

Final Performance Evaluation

EMPOWER: Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia



Source: Winrock International. A participant, who learned how to write after involvement in the REAL course curriculum, records responses from a life skills post-test in Mwanza hub in Petauke district.

United States Department of Labor

Bureau of International Labor Affairs

Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking

Final Evaluation Report

November 2020



SUBMITTED TO

United States Department of Labor
Bureau of International Labor Affairs
Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking

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PROJECT

Conduct Remote Final Performance Evaluation of EMPOWER: Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia Project
Contract Number: GS10F0240U
Order Number: 1605C2-20-F-00012

TASK & DELIVERABLE

Final Performance Evaluation of EMPOWER: Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia Project
Final Evaluation Report

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report presents the findings of the final evaluation of the EMPOWER: Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia Project. IMPAQ International, LLC (IMPAQ) conducted remote fieldwork for this independent evaluation from July 27 to August 18 in collaboration with the project team and stakeholders, and prepared the evaluation report according to the terms specified in its contract with the United States Department of Labor. IMPAQ would like to express sincere thanks to all the parties involved for their support and valuable contributions.

Funding for this evaluation was provided by the United States Department of Labor. This material does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.

The evaluation team would like to express our gratitude to Winrock staff, and especially the EMPOWER team, for facilitating the arrangements for remote meetings with the stakeholders and for sharing their valuable perspectives on the project. We would also like to thank EMPOWER's community participants and all the stakeholders we consulted in Eastern Province for taking the time to share their experiences with the evaluation team.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAHR	Children at High Risk of Engaging in Child Labor
CBDLS	Community Business Development and Livelihoods Specialist
CL	Child Labor
CMEP	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CR	Community Representative
CV	Community Volunteer
DCLC	District Child Labor Committee
DCPC	District Child Protection Committee
DEBS	District Education Board Secretariat
DPMS	Direct Participant Monitoring System
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
EDCs	EMPOWER District Coordinators
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FISP	Farmer Input Support Program (Zambia)
FOA	Funding Opportunity Announcement
HCL	Hazardous Child Labor
HH	Household
HO	Home Office
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services
MLSS	Ministry of Labor and Social Security
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOFL	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
MTE	Midterm Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
OTC	Outcome Indicator
OTP	Output Indicator
PD	Project Director
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
REAL	Rural Entrepreneurship and Leadership
RLC	Radio Listening Clubs
RWEN	Rural Women's Entrepreneurship Network
TEVETA	Technical Education, Vocational, and Entrepreneurship Training Authority
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPR	Technical Progress Report
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

WARESA Women and Resources in Eastern and Southern Africa
WFCL Worst Forms of Child Labor
YTES Youth Training and Employment Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Description

The US Department of Labor's (USDOL's) Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking (OCFT) awarded a \$5 million, four-year cooperative agreement in November 2016 to Winrock International (Winrock) to implement EMPOWER: *Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia*. The project aims to reduce the prevalence of child labor (CL) in Zambia's Eastern Province. Winrock is implementing the project with a sub-grantee, the Panos Institute of Southern Africa, responsible for community awareness.¹ The project's target participants are out-of-school girls ages 15 to 17 years engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor and vulnerable women and men from their households.

EMPOWER seeks to achieve its project objective through four outcomes:

1. Adolescent girls engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor have increased access to acceptable work and high-quality training opportunities.
2. Vulnerable women whose households have children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor have increased access to livelihoods opportunities.
3. Public awareness on child labor and gender equality increased.
4. Collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society on the promotion of acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women strengthened.

To achieve these outcomes, EMPOWER provides training and livelihood services through the six-month Rural Entrepreneurship and Leadership (REAL) course and follow-up mentorship program, targeting 2,500 participant adolescent girls ages 15-17 and 1,500 women from their households. EMPOWER also targets 1,000 men from participant households for three months of training to increase their understanding of child labor, child rights and gender equality. EMPOWER intends to broadcast 778 radio programs and organize other community-level events to raise community awareness on child labor and gender equality. Finally, EMPOWER intends to engage 33 government and private sector partners to support participants' business initiatives and build their capacity to combat child labor in their programs.

Evaluation Background

The objectives of this final independent evaluation are to assess:

1. The relevance of the project to address child labor in Zambia.
2. Whether the project has achieved its objectives, identifying the challenges encountered in doing so, and the driving factors for these challenges.
3. The project's intended and unintended effects.
4. Lessons learned and emerging practices from the project and experiences in implementation that can be applied in current or future projects in Zambia, and in other projects designed under similar conditions or target sectors.
5. The sustainability strategy, including an assessment of which outcomes or outputs can be deemed sustainable.

To meet these objectives, USDOL and Winrock agreed on 14 specific evaluation questions (see Exhibit 3 in Section 2).

¹ Sub-grantee agreements with Women and Resources in Southern Africa (WARESA) and WECREATE were implemented and subsequently terminated.

An independent evaluation team carried out the evaluation, including document review and remote fieldwork interviews and focus groups with stakeholders in Zambia and in the US. The methodology was designed to ensure optimal safety of all participants in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote fieldwork included meetings with Winrock’s home office, Panos’ Executive Director, the US Embassy, EMPOWER staff; and interviews with chiefs’ representatives, community representatives, volunteers, facilitators, and project participants (girls, women, men, radio listening club members) from a sample of the implementation sites. The evaluation team interviewed 123 people, individually or in groups. Data were triangulated from the individual and group interviews and document review to answer each of the evaluation questions. The evaluation team presented their preliminary findings to the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) and Winrock following the fieldwork.

Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Relevance and Coherence: EMPOWER’s objectives, to provide adolescent girls with life skills, vocational skills and employment options and vulnerable women with pathways out of poverty, responded to real needs among the girls and women in the target districts. The three pillars of the project’s design—(1) direct training and business development services for girls and women; supported by (2) building an enabling environment of widespread community awareness of child labor and gender equality; and (3) public-private partnerships (PPPs) in support of acceptable work for girls’ and women, together constituted a coherent theory of change towards the reduction of CL in the target districts. The logic of the design was sound, but a longer term impact on vocational services for girls in these districts, and potentially elsewhere, could have been built into the design through an explicit outcome regarding documentation and sharing the REAL course as a demonstration model with government authorities and development agencies.

The local focus on achieving impact in selected districts and the communities within them, and limited engagement at the national level was well justified—enabling focused use of resources and strategies, as opposed to more diffuse engagement across the local and the national levels. However, the number of implementation localities, known as “hubs”, spread across seven districts, and the large number of targeted direct participants still stretched the resources, especially given the high costs of delivering skills training in remote communities with poor transport facilities.

Effectiveness and Perceived Impact

Targets: The aim of reaching 2,500 girls and 1,500 women with vocational skills and employment or livelihoods services was ambitious within the project’s four-year lifespan. EMPOWER fell somewhat short of these targets, reaching 1,740 girls and 1,216 women with skills training services, because delays and budget constraints reduced the number of cohorts that could be run. This was still a substantial achievement, given that the REAL course was custom designed to meet the needs of these communities. EMPOWER has achieved most of the quantitative targets for conducting public awareness-raising events and engaging public and private sector partners in support of the REAL course graduates.

REAL course effectiveness in addressing participant needs: Adolescent girls and adult women found the life skills component of the REAL course highly valuable. Literacy skills, budgeting, and gains in self-confidence were all outstanding benefits, especially to those who had never been to school. The two main livelihood tracks available for the vocational training (poultry and goat raising) provided a narrower range of options for girls and women than originally envisaged, which included agricultural and non-agricultural training. On the other hand, the focus on delivering two high quality curricula was effective in providing participants with the means to raise these livestock commercially. Participant attendance rates were affected by the distances some had to walk and seasonal farming responsibilities, but overall, EMPOWER provided an

accessible skills training option to its target participants. The project was not successful, however, in offering a wider range of vocational opportunities to girls, such as linkages to apprenticeships or scholarships at Technical Education, Vocational, and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) accredited institutions to suit differing needs and interests. A small number of girls were assisted to return to school following their participation in the REAL Course. A key finding was that EMPOWER's strategy of combining girls and women in the same business groups, while intended to enable mentorship for the girls, was not the ideal arrangement to meet their needs, according to multiple stakeholders.

Men's participation in the REAL course life skills component was much lower than planned, with 213 completing the course compared with the target of 950. For those who participated, the course did strengthen their awareness of gender and CL issues. With a few exceptions, however, outcomes stopped short of giving men a more meaningful role to play in supporting the household livelihood development.

REAL course effectiveness for women's livelihoods: As of September 2020, 80 women's business groups have been formed from the adolescent girls and vulnerable women trained. Most of the groups are engaged in poultry raising, a smaller number in goat raising. A tailoring group and a catering group from the pilot cohort are continuing to run their businesses. For the poultry groups, there are still market price challenges to be overcome, but many of the groups are showing signs of viability based on several cycles of sales. The goat-raising groups are not as secure as the poultry raisers, but the support of Heifer International has linked the goat-raising groups with markets and value-adding processes. The EMPOWER entrepreneurship training process instilled the principle of getting the businesses on a solid financial foundation before sharing profits. Since many of the groups are still building their base, it is too early to observe significant income gains for the participants. An encouraging sign of women's improved economic status was individual diversification into other trading activities.

Radio broadcast contributions to public awareness: This component was a well-conceived initiative, aiming to spread awareness in the communities about acceptable work for children and issues of gender inequality. It was founded on Panos' considerable experience with the approach and benefited from the radio stations' strong relationships with the communities. A large number of motivated community members, most of whom were women, became involved in an interactive process of community discussion and radio broadcasts. The extent of reach to the wider community has not been measured, but the traditional leaders noted that changes in the communities' CL practices are emerging. Gaps in the collaboration between Winrock and Panos hampered the component in realizing its full potential.

Public sector and private sector engagement: EMPOWER collaborated closely with the district levels of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MOFL) to deliver the REAL Course to the target communities. In addition, the project team successfully engaged a wide range of private sector companies and civil society networks in support of the newly created women's business groups. These efforts have borne fruit in leveraging tangible business development supports to the poultry- and goat-raising businesses, and financial services in the form of business bank accounts. EMPOWER forged links with district government to enable government registration for many of the women's business groups, offering further business development support.

Engagement with traditional leaders, communities, and other stakeholders: EMPOWER was very successful in its approach to engaging with traditional leaders and communities, as well as with district authorities. The project spent enough time at the outset and throughout implementation to secure the buy-in of the chiefs, communities, and district commissioners.

Management Effectiveness and Efficiency: EMPOWER faced significant management challenges in the form of delays in implementation of the REAL course compared to the plan, high staff turnover in the EMPOWER team and Winrock home office (HO) team, issues of performance with initially selected implementing partners, and budget constraints. Winrock upheld high standards of accountability and performance of its implementing partners, and made timely decisions to terminate agreements with partners who did not meet the standards. EMPOWER management decisions largely ensured the project was able to deliver on the quality of its main outcomes, although the number of direct participants and the range of vocational tracks that could be offered within the budget had to be substantially reduced.

Overall, EMPOWER struggled to meet the demands of the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) system as well as preparation for an intended external impact evaluation. This was due to human and financial resource constraints. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) budget remained at or above the portion required by USDOL, but it was insufficient for all the envisioned M&E activities. The M&E staffing constraint was successfully addressed by recruiting M&E interns to assist with the mammoth task of supervising data collection and verifying the direct participant monitoring data. With substantial technical assistance from the Winrock HO and the recruitment of a competent and committed M&E Specialist in the final year of the project, EMPOWER was able to complete most of its CMEP data, including participant monitoring and outtake interview data. The evaluation considered the formulation of the CMEP provided a solid means to monitor and evaluate the results of the project. Project management staff monitored the CMEP results closely, and used the information to identify such issues as low skills test results and participant retention, and took action to understand and address these issues.

Sustainability: The sustainability strategy elaborated the expected long-lasting effects of the interventions for the direct participants, the strategy for enabling the business groups to receive ongoing support from public and private sector partners, as well as the expected longevity of the public awareness raising interventions. But the institutional sustainability elements of the strategy were weak—with no specific plans for the local partners or institutions to take over delivery of the REAL Course, or specific plans for continuation of the Radio Listening Clubs. While the sustainability strategy was updated in September 2020, the updated version reflected changes in implementation rather than specific sustainability and exit targets.

In terms of prospects of sustainability, the girls' gains in skills and confidence through the REAL course are likely to have a lasting effect on their employment prospects. The women's business groups also appear to have strong prospects of surviving and providing diverse sources of income to the households, based on the networks successfully put in place by EMPOWER; although girls' participation in the business groups may decline given that some of them are dissatisfied with the group dynamics.

The effects on community leaders, teachers and other REAL Course facilitators are likely to be long lasting in terms of their in-depth knowledge of CL and acceptable work, as well as gender equality issues in their communities acquired through the project's training processes. Similarly, the project has generated traditional leaders' ongoing engagement with the issues of CL and adolescent girls' rights.

EMPOWER made progress in building the District Child Protection Committees' capacity to address CL, but it is difficult to assess the extent and nature of the changes as this effort was taking shape only in the last year of the project.

The REAL course package represents a valuable resource and approach, but it has a low prospect of being continued in the target communities or elsewhere without external project support. There is no institution ready to implement the program or plans for elements of it to be adopted by specific institutions. In the absence of an institutional sustainability plan, the model

could be documented and shared with relevant national, provincial and international parties. During the closeout process EMPOWER is planning to share the lessons of the project with provincial stakeholders and to publish the REAL course curriculum online.

Key lessons learned included:

1. The need to differentiate the services for training and employment development pathways for adolescent girls and women and enable girls to form independent business groups;
2. The high costs involved in delivery of vocational services in remote rural areas in Zambia and hence the need to limit target numbers; and
3. Distance and transport challenges in these communities need to be taken into account in the planning to help participants attend classes and to support the needs of community facilitators.

Promising practices included EMPOWER's strategy of mobilizing a network of community volunteers and representatives to reach out to the community, recruit participants, and monitor activities; effective engagement with the traditional leaders from the beginning; and the REAL course formulation itself, with its unique combination of life skills, technical and entrepreneurship skills, and business start-up support.

Recommendations

Immediate recommendations to EMPOWER

1. Winrock and USDOL should identify opportunities prior to the project close to share the lessons from implementing EMPOWER's REAL course and business start-up model with government and relevant development partners in Zambia, with a view to promoting replication and adoption of the approach. This can include making the REAL course curriculum materials available online.
2. As part of its exit strategy, EMPOWER should discuss with the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in the participating districts a strategy to ensure women are given priority in extension training, as well as the potential for the agricultural extensionists to continue using EMPOWER's entrepreneurship curriculum in their training activities.

Recommendations to implementers of future projects

3. Future projects aiming to provide training and employment pathways to adolescent girls, with similar budget size, should target smaller participant numbers; if necessary, within a more geographically focused area. This would enable a range of tailored vocational and employment opportunities for adolescent girls to be offered—including options to take apprenticeships with local crafts persons, or to pursue entry-level study at registered training providers with a scholarship.
4. Projects that pilot unique life skills and vocational training approaches like the EMPOWER REAL course should embed strategies in the designed project outcomes to promote replication and adaptation. This can be done by documenting and sharing the model with interested government and non-government agencies and other US-funded projects.
5. Based on the experience of EMPOWER, entrepreneurship groups initiated among adolescent girls should be separate from adult women's business groups.
6. Future projects addressing problems of early marriage and pregnancy as factors contributing to CL in Zambia or similar contexts should partner with the education

- system to deliver or strengthen life skills education for in-school girls ages 12 to 14; and provide nonformal reproductive health and life skills education for out-of-school/never-in-school girls in this age group.
7. Future projects introducing new or pilot education and training interventions should pilot the interventions fully through all phases before roll-out, to fully realize the lessons learned and good practices that can be utilized to inform the roll-out phase.
 8. Vocational training programs delivered by development partners outside public institutions can be very costly — implying that project applicants should research costs in the proposal and inception phase and allocate adequate resources in their proposed budgets.
 9. Future projects on entrepreneurship development for women and girls should provide linkages to a range of financial resource options including microfinance institutions and allow enough time to establish these initiatives. In Zambia, options include Financial Sector Deepening Zambia and SaveNet, among other microfinance institutions.

Recommendations to USDOL for future projects

10. USDOL or other development partners should allocate a five-year timeframe for similar projects with vocational training and livelihoods development components, to allow for one year for preparatory activities baseline and CMEP activities, up to one year for piloting the intervention, two and three-quarter years for full implementation, and a three-month close-out.
11. In future projects of similar scale and where USDOL foresees an impact study, the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) grantee requirements should be more prescriptive regarding the design of the impact evaluation so that the implementing partner can design the project interventions and budget to accommodate the study. In particular, the FOA should specify the provision of two monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff (specialist and assistant) and should require sufficient funding allocation to support the planned evaluation components and staffing.
12. USDOL ILAB/OCFT should synthesize the lessons learned from the series of recent and current OCFT projects addressing vocational training as a CL response in African countries, (E.g. MOCA Ghana, Adwuma Pa Ghana, EMPOWER, ARCH Liberia, Eliminating Child Labor in Cocoa Growing Communities - Côte d'Ivoire, and more) to inform future program designs. Learnings from such a regional meta-study would help ILAB to propose the approaches that have proven to be most effective in future project formulation in the region.

1. PROJECT CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION

Labor participation among Zambian children and adolescents is an ongoing problem hindering opportunities for children to fulfill their academic and employment potential. In its 2012 report on child labor (CL) in Zambia, the *Understanding Children's Work* project estimated that one in three children ages 5 to 17 years were involved in economic activity and pronounced that child labor continued to be a key obstacle to achieving universal primary education in Zambia.² The vast majority of working children were employed in a single sector, agriculture; more than half of them were girls. Children mostly work on family or neighborhood farms. Much of the agricultural activity in rural Zambia can be classified as subsistence farming, and the low- or zero-cost labor provided by family members is considered indispensable.

The Bureau of International Labor Affairs' (ILAB's) 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor assessment estimated that 28% of Zambian children ages 5 to 14 were engaged in some form of labor—concluding that Zambia had made moderate advancement in eliminating the worst forms of CL. Agriculture remains the predominant CL sector, but girls are also involved in poorly paid domestic work or may be trafficked to urban areas as domestic workers.³ Girls also face strong pressure to marry young, particularly in Eastern Province. Once they marry, girls tend to drop out of school and risk entering CL.⁴

The high CL rate, combined with generally limited economic opportunities in rural Zambia, constitutes a significant barrier to community advancement, particularly among females. To assist in addressing these problems, the US Department of Labor's Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking (OCFT) within ILAB awarded a \$5 million four-year cooperative agreement in November 2016 to Winrock International (Winrock) to implement EMPOWER: Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia.

To reduce CL in targeted rural areas of Zambia, EMPOWER aims to provide direct services to 2,500 adolescent girls ages 15 to 17 who are engaged in or at high risk of engaging in CL. These girls participate in the Rural Entrepreneurship and Leadership (REAL) course, which includes training in life skills and vocational or technical skills, followed by post-training mentoring to help participants develop the skills they need to secure acceptable work or start their own businesses. The EMPOWER project also seeks to assist 1,500 women from the households of girls ages 15 to 17 who are engaged in, or at risk of engaging in, CL to build their own group businesses. EMPOWER also seeks to bolster family and community support (particularly among males) for the females targeted for project services. EMPOWER seeks to work collaboratively with the Zambian government and the private sector to increase public awareness of CL issues and support for gender equality in employment practices. The project focuses on achieving four main outcomes:

- Adolescent girls engaged in or at high risk of entering CL with increased access to acceptable work and high-quality training opportunities.
- Vulnerable women whose households have children engaged in or at high risk of entering CL with increased access to livelihood opportunities.
- Public awareness on CL and gender equality increased.

² ILO, UNICEF, World Bank Group. 2012. *Understanding Child Work project. Towards Ending Child Labor in Zambia: An Assessment of Resource Requirements* p.7.

³ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/zambia>

⁴ The child marriage rate in Eastern Province was 60%, compared with the national average of 42% (EMPOWER Project document).

- Collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society on the promotion of acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women strengthened.

Exhibit 1 summarizes EMPOWER’s outcomes and outputs.

