit from the current recourse to older family members. Approximately half of young women in the 25 to 29 age range are HIV-positive, and their children have a high probability of being orphaned at a young age. This leads to the question of how these children (with a disappearing older generation that is less capable of absorbing them) will be socialized. The school emerges as one of the institutions that may need to take up a new role in the protection, care, and socialization of the children. Up to this point, however, the school has not been capable of adapting to the new situation, nor of changing its traditional elitist and exams-focused educational system, inherited from colonial times.

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<sup>2</sup> Population estimate in July 2003: 1,161,219.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics from the U.S. Department of State's background note on Swaziland.

<sup>4</sup> All statistics in this section are taken from CSO, 2006–2007, *Swaziland Demographic and Health Survey*. Mbabane: Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland; and from Naysmith, Whalley & Whiteside, 2007, *Reviewing 'Emergencies' for Swaziland: Shifting the Paradigm in a New Era*. Mbabane: NERCHA/HEARD.

<sup>5</sup> The international threshold for emergencies is normally set at Crude Mortality Rate (CMR) of one death per day per 10,000 people.

## **1.2.2 Education**

As noted above, the educational system in Swaziland is highly exams-oriented and elitist, and it has not evolved much over the last 30 years. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), the objectives of primary education are (1) to provide basic skills in reading, writing, and numeracy so that graduates can function in their day-to-day activities; (2) to prepare children for secondary education; and (3) to expose children to various skills and talents so they can identify their areas of strength.<sup>6</sup> However, despite the idea of skills development, most classes focus on theoretical subjects such as mathematics, languages, and sciences. Vocational skills are not introduced before junior secondary education.

Primary education is supposed to last seven years, within the age range of 6 to 13 years. However, because primary education is characterized by very high repetition and dropout rates, it is therefore not infrequent to find young adults age 18 and above in primary school. Also, since many children do not obtain birth certificates at birth, their age is usually determined at a later stage, when it is supposed that they are of ‘school age.’ Hence, the theoretical age of 6 to 13 years for primary education is rarely valid in Swazi schools. During the seventh year of schooling, the Examinations Council of Swaziland (ECOS) externally examines the children in order to select those who qualify to proceed to junior secondary education (according to MOE, approximately 83% of the students pass the examination).

Parents contribute towards primary and secondary education through payment of school fees and building funds (i.e., construction of school facilities). As a measure to reduce the cost burden to parents, the Government of Swaziland has introduced (1) the provision of free textbooks to all primary school pupils, and (2) bursaries for orphaned and vulnerable children through an OVC program initiated in 2005.

As a member of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Swaziland is a signatory of the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), but has not yet finalized the country’s EFA action plan. The MOE, aware of the problems related to HIV/AIDS, is exploring with UNICEF the possibilities of re-creating schools as “Centres of Care and Support.” This was a pilot project launched in 2006, which covers 40 schools and attempts to build partnerships with the communities, provide psychosocial support, and ensure food security as well as basic health and sanitation services. However, in the climate of a generalized HIV/AIDS crisis, a deeper reform of the educational system is needed. For example, corporal punishment is widespread and accepted at a policy and legal level, as well as among the teachers. OVCs are primary targets for punishment, since they may not be able to pay school fees or school uniforms on time. Also, OVCs may have less free time at home to work on school lessons. The government’s for-fee schooling, uniform costs, and punishment policies have disastrous effects on the most vulnerable in Swazi society. Also, the Swazi education system can be considered as one of the main institutions to perpetuate and even exasperate the socioeconomic disparities of the country. Most project interventions will therefore have little possibilities for sustainability, unless they are reinforced at a policy level.

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<sup>6</sup> For additional information regarding the education system in Swaziland, see MOE’s website, accessible from <http://www.gov.sz>.

### 1.2.3 Child Labor

In 1992, Swaziland signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. In 2002, the country ratified the International Labour Organization's Minimum Age Convention (C138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182). ILO's South African-based program, *Towards the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labor* (TECL), has supported the establishment of a policy to address the worst forms of child labor (WFCL). In this context, a cross-agency Program Advisory Committee on Child Labor (PACC) was established in 2004 to oversee the coordination of TECL and similar initiatives at the national level. The Department of Labor in the Ministry of Enterprise and Employment functioned as the Secretariat of the PACC. The committee contributes to raise awareness on WFCL at the government level and helps review policies and legislation; it has finalized the drafting of a country action plan to address WFCL in Swaziland.

TECL/PACC is also providing technical support in the drafting of a child protection bill, an initiative led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Justice. The drafting committee includes other partners such as the Ministry of Education and various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). They have established the first draft of the bill and at present, it has been distributed to stakeholders for feedback.

The Department of Labor is leading a labor advisory committee initiative for a new employment bill (2006), which has been drafted but is not yet ratified. It includes a section on the "employment of a child or a young person" (Draft Bill, paragraph 10, p. 21), which deals with child labor along the following lines:

- (1) *No person may employ a child [defined as a "person under the age of 15 years on p. 12] except (a) in a family business, which in relation to the child, means a business carried out only by a parent or guardian of the child...*
- (3) *Any child who is employed in terms of subsection (1) may not work—*
  - (a) *During school hours, meaning the school hours prescribed by the Education Act, 1964 or its successor*
  - (b) *Between the hours of 6:00 p.m. of one day and 7:00 a.m. of the following day*
  - (c) *For more than six hours in any one day*
  - (d) *For more than 33 hours in one week; or*
  - (e) *For more than four hours continuously, without a meal interval of at least one hour for a meal or rest. (Draft Bill, paragraph 10, p. 21)*

However, WFCL-related policy work has been hampered by ample resistance from different government officials in Swaziland. In particular, some high officials claim that child labor is an unknown phenomenon in Swaziland, since it does not exist in the formal economy. The children working in the informal economy, such as herd boys, workers in the sugar cane plantations, or

children staying at home doing hard household work for their caregivers, remain to a large extent invisible to the society.

The RECLISA project, therefore, operated in a difficult environment in which the rampant HIV/AIDS situation made the project's presence invaluable, but where both the government's education and child labor policies were unfavorable to ideas of education as protection. However, some new government institutions and initiatives have improved the situation. Chief among these is the National Children's Coordination Unit, created under the Deputy Prime Minister's Office in August 2007, which aims to coordinate all children's issues in the country. This unit is well aware of RECLISA and has integrated WFCL as one of its mandates; it also coordinates WFCL issues with USDOL and MOE.

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## II PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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In July 2004, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) signed a cooperative agreement worth US\$9 million to implement an EI project in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland to support the goals of the Education Initiative and improve access to quality education as a means of combating exploitive child labor in Southern Africa. To achieve these goals, AIR identified the following objectives:

1. Increased public awareness of the importance of children's education, children's rights, and the worst forms of child labor.
2. Improved educational opportunities for working children and children at risk.
3. Improved social services for working children, children at risk, and their families or caregivers.
4. Strengthened integration of government policies, laws, and regulations to promote the entry of working children into the formal education system and prevent children at risk from dropping out.

AIR aims to withdraw or prevent at least 10,000 children in Southern Africa from being involved in the worst forms of child labor. RECLISA's regional headquarters are located in Pretoria, South Africa, and AIR works in consortium with one to two organizations in each of the five countries concerned. In Swaziland, Save the Children Swaziland is responsible for implementing project activities.

Save the Children Swaziland is a child-focused development organization that aims to help the most vulnerable children in Swaziland. It is part of the International Save the Children Alliance, which is made up of 32 members worldwide. Save the Children Swaziland's vision is based on the Rights of the Child, a vision shared by all the members of the Save the Children. The work in which Save the Children Swaziland is currently involved include the following issues:<sup>7</sup>

### **Child Protection**

- Ensure that children have the right to a happy, healthy, and secure childhood
- Speak out against the abuse of children, as abuse infringes on their rights as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Influence policy and practice in Child Welfare
- Provide counseling and guidance to children and their families pertaining to their welfare and protection

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<sup>7</sup> The information about Save the Children Swaziland is based on interviews with the organization's staff members and also taken from the website of the organization: <http://www.savethechildren.net/swaziland>.

- Network with all relevant stakeholders in protecting children's lives.

### **HIV/AIDS**

- Raise awareness of and educate children, young people, families, and communities about HIV/AIDS
- Provide counseling and support to individuals and families affected by HIV/AIDS
- Network with other HIV/AIDS service organizations
- Respond to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children and families
- Protect the inheritance rights of children affected by HIV/AIDS.

### **Disability**

- Work with disabled persons organizations to strengthen leadership, income generation, and advocacy skills
- Promote inclusive education
- Work with government to create an enabling environment for disabled people, particularly children.

### **Access to Basic Services**

- Food security; promote the understanding of sustainable development
- Access to basic services (i.e., clean water) and empowerment of communities to engage in income-generation projects
- Environmental protection.

