

FUNDED BY THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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

Winrock International

Cooperative Agreement Numbers—

CIRCLE I: E-9-K-2-0048

CIRCLE II: E-9-K-4-0005



2007



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

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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BCPC	Barangay Council for the Protection of Children
BP	Best Practice
CIRCLE	Community-Based Innovations for the Reduction of Child Labor Through Education
CLM	Child Labor Monitoring
CMC	Class Management Committee
CTWG	City Technical Working Group
DDC	District Development Committee
EFA	Education for All
EI	Education Initiative
GPRA	Government Performance Results Act
HQ	Headquarters
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
LA	Latin America
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MOL	Ministry of Labor
NFE	Nonformal Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
RFP	Request for Proposals
RLM	Regional Launch Meeting
RM	Regional Manager
RSC	Regional Selection Committee
SA	South Asia
SEA	Southeast Asia
SMC	School Management Committee
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPR	Technical Progress Report
UN	United Nations

USDOL	United States Department of Labor
W/P	Withdrawn/Prevented
WE	World Education
WI	Winrock International

## **SUBCONTRACTING NGOS**

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Aasman	Aasman Nepal
Actuator	ACTUATOR for Socio Economic Progress, Inc.
Arunodhaya	Arunodhaya Center for Street and Working Children
ASHA	Asha
BASE	Backward Society Education
BAT	Bal Ashram Trust
CAC	Community Action Centre Nepal
CCF	Child Care Foundation
CLAP	The Committee for Legal Aid to Poor
CRED	Centre for Rural Education and Development
CSAGA	Lingap Pangkabataan
CSID	Centre for Services and Information on Disability
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre
CWISH	Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights
DEEPALYA	Deepalaya
DWAY	The Development and Welfare Agency
HCC	Health Care Center for Children
HOPE	Hope Volunteers Foundation
Kaugmaon	KAUGMAON Center for Children's Concerns Foundation, Inc.
KKPC	Kapatiran-Komunidad People's Coalition
LPI	Lingap Pangkabataan
LVF	The Laura Vicuna Foundation
MUK	Manab Unnayan Kendra
NDS	National Development Society
QK	Quidan-Kaisahan of Negros Occidental
SCM	Share A Child Movement, Inc.
STC	Shree Taram Club
VOCRDC	Voc Rural Development Centre
WATCH	Women Acting Together for Change
WDA	Women Development Association
WP	Wathnakpheap

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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A final/midterm evaluation was carried out of the US\$8.5 million CIRCLE I and II projects (July 2002–April 2008) implemented by Winrock International (WI) for the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) during May and June 2007.

Community-Based Innovations for the Reduction of Child Labor Through Education (CIRCLE) is being implemented in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. This report covers the evaluation of the work in Asia. Similar studies have been done simultaneously in Latin America and Africa and a global synthesis report will also be prepared.

The main findings from this review are—

1. Overall Project Design/Implementation
2. Subcontract Design/Implementation
3. Partnership and Coordination
4. Management and Budget
5. Sustainability and Impact

### **OVERALL PROJECT DESIGN/IMPLEMENTATION**

The majority of the subcontracts addressed the Education Initiative (EI) goals to strengthen education systems and to raise awareness on education. An attempt was made to work more on the other two goals and this was successful in getting projects to focus on sustainability. Little has been attempted toward the policy objective. However some Round 3 projects focusing on sustainability were facilitating local-level policy developments as part of their strategy for sustainability.

From the information available in the region, it is not possible to confirm whether the project is on track to achieve its first purpose—developing and documenting best practices—due to the paucity of indicators and also because regional offices do not report their progress toward this purpose. The project is on track to achieve and exceed its rolling targets for the second purpose—the education of at-risk children. The reports on the USDOL common indicators are probably reasonably close to the correct figures.

A number of serious weaknesses in the project logical framework have been identified. These weaknesses have not been identified by the project nor have they had much negative impact on implementation, as the project makes little use of the logframe for planning or reporting.

The framework and process used to call for subcontract proposals has led to a high degree of innovation by many of the implementing partners. Some constraints to achieving greater innovation have been identified and some suggestions on how to overcome these have been presented.