Exhibit 1: EMPOWER Outcomes and Outputs

Project Goal: Prevalence of Child Labor in Eastern Province Reduced
Long-Term Outcome 1: Adolescent girls engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor with increased access to acceptable work and high-quality training opportunities
Medium-Term Outcome 1.1 - Adolescent girls with knowledge and skills required for acceptable work
Output 1.1.1 Adolescent girls have soft skills, life skills and work readiness skills
Output 1.1.2 Adolescent girls with increased technical and vocational skills
Output 1.1.3 Out of school adolescent girls referred to programs that provide support to re-enter school
Medium-Term Outcome 1.2 - Adolescent girls with increased access to acceptable work
Output 1.2.1 Adolescent girls supported through peer networks, business and/or social networks
Long-Term Outcome 2: Vulnerable women, whose households have children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor, with increased access to livelihood opportunities
Medium-Term Outcome 2.1 - Vulnerable women with knowledge and skills for improving their livelihoods
Output 2.1.1 Vulnerable women with soft skills, life skills and work readiness skills
Output 2.1.2 Vulnerable women with increased technical and/or, vocational and/or entrepreneurial skills
Medium-Term Outcome 2.2 - Vulnerable women with increased access to livelihood opportunities
Output 2.2.1 - Vulnerable women mentored through peer support network and/or linked business and/or social networks
Output 2.2.2 Vulnerable women with access to financial services
Long-Term Outcome 3: Public awareness on child labor and gender equality increased
Medium-Term Outcome 3.1 - Women and men who complete REAL Course training show an increased knowledge on child labor, child rights and gender equality
Output 3.1.1 Men with increased understanding of child labor, child rights and gender equality issues
Medium-Term Outcome 3.2 - Communities with increased awareness on the rights of the child, the value of education, the adverse effects of child labor, and the difference between child labor and acceptable work
Output 3.2.1 Radio programs on children rights, child labor and gender equality broadcasted
Output 3.2.2 Support groups (school clubs, or other) around child labor and gender equality established or strengthened
Output 3.2.3 Community level awareness raising campaigns conducted
Output 3.2.4 Traditional leaders sensitized to curb harmful traditional practices that promote CL and gender inequality
Long-Term Outcome 4: Collaboration between government, private sector and civil society on the promotion of acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women strengthened
Medium-Term Outcome 4.1 - Increased engagement and collaboration among key stakeholders (Government, businesses, workers’ representatives, and civil society) on addressing child labor and promoting gender equality in employment practices
Output 4.1.1 Public and private institutions provided specific technical assistance to integrate activities to combat child labor in their programs
Output 4.1.2 Networks of female entrepreneurs created and/or strengthened through PPPs

To achieve EMPOWER's four long-term outcomes, Winrock and its local partner, Panos, employ three implementation strategies to strengthen stakeholders' knowledge and capacity to reduce CL in target areas:⁵

Strategy 1 (Long-Term Outcomes 1 and 2): Offer the REAL course to adolescent girls, women, and men from vulnerable households delivered at local implementation hubs. These hubs are usually local facilities, such as primary schools, serving surrounding communities. Girls and women receive three months of life skills and work readiness skills training provided by specially trained community facilitators, and three months of technical and entrepreneurial training by extension agents from MOFL, followed by six months of follow-up services from business mentors who also provide networking opportunities and create linkages to private sector buyers, financing mechanisms, and markets for the hub-based business groups. Men receive three months of life skills training on gender equality, CL, and the importance of education delivered by the same community facilitators. The REAL course was delivered through a series of three cohorts of participants in each hub, following a pilot delivery in two hubs in March 2018.

Strategy 2 (Long-Term Outcome 3): Increase community awareness and understanding on issues of CL and gender inequality through Panos' engagement of traditional leaders to build their awareness and garner their support for the REAL course and radio listening clubs (RLCs), establishing community radio partnerships and organization of "town hall" meetings. This included training of radio stations; support for broadcasting radio programs on child rights, CL, and gender equality; and creating or strengthening RLCs in communities to lead in community awareness-raising on these issues.

Strategy 3 (Long-Term Outcome 4): Increase government, private sector, business, and civil society engagement and collaboration by building on public/private partnerships (PPPs) established through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or letters of commitment, to provide services or infrastructure to sustain awareness and business initiatives.

These strategies are built on a foundation of participatory community mobilization and collaboration with the district and local governments and private sector, to help ensure local ownership in the design, implementation, and monitoring of project interventions.

The project works in 20 hubs, located in seven districts in Eastern Province (See Exhibit 2).⁶

⁵ Winrock initially partnered with Women and Resources in Eastern and Southern Africa (WARESA) but ended their agreement on March 9, 2018. To replace WARESA, Winrock entered a partnership with WECREATE in August 2018, but this partnership was terminated in June 2019.

⁶ The project originally selected five districts, but in early 2018, the GoZ enacted the Statutory Instrument (SI) Number 26 of 2018 to split some districts. Two of EMPOWER's districts (Chipata and Lundazi) were affected, bringing the project districts to seven.

Exhibit 2: EMPOWER Intervention Areas



Source: IMPAQ International

An interim performance evaluation of the EMPOWER project was conducted in February and March 2019. As part of its Terms of Reference (TOR), the final evaluation specifically considers the extent to which the interim evaluation recommendations were addressed.

2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the final performance evaluation as determined by the TOR are to:

1. Assess the relevance of the project to address CL in Zambia.
2. Assess if the project has achieved its objectives, identify the challenges encountered in doing so, and analyze the driving factors for these challenges.
3. Assess the intended and unintended effects of the project.
4. Assess lessons learned and emerging practices from the project and experiences in implementation that can be applied in current or future projects in Zambia, and in other projects designed under similar conditions or target sectors.
5. Assess which outcomes or outputs can be deemed sustainable.

The evaluation provides evidence to inform decision-making, understanding of lessons learned and promising practices, and recommendations for future projects.

2.2 Methodology

This section describes the evaluation questions and data sources, schedule, site sampling and data collection, data analysis, and study limitations.

2.2.1 Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

The evaluation set out to answer specific evaluation questions agreed upon by ILAB, Winrock and IMPAQ and organized according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. The evaluation team addressed the evaluation questions using multiple sources of evidence, combining primary qualitative data with secondary quantitative data. Due to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, IMPAQ, Winrock and ILAB agreed that all primary data would be collected remotely with protective provisions put in place when small groups of interview participants were gathered in one place. Qualitative data were obtained through remotely conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Secondary quantitative data were obtained from the performance reporting data presented in the semi-annual technical progress reports to ILAB as well as the EMPOWER prevalence survey. Exhibit 3 lists the evaluation questions.

Exhibit 3: Evaluation Questions

#	Evaluation Questions
Relevance and Coherence	
1	To what extent has the project design appropriately and adequately addressed the key causes of child labor among adolescent girls in Zambia's Eastern Province?
2	2A: To what extent was the theory of change (ToC) as stated in the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan (CMEP), valid and coherent given the implementing environment? 2B: Were the project strategies relevant to the needs of its target participants, communities, and other stakeholders?
3	To what extent did EMPOWER meet the targets outlined in TPR Data Reporting Form Annex A? 3A: What were the enabling factors? In cases where targets were not met, what were some of the reasons for this failure? 3B: What could future projects do differently to better meet targets?
4	To what extent were the midterm evaluation's recommendations adopted by project management? If so, how did they affect the project's effectiveness? If not, do the concerns still exist?

#	Evaluation Questions
5	How effective was the REAL course on addressing the specific training and employment needs of the participant population? 5A: How effective was the life skills training on preparing participants for technical, vocational, and/or entrepreneurship training? 5B: How effective were the technical skills training components of the REAL course in teaching girls and women skills applicable to local employment and/or market opportunities? Could these interventions be replicated in other areas and contexts? 5C: Were gender-related topics and appropriate tools adequately integrated into REAL course curriculum design and project activities? 5D: What measures were adopted by EMPOWER to address retention issues for girls, women, and men attending the REAL course? Of these measures, what were effective? What measures proved unsuccessful and why?
6	How effective was EMPOWER in addressing socio-economic barriers for improving participant household livelihoods (as a means to reduce the use of child labor among all children in the household)?
7	How and to what extent have EMPOWER-funded radio programs contributed to public awareness on child labor and gender equality in the target communities?
8	How effective were EMPOWER's efforts to build relationships and coordinate initiatives with partners, government stakeholders, and community stakeholders to end/reduce child labor?
9	How effectively has EMPOWER built public/private partnerships to promote acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women in Zambia?
Management Efficiency and Effectiveness	
10	To what extent did the strategies and measures adopted by the project's management address the problems or delays encountered by the project, and can be attributed to achieving its objective and outcomes?
11	How effective was the formulation and management of the M&E system in tracking the achievement of planned outcomes? 11A: Following up on the midterm evaluation findings, has EMPOWER adapted their M&E processes to ensure adequate monitoring and outtake assessment of participants' child labor/work status (including for all children in the household for ILAB's Household-Level indicators), and what challenges and/or emerging best practices are associated with these processes? 11B: To what extent did project management use the data to inform decision making?
Sustainability	
12	To what extent has the project's sustainability plan been deployed? Have challenges come up regarding this plan? If so, what remedial steps has the project taken?
13	Which of the project interventions and results are likely to be sustained after the project ends? By whom and how? Which results are less likely to be sustained, and why?
14	Which of the project interventions are most likely to have a lasting impact on participants, their households, and/or their community? Why?

2.2.2 Evaluation Schedule

In collaboration with the Winrock team, the evaluation team developed the site sampling, confirmed the list of stakeholders to be met, and scheduled the interviews. Interviews with ILAB and Winrock HO staff were conducted in July 2020. The team conducted the main in-country interviews from July 27 to August 18, 2020. The de-brief meeting was held on September 1, 2020. Most of the data analysis and report writing was conducted from mid-August through September 2020.

2.2.3 Site Sampling and Data Collection Methods

Site sampling: The evaluation team determined the site selection criteria in consultation with the EMPOWER team and Winrock HO. The criteria were related to the project's service delivery locations for the REAL course, known as hubs. Most of these were primary schools or other local

facilities that serve surrounding communities. The criteria agreed were: (1) hubs representing a range of performance internally assessed by EMPOWER (strong, average, and weaker performance rating) and (2) a range of distances from the project office in Chipata. The team also considered telephone and internet connectivity when determining the potential remote communication methods—though poor connectivity was not an exclusion factor for a hub as it was determined that the interviews would be best conducted at the EMPOWER District Coordinator Offices. EMPOWER provided a list of all project hubs and their characteristics according to these categories, as well as their telephone and internet connectivity. The evaluation team initially selected three hubs (Munyukwa, Mwanza, and Kasenga) to represent a range of hub performance, as well as several back-up hubs per category that could be sampled if communications proved difficult. During the pilot test small group interviews in Munyukwa using the Zoom platform the team found that the girls’ accounts of their experience were not as in-depth as could be expected in an in-person interview. To address this the team decided to add a fourth hub, Mwanjawanthu, to compensate for the limited depth of interview data that could be gathered through remote methods. The team also requested the EMPOWER staff to help organize a small number of additional individual interviews with participants by telephone. The resulting site selection is shown in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4: Hub Sample and Criteria

Characteristics	Selected Hub
Strong performance rating Far from Chipata (255km) Limited phone and internet	Munyukwa (District: Chasefu)
Average performance rating Close to Chipata (45 km) Good phone and internet connectivity	Kasenga (District: Chipangali)
Weak performance rating Far from Chipata (215 km) Good phone, no internet connectivity	Mwanza (District: Petauke),
Average performance rating Far from Chipata (179 km) Good phone and internet connectivity	Mwanjawanthu (District: Petauke)

With the aim of collecting information from the pilot cohort of non-agricultural track participants, an additional two interviews were held with girl catering training graduates in Kagoro hub.

Data collection methods: The evaluation team collected data from four sources: KIIs, FGDs, document reviews, and secondary project data. The team used the data from these sources to answer the evaluation questions proposed for each analytic evaluation area. The KIIs and FGDs were designed to obtain stakeholders’ perspectives on the project’s implementation and effectiveness. In view of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, for interviews with stakeholders in Zambia—after full consideration of the risks associated with in-person meetings and in consultation with Winrock—IMPAQ and the evaluation team decided to conduct all interviews remotely.

KIIs and FGDs were conducted using a variety of remote platforms according to the preference of each stakeholder—Zoom, Skype, Microsoft teams, Whatsapp, and telephone. Given that most community participants lacked smart phone and internet access, groups of participants were gathered by the EMPOWER District Coordinators (EDCs) at their offices, where they could access a computer or shared smart phone. During the FGDs, interpreters in local languages were provided by Winrock. The interpreting process followed was that each question was asked in English and translated by the interpreter in turn, individual participants responded and the

answers of each respondent were translated into English; then the next question was asked and translated.

Exhibit 5 presents the number of participants in individual interviews and FGDs by stakeholder group and gender.

Exhibit 5: Participants in Interviews and FGDs

Stakeholder group	No. of interviewees	M	F
Winrock Home Office	4	1	3
EMPOWER staff	6	3	3
Panos Southern Africa Institute	2	2	0
US Government – Embassy, USAID	2	1	1
USDOL ILAB	2	0	2
EMPOWER public, private sector and civil society stakeholders	8	7	1
Empower community participants (girls, women, men, community representatives (CRs) and community volunteers (CVs), REAL facilitators, technical trainers and mentors, traditional leaders' representatives, radio listening clubs, radio station operators)	99	35	64
Total	123	49	74

The evaluation team facilitated approximately six FGDs per hub, each limited to four participants, for a total of 25 meetings across four hubs. In each hub the team met with groups of girls, women and men, radio listening club members and REAL course life skills and mentors. Radio station operators and technical training facilitators were interviewed individually, as were representatives from government, private sector and civil society stakeholders.

De-brief meeting. The evaluation team did not conduct a stakeholder workshop given the restrictions on in-person meetings under COVID-19, but held an online de-brief meeting convened by IMPAQ—where the evaluators presented the preliminary findings to ILAB, Winrock HO staff, and EMPOWER staff; and received questions and comments.

Document review. The document review was used to gain an understanding of the project progress from project reports, USDOL comments, and research activities conducted, as well as information on the context of CL and the status of gender equality in Zambia.

The main sources of information for the project's progress were the semi-annual technical progress reports (TPRs) submitted to ILAB from April 2017 through October 2020. The evaluation team also reviewed the project baseline prevalence study, market assessment, and documentation of the REAL course curriculum materials. The team identified relevant documents for the review based on the evaluation questions and each document's main purpose.

2.2.4 Data Analysis

The document review, stakeholder KIIs, and FGDs generated substantial raw qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation team categorized, synthesized, and summarized the raw qualitative data captured from the KII and FGD transcripts and the document review. The evaluation team also summarized the latest TPR quantitative data for comparison with end-of-project targets. The qualitative and quantitative data summaries were then triangulated to develop the evaluation's findings. During this process—which was driven by the evaluation questions—

the evaluation team requested further assistance from Winrock to clarify any data questions or request missing or additional information.

2.2.5 Limitations

The limitations of the evaluation relate mostly to the remote data collection methodology necessitated by COVID-19 safety requirements. The depth of information obtained was less than the team could have expected from in-person meetings.

Even in the project's district offices, interview participants frequently encountered difficulties connecting to the remote call. The calls were frequently interrupted by connection or power cuts, even in the locations close to Chipata that were considered to have stronger internet and telephone connection. The team adapted to the situation by switching to Whatsapp or standard telephone, as needed. To ensure the quality of data we held additional individual interviews with participants, expanded the overall number of interviewees to cross-check emerging themes in the responses and triangulated the responses from different stakeholders, such as REAL course participants and REAL course facilitators.

Also due to the remote process, the team experienced some challenges in communication with EDCs, including failing to receive detailed briefings in some instances regarding the hub and interviewee context prior to the meetings. This was rectified by the EMPOWER team as the data collection process progressed.

Some individual interviewees who initially agreed to an interview were finally not available, including the selected District Commissioner and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS) national-level representative.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the key findings for each evaluation question category: relevance and coherence, effectiveness and perceived impact, management efficiency and effectiveness, and sustainability.

3.1 Relevance and Coherence

This section addresses the extent to which the design addressed the causes of CL among adolescent girls (Question 1); the validity of the theory of change and coherence of the results framework in the implementing context (Question 2); and project relevance to participant and stakeholder needs.

3.1.1 Extent to which Design Addressed Causes of CL among Adolescent Girls

- *Question 1: To what extent has the project design appropriately and adequately addressed the key causes of child labor among adolescent girls in Zambia's Eastern Province?*

Validity of the problem analysis: The key causes of CL among adolescent girls in Zambia were identified in the funding opportunity announcement (FOA-ILAB-16-12) and further described in the EMPOWER project design narrative. According to the evidence gathered in the project document, more than half of working children in Zambia are girls.⁷ The types of CL they are engaged in tend to be heavy farm work over long hours, as well as domestic servitude and trafficking for sexual exploitation.⁸ Winrock selected Eastern Province to implement EMPOWER, as one of the poorest provinces with high reported CL levels. The EMPOWER prevalence study completed in 2017 confirmed high CL levels in Eastern Province, and—in contrast to the country-wide surveys—found that girls were more likely than boys to be involved in hazardous CL (HCL) in the province.⁹

The project document identifies the key drivers of girls' engagement and risk of CL as early school drop-out, especially due to teen pregnancy and child marriage, discriminatory gender norms, and lack of alternative vocational opportunities once they leave school.¹⁰ In the context of household poverty and low social status assigned to women and girls in Zambia, the cited literature suggests that struggling households often prioritize sons' over daughters' education. Girls' vocational opportunities in poor and remote rural areas are limited by the costs of training, as well as lack of locally accessible training and vocational pathways options once they drop out of school.

The reason for EMPOWER's focus on women's economic empowerment is their key role in household subsistence farming in the province. Women tend to lack access to credit for agricultural inputs, training opportunities, functional literacy, entrepreneurial know-how, knowledge of improved crops and techniques, and links to producer groups and markets. The project's rationale includes that girls' opportunities are closely linked to women's, so improving female prospects as a whole will affect girls' futures.

At the community level, traditional attitudes on gender and CL reinforce gender stereotypes and CL tolerance among both girls and boys. At the institutional level, the project design identified

⁷ Towards Ending Child Labor in Zambia. p.7

⁸ ILO, UNICEF, World Bank Group. Understanding Children's Work. Zambia, 2012.

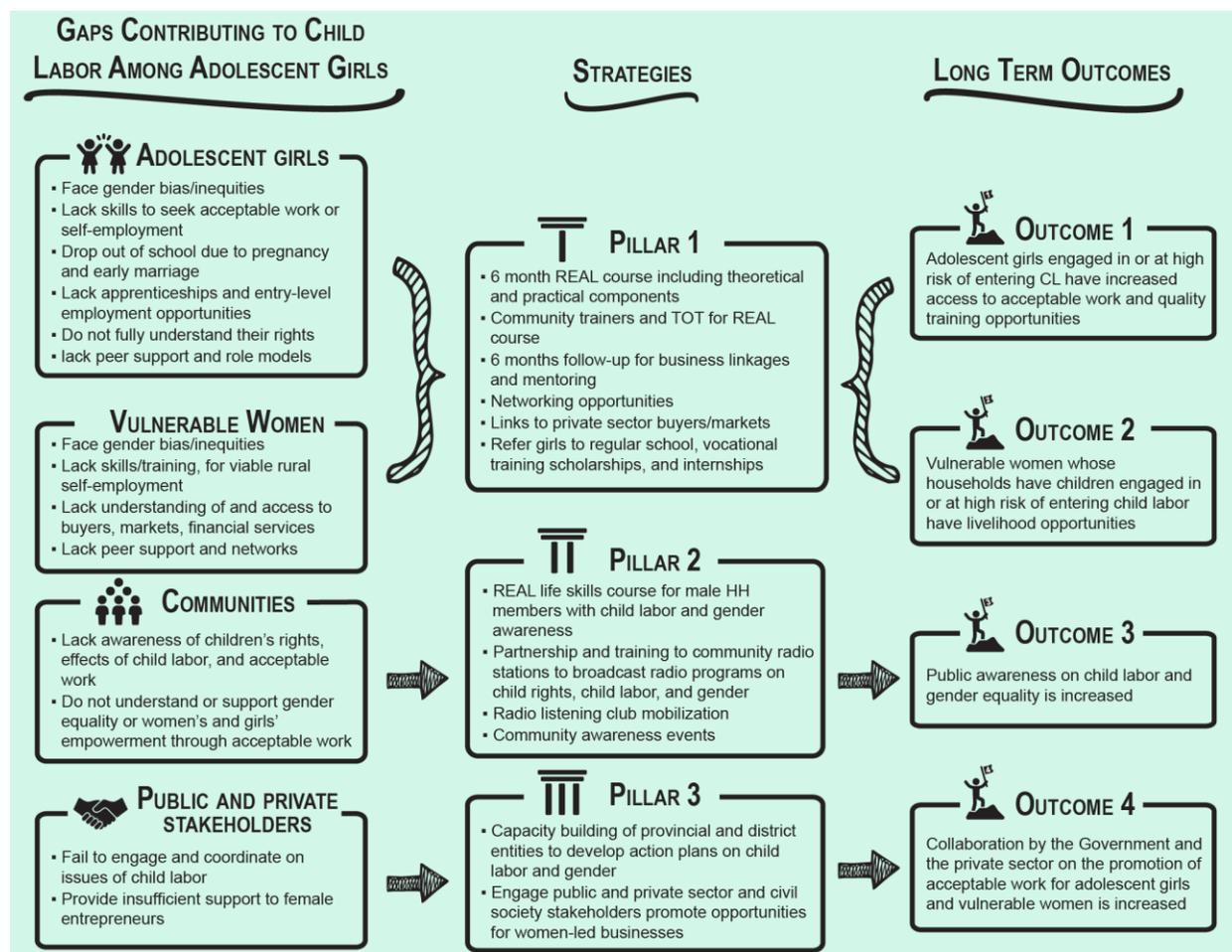
⁹ Winrock International. Baseline and Prevalence Survey of Working Children and Child Labourers in Chadiza, Chipata, Katete, Lundazi and Petauke Districts. MLeMba and Associates. 2017/2018

¹⁰ Zambia's Education Act specifies that school is compulsory for children of school-going age, but does not specify exact ages. This leads to children starting school late in rural areas, and to leaving before they complete seven years of basic education, or before age 15, when they are legally able to work in non-hazardous conditions.

gaps in government, private sector, and civil society collaboration to respond to CL in Eastern Province, as well as gaps in the reach of public and private sector services to support female entrepreneurship and agribusiness. The evaluation found the analysis of the nature and extent of CL among adolescent girls was sound. The analysis of contributing and causal factors at the household, community, and institutional levels relating to adolescent girls' lack of acceptable employment opportunities provided sufficient justification for the central intervention strategies. The stakeholder interviews with staff and government service providers confirmed this situation analysis—especially regarding traditional attitudes towards girls' roles and the lack of opportunities for training and business start-up, which provided justification for a gender-focused approach.