### **Emergency**

- Provide relief to the suffering, particularly where children's lives are in danger
- Complement the government's efforts in responding to emergencies
- Train communities in emergency preparedness
- Trace, support, and protect displaced children and reunite them with their families.

For the past few years, Save the Children Swaziland has been operating in Swaziland's Lowveld region, which faces serious challenges including a long period of drought that dramatically reduced food crop production. Simultaneously, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS resulted in the disruption of the traditional social support structures in the region. Some of the activities

implemented by Save the Children Swaziland, such as food security services (funded by the World Food Program), were implemented in conjunction with RECLISA-Swaziland.

RECLISA-Swaziland's work aimed to support 2,000 school-aged children through the provision of school fees and uniforms. Moreover, project-created Child Labor Committees (CLCs) aimed to follow up on the beneficiaries' welfare and, in some cases, provide psychosocial support. The CLCs were also tasked with raising awareness of abusive child labor in the communities. Various other awareness-raising activities, including media presence and the organization of a national conference on child labor, were planned at a national level.

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### III EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

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The final evaluation examines the project as a whole and its overall impact in relation to its stated targets and objectives. The activities carried out during the four years of the Cooperative Agreement are reviewed and assessed with regard to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

The evaluation aims to—

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

The evaluation addresses issues of project design and implementation, sustainability, and impact. This will provide an opportunity for AIR, USDOL, and national stakeholders to identify key achievements and shortfalls, as well as factors that might have affected project progress. It will help identify lessons learned and effective strategies and models of intervention for the future; it will assess the efficiency of project management at both country and regional levels; and it will determine how recommendations from the midterm evaluation were implemented and to what effect.

The evaluation is an objective inquiry that can facilitate any corrective action and encourage the development and further use of successful aspects of the project. Ultimately, the purpose of the project is to assure that vulnerable children’s needs are being met through project interventions and that the best possible use is made of emerging good practices. It is, above all, a learning process.

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## **IV EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

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The RECLISA evaluation was carried out by three evaluators: one covering South Africa and Botswana, one for Namibia and Swaziland, and one by the team leader who covered Lesotho and regional aspects of the project. Each evaluator provided a report for each of the countries visited, which then served to create a global analysis and synthesis of regional findings.

### ***Desk Review***

After an analysis of the purpose and scope of the evaluation and the specific questions in the Terms of Reference (TOR), the evaluators reviewed key project documents including the following:

- The RECLISA Cooperative Agreement
- The RECLISA Project Document
- Country Needs Assessments
- Project Performance Management Plans
- Various RECLISA Fact Sheets
- Technical Progress Reports
- The Midterm Evaluation Reports and the Project's Responses to Recommendations

### ***Selection of Sites to be Visited***

In all, four working days were spent conducting field visits and interviews in Swaziland. The sites for field visits were selected partly through random sampling and partly in consultation with implementing partners, with the aim of covering a cross-section of activities (including those that have been both more and less successful, and some of the less accessible project sites).

### ***Community Visits***

Two of the four days of fieldwork in Swaziland were used for community visits. The fieldwork included visits to the following schools:

- Duze Primary (interview with RECLISA focal point teacher)
- Engevini Sibetsaphi Primary (interview with RECLISA focal point teacher)
- Letindze Primary (interview with head teacher and RECLISA focal point teacher)
- Hlutse High (interview with head teacher and focus group discussion with five RECLISA beneficiaries)

- Mahhoshe Primary (interview with head teacher, RECLISA focal point teacher, and focus group discussion with three project beneficiaries)
- Madlenya Primary (interview with RECLISA focal point teacher)
- Maloma Primary (interview with RECLISA focal point teacher and focus group discussion with five project beneficiaries)

Also, the evaluator conducted focus group discussions with Child Labor Committees in Gucuka, Sithobela, Sibetsaphi, and Sinceni. The interviewees included child beneficiaries of the project, caregivers, teachers, head teachers, school counselors, and CLC committee members (see Annex A for a list of communities visited and interviewees). Mostly, focus groups and open-ended questions were used (see Annex E for interview guides).

### ***Interviews with Subcontractors***

Two of the four fieldwork days were spent at Mbabane, interviewing Save the Children Swaziland staff members, as well as representatives from various agencies and institutions at the national level. The interviewees included Save the Children Swaziland Director, the Program Coordinator, Field Officers, and the RECLISA Project Manager (who is also responsible for the organization's HIV/AIDS program), as well as the manager responsible for OVC.

### ***Interviews at the National Level***

Interviewees included representatives from the Coordinating Assembly of Nongovernmental Organizations (CANGO), the Department of Labor, the Ministry of Education, the National Children's Coordination Unit, the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA), UNICEF, and the U.S. Embassy. (See Annex A for a full list of interviewees.)

### ***Conference Calls with People in the United States***

Conference calls were conducted with USDOL, AIR, and Macro International Inc. representatives, as well as with the evaluation team, to organize the evaluation and reporting procedures.

### ***Stakeholder Meetings/Debriefings***

A stakeholder meeting was conducted in Swaziland on May 21, 2008. It was attended by Save the Children Swaziland and other stakeholders and partners, including the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, and the U.S. Embassy. (See Annex C for the PowerPoint presentation shown at the stakeholder's meeting.)

## V EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

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This section examines how the project is responding to Swaziland's education and child labor environment, the strategies it has developed, the activities it is implementing, and how sustainable these activities are likely to be. The findings of the evaluation are organized around the questions posed by USDOL in the TOR, taking the opportunity to not only respond to each question but to expand on the issues concerned as appropriate. Conclusions and recommendations complete the evaluation of the relevant issues.

To achieve these objectives, the various aspects of the project are divided into the following categories:

1. **Project Design and Implementation** looks at the degree to which the Swaziland project component has supported the EI goals and to what extent it has met its stated purpose and outputs.
2. **Regional Aspects** looks at the Swazi's and, in particular, Save the Children Swaziland's conception of the regional management structure of RECLISA, as well as the capacity building and awareness raising offered by AIR/RECLISA.
3. **Specific USDOL Concerns** looks at specific issues highlighted by USDOL (regarding the Swaziland part of the evaluation).
4. **Sustainability and Impact** looks at Save the Children Swaziland's strategies for sustainability of project actions, as well as the project's impact to date on the various stakeholders.

### 5.1 PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### 5.1.1 Design and Work Plans, Successes, and Challenges of Implementation

##### *Design and Work Plans*

The project has been implemented, for the most part, according to its design and work plan. However, there have been a few exceptions.

According to Save the Children Swaziland, the initial goal of the project was too ambitious. For example, the project set out to help withdrawn children with vocational training, which subsequently proved too costly; the goal of the project was changed to support beneficiaries at the secondary school level (with school fees and/or uniforms). The design shift seems appropriate in terms of the limited funding of the project and the expressed needs of the communities. Other project objectives, such as providing food aid to the beneficiary households or helping the beneficiary children obtain birth certificates, were implemented by other projects. The RECLISA project, therefore, concentrated on such direct services as school fees, school uniforms, and follow-up of the children through the CLCs. The project largely exceeded targets in awareness-raising efforts, such as radio and television presence.

At the project's initiation and during the startup phase, there was a lack of development and emergency support to the Lowveld Region. However, following RECLISA's engagement, other agencies became involved in the area. Funding and services became more readily available to help OVC with the payment of school fees. Save the Children Swaziland shifted its strategy from paying school fees for OVC in the target communities to providing school fees and/or school uniforms. The increase of support to the region made the screening of children (to ensure that they did not benefit from other organizations' financing of their school fees or uniforms) more complicated,<sup>8</sup> and at times slowed down the beneficiary identification process.

In the project document, Save the Children Swaziland stated its intention to implement the project in line with its "Community Action Cycle." However, the model was only partly implemented because, according to Save the Children Swaziland, a quantitative approach of the project limited the qualitative aspects of the implementation: "We understood that AIR/RECLISA accepted the [Community Action Cycle] model, but we needed to focus on quantitative results and clear deliverables—and found no place to implement the model." In other words, although the Community Action Cycle model would have strengthened the project, it was felt that the focus was only on measurable outcomes; the pressure to deliver against targets was such that Save the Children Swaziland could not sufficiently focus on the qualitative aspects of the project. Hence, instead of implementing a larger community program, the organization chose to focus on three direct services to beneficiaries: uniforms, school fees, and CLC intervention to provide psychosocial or food support where needed and to ensure that the children were not engaged in exploitive work.