Validity of designed strategies: To respond to the identified gaps and issues, which were grouped into four clusters, EMPOWER proposed a three-pillar strategy to contribute to the overall goal of reducing CL among adolescent girls in Eastern Province. See Exhibit 6 for an overview of these strategies and expected long-term outcomes.

Exhibit 6: EMPOWER Strategies to Address Child Labor among Adolescent Girls¹¹



Source: IMPAQ International

¹¹ Adapted from Project Document. 2018 updated version, p.8.

Under the strategy pillar leading to long-term (LT) outcomes 1 and 2, direct education and training and livelihoods development services are provided to participant adolescent girls and women through the REAL course plus follow-up, to serve girls' education and vocational training needs and women's livelihoods development needs. In the design, girls were also to be provided with scholarships to Technical Education, Vocational, and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) accredited courses if their capacities permitted, or to apprenticeship and employment introductions, according to their needs and interests. Support for women's development was intended to benefit all children at risk of CL in a household, not only the targeted girls. The second pillar (LT Outcome 3) supports the enabling environment to reduce CL and gender inequality, through community mobilization and raising awareness among males, in particular. The third pillar, supporting LT Outcome 4, strengthens partnerships for: (1) public and private sector networks to promote interventions to address CL and gender equality, and (2) public and private sector engagement in supporting networks of female entrepreneurs. The evaluation found that the three broad strategies were relevant and sufficient to address the contributing factors in the Eastern Province context.

A particular strength of the strategy of relevance to women's and girls' needs is the combination of life skills, technical skills, and start-up support in the REAL course, as confirmed by most interviewees. The local provision of training (though not fully confirmed in the initial design) was relevant in the target communities, most of which are not reached by formal training services. Another strength of the design was to direct multiple forms of assistance to a given household with both a participant child and a parent receiving assistance.

3.1.2 Validity of the Theory of Change and Coherence of the Results Framework

- *Question 2A: To what extent was the theory of change valid and coherent in the implementing environment?*

While the evaluators considered all the designed strategies valid, the project did not attempt to directly address girls dropping out of school, except as part of the long-term strategy of supporting the importance of girls' education in the communities. The project focus is on assisting girls once they have already dropped out of school. A school-level intervention for girls might have strengthened the approach—for example, life skills education among younger girls to address the causes of girls dropping out of school; and introducing girls' awareness of self-protection and risk of early marriage and reproductive health before age 15. However, given limited resources, it was a justifiable design choice to focus resources on the specific 15 to 17 age group.

Although the design narrative states the aim of strengthening stakeholders' capacity to address CL and gender through collaborative networks, the evaluation found that the REAL course provision is implemented in the form of a one-off intervention or pilot, rather than through a system-building approach among existing providers. Project sustainability or replicability is not explicitly included in the design. At minimum, to increase the likelihood of the approach serving girls and women in the future, one of the medium-term outcomes could have been documentation of the model and sharing it with potential provider institutions or other development agencies. The delivery approach was left open in the design, including the possibility of TEVETA-approved providers as potential options. Training delivery through formal providers was not feasible in practice given the costs involved. The project explored the options of delivering training with formal vocational training providers, such as Chipata Trades Training Institute, including on-site delivery in the college and delivery in the communities. On-site delivery of the training would have required participants boarding at the college, since the areas where the target population lives were far from Chipata. Even though the college was willing to deliver training at a lower tuition rate than normal, the costs of transport, lodging and food for each participant would have been

too high. The option of trainers travelling to the community sites was also considered, but was similarly costly as they would have to lodge in the localities, and there was an additional challenge that TEVETA approval is also required for the training premises. In view of these costs and logistical challenges the project put together its own delivery framework, utilizing local school buildings and teachers from the school system for the life skills course and engaging local agricultural extensionists for the content and delivery of the technical skills training.

Regardless of delivery mode, as an innovative approach involving community-based and women-focused vocational training, there could have been a curriculum documentation activity and dissemination strategy to inform vocational service providers, ministries, and development agencies about the benefits of the approach as an integral part of the project design. Winrock is exploring opportunities to disseminate the REAL Course curriculum and the lessons learned from its implementation as part of the closeout process; as discussed in the section of the report addressing sustainability (see section 3.4).

Based on several stakeholder interviews, including those with male household members, the evaluators concluded that, as a strategy for household economic resilience and in communities where men are usually considered the leaders, it might have been more strategic to also empower men with livelihood improvement skills, or skills to support the women's businesses.

Another element not included in the design suggested in the FOA was creation of community-based or other mechanisms to identify and respond to CL, through CL-monitoring structures and response mechanisms. Such interventions can provide a comprehensive approach to combating child labor and a sustainable means to respond to child labor at the community level, linked to evolving local child protection systems. Nevertheless, the evaluators considered the three strategic areas sufficient to bring about changes in the factors contributing to CL among adolescent girls.

The evaluation review of the results framework in the CMEP found the hierarchy of outputs and outcomes linkages coherent and logical. The design assumptions noted in the project document generally held true in support of the logic. Specifically, the Government continued to support CL reduction efforts within the constraints of government funding described by US Embassy and MLSS KIIs. Traditional and local government leaders and civil society stakeholders, as well as private sector partners, were willing to support project efforts. However, other contextual factors were not sufficiently taken into account, including the following:

- The impact of early marriage and girls' familial responsibilities on attending training was underestimated (i.e., the assumption that most of the identified girl participants could maintain their course attendance despite the practice of early marriage was not met). Although the project tackles gender norms about girls' access to education, it was not enough to prevent early marriage, which interfered with course retention.
- Transport limitations and the walking distance to hubs proved to be a disincentive for considerable numbers of REAL course participants.
- The financial resources required to deliver vocational training services to 4,000 girls and women were underestimated. It was overly ambitious to assume that 100 groups could be rolled out within the time and budget available.
- Finally, the scope of the geographic and participant targets was ambitious and proved costly to achieve in practice. The project was too ambitious in terms of its geographic scope and target numbers—which affected the quality of what could be delivered, as well as the relevance of the offerings to participants. This finding concerns not only the scope of the design, but also the depth of the impact delivered.

3.1.3 Relevance to Participants' and Stakeholders' Needs

- *Question 2B: Were the project strategies relevant to the needs of its participants, communities and other stakeholders?*

The extent to which the interventions were relevant to participants' needs is discussed as part of the discussion of EMPOWER's effectiveness in Section 3.2. The initial comments included here focus on the intervention design. First, the design allowed for flexibility to provide a variety of tailored services for girls and women, including different employment options for girls and a focus on business development for women. In practice, the skills development strategy for girls and women was not as differentiated as envisaged. The services provided for both girls and women were relatively similar, partly due to resource constraints that prevented a wide range of education and training services being offered. As discussed later in the report, significant numbers of girls interviewed by the evaluators were not as satisfied as women respondents about joining business groups with adult women. Men in participant households who completed the REAL training found it beneficial to their understanding of CL and gender but would have liked clearer guidance on their role after the course.

The community leaders and chiefs' representatives we interviewed confirmed that the EMPOWER project was highly beneficial to their communities and expressed the wish for the project to continue. Government representatives, including Eastern Province MLSS and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) found project efforts relevant to their respective agendas on CL prevention and entrepreneurship development.

3.2 Effectiveness and Perceived Impact

This section presents the evaluation findings regarding the extent of EMPOWER's success in reaching its development objective and performance targets (Question 3) and discusses the contributing factors.¹² It also addresses the project's response to the midterm evaluation (Question 4), and the qualitative effectiveness of each of the key project interventions and the effectiveness of community and stakeholder coordination (Questions 5 through 9).

3.2.1 Project Performance and Achievement of Indicator Targets

- *Question 3: To what extent did EMPOWER meet the targets outlined Technical Progress Report (TPR) Data Reporting Form Annex A? What were the enabling factors? In cases where targets were not met, what were some of the reasons for this? What could future projects do differently to better meet targets?*

Data for this analysis is based on April 2020 TPR reporting as well as information from the project staff about further data anticipated for inclusion in the October 2020 TPR. At the time of the April 2020 TPR, the project had only completed outtake interviews for cohort 1 and the pilot participants and still had outtake data to complete for REAL course participants and households from cohorts 2 and 3; therefore, not all the performance indicator data are final values.¹³ In particular, the final results for the CL status indicators, acceptable work among girls (Indicator OTC 3) and diversification of income among women (Indicator OTC 5) will be reported in the October 2020 TPR. Appendix A provides a complete analysis of the project performance on all Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) indicators as of April 2020 reporting.

¹² The CMEP establishes indicators and associated targets for each project outcome, supporting outcome, and output.

¹³ Outtake data are based on an interview with REAL course participants and their households conducted every six months after first enrollment in the REAL course.

Child labor status results: The project objective level indicators relate to CL status at the household and child participant levels. The results reported in April 2020 for the period November 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 are shown in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7: Child Labor Status among Participant Household and Adolescent Girls

Outcome Indicator	Actual April 2020 against Baseline
Project Objective: Prevalence of Child Labor in Eastern Province Reduced	
POH1. % of HH (households) with at least one child in child labor among all children in the HH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baseline: 95% (October 2019 reporting on all intake interviews is considered as the baseline) ▪ 73% for April 2020 reporting period November 2019 – March 2020 (Based on 288 outtake households surveyed in the period. Total target HH for outtake is 1,740).
POH2. % of HH with at least one child in HCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baseline: 95% (October 2019 reporting on all intake interviews is considered as the baseline) ▪ 14% for April 2020 reporting period November 2019 – March 2020. ▪ Although the result suggests a dramatic reduction in HCL among participant HH in April 2020, it is not considered a reliable reflection of the final rate because the outtake caseload in the period was only 288 households out of the target outtake of 1,740 participant households.
POH4. % of HH with all children of school age attending school regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baseline: 50% of households ▪ 29% for April 2020 reporting period ▪ Suggests a decline in regular school attendance among participant household based on partial outtake data.
POC 1. % of adolescent girls engaged in CL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baseline: 96% (October 2019 reporting on 1,878 intake interviews) ▪ 56% reported April 2020 period (Outtake caseload of 70 girls)
POC2. % of adolescent girls engaged in HCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baseline: 96% (October 2019 reporting on 1,878 intake interviews) ▪ 30% reported April 2020 (Outtake caseload of 70 girls)

Notes:

1. Targets for CL prevalence were not established, but a reduction is expected compared to the baseline.
2. Outtake data used to report on these indicators was reported for the first time in April 2020. April 2020 TPR reporting was based on a small caseload of 288 households and 70 child participant outtake interviews and may not reflect the final outtake values. The POC indicators only count girls aged 15-17 according to the indicator calculation therefore girls older than 17 years completing the outtake were filtered out of the indicator calculation.

Regarding the project's effects on CL, the household-level indicator data (POH indicators) are based on the outtake interviews conducted with household participants following completion of the REAL course plus support and count child labor among all the children in the household. Child participant CL data (POC indicators) are collected at the conclusion of the service ("service outtake") and at six-month intervals thereafter. The CL indicator is based on all those who received an EMPOWER education service. No targets were set for the rate of child labor reduction. It is difficult to determine what changes have been brought about in child labor engagement among children in the households and among participants based on these partial data as the life-of-project results are yet to be compiled. Tentatively, it appears there has been some reduction in CL among children in participant households. Among the girl participants themselves, HCL in particular appears to be reduced, while engagement in CL was still standing at over 50% in the small portion of outtake interviews collected and reported. The evaluators generally heard from the girls and their parents that they are not doing heavy farming tasks any longer; but the evaluation's remote interviewing process did not permit in-depth exploration of the work they are actually engaged in. The persisting low rates of children attending school (POH4)

among the participant households is reflective of the high rate of school drop-out in these communities. As pointed out by EMPOWER staff, this suggests the need for future projects to focus on this issue.

Outcomes 1 and 2: REAL Course Participation and Outcomes

Regarding REAL course participation, as of April 2020 reporting, the final cohorts of vocational training had been completed; therefore, data on most indicators are the final project values, while cohort 3 participants in three hubs (around 90 participants) remain to be counted for vocational training completion. Overall, EMPOWER fell short of its targets for enrolling 2,500 girls, 1,500 women, and 1,000 men. Nevertheless, the project has provided education, training, and business start-up services to a substantial number of participants across the 20 hubs. The details and contributing factors are examined below.

Exhibits 8 and 9 present the results compared with final project targets for girls and women.

Exhibit 8: Participation and Retention among Girl Participants in the REAL Course

Indicator	Actual Results at April 2020 against Project Targets
# of girls enrolling in life skills (Indicator OTP 1/E1)	Project Target: 2,500 Actual: 1,740 (69.6% of target)
# of girls completing life skills (Indicator OTP 2)	Project Target and April 2020 target: 2375 Actual: 878 (36.9% of target) 50.5% of those enrolling in life skills completed the course.
# of girls completing the vocational training (Indicator OTP 3)	Project target and April target: 2,375 Actual: 583; representing 33% of those who enrolled in life skills module
# of girls referred to services for re-entry to formal school (Indicator OTP 4)	Project target and April 2020 target: 300 Actual: 17 (6% of target).

Exhibit 9: Women's REAL Course Participation and Completion

Indicator	Actual Results at April 2020 against Project Targets
# of target households receiving livelihood training/service (Women enrolling in life skills) (Indicator OTP 6)	Project target and April 2020 target: 1,500 Actual: 1,216 (81% of target)
# of women completing life skills (Indicator OTP 7)	Project target and April 2020 target: 1,425 Actual: 715 Represents 58% of those enrolling in life skills, compared with the target of 95% of those enrolling.
# of women completing vocational training (Indicator OTP 8)	Project target and April 2020 target: 1,425 Actual: 493 Represents 40.5% of those enrolling in life skills.

EMPOWER fell short of its targets for the number of adolescent girls and women to be recruited and enrolled in the REAL Course. Compared with the target of 2,500 girls, 1,740 (69.6%) were enrolled and provided an education service. The project performed better with enrollments of women, reaching 1,216, or 81% of the target of 1,500. Regarding girls' enrollment figures, the EMPOWER staff noted that the project actually recorded 1,950 girls at the intake interview, approximately 500 short of the target; but some decided not to proceed. If a girl missed the first class it did not prevent them being counted towards the education service indicator. The OTP 1

total of 1,740 represents the number of girls who both enrolled and attended the life skills sessions, even if they did not attend the very first class.

Retention through the life skills and vocational training modules proved challenging. Among girls, 878 completed the first module, and 583 completed the second module (33% of those enrolling and attending in the first module). This represents an attrition of 67%. Among women, 715 (59%) completed the life skills module, and 493 completed the vocational training module (40.5% of those enrolling in the first module). It should be noted that the course “completion” measure was stringent, defined as attending at least 75% of the sessions. Participants were offered the chance to make up extra sessions within the same life skills cohort, to reach completion of the course, but they were not able to join another cohort. Life skills facilitators informed the evaluators that participants were allowed to enroll in the vocational skills module even if they had not met the 75% attendance requirement for completion of life skills, which explains why the number of girls and women reported in the April 2020 TPR as enrolling in vocational training (1,087 girls and 938 women) was higher than those completing life skills.

Reasons why enrollment and completion targets were not met: The main reason for not reaching girl and women enrollment targets relates to the number of cohorts the project was able to implement within its budget and timeframe. Under the original timeline, REAL course implementation would have begun in 2017. Due to the time required to complete the CMEP, conduct the baseline survey, and market assessment, and develop the REAL course curricula materials, as well as support the outcome evaluation, the implementation did not begin until February 2018. In planning for five cohorts, the project designers underestimated the significant time start-up activities would take. The initial pilot of the REAL course was delayed by a cholera outbreak, after which there were delays between cohorts due to EMPOWER District Coordinator (EDC) staffing gaps. Realizing it would not be possible to complete five cohorts, in September 2019 the project reduced the number to four. It had been assumed that the cohorts could proceed without interruption every three months, but this turned out not to be the case. In September 2019, the project officially notified its intention to drop the fourth cohort,¹⁴ due to the culmination of budget and time constraints as outlined in the Project Modification submission. The fourth REAL cohort, including follow-up phase, would have run from around September 2019 to September 2020, running into the close-out phase. The second reason enrollment targets were not met was constraints on the direct implementation budget, which began to be felt in mid-2019, partly due to the high costs of M&E activities.

EMPOWER sought to maximize its enrollment numbers by aiming to increase the number of participants in a hub from 25 to 35 girls, 15 to 25 women, and 10 to 15 men per hub, in cohort 3. In practice, cohort 3 had smaller numbers of girl participants in 17 out of 20 cases, based on data provided by EMPOWER. (See Appendix C: Final Schedule of Cohorts) EDCs and community volunteers (CVs) met by the evaluators reported one reason for the reduction in numbers as further distance of cohort 3 from the hub where the class was provided. If the project had implemented more cohorts in the pilot stage, it might have been possible to reach the target numbers within the timeframe. Data are not available to the evaluation on how many girls in the demographic and women with eligible children still remained in each catchment area who could have been enrolled in a subsequent cohort.

The evaluators learned from the CVs that initially it was hard to recruit participants, as they did not trust the benefits of the REAL course. According to life skills facilitators, some girls were not interested in the life skills module, preferring to learn practical vocational skills. In some hubs,

¹⁴ Project Revision Submission, September 6, 2019.

cohort 2 tended to be bigger, as community members had heard about some of the course benefits.

Turning to the course retention and attrition, the stakeholders (project team and stakeholders) involved in setting completion targets for the REAL course were ambitious in setting targets close to 90% of the numbers enrolling. This proved to be unrealistic given the mobility of the adolescent girl demographic in particular, who frequently left their home village after getting married and hence could no longer attend. Other girls met by the evaluators reported that family care responsibilities prevented them from keeping up with the course, while for others it was a question of the distance that had to be covered. Women participants also dropped out after enrolling in the life skills module or during the vocational training, due to distances that had to be travelled to reach the hubs, as well as family responsibilities, according to interviews with women and community representatives (CRs). The reasons for girls and women not enrolling or not completing the REAL course are discussed further in analyzing the effectiveness of the REAL course.

Outcome-level Targets: Girls’ acquisition of knowledge and skills for work was measured through indicators OTC1 and OTC2, respectively. Knowledge for work (OTC1) was measured by obtaining a score of at least 75% on the REAL course life skills post-test. None of the girls passed the life-skills knowledge test among those who had completed both modules as reported in April 2020.¹⁵ The test results did not prevent the participants from continuing to the technical training, and it was not considered necessary for the girls to re-take the tests. The project team conjectured that the low test results may be due to the difficulty level of the life skills tests, the length of the test, which made girls likely to get tired and lose focus, and the relatively high pass rate set. The project team considered re-designing the tests, but time constraints weighed against this. The observations of facilitators and staff on the ground observations were at odds with the result as the girls they met reportedly did have a good grasp of the work-related elements of the life skills course.

Of girls who completed the REAL course, 59% were able to demonstrate the required skills for work (OTC2) by joining a business group during the REAL course training or other forms of acceptable work or employment. This was well below the target of 75%—which may reflect the girls’ lower level of interest in the business teams, although the definition of this indicator was not very clear.

Exhibit 10 reports on the outcomes for girls and women in terms of acceptable work, self-employment, and women’s income diversification, reflecting the outcome-level measures.

Exhibit 10: Training and Entrepreneurship Outcomes for REAL Course Girl and Women Participants

Indicator	Actual at April 2020 against Project Targets
% of participant girls in acceptable work within six months after receiving EMPOWER support (OTC 3)	Project target: 50% April 2020 target: 40% Actual April 2020: 41% (161 girls of 391 completing both the REAL course modules counted in last six months reporting period are members of a business group or other employment). Outtake for cohort 3 not included.

¹⁵ Data from three of the twenty hubs were missing from the April 2020 reporting, that did not report their post-test results in time to be included.

Indicator	Actual at April 2020 against Project Targets
# of participant girls participating in a support group (during the technical training and mentorship phase) (OTP 5)	Project target: 3,750 April 2020 target: 1,875 Actual April 2020: 241 The data reflect participation during mentorship phase only, due to a misunderstanding of the indicator by data collectors.
% of women who diversify sources of income within six months of EMPOWER support (OTC 5)	Project target: 50% April 2020 target: 40% Actual: 36% in the reporting period
# of women participating in support networks (OTP 9)	Project target and target for the period: 1,050 Actual: 262 (As above for the girls' data collection)
# of participant women and girls accessing financial services (OTP 10/L4)	Project target: 1,200 April 2020 target: 1,008 Actual: 714 (406 girls and 308 women) Achieved 59.5% of project target.

The outcomes for girls and women in terms of their rates of participation in acceptable work or diversified income sources are on track compared with the targets, though a smaller number of participants than anticipated have completed the REAL course. The qualitative outcomes are discussed in Section 3.2.3.