Save the Children Swaziland has developed and employed a Community Action Cycle model for the identification of needs, awareness raising, designing an intervention to address needs, implementation, and evaluation. The model has six phases:

1. **Prepare to Mobilize:** Select the most relevant and obvious factors and issues that will be the focus of reducing exploitive child labor practices through education; define the communities that will be mobilized; select and develop a CLC; and learn more about exploitive child labor issues, factors, current beliefs, and practices.
2. **Organize the Community for Action:** Initiate contact with leaders and the community; orient the community and invite participation; identify the community's strengths; and organize the CLC for action.
3. **Identify Exploitive Child Labor and Education Issues:** Explore exploitive child labor issues and factors with the CLC, which will explore the issue of exploitive child labor in the wider communities, and analyze the information and set priorities for action.
4. **Planning Together with the Communities:** Set dates, times, and venues for planning meetings; prepare for planning meetings and planning processes; and carry out the planning sessions to develop an action plan.

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<sup>8</sup> If the schools were to obtain such double financing, they may have used the extra financing for other purposes than supporting OVC.

5. **Acting Together with the Communities:** Define the Save the Children team's role in accompanying community action; strengthen the community's capacity to carry out its action plan; monitor community progress; and problem-solve, troubleshoot, advise, and mediate conflicts.
6. **Evaluating Together with the Communities:** Determine those who want to learn from the evaluation; form a representative evaluation team with the community and other interested parties; determine what participants want to learn from the evaluation; develop an evaluation plan; develop evaluation instruments and train team members in their use; conduct the evaluation and analyze the results; provide feedback to the community; share lessons learned and recommendations for the future; and prepare to reorganize.

### ***Implementation Challenges and Successes***

The project has been successful in the implementation of its stated objectives (see Section 5.1.5: Support to the Five EI Goals) for further information about implementation achievements). The project also faced different types of implementation challenges, many of which were related to administrative, budget, and management issues.

First, challenges related to the underfunding of the project resulted in changed project objectives in terms of vocational training (see previous section: Design and Work Plans).

Second, and possibly connected to the limited budget, Save the Children Swaziland staff members felt that the organization faced a budget inflexibility that prevented the project from taking even the smallest actions to enhance implementation. For example, the members of the CLCs, to clarify their mandate as community Child Labor Committees, requested T-shirts. The request of such "uniforms" may seem a negligible issue from a Western vantage point, but it may lead to very substantial benefits from a grassroots development perspective. For a very modest budget, the distribution of T-shirts would promote community awareness of child labor and possibly improve the sustainability of CLCs (by boosting the morale of the members of these committees). However, because of a misunderstanding (possibly of procedures) between STC and AIR, the project did not purchase T-shirts or hats.

Third, the implementation challenges include what Save the Children Swaziland has termed the "quantitative approach" of the project; for instance, a feeling that the project's concerns were connected to numbers and not sufficiently to the quality of the services rendered. For example, the selection of the first generation of learners was done before the CLCs were operative and, therefore, was largely done on an ad hoc basis because of the pressure to enroll children "without delay." According to AIR/RECLISA, the "problem with the push to select the 'first generation' of learners was a direct result of the USDOL M&E (monitoring and evaluation) consultant's insistence on straight-line targets (25% of total targets in year 1)." This pressure to perform on quantitative targets created problems for Save the Children Swaziland during the project audit (see Section 5.1.2). USDOL noted in subsequent correspondence with the evaluator that the department "places equal amount of weight on both quality of services and quantity of beneficiaries served."

Fourth, another challenge has been what Save the Children Swaziland calls the “moving goalposts of the project.” The moving goalposts may be connected to the organization’s limited understanding of the contract as well as management procedures of USDOL and the Government Performance Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) at the beginning of implementation. In particular, Save the Children Swaziland felt that it did not sufficiently understand the management procedures related to timesheets and budgetary matters, and that the training received on this issue was insufficient.

For example, timesheet reporting is still considered a major difficulty, despite AIR/RECLISA’s training and follow-up on the use of these timesheets. Save the Children Swaziland feels that RECLISA staff members could not use project time for cooperation with other organizations and for traveling to the field because they are not sure how they could account for coordination time and travel time (these categories were apparently not found in the timesheets). Save the Children Swaziland’s general conception is that these activities (coordination time and time used to travel to the field) are “not allowed” by RECLISA.

Another problem has been that Save the Children Swaziland originally budgeted a yearly 7% salary adjustment to compensate for inflation for the organization’s staff members working with RECLISA.<sup>9</sup> Such adjustment is normally done for all Save the Children Swaziland staff. For RECLISA staff members, however, it has not been implemented (again, Save the Children Swaziland staff members faulted the timesheet system for preventing them from making the adjustment). Therefore, in real terms (counting inflation), the salaries of RECLISA staff in Swaziland have decreased by 5 to 7% per year of project implementation. The salaries of fieldworkers are low; also, the non-implementation of the raise has created inter-personnel problems for the project manager and has considerably lowered the field personnel’s morale. AIR reported that they took steps remedy the situation—that they trained Save on financial management (including timesheets), explained to Save that they could indeed bill time to RECLISA for travelling and meetings, and that they never told them that they could not increase their salaries by the normal 7% increment—however, somehow the misunderstanding remained.

During the final evaluation, both Save the Children Swaziland and AIR/RECLISA complained about occasional lack of effective communication with each other; a frequent complaint was, “We talk, but they don’t listen.” In the view of the evaluator, many of these budgetary issues might have been clarified with better communications procedures.

### **5.1.2 Challenges Related to the Project Procedures and the Project Audit**

A set of problems related to the project audit has hampered implementation since December 2007; the issue will be covered in some detail below.

- Save the Children Swaziland’s budget was frozen from December 2007 until the end of May 2008.

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<sup>9</sup> The inflation in 2007 was 5.9% (U.S. Department of State: Background note on Swaziland).

- Save the Children Swaziland has been requested to pay back US\$2,383 for enrollment of overage beneficiaries.

The budget freeze is related to the auditors' initial draft, in which the amount of disallowed funds for Save the Children Swaziland was much higher, representing more than 10% of Save the Children Swaziland's subcontract (compounding disallowed funding regarding timesheet reporting and overage enrollees). Accordingly, AIR's financial department was unable to make additional cash advances before the matter had been resolved through "recalculation and/or repayment." As noted by the RECLISA project director, "AIR successfully worked with Save and the auditors ultimately to reduce the total disallowed to US\$2,383, but the auditors' long delay in finalizing the audit and confirming that figure left Save in limbo. Fortunately this issue has now been resolved."

The freeze was requested by AIR. AIR/RECLISA informed the evaluator that AIR's financial department was unable to make additional cash advances before the audit's request for repayment of disallowed funds had been resolved. USDOL noted in subsequent correspondence "AIR could have continued to make advances for immediate cash needs, but did not choose to do so. Cash advances are required to be for immediate needs, and the auditors determined that advances to STC [Save the Children Swaziland] took up to seven months to liquidate." AIR/RECLISA notes, "We did not implement the funding freeze until after we had briefed Save in person (January 31) and confirmed the situation in writing (February 8). According to our records Save did not make any cash-advance requests during this interim period. The first time that Save informed AIR of a cash-flow problem was on April 17th."

The aforementioned two procedural-related decisions (disallowed funds and budget freeze) have lowered Save the Children Swaziland's staff morale, created a cash flow problem for the organization, and negatively impacted RECLISA's project implementation in Swaziland, Save the Children Swaziland's reputation, and other projects the organization is implementing. The list of RECLISA activities affected by the budget freeze includes—

- Decreased identification and skills training of children head of families
- Suspended CLC management training and thereby possibly reduced sustainability of these committees (see paragraph 5.4.1)
- Reduced technical support from Save the Children Swaziland (in terms of visits to communities)
- Suspended awareness-raising sessions for head teachers and politicians and community members (see paragraph 5.1.10)

According to a written statement to the evaluator from the Save the Children Swaziland director, "the organization struggled with its cash flow over the last five months with no payment from RECLISA due to outstanding issues due to [the] RECLISA audit. Meanwhile we were operating on the ground (i.e., paying salaries, fueling vehicles, and [paying operational] costs like telephone and fieldwork). As a consequence, this created problems with other programmes and

our own core money, which we were using to sustain the RECLISA activities. Essentially, we were subsidizing all the [RECLISA] activities...”

According to interviewees, two reasons (along with human error in entering and reviewing the data into the Student Tracking System [STS]) for enrollment of overage beneficiaries include—

1. The USDOL-provided STS did not automatically cancel beneficiaries who were above 18 during enrollment. It is unclear whether the STS malfunctioned or whether it does not have a function to prevent registration of overage beneficiaries. In any case, it would be advisable to include such function in future versions of the software.
2. The project was under pressure to provide quantitative results rapidly after receiving funds, before the selection and project management structures were well understood by Save the Children Swaziland (about 20 of the 26 overage beneficiaries were enrolled during the project’s first year).