Performance on public awareness (Outcome 3) and public and private partnerships (Outcome 4)¹⁶

Most of the CMEP targets for Outcome 3 (Public awareness) and Outcome 4 (PPPs in support of acceptable work for girls and vulnerable women) have been met, as presented in Exhibits 11, 12, and 13 below.

Exhibits 11 and 12 present the results for public awareness-raising indicators at outcome and output levels. Note that indicators OTC 6 and OTC 7 are limited to changes in knowledge of CL and gender equality among adult REAL course participants, rather than the wider community. On these indicators, adequate CL knowledge was demonstrated among 66% of the graduates in October 2019, not meeting the target, while the knowledge of gender equality target was met at 91%. As noted above, the enrollment of men in life skills was only 49% of the targeted enrollment, due to limited interest among men with no materials or practical benefits offered according to KIIs. Results on the three output indicators for RLCs and engagement with traditional leaders exceeded their targets, although short community announcements on COVID and other issues were included in the radio broadcast count. The project has reportedly engaged with 70 traditional leaders—including chiefs, chieftains, village headmen, and chiefs' representatives, known as *indunas*.

Exhibit 11: Increased Community Knowledge of Child Labor and Gender Equality

Indicator	Actual at April 2020 against Project Targets
OTC 6 % of men and women who complete the REAL course demonstrating knowledge of CL (OTC 6)	Project target/April 2020 target: 80% Actual: 68% (October 2019 reporting. April 2020 data not available due to COVID 19 disruptions)

¹⁶ Two outcome indicators, OTC 8 and OTC9, related to community levels of gender and CL awareness, were dropped from Annex A reporting, as they depend on the endline survey.

% of women and men REAL course participants who demonstrate sufficient knowledge of gender equality (OTC 7)	Project Target: 80% Actual: 91%. (October 2019 reporting. April 2020 reporting disrupted by COVID-19)
# of male participants who complete the REAL course life skills module (OTP 11)	Project Target/April 2020 target: 950 Actual April 2020: 213 of 433 enrolled (43.3%)

Exhibit 12: Awareness through Radio Station Broadcasts and Community Groups

Indicator	Actual at April 2020 against Project Targets
OTP 12 # of radio programs broadcast by EMPOWER (OTP12)	Project Target: 778 April 2020 Target: 648 Actual: 1,040 Radio broadcasts were increased in the last reporting period due to COVID 19 public service announcements.
OTP 13 # of community action groups on CL and gender equality established or strengthened	Project Target/April 2020 target:100 Actual April 2020: 104 RLCs established, 94 verified
# of traditional leaders sensitized on harmful practices that promote CL and gender equality (OTP 15)	Project Target/April target: 29 Actual: 70 Chiefs have been very active in the program activities and the radio listening clubs

As shown in Exhibit 13, the project has exceeded its targets for supporting bodies that work to raise awareness on CL and gender. However, the results count all the women's business groups towards the outcome indicator, which somewhat inflates the achievement. The key coordination organizations counted as being strengthened are the District Child Protection Committees (DCPCs) and the Rural Women's Entrepreneur Network (RWEN). The latter network is more accurately a series of events organized by the project to provide an opportunity for the women's business groups to network with existing businesses. It is not an established organization existing outside of the project.

It might have been better to count how many public and private institutions engaged with and supported the EMPOWER interventions, rather the number that received technical assistance, since the activity aimed to garner the support of various agencies for the business groups, although EMPOWER has certainly contributed to the aims of the MLSS and MCDSS.

Exhibit 13: Public Sector, Private Sector and Civil Society Collaboration

Indicator	Actual at April 2020 against Project Targets
# of public, private, and civil society stakeholder coordination bodies established and/or strengthened with EMPOWER support (OTC 10)	Project target/April 2020 target: 40 Actual: 72, including 66 REAL course business groups as bodies working to raise awareness of CL and gender equality
# of public and private institutions receiving technical assistance from EMPOWER (OTP 16)	Project target/April 2020 target: 20 Actual: 27 Reached public and private institutions through direct outreach, community awareness activities, and the RWEN events.
# of women entrepreneurs' networks supported by EMPOWER (OTP 17)	Project target:100 Actual: 66 women's business groups reported in TPR. 80 groups reported to the evaluator at time of writing. Likely to achieve target by end of project, as groups are currently splitting into two or three depending on numbers and geographical location.

Meeting targets in future projects: Focusing on the central targets of the project—those involving the participation of girls and women in the REAL course—future projects would be well advised to: (1) set more realistic cohort numbers, anticipating delays, thus lowering targets for enrollment in training per cohort; and (2) anticipate a higher rate of attrition during the course, thus reducing completion targets.

For future provision of vocational training in rural areas, which lack transport, attention needs to be paid to supporting transportation options. These might be provision of a regular minibus that could remain with the hub after the project, deals with taxi firms, transport allowances for participants, and more use of training in the village (rather than in a hub).

Addressing girls' mobility due to marriage was not an explicit long-term or medium-term objective of EMPOWER, although early marriage was cited as an issue contributing to child labor to be addressed by the provision of life skills and vocational training. Factoring in this important variable affecting completion of the training was not taken into account in the targets. The life skills module was evidently not persuasive enough to prevent all early marriage, though the project as a whole may have contributed to a gradual reduction. The project was not able to do much about attrition due to mobility upon marriage. It was not feasible to use virtual platforms via phone or internet for these participants as smart phone ownership is not common, connectivity is poor and moreover, face-to-face mentorship was considered critical for the girls. In the future more programming could be directed towards the 12 to 14 age group, before girls reach the traditional marriageable age.

Regarding how to increase men's engagement in the future projects, the gender strategy could be adjusted so that, while the priority is still on enhancing women's access, men in the HH would also be involved in livelihood development (including selected skills and entrepreneurship training), and ensure they have an ongoing project role to play in spreading the message on CL.

3.2.2 Response to Midterm Evaluation

- *Question 4: To what extent were the midterm evaluation's recommendations adopted by project management? If so, how did they affect the project's effectiveness? If not, do the concerns still exist?*

The midterm evaluation's recommendations were directed towards improving project planning and support; increasing facilitators' commitment to the project and knowledge of the project strategies; increasing men's participation in the project; extending literacy training within life skills training; building the training skills and CL awareness of vocational/technical trainers; enhancing community awareness strategies and RLC effectiveness; and enhancing support for the women's business cooperatives through PPPs. The full response of the project to the recommendations is included at Appendix B, together with the evaluation observations.

Planning and Support: With regard to planning and support, the project accepted the recommendations in terms of holding more frequent meetings and coordinating closely with the EDCs. It partially accepted the recommendation to strategically deploy the project vehicles. These measures appear to have been effective in increasing coordination among the team, based on our EDC interviews.

Facilitators: The project accepted the recommendation regarding provision of refreshments to facilitators and made two bicycles available to each hub, to be shared by CRs and facilitators. Lack of transport to the hub centers continued to be a challenge to both facilitators and participants, particularly in the rainy season. Following the midterm evaluation (MTE) suggestion, the project did inform facilitators on the economics of group-based businesses formed around a

hub, rather than individual start-up support. But the strategy has not been entirely successful, partly because of group conflicts and dynamics, and partly due to group participants living far from one another—leading many to still prefer individual start-up support.

Male participation: The MTE recommended including men in entrepreneurship training, or creating a support role for them in infrastructure for the women’s livestock businesses. The project partially accepted the recommendation by including men in some of the vocational module entrepreneurship sessions, and some men voluntarily engaged in supporting infrastructure for the women’s livestock groups. However, men continued to play a minor role in the project, and some of those interviewed by the evaluators were not satisfied with the role assigned to them. As expressed by an interviewee: “Having been trained, we should have an ongoing role to play.”

Life skills and literacy training: The project did not implement the recommendation to extend the time for literacy training or to engage community volunteers in literacy training due to time and budget constraints. The issue remains, as expressed by girls we interviewed, who said they would like to achieve a higher level of literacy. As a partial solution to this gap, the MCDSS indicated that they will introduce the business group members to continued functional literacy training.

Technical training improvements: The project followed up by supporting the facilitators in methods of working with large groups. According to the responses to recommendations and comments of the Project Director, training on CL and gender issues was subsequently integrated in the orientation sessions for the trainers.

Community awareness: The recommendations were twofold: (1) to institute monthly town hall meetings for broader community awareness activities; and (2) to strengthen the strongest RLCs per hub, seek radio station input on how to engage rural audiences, and review all broadcast material. In response, EMPOWER, through liaison with Panos, stepped up the monitoring of community events and RLC activities, but it reasonably preferred to focus on supporting all the RLCs rather than only the strongest ones per hub.

PPPs/Cooperatives: The recommendations suggested focusing on quality partnerships that can provide market-based support for the business groups; recruiting interns or volunteers to support the livelihoods work; and pursuing partnerships that could provide land or infrastructure support to the group businesses. The project adopted the first recommendation to good effect, finding that Heifer International, Eastern Comfort, and others could support markets links and inputs. It did not recruit any additional intern support but relied on the Community Business Development and Livelihoods Specialist (CBDLS) to do all the liaison work, resulting in a high workload for the specialist. EMPOWER rejected the last recommendation on the principle that the groups could find their own local resources for facilities such as poultry sheds.

Coordination with MLSS: The MTE recommended closer coordination with the MLSS in providing them with briefings. Although the recommendation was not followed in specific detail, the project did enhance its relationship with MLSS, particularly at the Province level—with benefits for the development of district CL policy and sensitizing the child protection system to CL issues.

Sustainability: The MTE recommended that the project revise its sustainability plan, with more specific targets. This revision was supposedly completed in October 2019, but the revised plan was still being finalized in September 2020, so it does not appear to have benefited the project significantly. Winrock provided the revised plan to the evaluation team, as reviewed in the sustainability section. Also related to sustainability, the MTE recommended that the project identify all relevant US government projects for potential collaboration. The project response was that none of them is currently working in Eastern Province. The evaluation view is that more could have been done in this regard, with a view to sharing the approach and lessons learned with other projects.

Extension/replication of entrepreneurship training in schools: The MTE recommended that this training be included in formal school curriculum to benefit an upcoming generation of girls. Although the project concurred with the suggestion, it was too ambitious and complicated to acquire curriculum approval for inclusion within project time and resources. Inclusion of life skills or entrepreneurship in general school curricula remain recommended strategies towards elimination of CL in the future.

Future programs: The final recommendation related to future programming, and the need to allow sufficient time—up to at least one a year—for preliminary studies and relationship building prior to delivering interventions. The final evaluators concur with this recommendation.

3.2.3 Effectiveness of the REAL Course and Entrepreneurship Support

- *Question 5: How effective was the REAL Course in addressing the specific training and employment needs of the participant population?*
- *Question 6: How effective was EMPOWER in addressing socio-economic barriers for improving participant HH livelihoods?*

Overview of the strategy and effectiveness

The REAL course was designed as a package comprising two training modules (life skills and technical training) followed by a six-month follow-up support phase for groups of trainees to form their own livelihood businesses.¹⁷ The evaluators considered the effectiveness in meeting participants' needs from the perspectives of participants themselves, as well as training facilitators, community representatives, project staff, and a TEVETA representative.

Overall, the evaluators concluded that the training has filled an important gap in providing accessible skills training, as well as a pathway into small businesses for girls and women who have very few other opportunities. Many girl interviewees said that this was the first training opportunity they had been given and that, otherwise, they would be staying at home tending to the vegetable garden. As noted in the EMPOWER prevalence study, agriculture extension services are not widely available in these districts, especially to women; and in relatively remote communities, as many of these are, it is difficult for school leavers to enter vocational training.

The program had benefits as a whole package, leading to group business formation for those who stayed through the whole 12-month period, who represented about one-third of enrollees. Individual modules also had benefits as well as limitations, as discussed below.

Regarding adolescent girls' own perceived needs, those interviewed by the evaluation team reported that they took up the training offer because they were under-occupied, and were also attracted by the benefits of receiving livestock to raise. According to the project team, when the project was deciding on the vocational tracks to offer, most girls were interested in owning hair salons or braiding businesses, while the women were interested in rearing goats, chickens and pigs. The project considered the demand and viability of the proposed businesses in the communities before selecting the poultry and goats tracks. Even though these livestock businesses may be more viable than hairdressing, which could have been oversupplied if it had been offered, the choices offered were very limited, and there was no evidence of assessment of participants' individual interests or job counselling once they had completed the life skills module. As an example, one participant girl interviewed who currently does hair braiding, would still like to

¹⁷ While Evaluation Question 5 focuses on the effectiveness of the REAL Course, which technically includes the two training modules, it is relevant to consider the effectiveness of the whole package of training plus entrepreneurship/business development support in meeting training and employment needs.

have her own salon—a more individualized approach that might have helped her find an apprenticeship with a hairdresser.

For girls, the structure and content of the REAL course—combining soft skills and work readiness skills with technical skills raising livestock and basic business skills—was beneficial to those who had dropped out of school early and had very limited alternative options, based on a variety of interviewee comments. But it is not yet clear from the incomplete indicator data (OTC 3 and OTP 5) how many are continuing to take an active part in the group enterprise.

For women participants, the package served multiple needs, including basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as a pathway towards a viable group business with the advantage of shared risk and no need for capital investment. The following sections assess the effectiveness of the REAL course components and different facets of EMPOWER’s strategy.

Effectiveness of Life Skills Training

- *Question 5A: How effective was the life skills training on preparing participants for technical, vocational, and/or entrepreneurship training?*

The evaluation review of the curriculum found that it is appropriate for the girls and women with low educational levels, noting that the program for girls included an additional set of sessions on self-awareness through the *SHAPE* exercise – Self, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experience. The materials were compiled predominantly by the Youth Training and Employment Specialist (YTES) and draw on a range of existing materials. The methodology was highly engaging according to the facilitators themselves, most of whom were current primary school teachers. Interviews with the life skills facilitators and EMPOWER staff comments on their performance suggested that they were highly motivated to help girls and women in their community and appropriately experienced, given their existing skills as teachers.

Both girls and women participant interviewees confirmed that they found the life skills and work readiness skills generally highly useful for work orientation, and also more broadly in strengthening their personal skills, emphasizing gender equality, problem solving and leadership. Leadership skills were particularly appreciated by men participants.

Literacy and numeracy components: These were the skills areas most frequently appreciated by participants, as demonstrated in the following comment boxes.

“I am happy that I can read and write. Before the course I could not write my name.”
Girl participant, Munyukwa

The limitation was that the number of literacy sessions conducted over 12 weeks, (2 literacy and 1 numeracy contact hours per week for girls and 1 literacy and 1 numeracy contact hours per week for women) was only sufficient to develop basic literacy for those who had never been to school. The midterm evaluation recommended that the project provide more extensive literacy training to develop functional literacy, but it was not possible for the project to extend the number of sessions. Although the project itself was not able to extend the literacy classes, the evaluators learned of one facilitator who continues to teach her cohort 1 group in her own time. Additionally, registration with MCDSS will offer some members of

“I have never been to school, now I can write my name.”
Woman participant, Munyukwa

registered groups to access further literacy training. One participant mentioned that she would have liked access to English language training to help her find a job. English language is part of Grades 9 and 12 requirements so English literacy would be required

“Now my wife can calculate the right change when she goes shopping.”
Male participant, Mwanza

registered groups to access further literacy training. One participant mentioned that she would have liked access to English language training to help her find a job. English language is part of Grades 9 and 12 requirements so English literacy would be required

for jobs that require these grades, but not for all acceptable work. As informed by the Project Director, the REAL course was not long enough to build literacy in English.

Participant interviewees also appreciated the personal *financial management and budgeting* sessions.

"I used to keep my money in a bag at home but now I put it in the mobile banking service."

Girl participant, Munyukwa

Effectiveness of technical and entrepreneurship training for local employment and/or market conditions

- *Question 5B: How effective were the technical skills training components of the REAL course in teaching girls and women skills applicable to local employment and/or market opportunities? Could these interventions be replicated in other areas and contexts?*

The aim of the technical training as expressed in the FOA and EMPOWER project document was to provide girls with skills to help them access acceptable work options or self-employment and women with more diversified livelihoods sources.

Vocational track selection: The EMPOWER market assessment completed in December 2017 was the first step and key tool to identify the production areas or services with good markets. The assessment highlighted range of agricultural and non-agricultural training areas. EMPOWER initially selected 11 curriculum tracks including egg production, fish farming, tailoring, catering, pig raising, and poultry and goat raising. However, they realized that some of the models far exceeded the project budget (for example, fish farming was quite expensive to implement and some of the crops recommended in the market assessment take a long time to grow for demonstration). To narrow down the selection, EMPOWER further considered the recommendations of the market assessment, selecting products or services that would have good markets and also be feasible to run in these communities. The choice was narrowed to four tracks for the pilot cohorts—poultry, goats, catering, and tailoring, and subsequently to poultry and goat raising for the full implementation.¹⁸

The views of stakeholders varied regarding the selection of the tracks and their marketability. In hindsight, most Winrock and EMPOWER staff perceived that the selection was appropriate, as it allowed the project to focus the provision of expertise. Facilitators from MOFL were generally more positive about the viability of the poultry track compared with the goats track. Poultry have a short six-week turnover to raise for sale. Community representatives favored the poultry track based on the markets, but would have preferred a wider range of livestock options. Chiefs' representatives would have liked catering to have been included beyond the pilot, as they felt there was a good market. The evaluation concluded that the selection was a pragmatic decision based on considerations of marketability of the livestock, as well as the costs and time involved in developing and delivering each curriculum. A narrow focus also enabled a high level of expertise in livestock raising and marketing to be shared.

Quality of the curriculum and training: The training manuals for the poultry and goat raising tracks were developed in close consultation with TEVETA and met TEVETA's guidelines and standards. The specific livestock-raising lessons were based on MOFL training manuals. As such, the materials follow approved standards. However, because the course was not delivered by a TEVETA accredited institution, TEVETA could not provide certification. The project canvassed various options for delivery, and opted for fisheries and livestock extensionists based on considerations of the delivery locations, expertise, and cost. The cost of delivering through a

¹⁸ The Kagoro pilot had three tracks - poultry, goats and catering, while the Kapoko pilot had three tracks – poultry, goats and tailoring.

formal TEVETA-accredited provider would have required a major part of the training budget. The participants were generally satisfied with the contents of the training.

Level of skills acquisition and skills recognition: The technical skills trainers were generally positive about the progress made by the participants in acquiring the level of skills needed for raising chickens and goats commercially. The project was able to provide informal certificates of completion, but not a formal TEVETA recognized certificate. The completion certificates were introduced to help motivate participants' involvement, retention and recruitment. As one skills trainer noted, it would have been best if more formal certificates could have been provided to help participants find work in poultry businesses in the towns that employ people with the skills possessed by the graduates, for example, in preparing feeds. On the other hand, the project staff felt that the REAL Course completion certificates would enable participants to access employment on poultry and goat farms.

Potential for replication of these interventions in other areas and contexts: The potential for replication of the approach and the curricula developed by EMPOWER, both for life skills and technical skills, and the community-based delivery model, by development agencies in other communities in the province or elsewhere in Zambia is promising, as these interventions offer a relatively low-cost and effective approach. In future adaptations, girls would ideally be offered additional options to livestock raising. The likelihood of such replication is discussed under the question of sustainability.

Integration of gender topics and tools into the REAL course curriculum

- *Question 5C: Were gender-related topics and appropriate tools adequately integrated into REAL course curriculum design and project activities?*

The Life Skills curriculum contains several sessions that address gender equality and gender-based violence. The SHAPE sessions appear an appropriate tool to develop adolescent girls' confidence and self-awareness in the context of early marriage and teenage pregnancy. While girls interviewed did not refer to the specific "SHAPE" acronym, they did comment on the confidence they have gained as girls that they can do many of the same jobs as men. The curriculum for men also addressed these topics directly, with benefits confirmed by the interviewees. Multiple stakeholder interviews with girls, women, and men confirmed that their perspectives of what women and men can do have changed as a result of the Life Skills training and the goat raising track, as illustrated in the comment boxes.

"I realize that women can do as much as men."

Woman participant, Mwanza

"I am now able to work together with my wife and we make decisions together. We decide together on what we need to grow and/or sell. Because I now understand that we are equal."

Male participant, Mwanjawanthu

"I am now able to support my wife, she can go to attend the sessions while I remain to take care of the children at home and cook."

Male participant, Munyukwa

Apart from the training on gender issues through the REAL course, various other activities focused on gender roles and rights as discussed under Long Term Outcome 3. Regarding gender-related outcomes for girls, girl participants nevertheless continued to be required to do home chores, which was one of the factors affecting their retention. Child

care responsibilities did not appear to conflict with their attendance. Many girls had children of their own, but they were able to bring them to class. While this reportedly affected their concentration at times, when their babies and toddlers required attention and feeding, it was generally a helpful approach supporting girls' participation.