Further, the administrative issues raised by the project audit has dominated the time of Save the Children Swaziland, AIR/RECLISA, and AIR staff and has led to considerable energy being expended on administration. Both AIR/RECLISA and AIR/Washington, DC, staff members have spent considerable time on this issue. A main problem was the long delays in finalizing the audit report. The audit was carried out in May 2007, but AIR/RECLISA did not receive the first written draft (with exact amounts disallowed) until January 2008. Subsequently, AIR/RECLISA received the final examination report on May 16, 2008, and noted, “This one-year delay exacerbated the other challenges of the audit... (essentially, major distractions from implementation for relatively minor problems). Furthermore, as of this date [July 1, 2008] we have yet to receive a [final] determination [of disallowed funds] from USDOL.”

### **5.1.3 Support for Theory**

Most respondents characterized the education-based strategy of the project as “sound.” The dropout rate of the project beneficiaries was low (about 5%) and not caused by poverty-related reasons. Pregnancy or the family’s moving to another region was among the major reasons for dropout. According to Save the Children Swaziland, approximately 90% of the girls at the secondary level who dropped out (and there were only seven RECLISA beneficiaries in this category) did so because of pregnancy. It should be noted that most schools do not provide much sex education (schools are, however, often the single educational source of information about sexual practices available to teenagers). Moreover, according to a UNICEF study<sup>10</sup> (October 2007) only 52.8% of the children having sex for the first time use condoms—and as a result they may get pregnant, or worse, get infected with HIV/AIDS. The project has responded to this situation by providing some education through the CLCs on HIV/AIDS and sexual behavior.

In terms of dropouts, the project situation contrasts with the general situation in the country: According to the UNICEF study cited above, among girls in the 13 to 17 age group who are currently not in school, 4.7% had left school because they had completed primary schooling;

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<sup>10</sup> UNICEF. 2007. *A national study on violence against children and young women in Swaziland.*

17.4% had gotten pregnant; 69.2% could not pay for school, and 8.7% had left for other reasons. The RECLISA project therefore seems to have largely eliminated the most prominent reason for dropping out from primary school, but it was not entirely successful in eliminating the pregnancy-related causes for dropout. The project's scope was mainly school fees and uniforms; hence, sex education was not in the project's mandate. However, through Save the Children Swaziland's child protection and HIV/AIDS program, attempts were made to create awareness of teenage sex and pregnancies.

According to Save the Children Swaziland, the major reason for male dropout was because the boys "were not academically gifted." If children repeated several classes and were older than their classmates, teachers and schoolmates will usually mock them. The project addressed some of these stigma-related issues by CLC psychosocial support. The project, however, may not have invested enough into the improvement of vulnerable children's situation at school. A UNICEF representative noted, "The children are not visible; they are not given the appropriate voice in school." The CLC intervention and the training of the RECLISA focal point teacher may have raised awareness about OVC's plight—but the RECLISA focal point did not systematically share this information with other teachers. If shared, the other teachers did not necessarily agree to the philosophy of the project (e.g., to limit child labor and/or to use other disciplinary methods in class than corporal punishment).

Most interviewees shared a positive view of the project's intervention. A key respondent in the Ministry of Education characterized RECLISA as "the right project at the right time" because it addressed child labor at a time when the issue became serious in Swaziland. The drought and the increasing number of AIDS orphans amplified the problem of dropout from school for economic reasons.

Save the Children Swaziland chose to implement RECLISA in the areas where the organization was already working; the project was meant to add value or complement and supplement other Save the Children interventions in the target communities. It is difficult to determine whether the good results of the project were also due to the food project implemented by Save the Children Swaziland (and targeted at the same beneficiaries). The extent to which the results are due to RECLISA or food services is not known (it may be argued that the RECLISA project, without food services, may have failed to compensate the beneficiaries for the opportunity costs of schooling). However, since the good results of the project are also noticed among beneficiaries not receiving food aid, there are grounds to believe that the project's theoretical foundations were very adequate.

#### **5.1.4 Complementing Government Programs**

The project was partly designed as a complement to Save the Children Swaziland's activities in the Lowveld Region in Swaziland, which addressed food security in the most vulnerable communities in the Lowveld Region (the target communities were identified in a government emergency plan).

OVC in this area faced multiple challenges, including HIV/AIDS (many of the children were orphans, caregivers for parents with HIV/AIDS, or infected themselves) and poverty-related problems resulting from the long-time drought in the area. Therefore, at the suggestion of AIR,

Save the Children Swaziland created a project to address education barriers in the region. The design complemented existing government involvement and proposed a series of actions to address the education barriers mentioned above (i.e., chiefly school fees). The quality of the education provided was not identified at the time as a barrier to education and, therefore, the project design focused on OVC's access to education and did not include any teacher training or curriculum development components.

However, subsequent to the project's start, MOE developed an OVC support program in 2005 that aimed at paying parts of OVC's school fees. Therefore, Save the Children Swaziland changed some of the project orientation and started distributing school uniforms to prevent children from dropping out of school. Also, some other activities that had initially been included in RECLISA were picked up by other initiatives (food distribution by a Save the Children Swaziland/World Food Programme [WFP] project; provision of birth certificates by a UNICEF project, etc.). In general, the project adapted adequately to the new situation by providing alternative needed services (e.g., support to secondary education for 300 beneficiaries and school uniforms).

### **5.1.5 Support for the Education Initiative Goals**

**Education Initiative Goal 1:** Raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and the mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand the education infrastructure.<sup>11</sup> This initiative has been supported through (1) the CLCs that have raised awareness on child labor in the target communities; (2) the project's involvement in national media (e.g., journals, TV, and radio); (3) cooperation with government institutions and NGOs to discuss the issue of OVC and child labor; and (4) the National Conference on Child Labor.

**Education Initiative Goal 2:** Strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school. This initiative has been supported through (1) the provision of school fees or school uniforms to at-risk children; and (2) follow-up on food security, labor status, and the well-being of at-risk children through the intervention of CLCs.

**Education Initiative Goal 3:** Strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor. This initiative has been supported through Save the Children Swaziland's participation in PACC (created by the Swaziland branch of ILO's TECL based in South Africa) and other policy-generating committees. Also, the National Conference on Child Labor was connected to the debate and information gathering for the national action plan against WFCL, and fed directly into PACC and TECL's policy work. As noted by Save the Children Swaziland, "The project has enabled us to work on WFCL issues, to establish a model—and to show the government the way forward. We have used our field experience to inform the action plan against child labor."

**Education Initiative Goal 4:** Supporting research and the collection of reliable data on child labor.<sup>12</sup> This initiative has been supported through the projects' participation in PACC and

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<sup>11</sup> The project never intended to have any significant impact on education infrastructure.

<sup>12</sup> This initiative has recently been added by USDOL to the (previous four) Education Initiative Goals and was not a part of the initial goals of the RECLISA project.

thereby through the feeding of case studies and other relevant information into the policy process.

**Education Initiative Goal 5:** Ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts. This initiative is supported through the capacity building of community-based CLCs. Because the CLCs are intended to become a permanent village institution, it is believed that awareness raising and capacity building at this level is sustainable. If Save the Children Swaziland’s work to convert the CLCs into registered community-based organizations (CBOs) is successful, a larger percentage of these committees may prove sustainable. In terms of sustainability of the RECLISA beneficiaries’ schooling, Save the Children Swaziland has successfully approached MOE, which will take over the funding of the beneficiaries until the end of their schooling. Hence, the project’s exit will not cause a major disruption in the children’s lives (see paragraph 5.4.1 on the project’s exit strategy). Save the Children Swaziland will not leave the Lowveld Region when the project stops. The organization implements several projects in the area, including a food safety and an HIV/AIDS project. The presence of Save the Children Swaziland is well known locally, and CLCs and other RECLISA beneficiaries may call on the organizations’ field-based staff members in case of need. By using Save the Children Swaziland as an implementation partner, an element of sustainability was built into the project design from the start.

### **5.1.6 Direct Educational Interventions of the Project**

The direct educational interventions of the project primarily consist of provision of school uniform and/or payment of school fees, as well as follow-up from CLCs.<sup>13</sup> Save the Children Swaziland recently (in May 2008) started providing skills training to children heading families—or living in child-headed families (and who therefore are considered particularly vulnerable). This training had as its objective to improve the children’s lives “by equipping them with life skills that will enable them to face the challenges that come up with being young leaders of their households.” It included sessions on business planning and market information, communication skills, conflict and stress management, as well as home management. Initially, this training was conducted for two schools (Maloma and Bhokweni primary schools). According to Save the Children Swaziland, the training was hampered by the budget freeze and could not take place as originally planned.

The CLC follow-up of beneficiaries in junior secondary schools did not prove as successful as the follow-up in primary school. This was largely because the secondary school teachers were not members of CLCs, and some of the secondary schools did not have a RECLISA focal point teacher. Therefore, many of the secondary school stakeholders did not know much about the project. When asked about the goals of RECLISA, one head teacher (who served as focal point for RECLISA activities) had “no clue” what the project was about and considered child labor as “a crime,” which did not exist in the area. The secondary school beneficiaries of the project in this community had not received any follow-up of the CLC (other than the payment of the school fees), and timidly asked the evaluator who was going to tell them about child labor (the evaluator

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that the following activities were not part of the initial project proposal and were therefore not implemented: improvement of the quality of the formal education provided in its target schools, improvement and/or adding to the school infrastructure, training teachers, or improving the curriculum. None of these interventions were planned in Swaziland.

did). Another focal point for RECLISA noted that the project staff members “just come to pay for the children. They don’t tell us much.” According to Save the Children Swaziland, these unfortunate situations are due to the rare occurrences when none of the schoolteachers are members of the CLCs. In most places visited during the fieldwork, the direct services received by the beneficiaries included follow-up from the CLCs, and both teachers and the children were aware of the goals of the project and of child labor.

### **5.1.7 The Process for Identifying Beneficiaries for the Project**

The identification of children has been based on Save the Children Swaziland field officers’, teachers’, and/or CLCs’ identification of children who are orphans and/or in a particularly vulnerable situation (e.g., child-headed households and households needing food aid). Save the Children Swaziland worked with the aim of enabling the CLCs to work with the traditional leader and his “Inner Council” to identify the beneficiaries for the project.

It should be noted that the selection of the first generation of learners was partly done on an ad hoc basis because of pressure to enroll children without delay to reach the targets for year one. Another problem of the identification of beneficiaries is connected to the notion of “withdrawn” and “prevented.” A large number of children identified by the CLCs were children that were not enrolled in school at the time of identification, and the evaluator believes, based on their stories and on the CLCs identification processes, that they should have been counted as “withdrawn.” However, Save the Children Swaziland in the beginning of the project found it very difficult to prove that these children had been in an abusive work situation, and also believed that the organization was supposed to collect work certificates, payment slips, or other evidence of the children’s abusive work situation. According to Save the Children Swaziland, since in most cases they would fail to provide such extensive proof that the children had been in an abusive labor situation, it was agreed with AIR/RECLISA to count all the beneficiaries as “prevented.”

### **5.1.8 The Student Tracking System**

The Student Tracking System, a USDOL-provided database with the purpose of facilitating the tracking of beneficiaries, did not function well. It was not adequate to generate the reports required by USDOL and presented a number of difficulties that required regular technical support from AIR/RECLISA. Also, it was the understanding of the project that the program was supposed to prevent the registering of overage beneficiaries in the system, a function that did not work. It is unclear whether the STS malfunctioned or whether it does not actually have a function to prevent registration of overage beneficiaries. The working status of children was not systematically tracked (the tracking consisted of CLC and project fieldworkers’ follow-up in households where child abuse or exploitive labor was suspected).

### **5.1.9 Effectiveness of Awareness-Raising Activities**

At the community level, awareness-raising activities were implemented via CLC intervention. The CLCs are composed of various influential community members (local pastor, community police, health motivator, etc.) and have a connection with the traditional leader’s Inner Council (usually, one member of the CLC belongs to the Inner Council). By operating through the traditional channels of community exchange, the project has a stronger voice in the community,

since community members would normally pay more attention to messages from the Inner Council.<sup>14</sup> In the beginning of project implementation, the CLCs messages were largely rejected by the communities. It was considered inappropriate to talk about child work and child abuse to parents and caregivers. Many of the CLCs told that “parents were angry and said, ‘children need to work to become strong and productive.’” However, the awareness-raising messages subsequently created a real debate in the communities, and (according to the CLCs) most community members began to understand (and accept) the difference between harmful child labor and normal child work.

An ILO/TECL representative in Pretoria explained, “we try to push the under-18 protection. In many African languages it is difficult to distinguish between child work and child labor. However, people have got a notion of what is harmful. From there you can engage with the [community]. Children at the age of 14-16 can engage in work activities if they are appropriate. The biggest problem is the 15-18 age group, when compulsory education is over and work is not available. Also, there are very few opportunities of NFE [nonformal education] or vocational training.”

Additional awareness-raising activities took place by project involvement in radio/TV talk shows and other mass media. The project manager frequently participated in such shows. After the RECLISA-organized national conference on child labor, in particular, he became known as a resource person on the topic, and was frequently invited to participate in televised or radio debates.

The RECLISA-organized conference on child labor contributed to raising awareness at the central level. Taking place in November 2006, the conference was the first of its kind in Swaziland and had as an outcome a greater knowledge and awareness on child labor, as well as a better coordination among organizations and institutions that were interested in the issue. The interest generated by the RECLISA conference was such that people started to telephone the USDOL radio team and ask them questions about child labor (the department is responsible for a radio program on labor issues). USDOL felt it was particularly important to distinguish between child labor and child work, since many of the questions to the radio team were related to misconception about that issue. The interest of the audience indicates a new public awareness about child labor.

Some of the awareness-raising efforts, in particular at the local level, may at times have been limited by some confusion surrounding the concept of child labor. The project manager explained that the CLCs were mainly concerned about the children’s education and may have had a tendency to polarize the discourse on child labor. In other words, they may have insisted that no labor is allowed below the age of 18 years (whereas certain forms of labor are permitted by Swazi law for children from the age of 14). In any case, the CLCs—and communities’—knowledge of child labor and child abuse was markedly better during the final evaluation’s fieldwork than during the midterm evaluation. The awareness-raising impact of the project as a whole can be said to be very successful.

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<sup>14</sup> The Inner Council is also selecting a representative for the Constituency Council. A constituency comprises about 10 communities (or Chiefdoms). The 55 constituencies of Swaziland each select a parliament member. Through its bottom-up approach (working at Inner Council level), the RECLISA project has an indirect influence and is building awareness at a regional and a central level.

### **5.1.10 Follow-up of Recommendations from the Midterm Evaluation**

The evaluator found that the recommendations from the midterm evaluation had been successfully followed up on. It was also noticed that AIR/RECLISA and Save the Children Swaziland had tracked the follow-up of the midterm recommendations in detail. The following recommendations are relevant to AIR/RECLISA and Save the Children Swaziland:

**Adopt a definition of and train stakeholders on child labor:** Awareness-raising sessions for teachers, politicians, and community members were planned using TECL's definition. The planned awareness-raising activities have been canceled or delayed by the budget freeze.

**Reallocate funds for further training of the CLCs:** Funding was set aside in the July 2007 re-budget and the CLCs completed psychosocial support training in November 2007.

**Train CLCs to address non-beneficiary dropouts:** No action was planned or undertaken to address this (e.g., children dropping out for economic reasons); it was considered to be out of the scope of project.

**Ensure that the STS functions well:** AIR/RECLISA and Save the Children Swaziland have been updating STS records for the current year. Technical support was continually provided by AIR/RECLISA.

**Copy reports and project documentation to TECL:** After the midterm evaluation project documentation was more systematically shared with TECL. Staff members from RECLISA and TECL noted that the communication and relations between the two projects had considerably improved during the last two years.

**Clarify timesheet reporting procedures:** The financial stream of partners met following the Botswana conference and received training on this issue. AIR/RECLISA provided further training and follow-up on timesheet reporting and budgeting in the country offices. However, Save the Children Swaziland still had problems with certain aspects of the timesheet reporting (see Section 5.1.2).

**Retroactively reimburse first generation of target beneficiaries who have not received assistance (Mahhoshe school):** Investigation of this case has been completed and the appropriate action was taken (the school had received the funds but initially did not use them appropriately). The situation was corrected. As a standard procedure to enrollments, all project schools were subsequently checked for similar financial irregularities. Also, Save the Children Swaziland subsequently required the target schools' head teacher to sign a receipt for received funding, and also informed the CLCs about each transfer of project funds to the school. This system created much better accountability for the funds.

**Refine sustainability and exit strategies:** This component is in process. All RECLISA beneficiaries have been included in the government's lists of those who will be supported through the OVC Education Fund after the RECLISA project has ended. Save the Children Swaziland has planned to help the CLCs to obtain a legal status as CBOs by the end of the project.

### **5.1.11 Working with Local NGOs and Other Local Organizations**

Save the Children Swaziland is the sole implementer of the RECLISA/Swaziland project and does not work in partnership with other NGOs or CBOs in Swaziland. Likewise, Save the Children Swaziland has not subcontracted any project deliverable to other partners. The project never intended to use subcontracts or build capacity in other NGOs.

The partnership between Save the Children Swaziland and AIR/RECLISA has generally been good. Save the Children Swaziland noted that at times simultaneous instructions received from AIR/RECLISA (Pretoria) and AIR (Washington, DC) created confusion, such as during the project audit and budget freeze. Also, the Save the Children Swaziland team was uncertain about Khulisa's (the South African nongovernmental organization subcontracted to support project monitoring) role in the project.