Effectiveness of efforts to improve retention in the REAL Course

- *Question 5D: What measures were adopted by EMPOWER to address retention issues for girls, women, and men attending the REAL course? Of these measures, what were effective? What measures proved unsuccessful and why?*

The issue of high attrition from the REAL course was evident to EMPOWER staff from the implementation of cohort 1, as noted in the MTE. A significant proportion of girls and women enrolled and subsequently dropped out from both life skills and technical training modules. According to vocational/technical facilitator interviews, girl participants dropped out of the vocational training more frequently than women. The project TPRs note a range of reasons for participant attrition, which were confirmed and elaborated by evaluation respondents. Distance for participants to travel to the hubs was a primary reason, especially in the rainy season, and the farming responsibilities of girls in the busy season (planting and harvesting). Girls and facilitators also mentioned movement due to early marriage offers and family responsibilities (such as caring for a sick parent) as reasons for dropping out. Several girls and one woman mentioned dissatisfaction with the behavior of group members (people talking too much and lack of transparency, though the latter applied particularly to the business development phase).

EMPOWER's main effort to increase retention was to set up classes in 13 satellite hubs to reduce the distance participants had to travel. This was helpful according to EMPOWER staff and facilitators. There was no restriction on participants bringing their children to the sessions, although walking long distances with children might have been an added difficulty. Additionally, participants were allowed to drop in and out of the course.

Despite the project's efforts, retention continued to be an issue, particularly due to early marriage among the girls, and in some cases their moving from the project area to the village of their husband. Although chiefs' representatives reported local laws prohibiting families from offering their daughters for early marriage, and applying penalties in the form of payment of animals, the practice evidently continues. The project's awareness-raising efforts were not sufficiently powerful in the short term to reverse this traditional practice.

Effectiveness of the business development phase on improving girls' employment and household livelihoods

- *Question 6: How effective was EMPOWER in addressing socio-economic barriers to household livelihood improvement among participants? (as a means to reduce poverty and use of child labor)*

The project's strategy for achieving two separate outcomes (girls' access to acceptable employment and improved household livelihoods) was essentially the same: supporting development of viable business groups of girls and women. A small number of girls, fewer than originally expected, were referred to return to regular school, while two interviewees noted that they would like to go back to school but could not afford to do so. Likewise, the proposed internships with employers and TEVETA scholarships for further study did not come to fruition. Regarding internships, these were most likely to be available in hospitality, but enterprises contacted by EMPOWER responded that higher level of literacy was required for internships in the industry. TEVETA has a scholarship program for vocational training at registered providers and these could have been provided for certificated training in poultry or goat-raising on completion of the REAL course, but these had already been assigned when Winrock approached them, and at the same time few participants were ready to take up further study.

As noted earlier, one of the MOFL facilitators observed that more formal certificates would have opened more opportunities for REAL course graduates' employment with poultry businesses and that the skills they learned are in demand. Winrock believes that the certificate of completion for

the REAL Course can help participants to be employed on poultry and goat farms. However, for other jobs available on the market, the low educational levels of project participants puts them at a disadvantage to meet employment criteria.

Overall, the evaluation found that the combination of start-up package, mentorship, and linkages with financial services and supportive market networks has proven successful in generating livelihood opportunities for the HHs who stayed in the business groups. At the time of writing in September 2020, the project reported 80 women's business groups (poultry, goats, and two tailoring and catering groups from the pilots) are now established and in the process of registration with the MCDSS.

The evaluation interviews with girls, women, community representatives, business mentors, stakeholders, and project staff provide substantial information regarding the viability of the group structures, access to finance, progress in sales and markets, improvements in girls' opportunities and preliminary observed improvements in household economic development, as discussed below.

Mentorship and peer support: The participants found the monthly meetings with business mentors valuable in helping with marketing approaches. In some cases the mentors provided material support such as poultry sheds. The catering group in Kagoro appreciated the support of the technical trainer, a home economics teacher, who has continued to meet them every weekend to teach them new cooking concepts. There were comments from participants and CRs, however, that the mentorship sessions should have been more frequent than monthly. The opportunities to learn from the RWEN events organized by EMPOWER also appear to have been valuable in enabling the business group members to exchange their experience and form connections with the livestock industry and business development services.

Functionality/stability of business groups: Regarding the functionality and stability of the groups, the evaluation gained mixed perceptions. While the women interviewed were generally satisfied with the functioning of the groups and the combination of mothers and daughters, adolescent girls were less satisfied with the arrangement. Girls interviewed in three out of four hubs sampled commented that they were unhappy working together with the women. They would have preferred separate groups for girls and women. The reasons for this dissatisfaction included girls being relegated to the basic livestock feeding and care tasks, rather than holding decision making roles—especially not trusting the leaders' handling of the finances, and not being able to speak up to question their elders' handling of the group sales. Also, due to cultural respect for elders, girls could not openly question the women, so the women were not held accountable for management practices. Lack of trust among the members as expressed by girls in two hubs, Kasenga and Mwanjawanthu, appears to be a major risk for sustained operation of the business groups.¹⁹ Some technical training facilitators (MOFL) were also of the view that the girls and women should work independently. Part of the reason the facilitators gave was that some of the girls were very active in class, which made the older women more reticent to participate.

Even so, women said they were happy working together with their daughters; and some girls also favored the arrangement.

Viability of products and market access: The groups reported gradual improvement in the survival of their livestock, though some groups have experienced losses. In particular, one group lost goats due to foot and mouth disease. The poultry market varies from hub to hub, but those close to Chipata town encountered the challenge of low prices at the main market (*boma*), where a plentiful supply of poultry pushes prices down. To address this, the mentors suggested value

¹⁹ One group of girl participants asked the evaluators to request EMPOWER to separate the groups into girls and women, while they emphasized that they loved the business concept.

adding such as processing the chickens in small pieces to gain sales, which has proved successful. The chicken raising group also has support of the Eastern Comfort Lodge, where they sell their chickens in bulk. Heifer International indicated that similar value adding is done with the goats, including dried goat skin for sale.

The viability of the goats groups has been well supported by the linkages facilitated with Heifer International (veterinary inputs, abattoir facilities and links to markets). Nevertheless, some technical trainers interviewed were unsure about the long-term viability of the goat raising businesses. The poultry groups appeared relatively more secure in markets and sales, based on a range of interviewee views.

The catering group in Kagoro has been well established since 2018, with seven members, and has a stable market through the Eastern Comfort Lodge. They have their own restaurant where they cook and sell foodstuffs, renting the place at K600 per month. However, they felt that EMPOWER could have helped with the start-up capital for the first few months.

Financial management, financial services:

Financial literacy training was a key support to the participants, as individuals and as groups, facilitated by EMPOWER through partnering with agencies including the Zambia National Commercial Bank and Atlas Mara. Access to possible government small business grants has been foreseen through registering the groups with the MCDSS, so that they can access the government Farmer Input Support Program (FISP) grants. The group members we met did mention that they still lack finance for infrastructure for the livestock—indicating that the project could have introduced a wider range of financial services supports to the groups.



Source: Winrock International. REAL course participants hold up their account opening forms for NATSAVE Bank in Petauke District.

Effect on incomes: So far, most of the groups have not yet shared out profits to group members but are ploughing profits back into the business. Nevertheless, some observers, such as CRs/chiefs' representatives, note that household finances are more stable as a result of the business development, and more households are able to send their children to school.

Individual business diversification: The evaluators learned of several groups and individuals who are diversifying their business activities. Some have ventured into maize trading, vegetable trading, trading in radio sets, and fabric trading.

In summary, EMPOWER has been quite successful in addressing barriers to livelihoods improvement—specifically start-up costs, technical guidance, business planning know-how, and market linkages. Regarding financial benefits, the team heard some accounts of profits being shared from the poultry sales, but most of the groups are still at an early stage of development, and it is too soon to observe changes in family economic circumstances.

3.2.4 Effectiveness of the Radio Listening Clubs

- *Question 7: How and to what extent have EMPOWER-funded radio programs contributed to public awareness on child labor and gender equality in the target communities?*

Under Panos' supervision and implementation, EMPOWER's key strategy to raise public awareness on CL and gender equality was through creating or strengthening community listening clubs associated with local community radio stations. The clubs consisted of around 15-20 community members who met regularly to discuss the radio broadcasts from participating stations, record their discussions which were then broadcast on the radio. Panos has extensive experience using this type of strategy throughout Zambia. There were some delays in getting this initiative off the ground, including termination of the locally based Panos staff position, but this component gained traction in mid-2019 based on a range of interviewee accounts.

Both the radio station staff we met observed that communities are gradually getting a better understanding about CL and acceptable work, as well as gender-based violence as a result of the activities. Behavior is also changing; for example, people no longer expect their children to be responsible for raising cattle. According to the radio station staff it is vital to continue with this form of participatory radio programming on these subjects.

One radio station operator observed that the role of the radio station could have been more effective if EMPOWER's project-wide success stories and changes in behavior could have been broadcast,

but they were limited to broadcasting radio discussions. The radio station operator attributed this to Panos and Winrock not working in close collaboration. The station operator also expressed that the station operators should have been consulted in the costing of the equipment during the inception phase, for efficiency as well as local ownership.

Drawing on the interviews with the RLC members, the evaluation team learned that some of the clubs, such as those in Mwanza hub, were based on existing groups working through their churches to educate people about the harmful effects of child marriage. The members interviewed by the evaluation were highly motivated to participate in the activity. According to the members we met, since they were already doing sensitization in the community it was easy for them to form groups. Interviewees reported that they had thought of getting involved with community radio before, but did not have the resources before EMPOWER came. The group members reportedly appreciated the training on the importance of education, gender, and livelihood opportunities for women. They received radio sets and recording equipment to record their discussions, which were subsequently broadcast by the radio stations. The RLC members also disseminated the information to other members of the community.

"Previously men did not allow the women to do business, but this has slowly changed as they trust their women and children."

Radio Listening Club, Mwanza

"From the women's clubs they had their own topics or agendas on what they were doing in their groups and if they saw an increase in child labor they would sit down and call the traditional leaders in those areas then they would call me to do a recording which I would then air on the radio stations. Then from there I would look for relevant authorities who would come and answer some of the questions and highlight more on such issues."

Staff, Radio Explorer

Although the evaluators did not have the opportunity to canvas the wider community about the spread of information, the participants and community representatives shared that the radio programs have reached many people in the communities with messages about CL and gender issues, and people

of all ages came together to listen to the radio programs. In Mwanza hub, Petauke district, they meet in church buildings and sometimes met outside "under the tree" to listen to the radio programs. They use battery operated radios and are able to replace the batteries themselves.

According to members from Mwanza RLCs, they are beginning to see changes in community attitudes on gender.

The main limitation the RLC participants noted was that there are still remote communities not covered, because EMPOWER only worked in hubs covering a few communities. In terms of reach, 100 clubs were formed altogether, five in each hub, with 15 members in a club.

“We have challenges around early pregnancies among the girls in our communities, so we use the radio programs to educate everyone on this. We are also working with the ministries of health and education to ensure girls get the information on sex and early marriages.”

Radio Listening Club, Mwanza

While the intervention appears to have been successful in its own right, Panos staff and radio station managers expressed that it would have been more impactful if the Winrock staff had made more effort to link this component together with the REAL course and other project activities. Few REAL course participants were members of the RLCs, and there was no project-wide branding in the form of t-shirts for RLC leaders. This reportedly created some disharmony within the project, and meant that dissemination of messages was not optimized. The chiefs’ representatives consulted by the evaluators were aware of the linkage of the components within the overall project, and provided positive feedback on the effectiveness of the radio broadcasts. But the evaluation interviews with REAL course participants and facilitators confirmed that they had little awareness of the radio programs.

Poor communication and coordination between Winrock and Panos limited the effectiveness of the activities, according to the radio station operators charged with training the groups, distributing equipment, and managing the radio broadcasts. They expressed that the intervention was still able to work—due to the strong engagement with the community over a long time, and because the community trusts the radio station. Panos representatives expressed related views regarding limited linkage of the component with Winrock’s activities, as discussed in the following section. While the radio station operators interviewed perceived the coordination between the partners to be weak, Winrock attributes the issues to internal communications issues at Panos between their Community Awareness Specialist and the home office Program Manager, which hampered implementation strategies, and that once the EDCs began working directly with the Panos program manager the activities were better integrated into the program. Winrock made efforts to coordinate more closely by better integrating the RLC activities under the EDCs in the last year of the project.

The project also used other communications methods to raise awareness, including town hall meetings and theatre, but the evaluators did not hear any participant accounts about their effectiveness.

3.2.5 Coordination with Partners, Government and Community Stakeholders to Reduce CL

- *Question 8: How effective were EMPOWER’s efforts to build relationships and coordinate initiatives with partners, government stakeholders, and community stakeholders to end/reduce child labor?*

Effective coordination with its partners, government institutions, and private sector and community leaders was central to EMPOWER’s intended strategy in delivering the interventions as well as sustaining results. The evaluation examined the relative success of coordination with stakeholders in each of these groups.

Traditional leaders and community leaders: Chiefs’ representatives, as well as other stakeholders we met, confirmed that EMPOWER built positive relationships with the traditional leaders and village headmen from the time of entry to the communities and onwards. Initial

meetings were held with chiefs to solicit their approval and engagement in the project. The interviews with the chiefs' representative from Chasefu district, for example, demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the project initiatives and satisfaction with the coordination and communication: "Communication and coordination were very good. We were very much involved in the project and the coordinators arranged for meetings, which we were invited to attend so we knew what the project was doing in our communities." The traditional leaders are highly influential in their chiefdoms, making their buy-in essential for the project's success.

EMPOWER's strategy of working through elected CRs has been particularly effective in maintaining coordination and communication between the EDCs and the communities, as well as strengthening the awareness-raising messages.

Government stakeholders: The project's government partnerships have been highly effective. At the district level, the project worked with the District Education Board Secretariat to identify life skills teachers and utilize and repair school facilities. MOFL also collaborated closely with the project to identify agricultural extensionists as facilitators for the poultry and goats tracks and provide their curricula. This coordination and relationship with the MOFL trainers was effective as reported by the facilitators and EMPOWER staff. Some minor dissatisfaction with the amount of the travel stipend provided by EMPOWER was voiced by one of the MOFL facilitators, as their costs were not fully covered when the satellite hubs were created. The project did have challenges helping district officials travel to the project hubs given budget constraints. The evaluators could not ascertain if this affected their engagement as we did not have the opportunity to interview them.

EMPOWER established a close relationship with the MLSS at the province level, which is the focal government agency responsible for addressing CL. The Eastern Province labor officer appreciated EMPOWER's support to reduce CL in the target districts. The representative confirmed that EMPOWER helped strengthen the integration of CL within the scope of responsibility the District Child Protection Committees through the presentations the CBDLS made to the committees. This initiative was the key contribution to supporting government efforts under Outcome 4. The initial intention was to provide technical support to the DCLCs. However, the project learned under implementation that the DCLCs were not functioning in any of the districts. As explained by the Province labor representative, the government is now seeking to embed CL response within the DCPCs rather than through duplicative CL committees, and the project's response was aligned with the national strategy. The representative confirmed that the project has been instrumental in supporting the committees' understanding of CL issues through a series of meetings convened by the CBDLS with the DCPCs on CL and gender. The Ministry does face serious resource constraints, however, and the representative was disappointed that the project is not handing over vehicles at the close-out to aid their work. EMPOWER also participated in national-level consultations on the Zambian National Plan of Action on Child Labor according to TPR reporting, but focused on local rather than national advocacy.

As the women's business groups were formed, the project successfully brought in the district officers of the MCDSS to guide the groups' registration as associations, and include the groups in the MCDSS database for access to government services. EMPOWER also maintained communication with the District Commissioner's offices, and held regular meetings to inform them of project activities. Representatives of the ministries consulted for the evaluation were satisfied with the quality of communication and appreciative of project support toward shared goals.

Sub-award partners and other stakeholders: EMPOWER's coordination with Panos as a sub-grantee is discussed in relation to Outcome 3, and also below in the Management Effectiveness and Efficiency Section – (3.4). In brief, Panos staff expressed concern that the community awareness initiatives they were responsible for implementing were not sufficiently integrated with

the project as a whole, even though the relationship appears to have been managed satisfactorily overall.

To the extent the evaluators were able to interview a range of supporting stakeholders, the representatives were broadly appreciative of the role played by EMPOWER in helping the communities they serve. However, representatives of TEVETA, Heifer, and the Human Rights Commission were not fully satisfied with the communication and coordination. Heifer International, in particular, noted that the coordination was not very good. Heifer was expected to travel to the district to train EMPOWER groups at their own cost, with no contribution from Winrock. They felt that both organizations should have shared the costs. Heifer's representative noted that EMPOWER should strengthen their relationship with the government including the MOFL and MCDSS, in order to link the groups to Community Development Funds, suggesting they were not aware that the project is collaborating with MCDSS. The TEVETA district representative was appreciative of EMPOWER's close cooperation with TEVETA in developing the REAL curriculum; but, having advised EMPOWER to deliver training through TEVETA-accredited providers, the district representative was unclear what implementing modality EMPOWER settled on, and felt they had not been kept informed.

3.2.6 Public and Private Partnerships in Support of Acceptable Work for Girls and Women

- *Question 9: How effectively has EMPOWER built public/private partnerships to promote acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women in Zambia?*

EMPOWER's effort to engage private sector entities in support of the women's business groups evolved successfully in the last two years of the project. In the first half, however, the private sector partnerships were slow to get off the ground, especially given the failure of the agreements with two implementing partners; first Women and Resources in Eastern and Southern Africa (WARESA) and then WECREATE. Once the Winrock EMPOWER project staff took over the responsibility for partnerships work following the successive cessation of the agreements with WARESA and WECREATE, progress was made in engaging a host of private and public sector partners to provide advice and services.

Although the government partners and the private sector partners did not necessarily coordinate together to support the livelihoods development component, each of public sector, private sector and civil society organizations have been involved in lending support.

EMPOWER was flexible in its approach for forging partnerships. While the intended modality was to establish MOUs, most PPPs and civil society organizations preferred Letters of Collaboration, which were perceived as less binding and preferable when no budget was involved. EMPOWER, through the CBDLS, gained the practical involvement of a wide range of partners in the life skills, vocational training, and business group mentorship phase and beyond:

- Zambia National Commercial Bank (Zanaco) and Atlas Mara among others, provided financial literacy and advisory sessions on setting up individual and business bank accounts, mobile banking.
- District poultry associations, Agricultural Technical Services, Modern Bazaar and Ross Breeders provided poultry raising technical advice and sources of inputs.
- Heifer International provided hands-on technical advice on goat raising and links to markets.
- Eastern Comfort Lodge provided a market for the catering group products, poultry and additional training for the catering group.

- Networking events hosted by EMPOWER, referred to as the “Rural Women’s Entrepreneurship Network” provided the opportunity for participants to meet with financial institutions, government agencies and private companies.

Among these partners, the evaluators were able to interview Zambia National Commercial Bank, Heifer International, and the Eastern Comfort Lodge. Each of these representatives shared that they were motivated to support the project because their goals were well aligned. As the Heifer representative noted: “The project helped us to extend our reach to communities in these districts.” The only issue raised was that of the logistics costs, which were not covered by the project.

The project could perhaps have broadened the partnerships with institutions working on financial inclusion by engaging with Financial Sector Deepening Zambia, SaveNet, or other microfinancing institutions to help the groups access finance for their enterprises.

3.3 Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The following sections address the extent to which the project’s management satisfactorily addressed the problems or delays encountered by the project and the effectiveness of the management and formulation of the M&E System, responding to the evaluation questions:

- *Question 10: To what extent did the project management address the delays or problems encountered?*
- *Question 11: How effective was the formulation and management of the M&E system in tracking the achievement of planned outcomes?²⁰*

3.3.1 Effectiveness of Management Strategies in Addressing Delays and Problems

EMPOWER faced significant management challenges in terms of implementation delays, staff turnover, implementing partnership issues, and budget constraints. Winrock’s strategic decisions largely ensured the project was able to deliver on the quality of its outcomes, though the quantity of participants and the range of vocational services that could be delivered within the budget was limited. The following discussion reviews the management response to the key issues encountered, some of which have been introduced in preceding sections.

Human resources: The project experienced significant staff turnover, including changes in the key positions of project director (PD) and M&E Specialist. Following two incumbents in the PD position, Winrock appointed the YTES as acting PD in October 2019, and fully appointed her to the position in March 2020. This decision was fortuitous, from several KII perspectives, as she has played a critical role in the development and implementation of the REAL Course since the outset of the project, and has been with EMPOWER since early 2017. There were also three incumbent changes and gaps between appointment of personnel to the M&E Specialist position, which delayed M&E data collection, especially during 2018. Fortunately, Winrock was able to dedicate HO staff time to address the gaps between staff; and with the appointment of the current incumbent in December 2019 was able to advance the M&E data collection on track. Further decisions to supplement M&E staffing capacity with four university interns, instead of one intern as originally conceived, assisted in surmounting the backlog of data collection and verification.

²⁰ Specific questions: 11A: *Following-up on the midterm evaluation findings, has EMPOWER adapted their M&E processes to ensure adequate monitoring and uptake assessment of participants’ child labor/work status (including for all children in the household for ILAB’s Household-Level indicators) and what challenges and/or emerging best practices are associated with these processes?* 11B: *To what extent did project management use the data to inform decision making?*

There has also been frequent turnover in the EMPOWER project manager incumbent at the HO. Since the beginning of the project, four individuals have held this position. While this was not ideal given the challenges faced by the project, it is difficult to determine if the changes at the project manager level unduly affected the project's oversight or strategic direction, based on KII accounts. It appears that the handover to the current project manager in January 2020 was thorough; and there has also been management continuity at the level of Director of Education and Empowerment, as well as supporting staff.

The project's management strategy to recruit CRs to carry out liaison work with the communities—though part of the intended strategy rather than a response to a specific problem—was advantageous in both implementation effectiveness and financial efficiency, as the CRs are familiar with their communities and were able to provide feedback to the EDCs on any issues that arose. The CRs were hindered by lack of transport to the hubs, but this was partially resolved by providing two bicycles per hub in 2019, following the midterm evaluation.

Implementing partnership issues: Winrock had issues with both sub-awardees brought on to deliver Outcome 4. The WARESA partnership was terminated in August 2018 due to concerns about their capacity to deliver, and EMPOWER brought in WECREATE for this role. Unfortunately, WECREATE did not comply with Winrock/USG financial reporting requirements, which ended the agreement in June 2019. Rather than identify another partner for the final year of the project, Winrock decided to transfer responsibility for Outcome 4 to the PD and the CBDLS. This has had the benefit of efficiency; and the PPPs interventions have evolved satisfactorily as far as the evaluators can ascertain. The evaluators observe that Winrock has upheld high standards of financial accountability for itself and its partners.

Panos' performance was affected by monitoring and reporting issues, particularly for one of the community radio stations. In response to this, the staff position at Panos was let go, and the Lusaka-based Panos staff took over the monitoring.

Delays and adaptation of the cohort timeline: As outlined in Section 3.2.3, the time taken for all the necessary start-up activities, including the CMEP development, baseline survey, conducting the market survey—and negotiating the most suitable delivery modality and vocational track selection, followed by development of the REAL curriculum—took much longer than anticipated. Winrock recognized in the September 2018 TPR reporting that it would not be possible to conduct five REAL course cohorts. Some of these preparatory activity time requirements could arguably have been anticipated by Winrock, particularly the CMEP development, based on Winrock's previous experience implementing OCFT projects, which frequently take more than six months to complete. Similarly, the baseline and preparation of the external outcomes study could have been foreseen in the time frame. The evaluation considers Winrock's original intention to begin running the REAL course in the fourth quarter of the first year, as indicated in the award Project Document workplan, to have been overly ambitious. However, some causes for delay and interruption, such as the cholera outbreak and COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, were clearly outside the project's control.

Budget constraints and service delivery: The original budget allocations proved to be insufficient to support a larger number of curriculum tracks as well as five cohorts of participants. The management decisions made in this regard have been discussed elsewhere in this report. However, it should be noted that Winrock submitted a project cost revision request in September 2019, with the corresponding modification approved by ILAB in July 2020, that adjusted some of the budget amounts to cover the unforeseen M&E costs—as well as the cost of HO trips to support M&E activities and additional transport costs—with savings from reducing Panos staffing and reduced costs of the independent final evaluation. In addition, it is important to note that savings from terminated subaward budgets were used to address training shortfalls, including facilitator

travel costs and retention measures. The lengthy approval process included ILAB and Office of Grant Management approval processes, but also time for questions from ILAB and responses from Winrock.

Distance, transport and network challenges: The difficulties associated with working in remote areas that lack transport were partially overcome with the provision of 40 bicycles to the hubs, but the need still remained for CRs and facilitators to have more ready access to transport to monitor the participants. Government and stakeholder staff also expected travel allowances to visit the local communities, but such allowances were not available. Radio Listening Clubs leaders also mentioned to the evaluators that they lacked transport for their community outreach work. The original project budget did not take full account of the challenges posed by working in areas with poor infrastructure, both road and telecommunications connectivity.

3.3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation System Formulation and Management

Formulation of the CMEP

Based on the lead evaluator's review, the formulation of the CMEP, including the results framework, PMP, and data collection plan, represent a coherent and complete package. The logical hierarchy of results is clear and specific, meeting good practice standards of result-based monitoring and evaluation, and satisfying ILAB requirements.

Most of the indicators and their definitions at the outcome, sub-outcome, and output level are clear and provide meaningful data. The measurement of girls' and women's active engagement in business development and mentorship activities (OTP 5) does not provide a very clear indication of the number of girls who stayed in the business groups after formation. Technically, the indicator was intended to count activity during both the time of the entrepreneurship module and the follow-up support period. Active group membership was counted as at least four mentoring sessions attended, so it is still difficult to gauge the girls' and women's participation in the business activity itself. An alternative measure could have been the number of participants registered as business group members at the time of registration with MCDSS, disaggregated by girls and women, depending on the level of formality of business membership. However, the group registration process was not foreseen at the CMEP development stage.

Management and application of the M&E System

Overall, the project faced significant challenges in implementing the extensive demands of the M&E system. The project team, supported by Winrock HO staff, substantially resolved the challenges of the amount and complexity of data collection by instituting additional checks and recruiting more intern personnel to assist in supervising data collection. The project could not entirely surmount the challenge of outtake data collection given the mobility of the girls and reticence to participate. The COVID-19 pandemic also affected outtake data collection from March to July 2020 as elaborated below. The evaluation noted several specific challenges and EMPOWER's response.

Managing the large amount of data to be collected: Given the large number of participants to be monitored via the intake and outtake forms at six-monthly intervals, the initial provision of one M&E specialist and one intern proved insufficient to supervise the collection and verification of the data. The task of completing the outtake interviews was part of the responsibility of the facilitators, who were trained for the task. However, the project faced a huge backlog of data collection and entering by 2018, when there was a gap between M&E Specialist appointments. This was addressed by bringing in four university interns to help the M&E Specialist oversee collection of monitoring and outtake data by the facilitators.

Accuracy of data collected: The M&E Specialist and Winrock HO M&E staff were aware that the facilitators made frequent errors in recording the information. These were also noted by the Mathematica Outcomes Study team who use the intake and outtake data. The use of paper-based recording is typically prone to error, but it was determined that it was more practical than digital recording in the local context. To improve the accuracy of intake, monitoring, and final outtake data, the current M&E Specialist, who joined the project in December 2019, instituted a number of steps—including checklists to be completed by all staff visiting the localities, refresher training for the facilitators who collect the data, and close monitoring during the process by EDCs, the M&E specialist, and the interns. According to the project staff we interviewed, the accuracy has improved considerably. Final data cleaning is also carried out by the M&E specialist. This extensive range of coaching and supervision activity for the data collectors represents a good project practice.

Completion of outtake data: One of the challenges confronted was lack of commitment among some REAL course participants to be involved in the outtake process. The interviews are especially long (around 64 pages of questions). This was addressed by conducting the interviews at the participants' homes rather than at the hub. A further challenge was that many of the adolescent girl participants moved to other villages upon marriage. Although the data collectors were able to find out the whereabouts of the girls from family members the team did not have the resources and time to visit the different localities to meet them. EMPOWER began outtake in November 2019 and it continued until March 2020 at which point it was suspended due to the pandemic. At that point they had completed about 22% of the target interviews. During the pandemic, the project initially piloted interviews by phone, but encountered challenges and especially connectivity issues. Plus the length of the form made participants tired, leading them sometimes to opt for continuing the interview the following day.

In-person data collection resumed in July 2020, with social distancing measures, and continued it through the end of August, at which point they had reached 69% of the target number of outtake interviews.

Demands of multiple evaluation activities: The project's planned evaluation activities as foreseen in the FOA, including an impact evaluation, endline survey, final performance evaluation, and outtake monitoring, amounted to a significant M&E load. The impact evaluation was downgraded to an outcome evaluation under implementation because of the lack of budget and planning for a randomized control trial or quasi-experimental design. While the M&E portion of the budget was always at or above the 8% threshold required by USDOL, it emerged that the project's budget and allocated human resources were insufficient to manage all these parts, especially the budget needed for setting up the sampling required for an impact study. While sufficient budget was reserved for the endline survey USDOL agreed to cancel it on April 14, 2020 due to potential participant fatigue, sampling limitations given the COVID-19 situation which made it very difficult to carry out a multi-stage cluster survey comparable with the baseline and logistical concerns. This alleviated the overall M&E burden. However, the project additionally introduced a study to be conducted by a graduate student in the US to look into the reasons for participants' attrition and the range of REAL course outcomes. This was a worthy effort to inform future programs, but the research study questions pose some overlap with the scope of the final evaluation, (although the scope was re-designed to avoid duplication) and represented another task to manage during at the busy close-out period. The project contributed minimal funds to the cost of the research amounting to less than \$2,000 for FGD participants' travel costs and the graduate student completed the task as a volunteer internship. However, given the range of needs expressed by participants for transport subsidies and other community-level incentives, perhaps this funding could have been applied to direct service. In light of the demands on the project team in the latter months of the project, the case study does not seem sufficiently warranted..

Complexity of data analysis: The technical complexity of transferring data from one platform to another took time to resolve and was handled through technical assistance from the HO. It involved transferring the M&E data from Excel to Survey 123 software, and then to Devresults software for analysis.

Application of data to decision making: The TPR narratives provided detailed commentary on the CMEP results obtained and describe actions taken to respond to areas of concern. The project staff, including the PD, M&E Specialist, and CBLDS confirmed that the CMEP data has been effectively used in the project's decision making. For example, the team identified low REAL course retention rates and employed measures to alleviate the issue, including the establishment of satellite hubs.

3.4 Sustainability

3.4.1 Implementation of EMPOWER Sustainability Strategy

- *Question 12: To what extent has the project sustainability strategy been deployed and adjusted?*

EMPOWER's sustainability strategy was developed early in implementation and first submitted in December 2017. It was resubmitted as per requirements in September 2018 and 2019, but without substantive change. Following the MTE recommendations, Winrock revised the strategy in October 2019, to be submitted with the October 2020 TPR. Winrock provided the updated strategy to the evaluation team in September 2020, in advance of formal submission to USDOL. The evaluation considered the extent to which the original strategy was deployed or adjusted based on the KIIs, project reports, and the updated strategy, which reflects the key adjustments to the original planning.

The sustainability strategy describes efforts under three themes—technical project design and implementation, institutional sustainability, and financial and material sustainability. The technical sustainability theme describes a range of measures to promote the lasting benefits of the REAL course learning to participants—providing a demonstration model for the Zambian government to learn from and replicate under the national action plan to reduce CL, or advocate for internal and external resources to do so.

The overall approach to sustainability through providing a training package with lasting benefits for the adolescent girls and women was deployed and remained in place. The PPP strategy to support the EMPOWER women's businesses similarly remained the backbone of the approach to promoting continued operation and growth of the new businesses, and to a large extent has been put in place, as discussed below. The evaluation observed that much of the sustainability strategy is a description of the REAL course plus mentorship strategy itself, rather than more focused sustainability actions. The institutional and financial sustainability elements are the weakest parts of the strategy, not least because the government of Zambia lacks resources to implement such models, but also because the strategy to document and communicate the model was not an explicit part of project planning. The project has engaged at the national level in terms of consultations on the National Action Plan on Reducing Child Labor, as reported in the updated Sustainability Strategy, but has worked more closely with government agencies at the province and district level towards strengthening district child protection committees.

The updated strategy does not provide any specific priority actions for sustainability in the sense recommended by the MTE. However, several elements of the sustainability strategy were adjusted in practice, based on realities in the context of organizational partnerships. The plan prioritized the use of TEVETA-accredited agricultural training for quality and sustained value for participants. TEVETA accreditation of the vocational training was not possible, and the course was not delivered by accredited providers, although the quality of the course was aligned with

TEVETA standards based on close consultation during course development. The path taken was well justified, but it reduced the immediate potential for replication of the training package by accredited providers or other agencies.

As part of the EMPOWER exit strategy, in September 2020 the project was scheduled to hold close-out meetings in each district with district commissioners and district representatives of government ministries, as well as private sector stakeholders in the districts. The agenda for the district-level meeting includes sharing EMPOWER's sustainability strategies with stakeholders, soliciting their buy-in, and obtaining recommendations on how best EMPOWER can work with them to implement these plans. In principle, the meetings are an important marker of the end of the project, but on their own they are unlikely to assure commitments unless plans are already in place. It might be valuable to engage the province level government in the close out process if not already planned, since district government action frequently requires province approval.

At the community level, the staff have been sharing with beneficiaries and community stakeholders regarding the project closure, obtaining plans and next steps from the beneficiaries, and sharing with them linkages and contacts of services they can access within their communities or districts.

3.4.2 Prospects for Sustainability

- *Question 13: Which of the project interventions and results are likely to be sustained after the project ends? Which are less likely to be sustained?*
- *Question 14: Which of the project interventions are most likely to have a lasting impact on participants, their households and/or their community?*

The evaluation provides an assessment of the likelihood that project interventions and results will be sustained as follows—considering in turn participant benefits, indirect participant benefits, prospects of other providers or government of Zambia drawing experience from the REAL course experience or replicating it, and any lasting institutional changes.

Individual participant gains in life skills, technical skills and self-development: Based on the evaluation interviews with girls and women REAL course participants, the long-term benefits for their individual gains in knowledge, self-awareness, and skills appear significant. Despite low results on average on the technical knowledge tests, the evaluation interviews pointed to significant impacts on the girls', women's, and men's interpersonal and practical life skills. For those participants who continued through the whole program, their business skills and fledgling enterprises stand a good chance of providing them sustained economic and social benefits. For girls, the longevity of some of the changes is already substantiated from our interviews with first cohort participants.

Within households the involvement of both mother and daughter, or father and daughter, in the project increases the prospects that girls will be able to take up opportunities that arise. But evidence from girls' roles in the women's business groups suggests that changes in their empowerment within the traditional family structure is still a long way off.

Viability of group business enterprises and sustainability of livelihoods gains: The evaluation assesses that the prospects of the EMPOWER-initiated business groups continuing to run and flourish are good, based on accounts of the group members from the earliest cohorts. The project team has made considerable efforts to link the businesses with a host of public and private sector entities, ranging from Heifer International to Eastern Comfort Lodge, banks, and Ministry services. The evaluation observed good prospects for sustaining the EMPOWER business groups through registration as a "society" under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which has been facilitated by MCDSS, as conduits for access to business support services. Nevertheless, it

is still too early to find evidence, or confirm the businesses' viability. The viability of the group enterprises will depend not only on the management, sales, and investment, but also on group dynamics and trust. There are indications from the evaluation interviews that girls may not remain members of the groups but might form their own group—since the expressed level of dissatisfaction with group operations among the sample of 23 girls was quite high. Risks remain due to the lack of finance for investment, low profits/market prices, and group dynamics. Group members may eventually turn to individual enterprise efforts, which would still be a positive sustained outcome.

Community leaders' knowledge, attitudes and advocacy on gender and child labor nexus among community leaders, facilitators: A wide range of community leaders have been sensitized to the issues of CL and gender, and the relationship between gender practices and CL. EMPOWER's extensive training provided to many community members in each hub - course facilitators, CVs, CRs and RLC leaders - who learned how to collect very specific data on child labor participation and to use gender tools has built their knowledge on the issues. As we learned from the evaluation interviews, these community members are now highly aware of the issues. There were indications that teachers of life skills will carry their learning into their classrooms; agricultural extension officers are also now more aware of the equal tasks that women farmers can do; and farmer facilitators who acted as mentors can also apply their knowledge in field work. Gains in knowledge and sensitization were also reported by the chiefs' representatives, and there appear to be sustainable changes in the practice of traditional enforcement of violations of new regulations on offering a child for marriage, or allowing her to work in an inappropriate number of hours or carrying overly heavy loads.

Radio listening clubs: Club members expressed their intention to continue advocacy work and radio listening activities. The prospects to do so appear good, as some groups (such as Radio Breeze groups) existed prior to the EMPOWER project and the project has handed over the radio sets and recording equipment to provide material support. The radio station operators we met indicated their intention to continue working with the groups, subject to available resources.

The REAL course package: The evaluation concluded that the REAL course composite modules and delivery modality have low prospects of being sustained as a package in the target communities, or replicated elsewhere, at least in the short term. The evaluation did not identify significant initiatives by EMPOWER towards promoting the model or elements of it to other providers, schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or government during the course of the project. However, during the closeout period, Winrock is making efforts to have the REAL Course curriculum featured on the US Embassy website in Zambia, as well as on Winrock's website. EMPOWER is also planning to share lessons learned from REAL Course implementation during the project's provincial closeout meeting. Nevertheless, no discernible progress has been made at the time of writing towards the REAL Course continuation or replication. The evaluators are not aware of government vocational providers with satellite or outreach programs that could pick up the approach with other groups of girls and women.

It is possible that elements of the training could continue to be used with similar groups of learners; for example, the district Fisheries and Livestock staff could use the entrepreneurship materials with other learners, subject to copyright permission.

EMPOWER explored avenues for working with accredited training providers; but the costs were prohibitive, so there is no existing training institution ready to run with the program. EMPOWER considered promoting delivery of entrepreneurship module in schools following MTE, but the process of ministry approval was too lengthy. EMPOWER was able to include some of the project activities in the Government of Zambia's National Action Plan on Child Labor in the first year of the project through participation in the national steering committee. Unfortunately, the MLSS is

severely underfunded and would not be able to further any of these activities without external funding. The hope was that having the training and other project activities in the National Action Plan would help enable the government to secure funds to carry them forward, but no progress is evident. EMPOWER could make further effort to promote the REAL course approach and materials to other international development agencies and district training providers, however, prior to exit. As noted by Winrock, they are interested in working with USDOL to feature the REAL course curriculum on the website of the U.S, Embassy in Zambia and are also working with Winrock's communications team to include it on Winrock's website. Winrock is planning to share lessons learned from REAL Course implementation during the project's provincial closeout meeting planned for late October 2020. They will also look to share the curriculum with NGOs implementing relevant activities in Zambia such as FHI 360 and Restless Development Zambia.

Institutional impacts: The prospect of sustained strengthening of the DCPCs as an avenue for CL advocacy looks promising. District representatives of the multi-sectoral agencies that comprise the DCPCs reportedly gained awareness of CL issues and how to integrate CL within child protection response. The evaluation was not able to meet with district members of the committees to gauge the longevity of the engagement, although the provincial MLSS representative was appreciative of EMPOWER's technical support, as well as the benefits of the project's presentations. And the Human Rights Commission assured their ongoing involvement in advocacy on child rights, child labor and gender equality issues beyond the project.

4. LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

The final evaluation gathered lessons learned and promising practices from interviewee perspectives, EMPOWER progress reports, and the evaluators' analysis. The lessons reflect learning from both EMPOWER successes and limitations; the promising practices represent approaches or intervention strategies implemented by EMPOWER that are deemed worthy of replication due to their effectiveness and sustainability.

4.1 Lessons Learned

1. **Adolescent girls' and women's needs in rural communities in Zambia are different in terms of skills training and entrepreneurship group formation, implying that services are best delivered separately. At a broader level, vocational skills development and employment pathways for adolescent girls require distinct strategies and interventions.**

While the project varied the content of the life skills module for women and girls, the evaluation found that girls did not fully benefit from the combined women and girls training and business group model, where group dynamics meant that girls' opportunity to take leadership roles were not optimized and they were not comfortable with the group operations. In keeping with the central aim of broadening adolescent girls' employment options, a more diverse range of vocational skills options should ideally be offered adolescent girls in the context of emerging skills markets. Interviews suggested that the girls took up the training offer because no other options were available, rather than through a considered choice of vocational preference.

2. **Substantial financial and human resources are required to deliver a range of vocational training services in rural areas in Southern Africa, indicating that sufficient resources required for optional vocational tracks and delivery modes need to be costed in the project design.**

EMPOWER's eventual decision to deliver only two vocational tracks for adolescent girls and women, post the pilot, was based not only on the market assessment that identified viable markets for poultry and goats, but also the budget and time required for developing and delivering a range of vocational tracks (such as other livestock and crop production models). There were benefits of running only two tracks in terms of the quality of the training and management efficiency, but the choice did not fully meet the original project aim of providing adolescent girls with a range of vocational opportunities. A related lesson is that the delivery options and partners need to be investigated during the design and confirmed early in implementation stage, to identify what accredited providers, or custom-trained facilitators such as local crafts persons or government agricultural extensionists, can feasibly deliver the training. EMPOWER investigated all these options, but somewhat late in the first year, thus delaying the delivery and resulting in a narrowed range of options.

3. **Distance and lack of transport in these communities were key factors affecting vocational training attendance, and also limited the effectiveness of community monitors, facilitators, and training providers.** The project went some way towards addressing transport difficulties for REAL course participants, facilitators, and community representatives as they arose, but future projects would be well advised to include transport options from the outset in serving these or similar communities.
4. **There is a need to incentivize key data collection processes and training session attendance to help improve participant attendance numbers, through in-kind benefits to project participants.** EMPOWER found that REAL course participants

missed sessions due to the time involved in reaching the classes as well as their farming responsibilities and some were reluctant to participate in lengthy outtake interviews.

5. **Importance of strong coordination and communication among implementing partners and stakeholder agencies.** It is critical that the communication and coordination between the grantee and sub-grantees is well managed, and that the roles and responsibilities of key project partners and stakeholders are clearly defined. Representatives of Panos, the implementing partner, and stakeholder agencies TEVETA and the Human Rights Commission, expressed that communication and coordination between Winrock and the partners could have been improved.
6. **Project grantees need to apply comprehensive and inclusive project identification for participants across sub-grantee activities, and ensure effective coordination with implementing partners.** The RLC members' and radio station operators' sense of not being fully part of the EMPOWER affected their motivation.