## **5.2 REGIONAL ASPECTS OF MANAGEMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING, AND AWARENESS RAISING**

### **5.2.1 Value of RECLISA's Regional Approach**

Save the Children Swaziland found the regional approach positive, insomuch as the project partners could meet regularly and share views on project implementation. Save the Children Swaziland staff was very positive about some of the technical training received (e.g., training of trainers on small-scale business and household management for children who are heads of households). This regional training workshop led to training of children heads of households in Swaziland (see Section 4.3.1.).

However, Save the Children Swaziland also perceived the project as being too focused on quantitative deliverables and not sufficiently focused on quality. It was strongly pointed out that the overly quantitative approach had limited the effectiveness of the project activities. On the quantity versus quality issue, AIR/RECLISA further clarified, "Although the common indicators' quantitative emphasis did limit RECLISA resources (time and money) available for qualitative interventions, neither Save nor AIR lacked interest in quality. On the contrary, we built quality-oriented interventions into our work plans, included quality indicators in the PMPs [Performance Monitoring Plans], and supported a number of quality initiatives. In Swaziland, these included the training of CLCs in child protection issues and risk assessment, monitoring of food distribution by CLCs, awareness-raising efforts, provision of psychosocial and life-skills training, introduction of micro-enterprise skills, and consultations with government stakeholders to improve the status of OVCs."

### **5.2.2 Building Management Capacity of Save the Children Swaziland**

Save the Children Swaziland generally felt that it had benefited from the project's capacity-building activities. Many of the administration procedures that at first created difficulties for the organization were subsequently adopted as a standard, organization-wide practice (e.g., the use of timesheet reporting). However, Save the Children Swaziland found that the initial instructions and training on project management were not sufficient. Save the Children Swaziland suggested that in-depth training and facilitation about project procedures and administration should have

taken place before the project started. Further, it was pointed out that the contract for the project implementation was “very complicated” and that the organization would have benefited from help going through it to understand the project requirements and obligations. In particular, Save the Children Swaziland staff felt the administrative procedures were not well understood at the beginning. After the midterm, AIR/RECLISA provided further training on all these procedural problems. However, at the time of the final evaluation, Save the Children Swaziland still did not feel that the timesheet reporting was fully understood (e.g., how to include a salary raise, or how to account for travel or cooperation time). AIR/RECLISA informed that most of these issues had been covered in training sessions—and that they had provided in-country follow-up subsequently to an initial training on timesheet reporting.

In particular, Save the Children Swaziland staff members found that they lacked a long-term mentoring plan and found that the training was provided on a mostly ad hoc basis. “They [AIR/RECLISA] would just tell you that someone is coming to do a, b, and c with you.” Further, Save the Children Swaziland personnel felt that an unnecessary amount of instructions came over the telephone; they felt it would have been more appropriate to receive the information in writing. However, it should be underlined that this is the impression by the country office and that it is possible (according to the evaluator) two management styles and cultures may have clashed in this project.

During the final evaluation, both Save the Children Swaziland and AIR/RECLISA noted occasional lack of effective communication from the other partner (and both underlined the insufficient communication in writing). For example, Save the Children Swaziland said that the budget freeze was never explained to them through a formal letter, nor did the letter requesting the organization to pay back US\$2,383 of disallowed funds provide any explanation of how this amount was calculated, or how many overage beneficiaries were concerned. AIR/RECLISA noted that this information had been provided both orally and in writing, and that Save the Children Swaziland calculated the costs for the overage beneficiaries. The evaluator believes that the discrepant information is largely due to clashing management styles, occasional misunderstanding, and lack of effective communication.

The evaluator believes that many of the administration issues (timesheet requirements, administrative procedures, etc.) may have been clarified with more effective communications procedures from both sides.

### **5.2.3 The National Child Labor Conference as a Strategy to Increase Awareness**

The national child labor conference was a useful tool to raise awareness of the issue of child labor. It had several positive (and practical) outcomes: (1) the problem of child labor and child abuse received media coverage that generated a nationwide awareness and interest in the topic; (2) it helped improve coordination on the topic, because all the actors working on this or related topics became known to each other (and exchanged information about ongoing work in the sector); and (3) Save the Children Swaziland became known as a central actor working on the topic. This generated future media coverage of the project; at present, when the media needs a specialist on child labor or abuse, they usually call on the RECLISA project manager. Also, according to USDOL, the draft of the employment bill was influenced by the conference.

## 5.3 SPECIFIC USDOL CONCERNS

### 5.3.1 Direct Services to Protect OVC from Abusive Labor

The three direct educational interventions provided by the project consisted of provision of school uniforms and/or payment of school fees to all beneficiaries, as well as follow-up from CLCs. Additionally, needy beneficiaries could access food aid from another Save the Children Swaziland project (funded by WFP). These services in most cases were sufficient to protect the children from abusive labor by (1) successfully keeping them in school; (2) ensuring that their basic needs in terms of food were met at home; and (3) ensuring, through CLC follow-up at their homes, that they were not engaged in abusive child labor during their free time. Unfortunately, certain CLC members stated that some caregivers had taken the school uniforms (provided by RECLISA) away from the OVC beneficiaries, and instead given them to their children by birth. It is not known whether this was a one-case occurrence or a frequent situation. It should be noted that similar cases were never brought to the attention of the Save the Children Swaziland project's field staff or manager.

The school fee and school uniform situation that the project addresses also shows how unfortunate the government's for-fee schooling and school uniform policies are. The school uniforms, in particular, are expensive and cannot simply be made by industrious people in the community. The schools require that these uniforms should be purchased from specific factories. Moreover, many schools require the purchase of several uniforms; one for the winter, one for the summer, one for sports, one for formal occasions, etc. One interviewee counted 11 different uniform combinations in his school. Several parties informed the evaluator that the school uniform requirements are largely influenced by bribes received by school personnel from garment factories. In other words, the school uniform policy may have as a direct result a net cash transfer from the poorest and most vulnerable in society to corrupt civil servants. "If the children don't have [a] uniform," said an interviewee, "they are chased from school."

How widespread the corruptive practices are is unknown. However, the negative aspects of the policy show how important it is to combine policy initiatives (such as TECL) with practical interventions (such as RECLISA).

As further direct services, Save the Children Swaziland has provided specific life-skills training to a small number of children heading families—or living in child-headed families (and who therefore are considered particularly vulnerable). This training had as its objective to improve the children's lives through training in a broad range of practical skills.

### 5.3.2 Child Labor Committees: Effectiveness to Protect Children; Sustainability

The CLCs vary in quality, and their sustainability will also probably vary individually. Save the Children Swaziland has provided much more training to the CLCs during the second phase of the project, and most of these committees are now functioning fairly well and following up on the children's welfare at home. It should be noted that the follow-up is generally limited to homesteads where "it is known that the children are being abused." There is no *systematic* tracking of the work status of children. However, in case of abusive child labor practices

(or other child abuse), the CLCs are connected to the police (many, in fact, have a community police officer among their members) and may report the case to the police to ensure direct protective intervention.

The CLCs lack incentives to continue work on a regular basis after the project's end, and the evaluator, based on interviews with CLC members, believes that many of them will eventually cease to function. The current initiative from Save the Children Swaziland to convert them into CBOs could prolong their lives, and may make some of them sustainable, especially if the CBOs manage to secure funding to continue their awareness raising and follow-up on child labor in the communities. Also, small incentives like provision of a CLC T-shirt would have boosted their self-esteem and enhanced their role and visibility in the community. As I have noted earlier, the project did not have sufficient funding for these kinds of small incentives that could have improved the sustainability and impact of the project.

It should be noted that in most communities the original CLC rarely functions as a whole; currently, most CLCs are now reduced to three or four core members. The other members are frequently "too busy" to participate in meetings and in the practical follow-up of the children. The existing CLC members deplored the end of the project and hoped for continued support.

## **5.4 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT**

### **5.4.1 Effective Exit Strategy**

It may be useful to distinguish between two types of sustainability: (1) sustainability of activities and (2) sustainability of protection structures and institutions.

As for the sustainability and exit strategy of project activities, the evaluator considers the exit strategy as successful, since the Ministry of Education has agreed to take over the financing of the children's schooling. The financing from MOE will not cover the whole school fee of the children, nor will it cover the children's uniform; however, it is expected to ease the costs of schooling and prevent a massive dropout of RECLISA beneficiaries after the project's end. According to MOE, at the primary school level, the government OVC program will support the children's schooling with 400 Emalangeni<sup>15</sup> per year, of which 200 are to be used for food. Government schools, however, charge up to 800 Emalangeni in school fees, whereas private schools may cost as much as 1,500 Emalangeni. In addition, the children need to buy school uniforms and cover expenses for extracurricular activities (which can in some cases be avoided). Beyond grade 4, the children have to pay for books and stationery themselves.<sup>16</sup> For junior secondary school, the government will support the beneficiary children with 1,500 Emalangeni (the normal school fee is between 3,000 and 4,500 Emalangeni). AIR/RECLISA, during the stakeholders' meeting, engaged to top up the school fees so as to ensure that the full fees were paid for this current school year (2008).