4.2 Promising Practices

1. **Engagement with traditional leaders and community leaders from the start of the project was effective.** EMPOWER engaged successfully with traditional leader throughout the project from entry through awareness raising and exit, offering an effective strategy for future replication.
2. **Mobilizing a network of community volunteers and community representatives to reach out to the community and coordinate activities was effective and efficient.** The project was able to motivate and recruit CVs and CRs to support implementation, with benefits for reducing staffing costs and providing a sustainable resource for the community.
3. **The pedagogical approach of the REAL course and its local delivery model provides a potential good practice model for girls and women in rural Zambia, provided it is well documented for future application.** The combination of soft skills, vocational training, and entrepreneurship, followed by mentoring and start-up grants, provided a comprehensive package. One limitation to be addressed in future projects supporting girls' vocational training is to provide vocational counseling and offer graduating girls from the REAL course different pathways—small business group, further training, or back-to-school experience.
4. **The household-focused model for addressing CL by providing education and livelihoods services to adolescents engaged/at risk of CL and their parent/s is valuable in focusing both economic and CL/gender awareness benefits.**
5. **Achieving buy-in from government and private sector partners to continue working with and supporting the women's business groups after project ends is beneficial for sustainability.** EMPOWER worked very effectively with district government agencies, MCDSS, and rural women's networks to ensure ongoing support for the fledgling business groups.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the evaluation team's conclusions about the project's performance with regard to each of the evaluation criteria: relevance and coherence, effectiveness and perceived impact, management effectiveness, and efficiency and sustainability.

5.1 Relevance and Coherence

The EMPOWER objectives, to provide adolescent girls with life skills, vocational skills and employment options and vulnerable women with pathways out of poverty, responded to real needs among the girls and women in the target districts of Eastern Province. The three pillars of the project's design— (1) direct training and business development services for girls and women; supported by (2) building an enabling environment of widespread community awareness of child labor and gender equality; and (3) public and private sector engagement in support of acceptable work for girls' and women, together constituted a coherent theory of change towards the reduction of CL in the target districts. In practice, the community awareness component which focused on radio broadcasts and community listening clubs, was not sufficiently integrated with the direct service provision component, which reduced the potential impact. The logic of the theory of change was sound, but a longer term impact on vocational services for girls in these districts, and potentially elsewhere, could have been built into the design through an explicit outcome regarding documentation and sharing the REAL course as a demonstration model with government authorities and development agencies.

The local focus towards achieving impact in the selected districts and communities within them, as opposed to extensive engagement at the national level was well justified, allowing for focused use of resources and strategies. However, the number of localities and the large number of targeted direct participants still stretched the resources, especially given the high costs of delivering skills training in remote communities with poor transport facilities.

5.2 Effectiveness and Perceived Impact

Targets: The aim of reaching 2,500 girls and 1,500 women with vocational skills and employment or livelihoods services was ambitious within the four-year lifespan. EMPOWER fell somewhat short of these targets, reaching 1,740 girls and 1,216 women with skills training services, given that delays and budget constraints reduced the number of cohorts that could be run. This was a substantial achievement, nevertheless, given that the REAL course was custom designed to meet the needs of these communities. The project provided accessible skills training to its target participants, though attendance remained affected by factors such as walking distances to the training location and seasonal farming responsibilities. EMPOWER achieved most of the quantitative targets for conducting public awareness-raising events and engaging public and private sector partners in support of the REAL course graduates. It is difficult to assess any changes in child labor among the participant adolescent girls due to the partial completion of post-service interviews, although anecdotal community observations point to a reduction.

REAL course effectiveness in addressing participant needs: Adolescent girls and adult women found the life skills component of the REAL course highly valuable. Literacy skills, budgeting, and gains in self-confidence were all outstanding benefits, especially to those who had never been to school. The two main livelihood tracks (poultry and goat raising) available for the vocational training provided a narrower range of options for girls and women than originally conceived in the project design, but the content of these curricula was effective in providing the participants with the means to raise the two chosen livestock types commercially. The evaluation found that the range of vocational pathways offered to girls could have been wider, however, in terms of providing apprenticeship referrals, scholarships, as well as alternative strategies to help

girls return to school. Significantly, the evaluation concluded that the practical solution of combining girls and women together in the same business groups was not the most appropriate arrangement to meet the girls' needs.

Men's participation in the REAL course life skills component reached a much smaller number of men than planned, with 213 completing the course. For those who participated, it did bring positive benefits for men's awareness of gender and CL issues, but with a few exceptions stopped short of giving men a more meaningful role to play in supporting the household livelihood development.

REAL course effectiveness for women's livelihoods: 80 women's business groups have been formed as of September 2020, most of which are engaged in poultry raising, a smaller number in goat raising. One tailoring group and one catering group from the pilot trainings are continuing to run their businesses. There are still market price challenges to be overcome, but many of the poultry groups are showing signs of viability having achieved several cycles of sales. The goat raising groups are not yet as stable as the poultry groups, but the support of Heifer International has linked them with markets and value adding processes. The EMPOWER entrepreneurship training process instilled the principle of getting the businesses on a solid financial foundation before sharing profits. Since many of the groups are still building their base, it is too early to observe significant income gains for the participants. An encouraging sign of women's improved economic status was individual diversification into a range of other trading activities.

Radio broadcast contributions to public awareness: This component was a well-conceived initiative, founded on Panos' considerable experience with the approach. It engaged a large number of motivated community members, most of whom were women, in an interactive process of community discussion and broadcasts of CL and gender. There were initial performance issues with Panos, who did not have on-the-ground coordinators, and gaps in collaboration between Winrock and Panos that hampered this component in realizing its full potential. The extent of reach to the wider community has not been measured, but the traditional leaders noted that changes in the communities' CL attitudes and practices are emerging.

Public and private partnerships' effectiveness: EMPOWER successfully formed partnerships with the public sector and civil society for the development and delivery of the REAL course, particularly with the District Education Board Secretariat and the MOFL. This delivery strategy proved successful and relevant to local community needs, given that the initial strategy of partnership with formal providers such as Chipata Trades Training Institute could not be pursued due to the high costs that would have accrued.

The project was not as successful in forming partnerships to provide further training, alternative skills development opportunities or apprenticeships for REAL course graduates, partly due to the project's time constraints.

The project team successfully engaged a wide range of private sector companies and civil society networks in support of the newly created women's business groups. These efforts have borne fruit in leveraging tangible supports to the viability of the poultry and goats raising businesses, financial services in the form of bank accounts, and links to business service providers and markets through the EMPOWER networking events. Through EMPOWER's engagement with the MCDSS, government registration is underway for many of the women's business groups, linking them to ongoing business development support.

Engagement with traditional leaders, communities and other stakeholders: EMPOWER was very successful in its approach to engaging with traditional leaders and communities, as well as district authorities. The project spent enough time at the outset and throughout implementation to secure the buy-in of the chiefs, communities, and district commissioners.

5.3 Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

EMPOWER faced significant management challenges in the form of delayed implementation of the REAL course compared to the plan, high staff turnover in the EMPOWER team and Winrock HO team, issues of performance with initially selected implementing partners, and budget constraints. Winrock upheld high standards of accountability and performance of its implementing partners and made timely decisions to terminate agreements with partners who did not meet the standards. Winrock also made substantial effort to improve coordination with Panos and supported them to improve their performance. EMPOWER management decisions largely ensured that the project was able to deliver on the quality of its main outcomes, although the quantity of direct participants and the range of vocational tracks that could be offered within the budget had to be substantially reduced.

EMPOWER struggled to meet the demands of the CMEP system as well as preparation for the external outcome evaluation, due to human and financial resource constraints. Although the project complied with the 8 per cent budget allocation for M&E, the budget was still short to cover all intended activities including the intended impact evaluation. The initial M&E staffing was insufficient, but this was successfully addressed by recruiting four M&E interns to assist with the mammoth task of supervising data collection and verifying the direct participant monitoring data. With substantial technical assistance from the Winrock HO and the recruitment of a competent and committed specialist in the final year of the project, EMPOWER was able to obtain and complete most of its CMEP data, including participant monitoring and outtake interview data. Good practices in this process included a checklist to be completed by all staff going to the field to support the M&E effort. Overall, the evaluation considered the formulation of the CMEP to provide a solid means to monitor and evaluate project results. The project management staff monitored the CMEP results closely, used the information to identify issues such as low skills test results, and the retention issues, and took action to understand and address the issues identified.

Given the substantial M&E elements to be managed in the final months of the project, the evaluation found that the addition of a follow-up case study of outcomes among the participant girls was not sufficiently warranted.

5.4 Sustainability

The sustainability strategy to a large extent restated the project strategy, rather than providing a specific sustainability and exit plan. It elaborated the expected long-lasting effects of the interventions for the direct participants, and the strategy for enabling the business groups to receive ongoing support from public and private sector partners, as well as the expected longevity of the public awareness-raising interventions. The evaluation found that the institutional sustainability elements of the strategy were the weakest elements. There were no specific plans for the local partners or institutions to take over delivery of the REAL Course beyond the project, or specific plans for continuation of the Radio Listening Clubs. While the strategy was updated in September 2020, the updated version reflected changes in implementation rather than specific sustainability and exit targets.

The girls' gains in skills and confidence through the REAL course are likely to have a lasting impact on their employment prospects. The women's business groups also appear to have strong prospects of surviving and providing diverse sources of income to the households, based on the networks successfully put in place by EMPOWER, although girls' participation may decline.

The effect on community leaders and teachers and other REAL Course facilitators is likely to be long lasting in terms of their in-depth knowledge of CL and acceptable work, as well as gender equality issues in their communities acquired through the project's training processes. Similarly,

the project appears to have achieved lasting effects on traditional leaders' engagement with the issues of CL and adolescent girls' rights.

EMPOWER made progress in building the DCPCs' capacity to address CL; but it is difficult to assess the extent and nature of the improvement, as this effort was taking shape in the last year of the project.

The REAL course package represents a valuable resource and approach, but it has a low prospect of being continued in the target communities or elsewhere without external project support, as there is no institution ready to implement such a program or plans for elements of it to be adopted by specific institutions (whether the education system, MOFL, or PPPs). In the absence of a specific institutional sustainability plan, it is important to document and share the REAL course model with relevant provincial, national and international parties. To this end, Winrock is taking steps during the last month of the project to share lessons at the provincial government level and to make the curriculum available online.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation team makes the following recommendations based on the evaluation findings presented in Section 3, and the lessons learned and promising practices presented in Section 4.

Immediate recommendations to EMPOWER

1. Winrock and USDOL should identify opportunities prior to the project close to share the lessons from implementing EMPOWER's REAL course and business start-up support model with government and relevant development partners in Zambia, with a view to promoting replication and adaption of the approach. This can include making the REAL course curriculum materials available online.
2. As part of its exit strategy, EMPOWER should discuss with the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in the participating districts a strategy to ensure women are given priority in extension training, as well as the potential for the agricultural extensionists to continue using EMPOWER's entrepreneurship curriculum in their training activities.

Recommendations to implementers of future projects

3. Future projects aiming to provide training and employment pathways to adolescent girls with similar budget size should target smaller participant numbers, if necessary, within a more geographically focused area. This would enable a range of tailored vocational and employment opportunities for adolescent girls to be offered, including options to take apprenticeships with local crafts persons, or to pursue entry-level study at registered training providers, with a scholarship.
4. Projects that pilot unique life skills and vocational training approaches like the EMPOWER REAL course should embed strategies in the designed project outcomes to promote replication and adaptation. This can be done by documenting and sharing the model with interested government and non-government agencies and other US-funded projects.
5. Based on the experience of EMPOWER, entrepreneurship groups initiated among adolescent girls should be separate from adult women's business groups.
6. Future projects addressing problems of early marriage and pregnancy as factors contributing to CL in Zambia or similar contexts, should partner with the education system to deliver or strengthen life skills education for in-school girls ages 12 to 14; and provide nonformal reproductive health and life skills education for out-of-school/never-in-school girls in this age group.
7. Future projects introducing new or pilot education and training interventions should pilot the interventions fully through all phases before rolling out, in order to fully realize the lessons learned and good practices that can be utilized to inform the roll-out phase.
8. Vocational training programs delivered by development partners outside public institutions can be very costly. Therefore, project applicants should research costs in the proposal and inception phase, and allocate adequate resources within the proposed budgets.
9. Future projects on entrepreneurship development for women and girls should provide linkages to a range of financial resource options including microfinance institutions and allow enough time to establish these initiatives. In Zambia, options include Financial Sector Deepening Zambia and SaveNet, among other microfinance institutions.

Recommendations to USDOL for future projects

10. USDOL or other development partners should allocate a five-year timeframe for similar projects with vocational training and livelihoods development components, to allow for one year for preparatory activities baseline and CMEP activities, up to one year for piloting the intervention, two and three-quarter years for full implementation, and a three-month close-out.
11. In future projects of similar scale and where USDOL foresees an impact study, the FOA grantee requirements should be more prescriptive regarding the design of the impact evaluation so that the implementing partner can design the project interventions and budget to accommodate the study. In particular, the FOA should specify the provision of two monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff (specialist and assistant) and should require sufficient funding allocation to support the planned evaluation components and staffing.
12. USDOL ILAB/OCFT should synthesize the lessons learned from the series of recent and current OCFT projects addressing vocational training as a CL response in African countries, (e.g. MOCA Ghana, Adwuma Pa Ghana, EMPOWER, ARCH Liberia, ECLIC, and more) to inform future program designs. Learnings from such a regional meta-study would help ILAB to propose approaches that have proven to be most effective in future project formulation in the region.

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF EMPOWER PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
POH1 Households with at least one child engaged in child labor	Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBD	There was no target value
	Actual	100%	95%	97%	95%	73%	TBD	April 2020 showed a decline in child labor compared with October 2019 which is considered as the baseline when all intake data were reported, but it was based on a small outtake sample of 288 households in the period covering the Pilot and Cohort 1 outtake interviews
POH2 Participant households with at least one child engaged in hazardous child labor	Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBD	
	Actual	100%	95%	95%	95%	14%		The substantial drop in HCL reported in April 2020 for the outtake data collected in the preceding six months with the baseline, which is considered as October 2019, may not be an accurate reflection due to the small sample of 288 beneficiary HH in the outtake. EMPOWER expects to see a figure that shows some change but not as dramatic once all outtake data are analysed in the final TPR of October 2020.
POH4 % Participant HHs with all children of compulsory school age attending school regularly	Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBD	
	Actual	50%	42%	46%	48%	29%		The April 2020 result suggests that school attendance has declined since the baseline, but only a portion of outtake data was recorded in April 2020. According to EMPOWER, there are a number of factors why most children are not in school in spite of the reported improvement in CL status. School dropout rate is high and

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
								also a number of girls go into early marriages which explains why fewer girls do intake compared to those who did intake. Early marriage is also suggested as one of the reasons why there is a drop in children of compulsory school age attending school regularly.
	Caseload	44	211	511	593	295		
POC1 % of participant adolescent girls engaged in child labor	Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBD	
	Actual	100%	89%	94%	96%	56%		The rate of child labor among all the intake participants, reported in October 2019, based on 1,878 girls, was 96%. Based on partial intake (post-service) interviews in April 2020 of only 70 girls, there was a decrease in engagement in child labor among this small sample of participants. The final TPR reporting in October 2020 will be more reliable as it will be based on a larger amount of intake interviews.
	Caseload	57	267	675	1,878	70		The POC indicators only count girls aged 15-17 according to the indicator calculation therefore some girls completing the intake were filtered out. Also, some girls could not be reached to complete the intake interview, further reducing the number.
POC2 % of participant adolescent girls engaged in hazardous child labor	Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBD	
	Actual	100%	87%	91%	96%	30%		As noted above, among on a small number of intake interviews reported in April 2020 the percentage of girls engaged in HCL dropped dramatically compared with the baseline. However,

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
								as this outtake only represents 70 out of 1,878 girls, the April 2020 results should not be regarded as a true reflection of the rate among all girls provided with services.
	Caseload	57	267	675	1,878	70		
Outcome 1: Adolescent girls engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor with increased access to acceptable work and high-quality education opportunities								
Outcome 1.1 Adolescent girls with increased knowledge and skills required for acceptable work								
	Target	0%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%
OTC 1 % of Participant adolescent girls completing REAL course who demonstrate knowledge required for acceptable work.	Actual	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%		Target not achieved. In the April 2020 reporting period, none of the participant girls passed the life skills post-test, among 583 who had completed both modules. The April 2020 data does not include three hubs (Kameta, Chimutende and Kapoko) where participants had completed the course, but the post-test data was not yet available. Length of tests is a possible reason for girls' poor performance. The project was reviewing the level of the tests but finally did not re-design them. The results were not consistent with staff observations of the good level of girls' work skills knowledge.
	Target	0%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%	
OTC 2 % of Participant adolescent girls completing REAL course who demonstrate skills required for acceptable work.	Actual	0%	0%	0%	0%	59%		Target not achieved. 344/583 who completed the REAL course - Life Skills and Technical Training modules demonstrated skills by joining business teams to get involved in business initiatives, acceptable work, or self employment.
Output 1.1.1 Adolescent girls trained in soft skills, life skills and work readiness skills								

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
OTP 1 # of children engaged in or at high-risk of entering CL provided education or vocational training services (E1)	Target	50	750	1000	700	-	2500	
	Actual	57	220	402	997	64	1,740	Target not achieved
OTP 2 # of Participant adolescent girls engaged in or at high risk of entering CL completing the FIRST part of the REAL course (soft skills, life skills and work readiness skills training)	Target	0	285	1235	2138	2375		
	Actual	0	22	258	820	878	878	Target not achieved. Of 1,740 girls counted as enrolled in the first part of the REAL course, 878 completed by attending 75% of the sessions.
Output 1.1.2 Adolescent girls with increased technical and vocational skills								
OTP 3 # of Participant adolescent girls engaged in or at high risk of entering CL completing the SECOND part of REAL course (technical and vocational skills training)	Target	0	48	760	1710	2375	2375	
	Actual	0	0	170	360	583		Target not achieved
Output 1.1.3 Out-of-school adolescent girls referred to programs that provide support to re-enter school								
OTP 4 # of Participant adolescent girls referred to available services for re-entry to formal school	Target	0	6	96	216	300	300	
	Actual	0	0	9	17	17	TBD	Target not achieved. EMPOWER reported that fewer girls than expected wished to return to school. However, the evaluation team met a small number who wished to do so but found the cost prohibitive.
OTC 3 % of Participant adolescent girls in acceptable work within	Target	0	0	20%	30%	40%	50%	
	Actual	0	0	0	0	41%	TBD	Target not achieved.

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
6 months after receiving EMPOWER's support								Note: Not all enrolees counted yet. The percentage represents 161 girls of 391 graduating from vocational module in the reporting period transitioned to acceptable work, defined as engaged in entrepreneurship activities or other acceptable employment.
OTP 5 # of Participant adolescent girls participating in a support group	Target	38	600	1350	1875	1845	3750	Target not achieved. The final target for the project represents attendance at multiple events.
	Actual	0	0	0	49	241	TBD	
Outcome 2: Vulnerable women, whose households have children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor, with increased access to livelihood opportunities								
Outcome 2.1: Vulnerable women with knowledge and skills for improving their livelihood								
OTC 4 % of Participant vulnerable women completing the REAL course modules who demonstrate knowledge required for improving their livelihoods	Target	0	75	75	75	75	75	Target not achieved. Few women participants demonstrated the required knowledge through the post-tests.
	Actual	0	0	0	18	8	TBD	
Output 2.1.1 Vulnerable women with increased soft skills, life skills and work readiness skills								
OTP 6 # of target HHs receiving livelihood services (L1)	Target	30	450	600	420	0	1500	Not achieved
	Actual	35	141	546	446	48	1,216	
OTP 7 # of Participant vulnerable women completing the FIRST part of the REAL course (soft skills, life skills and work readiness skills training)	Target	0	171	741	1283	1425	1425	Not achieved. Completion of the life skills module (total of 717 women) was lower than expected, given that 1,216 enrolled in the course over the life of the project. Low retention rate appears to be due in part to the requirement of 75% attendance.
	Actual	0	118	305	667	715		

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
Output 2.1.2 Vulnerable women with increased technical and/or vocational and/or entrepreneurial skills								
OTP 8 # of Participant vulnerable women completing the SECOND part of REAL course (technical and vocational skills training)	Target	0	29	456	1026	1425	1425	Target not achieved.
	Actual	0	0	119	342	493		
Outcome 2.2 Vulnerable women with increased access to livelihood opportunities								
OTC 5 % of participant vulnerable women who diversify their sources of income within 6 months of receiving EMPOWER's support	Target	0%	0%	20%	30%	40%	50%	Target not achieved. Limited outtake data reported to date.
	Actual	0%	0	0	0	36%	TBD	
Output 2.2.1 Vulnerable women mentored through peer support network and/or linked business and/or social networks								
OTP 9 # of Participant vulnerable women participating in support networks	Target	21	336	756	1050	1050	1050	Target not achieved. Data on peer support networks was not collected during the REAL course itself, due to misunderstanding of the indicator definition. Numbers reported here represent peer-to-peer, business mentorship sessions and guest speaker sessions.
	Actual	0	0	0	102	262		
Output 2.2.2 Vulnerable women with access to financial services								
OTP 10 # of Participant vulnerable women and girls that access financial services with project support (L4)	Target	0	0	144	624	1008	1200	Target not achieved. The cumulative total to date is 714 girls and women compared with the target of 1008 for the reporting period.
	Actual (Girls)		20	28	260	406	TBD	
	Actual (Women)	0	16	22	184	308		
Outcome 3: Public awareness on child labor and gender equality increased								
Outcome 3.1 Women and men who complete REAL Course training show increased knowledge of child labor, child rights and gender equality								
OTC 6 % of Participant men and women who complete the REAL	Target	0	80	80	80	80	80	Not achieved to date, but data incomplete
	Actual	0	0	50	68	0		

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
Course training demonstrating sufficient knowledge of child labor								Three cohorts in 3 hubs not counted in April 2020 reporting due to COVID-19 disruptions.
OTC 7 % of Participant women and men who complete the REAL Course demonstrating sufficient knowledge of gender equality	Target	0	80	80	80	80	80	
	Actual	0	0	100	91	0	TBD	Exceeded target
Output 3.1.1 Men with increased understanding of child labor, child rights and gender equality issues								
OTP 11 # of male Participant that complete applicable sessions of the REAL course training	Target	0	114	494	855	950	950	
	Actual	0	42	94	206	213		Target not achieved
Outcome 3.2 Communities with increased awareness on the rights of the child, the value of education, the adverse effects of child labor, and the difference between child labor and acceptable work								
OTC 8 % of target population that can identify at least three children's rights	Target	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	TBD	
	Actual	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		About one third of the population surveyed at baseline were able to identify 3 child rights. Endline survey has been cancelled so the end of project result cannot be compared to baseline.
OTC 9 Gender equality score in target population	Target	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	TBD	
	Actual	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		As above
Output 3.2.1 Radio programs on children rights, child labor and gender equality broadcasted								
OTP 12 # of radio programs broadcasted by EMPOWER	Target	130	259	389	518	648	778	
	Actual	7	23	83	534	1040	1040	Exceeded target. Public service announcement associated with COVID advisories boosted the number in April 2020 reporting
Output 3.2.2 Support groups (school clubs, or other) around child labor and gender equality established or strengthened								
	Target	10	45	80	100	100		

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
OTP 13 # of community action groups around child labour and gender equality established or strengthened	Actual	8	64	76	94		TBD	Expected to exceed target. 104 groups established and active but only 94 verified. Will be verified and reported in the Oct TPR
Output 3.2.3: Community level awareness raising campaigns conducted								
OTP 14 # of community initiative events focused on raising awareness about child labor and protection of children's rights	Target	20	110	270	470	670	870	
	Actual	4	53	89	194	301	TBD	Below target because some of the events conducted could not be verified due to COVID-19.
OTP 15 # of traditional leaders sensitized on harmful traditional practices that promote CL and gender equality	Target	5	7	5	8	4	29	Exceeded this target. Chiefs have been very active in the program activities and the radio listening clubs.
	Actual	19	33	6	12	0	70	
Outcome 4: Collaboration between government, private sector and civil society on the promotion of acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women strengthened								
Outcome 4.1 Increased engagement and collaboration among key stakeholders (Government, businesses, Workers' representatives, and civil society) on addressing child labor and promoting gender equality in employment practices								
OTC 10 # of public, private and civil society stakeholder coordination bodies established and/or strengthened with EMPOWER's support	Target	17	27	40	40	40	40	
	Actual	0	1	2	8	72		Exceeded the target. REAL course business groups included among bodies working to raise awareness on child labor and gender equality.
Output 4.1.1 Public and private institutions provided technical assistance to integrate child labor in their programs								
OTP 16. # of public and private institutions receiving technical assistance from EMPOWER	Target	15	15	20	20	20	20	Exceeded the target. 27 public and private institutions through direct outreach, community awareness activities and the RWEN events.
	Actual	3	22	27	27	27	27	

Indicator	Target/Actual	April 2018	October 2018	April 2019	October 2019	April 2020	Final value	Progress Toward Target/Comments
OTP 17 # of women entrepreneurs' networks supported by EMPOWER	Target	10	40	60	100	100	100	
	Actual	0	2	2	66	66	66	Expected to exceed target. 66 represents all the groups of women and girls who have undergone the REAL course. The number is likely to exceed 100 by next reporting period as groups are splitting in to two or three, depending on the numbers and according to their geographical location.

APPENDIX B. EMPOWER RESPONSE TO THE MIDTERM EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The project's responses to the MTE recommendations were reported in the April 2020 TPR.

	Recommendation	Summary of Grantee Response/Status	Final evaluation comment
Planning and support			
1	Ensure continuous implementation management to keep project activities on track and training modules in tight sequence; seek creative solutions when delays are encountered (e.g., increasing the number of sessions per week).	Accepted. Adjusted management strategy: monthly all staff coordination meetings, and weekly technical team meetings to ensure program activities are on schedule and on track. This allows us time to address implementation challenges as they arrive. In instances where we have run into implementation delays with the REAL Course we have worked with the participants and RCF to increase the number of sessions per week to ensure that cohorts are not delayed.	Overall, the project did make efforts to keep project activities on track based on interviews and TPRs, but some delays between modules continued post-May 2019 due to EDC staffing changes.
2	Coordinate daily with EMPOWER district coordinators (EDCs) to determine their needs in terms of training of trainers, procurement, and field office specialist support.	Accepted. EMPOWER is working to strengthen the feedback and reporting from EDCs to ensure they provide daily updates to the CBDLS, their supervisor, and are reviewed during the weekly technical team meetings...EDCs have continued to submit weekly and regular updates to the CBDLS and these are reviewed in the weekly technical team meetings.	EDCs interviewed by the final evaluation team were satisfied with communications and support within the management and specialist team.
3	Pay special attention to the strategic use of limited transport means; field activity planning must maximize use of project vehicles for all four components.	Partially accepted. The implementation schedule has been revised to align it to available transport. We have also developed a monthly travel calendar to coordinate travel across all four components to ensure effective use of project vehicles. Using phone communications and public transport to send reports and data. In addition, we have created a checklist for staff to use when going to the field to ensure that staff can fulfill multiple tasks under multiple components as well as M&E when they go to a given site. For example, both the YTES as well as the CBDLS have worked on orienting CRs on mentoring requirements and documentation.	The recommendation appears to have been followed-up as far as possible, providing for more strategic use of the available vehicles.
Facilitators			

	Recommendation	Summary of Grantee Response/Status	Final evaluation comment
4	Provide adequate incentives to retain the valuable team of EMPOWER facilitators, including water or snacks and access to bicycles for remote hubs, per feedback from facilitators.	Partially accepted. We partially agree with the recommendation. We have procured a total of 40 bicycles, which is two per hub. However, we are constrained by limited finances to provide water and snacks. Bicycles helped to motivate the facilitators to carry out the sessions and minimize distance challenges. After completion of the training, the bicycles are now being used by the Community Representatives to help coordinate field activities and mobilize participants when necessary.	The provision of bicycles was valuable to the facilitators and CRs. Lack of transport costs for technical facilitators and incentives for leaders of Radio Listening Clubs continued to be a source of discontent per feedback from these participants. The budget was constrained to cover these costs.
5	When conducting trainings of trainers, review the project's reasons for opting to create hub-based cooperatives vs. providing individual start-up kits to participants to ensure that they are able to convey to participants the logic and economics behind this decision. Most participants expressed a strong preference for individualized start-up support as opposed to group activities.	Accepted. The evaluator may have slightly misunderstood some nuances of our strategy. Rather than creating hub-level cooperatives, we are assisting in the formal registration of women's/girls' business groups as associations under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS), which will provide them with expanded opportunities for training, credit, and participation in the government's FISP program. Women cannot access these benefits as individuals but only as groups. The provision of the training materials to our groups is in line with our strategy to build strong and sustainable women's business groups and networks. Women are always free to engage in entrepreneurship activities individually on the side in addition to their group income-generating activities. That said, we are providing a number of "talking points" or explanations for EDCs to better be able to address various community questions and concerns. EMPOWER has been working closely with the MCDSS in providing training on the registration process of the EMPOWER business groups in all seven Districts. The business groups are at different stages of the registration process with 19 having submitted the complete files to the Registrar of Societies.	The response explains more about the rationale than the communications on the reasons for pursuing group-based businesses. The final evaluation did not hear this preference for individualized start-up so much as the preference for separate girls' business groups.
Men's participation			

	Recommendation	Summary of Grantee Response/Status	Final evaluation comment
6	Consider means of broadening training for men to include entrepreneurship or creating a support role for hub cooperatives (infrastructure perhaps) to give them a sense of inclusion	Not accepted We were not able to provide entrepreneurship training to the men, but provided them an opportunity to participate as Trustees in the Executive Committees of EMPOWER groups, to provide support to the women and the girls.	Although not adopted in the specific way proposed, the project did make efforts to include men in some of the training sessions for women and girls. Nevertheless, men participants still expressed dissatisfaction that they did not have a key role to play.
Life skills training			
7	Increase the time allocated for literacy training, perhaps by training and involving community volunteers who could provide additional sessions; many CVs are volunteer teachers, and this would also create a sustainable local capacity.	Not accepted. While EMPOWER was unable to extend the time allotted for additional literacy training, EMPOWER's business groups, through registration with MCDSS, will be able to access additional support from the department in terms of additional training opportunities in business, literacy and linkages to other partners once they are fully registered. This is subject to MCDSS availability of funds.	The final evaluation also learned that some facilitators continued to provide literacy classes to their classes.
Technical training			
8	Train facilitators on how to work in challenging classroom settings with large groups of rural girls and women in terms of tracking participant learning and organizing smaller groups for specific tasks.	Partially accepted EMPOWER continued to provide observations and feedback to the RCF during implementation. The REAL Course Lifeskills and Technical Training modules are now completed. Based on our observations and interactions with RCFs during the implementation of the REAL course, there were limited challenges encountered in the delivery of the training due large numbers participants in the classrooms. This was due to the RCF already having experience in teaching larger numbers student than per the EMPOWER cohorts.	No comment
9	Train technical facilitators on child labor and gender equality issues so they can take that message to their other activities with farmer field schools.	Accepted. This was already incorporated in the training of trainers for hubs eleven to twenty. Hubs 1 to 20 will receive this training at hub-level orientation sessions.	Technical facilitators met expressed awareness on child labor and gender issues.
Community awareness			
10	Work with community representatives (CRs) to develop a monthly program of town hall meetings to broaden the scope	Accepted. Ongoing as of April 2020 EMPOWER has been working with Panos to receive monthly schedules of planned community events, which have been implemented through the	While the monitoring of the RLC activities may have been stepped up, the town hall meetings were not held

	Recommendation	Summary of Grantee Response/Status	Final evaluation comment
	of awareness activities; include headmen in each presentation.	Radio Listening Clubs who record, listen in and provide feedback to the content on child labor messaging. Panos has engaged the CRs to help support the monitoring of these events and assist in data collection.	monthly as recommended to broaden awareness activities.
11	Ensure that radio stations regularly supervise the strongest one or two RLCs per hub and provide guidance on messaging and recording; seek station input on how best to reach and engage rural audiences; review all broadcasts to date to ensure adherence to approved messaging and to identify any gaps in content.	Accepted and adopted. EMPOWER has intensified supervision of all the RLCs per hub to ensure they actively play their role in the awareness creation events and radio programming. We need all the five clubs to be active to meet the targets as per our running action plan. The radio stations are at the center of rural audience outreach. EMPOWER supports them with resources and content to effectively conduct their outreach work. The broadcasts will be reviewed, and any noted gaps addressed immediately. EMPOWER has worked closely with Panos to set up a more effective monitoring and data collection system that is supported by the CRs and EDCs. The CRs and EDs use the schedule shared by Panos to follow up with RLCs to collect data on a weekly basis as activities conducted at the hubs.	EMPOWER's response was effective in improving monitoring of the RLCs, though the strategy was not to focus just on the one or two strongest RLCs.
PPPs/cooperatives			
12	Focus on identifying quality partnerships that can provide technical and market-based support for the cooperatives; this is one of the most critical project legacies.	Accepted. EMPOWER is reviewing our strategy for identifying PPPs and is focusing more on engaging the various potential PPPs that are closer to our beneficiaries and that can provide the best support to them and their business groups. Rather than pursue PPPs with Lusaka-based entities, the project is focusing on working with the MCDSS to register the women's groups as official associations and with more local entities like Modern Bazaar and Eastern Comfort that can support the women's business goals. EMPOWER is working with a number of district level PPPs who have been able to provide training and technical support to EMPOWER groups. We were able to work with ATS, OMNIA, Ross Breeders in the provision of poultry products and	This recommendation was an integral part of the EMPOWER strategy and EMPOWER was successful in identifying local government and private sector partners, particularly in support of the women's business groups.

	Recommendation	Summary of Grantee Response/Status	Final evaluation comment
		services, Heifer International in the provision of goat production support services. Also financial institutions such as ZANACO, Atlas Mara, National Savings and Credit Bank in providing financial literacy and account opening process. We are continuing to explore additional partnerships to link to our business groups during the business mentorship and guest speakers sessions.	
13	Recruit an intern or community volunteer to support DC, community/business development and livelihoods (CBDL) and PPP specialists' work with the cooperatives.	Not accepted. We have recruited a large number of interns for the M&E and unfortunately cannot take on more due to budgetary constraints. As the REAL Course activities decrease, though, the YTES should be able to help support the CBDL's activities.	The business groups were supported by the mentors as well as public and private sector partners.
14	In hubs where land and infrastructure support are available, pursue partnerships that can provide construction resources to build or upgrade an existing a multipurpose facility, including space for a poultry house and class and meeting rooms.	Partially accepted. EMPOWER continues to encourage business groups to construct their own poultry houses using part of the moneys from the sale of their first batch of chickens. Several business groups have been successful in constructing their poultry houses and were able to mobilize additional local resources through the support of their family, communities, CRs and local business, and producing their bricks with the help of the men. Additionally, CRs and traditional leaders have also assisted the women in securing land for their goat pens. EMPOWER will continue to support the business groups secure or raise resources for their businesses.	In support of EMPOWER response, the final evaluation observation that one entrepreneurship mentor provided the group a poultry house.
Entrepreneurship (training)			
15	Per the request from head teachers in the EMPOWER communities, work with the Ministry of Education and school head teachers to review options for including the EMPOWER entrepreneurship component in the formal school curriculum.	Not accepted. We would love to do this, however, curriculum revision is a very time-consuming process that happens primarily at the national level . The scope of that exceeds the timeframe and scope for this project. We can, however, promote access to the curriculum by the government and other potential implementers by giving access to it by, for example, putting it online, etc.	The final evaluation supports EMPOWER's suggestion to make the entrepreneurship curriculum available to government and other potential implementers. The life skills curriculum could likewise be promoted to government and other potential implementers.
Sustainability			

	Recommendation	Summary of Grantee Response/Status	Final evaluation comment
16	Ensure that national and provincial-level Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS) officials receive regular briefings on progress; provide a synthesis of the technical progress report (TPR) to the district child labor committee (DCLC); organize a field visit for DCLC members to observe project interventions and to interact with participants.	Partially accepted. Ongoing EMPOWER has been providing formal updates to Eastern Province Provincial Labour Officer in Chipata, who forwards the reports to the Ministry of Labour Headquarters. A field visit was planned with the Provincial Labor Office in March but could not occur due to COVID-19. The updates are due to the MLSS in May.	Final evaluation observation that EMPOWER engaged closely with Provincial Labour Officer.
17	Revise the sustainability plan based on project experience and local dynamics: identify a reasonable number of priority sustainability targets (e.g., cooperatives, local-level child labor monitoring, awareness, functional literacy) and develop a clear plan and metrics for tracking progress toward sustainable solutions.	Accepted and completed The revision was done by October 2019. EMPOWER will revise the final draft for submission in the October 2020 TPR.	Not fully addressed. The sustainability strategy was updated in September 2020 prior to submission and provided to the evaluation team. The updated strategy reflects changes that occurred in the implementation strategy but does not reflect a response to the MTE recommendation in terms of identifying sustainability targets. Since the interim evaluation report was completed in April 2019, it would have been useful to revise and submit the sustainability plan in October 2019, rather than October 2020.
18	Identify all other US Government (USG) and donor projects that offer synergies for addressing child labor and gender equality in Eastern Province (e.g., the Arise 3 project in Chipata).	Accepted EMPOWER mapped out USD and donor projects in July 2019, and unfortunately few serve the remote communities we are reaching on EMPOWER. The project is currently working with the district Child Protection Committees to ensure child labor issues are sustained given child labor's impact on children's rights and their safety. The project convened two District Child Protection Committees meetings to date to incorporate child labor into their Terms Of Reference. EMPOWER plans to conduct initial and follow up meetings in all districts before the project office closes in Chipata in September 2020.	The evaluators suggest a) that the networking and sharing would have been useful even if these concurrent projects were not serving the same communities, and b) that for future learning the EMPOWER model could be shared with other USG and donor projects working in the Eastern Province prior to project end.
Future projects			

	Recommendation	Summary of Grantee Response/Status	Final evaluation comment
19	Given the inevitable start-up issues that rural child labor projects face, project implementers, especially those who have no existing community presence, should allow sufficient time for required preliminary studies and for community relationship-building prior to provision of interventions. This phase can often take more than a year of the project's available timeline.	Not applicable to EMPOWER, but accepted for future projects	The evaluator agrees and recommends that a minimum of one year should be allocated for preparatory studies, relationship building and CMEP completion prior to providing interventions in project workplans, especially in projects with significant direct participant components.

APPENDIX C. FINAL SCHEDULE OF COHORTS

District	Hub	Cohort #	Cohort Start Dates	Girls Enrolled		
Chadiza	Zingalume	1	Jul-2018	29		
		2	Dec-2018	33		
		3	May-2019	20		
	Chanjowe	1	Dec-2018	42		
		2	Mar-2019	36		
		3	Jul-2019	21		
	Chafulu	1	Nov-2018	33		
		2	Mar-2019	33		
		3	Jul-2019	23		
Chipangali	Kasenga	1	Jul-2018	42		
		2	Jan-2019	27		
		3	May-2019	25		
Kasenengwa	Kapoko	Pilot	Mar-2018	29		
		1	Jul-2018	27		
		2	Feb-2019	32		
		3	Jun-2019	15		
Katete	Kagoro	Pilot	Mar-2018	30		
		1	Jun-2018	26		
		2	Jan-2019	37		
			3	May-2019	20	
			Chimutende	1	Jul-2018	34
				2	Feb-2019	41
	3	May-2019		36		
		Dole	1	Nov-2018	44	
			2	Apr-2019	37	
			3	Jul-2019	38	
		Kameta	1	Nov-2018	39	
			2	Mar-2019	27	
			3	Jul-2019	28	
		Nyembe	1	Jul-2018	29	
			2	Jan-2019	37	
3			May-2019	34		
Petauke	Mwanjawanthu	1	Dec-2018	40		
		2	Apr-2019	32		
		3	Jul-2019	32		
	Mankungwe	1	Dec-2018	32		
		2	Apr-2019	34		
		3	Jul-2019	25		
	Nyamphande	1	Jul-2018	39		

District	Hub	Cohort #	Cohort Start Dates	Girls Enrolled
		2	Mar-2019	29
		3	Jun-2019	33
	Mwanza	1	Jun-2018	48
		2	Mar-2019	34
		3	Jun-2019	33
	Mumbi	1	Dec-2018	32
		2	Apr-2019	36
		3	Jul-2019	25
Lundazi	Mukomba	1	Jul-2018	29
		2	Feb-2019	31
		3	May-2019	21
	Kapichila	1	Dec-2018	34
		2	Apr-2019	34
		3	Jul-2019	20
	Mwase	1	Jun-2018	27
		2	Jan-2019	32
		3	May-2019	21
Chasefu	Egichikeni	1	Dec-2018	33
		2	Apr-2019	31
		3	Jun-2019	39
	Munyukwa	1	Dec-2018	37
		2	Apr-2019	32
		3	Jun-2019	27
Total		62		1956

APPENDIX D: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

EMPOWER Project Documents

- Winrock International Technical Proposal. EMPOWER Project, June 2, 2016
- USDOL Cooperative Agreement , IL-23979-13-75-K to Winrock International, November 1, 2016
- EMPOWER Zambia Project Document, Revised 2018
- Grant Modifications
- Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Final Version. Dated 2018
- EMPOWER Zambia Midterm Evaluation. MSI. May, 2019

Winrock Technical Progress Reports and Annexes

- Semi-annual Technical Progress Reports: April 2018, October 2018, April 2019, October 2019, April 2020
- Correspondence related to Technical Progress Reports

Project Research Reports and Terms of Reference

- Winrock EMPOWER Prevalence Study Report. January 2018
- Winrock International. EMPOWER Zambia Market Study. A Market Needs Assessment for Vocational and Technical Skills and Livelihoods Opportunities in Eastern Province, Zambia. December 2017.
- Mathematica Outcomes Study TOR

USDOL Documents

- Funding Opportunity Announcement. FOA-ILAB-16-12 Zambia
- USDOL Management Procedures and Guidelines MPG FY 2016

Other Literature

- ILO, UNICEF, World Bank Group. September 2012. Understanding Child Work project. Towards ending Child Labor in Zambia: An Assessment of Resource requirements.

APPENDIX E: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND FGD PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX F: EVALUATION DEBRIEF AGENDA AND PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP GUIDES

APPENDIX H: TERMS OF REFERENCE