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<sup>15</sup> The Emalangeni is pegged to the South African Rand. US\$1 averaged 7.4 Rand in 2007.

<sup>16</sup> The RECLISA services did not include books and stationery.

As for the awareness-raising activities, the evaluator considers that these activities are sustainable, since the knowledge and awareness about abusive child labor and child abuse are unlikely to be dismissed by the communities at the project's end.

As for the protection structures and institutions (chiefly the CLCs), the evaluator believes that these structures will be of various degrees of sustainability, and many will be short-lived. The exit strategy, consisting of converting the CLCs into CBOs is excellent, although it had not yet been initiated at the time of the final evaluation. Due to staff time dominated by administrative issues and lack of budget (both related to the project audit and budget freeze), this exit strategy will start too late to be as effective as it might have been had it been initiated earlier. The evaluator believes that the members of a new CBO need a massive amount of training, and doubts that sufficient time is left to organize this training. During the fieldwork, many CLC members were enthusiastic about creating a CBO, but displayed a very naïve conception of what the conversion of the CLC into a CBO would entail. "If we are registered as a CBO the government will tell us where to go whenever there is a need. The government will train us and let us attend workshops." The evaluator doubts that the government will provide any of the training sessions or workshops that the CLC/CBOs clearly need. Initially, Save the Children Swaziland had planned CLC/CBO management training sessions, but the training was not implemented due to the budget freeze.

The exit strategy of the project was not always well understood by the community stakeholders (e.g., some of the CLCs found the disengagement of the project puzzling). Some CLC members wondered whether they had "done anything wrong" or were "being punished for something."

#### **5.4.2 Impact to Date**

The impact of the project can be seen at different levels: At school level, the beneficiaries have increased opportunities for schooling because of the reimbursement of their school fees and/or uniforms. CLCs are following up on their schooling and on their situation at home to help protect them from abusive work. The CLCs, in many cases, functioned like "police," checking up on the schools' appropriate use of the RECLISA funding. Unfortunately, school administrations in Swaziland are known for corruption (see Section 5.3.1. on school uniform practices). Hence, CLC members were often present during distribution of school uniforms to beneficiaries—and also checked up on the use of the funding the schools received to pay for the beneficiaries' schooling. Certain school administrations, not used to being accountable for their funding, felt threatened by the CLCs' intervention. Save the Children Swaziland indicated that on several occasions the organization received complaints from schools about the CLC control of RECLISA funding.

Through the action of CLCs, communities and teachers are more aware of child labor problems. Save the Children Swaziland also noticed that children had more self-esteem and felt more secure in dealing with caregivers, since they were aware of their rights and knew about exploitive child labor. In some cases, the children had abused their new knowledge, and used it against the caregivers to escape normal household chores. Some outraged caregivers accused the project for "stealing their children," since the children apparently did not listen to them anymore. Obviously, in such situations, the difference between child work and abusive child labor was not clearly perceived.

In addition to its work at the community level, the project through the national conference on child labor and through its media presence has raised awareness and created a constructive debate about abusive child labor at the community, constituency, and national levels. The national conference on child labor also fueled into the PACC action plan, which had as a direct outcome the launch of the national action plan to eliminate WFCL earlier this year (April 2008).

### **5.4.3 Community Members' Continued Advocacy Against Child Labor**

The evaluator believes that the members of CLCs, as individuals, will continue to advocate against abusive child labor after the project has ended. Most of the CLC members have been selected because of other relevant functions in the community (pastor, RECLISA focal point teacher, health motivator, community police, etc.). These institutions now have a “focal point” for child labor and child abuse who can be consulted on these issues or, if needed, can take action to stop abuse. For example, during the evaluation fieldwork, a pastor told that he sometimes spoke about child labor issues to members of the congregation.

Again, the level of commitment by the CLC members to continued advocacy against child labor raises the question of small incentives: In the context of Swaziland, it may have been advantageous to give the members of the CLCs a small token of appreciation for their continued commitment to the problem of child labor.

See also paragraphs 5.3.2 and 5.4.1 on CLCs and sustainability.

### **5.4.4 Impact on National Policies**

The RECLISA-organized and financed national conference on child labor adopted a resolution that was subsequently further developed by TECL. Also, the project indirectly has had an impact on the new labor law and on the child protection act, since Save the Children Swaziland's RECLISA staff members have been consulted in the drafting process of these policies and laws. Further, the project has participated in the TECL-organized PACC. According to the evaluator, RECLISA and TECL have had a mutually strengthened and clearly positive impact on the policies regarding abusive child labor in the country. TECL representatives, noting that the two projects had strengthened each other, regretted that there was not a more direct engagement of the projects to support each other. “They have attended our meetings and we have attended their meetings. They gave us inputs—but they did not engage as a program, but as individuals, giving individual comments on our reports—just as we gave individual comments on their reports.” In other words, they regretted the absence of a more committed joint RECLISA/TECL positioning on key education policy issues.

Two of the aspects that could have been explored jointly include the school fee and school uniform policies in Swaziland. Also, it should be noted that the legal situation regarding children in Swaziland might be considered as divergent from international legislation regarding children's rights. For example, corporal punishment is allowed and even publicly promoted in the schools. Also, if children are engaged in criminal activities, the punishment (based on current legislation) may consist of public whipping of the child. Save the Children Swaziland staff members noted that their intervention in schools (through discussion and training of school personnel) to prevent

corporal punishment was met with rejection from school personnel, since corporal punishment was not only in line with current legislation, it was also a publicly encouraged policy. OVC are particularly targeted for corporal punishment, since their home and economic situation in many cases prevent the use of sufficient time to do their homework. Also, they may not be able to afford adequate school supplies. During fieldwork, several of the interviewed school children drew pictures of being whipped in school and also verbally confirmed that they were “frequently” beaten.

#### **5.4.5 Government Willingness to Carry on Project Implementation**

Save the Children Swaziland worked actively to persuade the Ministry of Education to include the RECLISA beneficiaries in its OVC program (see Section 5.4.1.). As a result, MOE has started to take an interest in child labor issues. Currently, MOE has taken steps to mainstream the school fee policies (each school has its own fee structure) and has begun looking onto the issue of school uniforms. The MOE is also interested in participating actively in the implementation of the TECL/PACC child labor action plan, and looks at RECLISA to gain more knowledge about practical aspects of the interaction between child labor and education. However, MOE also underlined that it lacked the funding to implement the education component of the child labor action plan.

During the fieldwork, the Department of Labor stated its interest in working with the CLCs. Interviewees in USDOL said that the CLCs could be attached to the USDOL inspectorate. The inspectors don’t know how to engage directly with households, and it may in certain cases be helpful to use the CLCs as intermediaries. However, the Department had little knowledge of the functioning of these committees and doubted that the department would create CLCs on its own. It may be beneficial for RECLISA to explore whether any cooperation could be built between certain (very active) CLCs and the Department of Labor’s inspectorate.

#### **5.4.6 Greatest and Least Impact**

Most interviewees found that “all the project interventions were important” to reduce child labor and to increase school enrollment. It was pointed out that the direct services provided were of great importance, especially the payment of school fees, distribution of uniforms, and provision of food aid (the latter was implemented by Save the Children Swaziland through a WFP-funded food security project).

However, the Save the Children Swaziland staff also pointed out that the project’s strategy was not adequate for children above a certain age—since it would be difficult to enroll, say, a 13-year-old boy or girl in first year of primary schooling. Hence, it was felt that the project was less effective in the withdrawal of teenagers with little former schooling. On the other hand, it was felt that the project had been very successful “in preventing those on the verge of dropping out.”

### **5.4.7 Lessons Learned about Sustainability**

The project staff felt that the inclusion of representatives from traditional leaders in the CLC had improved the possibility of sustainability and improved the impact of awareness raising. Also, the need for cooperation with key government structures was noted, so as to ensure government takeover toward the end of the project (e.g., for payment of school fees for project beneficiaries). Finally, an overall lesson learned is to have the exit strategy in mind at project start to avoid an abrupt ending of project activities.

## **5.5 CONCLUSIONS**

According to the evaluator, this is a good initiative with many positive outcomes, including the continued schooling of more than 2,000 vulnerable children. The project, at its end, has exceeded its quantitative targets in terms of enrollment of beneficiary children and provision of services. However, the lack of matching quantitative with qualitative aspects of implementation has limited the quality of the project interventions. Also, the communication between Save the Children and the AIR/RECLISA office has occasionally not been effective enough to clarify basic administrative issues of the project (i.e., timesheet reporting, use of the different budget lines). The administrative problems were exasperated by the project audit, which led to a large amount of staff time used on administrative issues (such as retroactively try to determine the age of a reduced number of children that already had been enrolled in the program), instead of being actively involved in the exit phase of the project.

The program design was based on Save the Children's vision and assessment of needs in the Lowveld region. Hence, the project is responding to real needs, and addressing issues of child labor when the problem of OVC is becoming acute. The design has many strong assets, such as the inclusion in the CLCs of representatives from traditional forums (the Inner Council) and community development committees (e.g., health motivators, community police, teachers). However, the program design was not sufficiently based on a participatory assessment involving the actual stakeholders, such as OVC and caregivers. Also, the main government institutions (Ministry of Education and Department of Labor) did not participate in the design phase. Such participation may have ensured a greater government and community ownership of the project.

By involving core government institutions from the start, the project would have encountered less coordination problems and may have incorporated more sophisticated mechanisms surrounding project sustainability. For example, if the CLCs are converted to CBOs, they will require a lot of training and follow-up work to function properly.

The project supports the five EI goals through a range of actions: (1) Save the Children Swaziland fieldworkers and CLCs are raising awareness of child labor in the communities, the national conference led to widespread awareness raising at different levels, and the project manager is providing information about the issue in different forums and in mass media; (2) direct cost barriers to schooling are addressed through the provision of school fees and uniforms to OVC; (3) the national conferences had a direct impact on policy issues regarding abusive child labor, and during the whole project implementation period, the project manager has been active participating in different policy-related activities; (4) by provision of project-related

findings and practices to PACC and other policy structures, the project has contributed to research on the issue of abusive child labor in the country; and (5) an appropriate exit strategy (although possibly not implemented in time for all planned exit actions) seeks to ensure the long-term sustainability of CLC involvement in the communities as well as obtaining MOE's guarantee to continue funding of the RECLISA beneficiaries after the project has ended.

Save the Children Swaziland had a good team for implementing this project, and a staff that was appropriately assigned. The staff members had prior extensive exposure to the Lowveld Region, and therefore had a good knowledge of the implementation area. However, some management problems persist at the end of the project (e.g., lack of systematic tracking of the working status of the children).

There also was a lack of successful communication between AIR/RECLISA and Save the Children Swaziland about the use of timesheet reporting, budgets, quality/quantity approaches, and management issues. Further, the project audit caused harm by use of staff time to argue about procedural matters affecting a very small percentage of beneficiaries (at most 1.4%) and in lowering staff morale. Also, the project has been perceived as working toward quantitative goals without being sufficiently occupied with quality issues all along the implementation. The evaluator believes that this perception has diminished the impact of the project.

Finally, according to the evaluator, RECLISA-Swaziland is a positive initiative that has ensured continued schooling of more than 2,000 vulnerable children, raised awareness in the project's target communities and at national level, as well as launched a national debate on the topic of exploitive child labor and child abuse.

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## VI RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO USDOL

**Implementation effects of the project audit:** According to respondents, the audit results and budget freeze dominated staff time and reduced the effectiveness of the exit strategy of the project. For future projects, it is recommended that USDOL work with lead grantees, such as AIR, to explore ways in which subcontractors or partners can effectively implement exit strategies. In this case, such a strategy could have consisted of the conversion of CLCs into CBOs, and subsequent training of the CBOs in fundraising and other organizational matters. It is believed that, time-wise, such activities will need to extend beyond the closing of the project.

**Project contracts:** Save the Children Swaziland staff members recognized that they did not understand parts of the project contract. In the future, it is recommended that USDOL provide technical assistance to ensure that all partners understand the project contract as well as the underlying USDOL requirements (in terms of reporting, administration, and implementation).

**Project conception:** The project was conceived by Save the Children Swaziland in cooperation with AIR without sufficiently involving local stakeholders such as OVC, caregivers, and government staff.<sup>17</sup> For new projects, it is recommended that USDOL require grant applicants to make use of participatory approaches in the conception phase to ensure that project proposals address local needs and guarantees local ownership.

**Creation of new committees:** The project created a new institution—the CLC.<sup>18</sup> It is recommended that USDOL investigate, in all committee-creating projects, whether an existing and functioning community committee can be used instead of establishing a new institution. If it is deemed necessary to create a new committee, USDOL should consider whether sufficient funding and time are allocated to enable adequate training and follow-up of the committee.

**Project funding:** The limited funding for project activities led to rigidity and inflexibility regarding project activities, which may have reduced the project effectiveness and sustainability. For future projects, it is recommended that USDOL carefully examine overhead and administration costs, and compare them with the actual costs of activities to ensure that the budget strikes a balance between effective administration and sufficient funding to implement project activities adequately.

**Quantitative approach:** The quantitative approach of this project limited its effectiveness and reduced its quality. For future projects, although it is recognized that USDOL needs quantitative feedback, it is recommended that USDOL emphasize and prioritize a quality approach for implementation instead of requiring quick numeric returns.

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<sup>17</sup> Although it should be noticed that Save the Children did promote participation at the grassroots level when planning RECLISA's implementation

<sup>18</sup> The creation of new committees rather than using existing community structures was based on the general recommendation of the communities themselves to create a committee.

## **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO AIR AND AIR/RECLISA**

**Communication:** Save the Children Swaziland staff members felt confused by simultaneous communication directly from AIR Washington and from AIR/RECLISA. Also, they were unsure about KHULISA's role in the project. In the ending phase of the project, to avoid further confusion, it is recommended that AIR centralize communication through AIR/RECLISA and that AIR/RECLISA ensures that work provided by KHULISA has a clear mandate that is understood by all partners.

**Written communication:** Save the Children Swaziland felt that it needed further explanation in writing (i.e., a formal letter) about crucial administrative matters, including the budget freeze and about the method of calculating the disallowed funds. It is recommended that AIR/RECLISA provide such written documentation and ensure that Save the Children Swaziland understands the communication and/or documentation.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO SAVE THE CHILDREN SWAZILAND AND AIR/RECLISA**

**Written communication:** AIR/RECLISA did not receive full explanation in writing about many budgetary, administrative, and implementation difficulties faced by Save the Children Swaziland.<sup>19</sup> It is recommended that Save the Children Swaziland, for the closing of the project, provide such written documentation in case of budget, procedural, administrative or implementation uncertainties or difficulties.

**Training of CBO/CLCs:** If the CLCs are converted into CBOs, they would need initial training on CBO functioning and administration. It is recommended to initiate the management training of the CBO/CLCs as soon as possible.

**Cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor:** USDOL has stated its interest in working with the CLCs and to possibly cooperate with them. It is recommended to explore this issue further with USDOL.

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<sup>19</sup> Save the Children Swaziland noted, "implementation uncertainties and difficulties were reported in the Technical Progress Reports (TPRs)."

## VII LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

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**Program design:** Using a participatory approach in the design phase may lead to better coordination with government institutions, and increased community buy-in and ownership. The use of participatory approaches involving representatives from all categories of future stakeholders in the design phase might also help eliminate problems that would otherwise impede project implementation at a later stage (such as initial misunderstandings about child labor). Also, a design building on and cooperating with existing institutions and committees simplifies implementation and increases the chances for sustainability.

**Project implementation:** Project-created committees need clear TOR and a great amount of capacity building to function well.

**Partnership and coordination:** Coordination should be an intrinsic part of any project and should be chargeable to the project budget. Project personnel need to create a partnership and coordination structure during the design phase. This structure needs to include coordination and communication methods between implementing partners, and a clear understanding of who is responsible for what at all project levels. Communication is always two-sided; it needs to be treated as an integral—and vital—part of project implementation.

**Management and administration:** The management and administrative structure should enhance project implementation, not the opposite. The project should work throughout the year to assess as well as identify enough beneficiaries to meet the agreed quantitative targets while simultaneously ensuring quality. For example, the assessment of the first generation of project beneficiaries was not done appropriately because of the need of meeting quantitative deadlines too soon. Both the managing and implementing partners need to ensure good communication on such issues as reporting, administration, and budgeting, and ensure that these support the project's implementation. Likewise, any project evaluation or audit should have as its primary objective to strengthen the project implementation (and never impede it or suspend project implementation, except in case of fraud).

**Sustainability and impact:** The use of a local NGO with long-term commitment in a certain region creates a possibility for sustainability for project activities even after the project has ended. An exit strategy should be created during the project conception phase. It is important to involve project stakeholders (e.g., government institutions, direct beneficiaries) in the design of such a strategy, and to ensure that the exit strategy is implemented early enough to ensure community takeover of the project.