The Best Practices (BP) document is being developed using the Spotlight Stories and the BP evaluation process. The potential contribution of the regional analyses of the best practices that have been identified by the partners has been highlighted. Until now there has been no involvement of other partner nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the BP evaluation process but there are current plans to involve them and this will have a range of benefits. There are no definitive plans as yet on how the BPs will be disseminated to different groups of stakeholders. There is potential to use the network of CIRCLE partners to disseminate the BP document through national or subregional interactions.

## **SUBCONTRACT DESIGN/IMPLEMENTATION**

Virtually all projects are on track to meet their stated output targets. Overall, the percentage of “education completion” against target is 138% and the percentage of “withdrawn/prevented” (W/P) against target is 126%. Most projects are near their targets. One project in Nepal greatly exceeded their targets due to a high level of mobilization of resources from local and government sources. With one exception, all projects visited showed impact in the field and robust management systems. On the whole, projects are accurately measuring results in terms of the USDOL indicators, although there are a number of issues that, in most situations, have resulted in over reporting. There is no approved way of estimating and reporting on children withdrawn or prevented from child labor through indirect interventions.

Requests for proposals (RFPs) have been effective in reaching child-focused organizations throughout the region, but they have not been so effective in reaching organizations not already working with children. Many project proposals had been significantly reduced in budget and some experienced a reduced timeframe, which has not only affected target numbers, but also the viability of some of the planned outputs.

Communities are very satisfied with the interventions that the partners are providing and in most cases, these interventions address previously unmet needs.

Capacity building of partners has been mainly on project management to enable partners to efficiently fulfill CIRCLE requirements. Technical capacity-building has been on an informal basis and dependent on the knowledge and skill of the regional manager (RM).

Partnering with NGOs that have previously not been involved in child labor has been an effective way of integrating child labor into the NGOs’ longer term and broader development agenda with their target communities.

## **PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION**

Project partners generally have good links with other NGOs at the local level. Networking between CIRCLE partners is very limited and the single meeting at the RLM has not been sufficient to make this happen. Links with the International Labour Organization/International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) and with other EI grantees is varied—good in the Philippines and limited in Nepal and Bangladesh.

Regional selection committees have been an effective method for selecting good partners and projects. The process is recognized as clear and transparent.

## **MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET**

Project management at global and regional levels has been efficient and partners feel well supported. Communication at all levels of the project has been effective.

The RLMs achieved their objectives for developing the required management capacity in the partner organizations. Site supervision has increased since the midterm evaluation to approximately two visits per subcontract. These visits were useful but partners would have appreciated more regular reviews as well as increased opportunities to share experiences with other organizations.

The project only provided limited technical capacity development on child labor—mainly in the area of monitoring—in order to enable partners to fulfill the requirements of the subcontracts. An opportunity has been missed for developing additional knowledge and skills on child labor elimination.

An important issue is whether a regional project structure was able to provide sufficient oversight (site monitoring) and capacity-building of the implementing partners. Regarding the achievement of specific project outputs, the answer is “yes,” but there are clear calls from the implementing partners for additional support. The national and regional disbursement of the subcontracts was the likely constraint to providing additional support. The costs (both in time and money) required for site visits and for calling partners together would have been high. The negative consequences of a regional management structure are identified. It can be argued that for a knowledge-generation project like CIRCLE, the benefits obtained from the wide geographical spread justified the regional strategy. Looking ahead, it is recommended that any scaling up and replication should be done at the national level.

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT**

The two strategies for sustainability were to encourage/enable local groups and organizations to mobilize locally accessible resources (in kind and financial) and to build the capacity of NGO partners so they are able to continue effective interventions to withdraw children through education.

The short duration of all of the subcontracts has led to limited impact on the capacity of local groups and organizations (such as parents groups and child clubs) to act independently on child labor issues.

Almost all of the NGO partners are continuing to work on child labor and education within the same location following the closure of the subcontracts. Some have expanded this work to projects supported by other donors in new locations. Most have been successful in obtaining at least some followup funding.

There have been significant positive changes in the attitude and behavior of the direct beneficiary children as well as a good school “completion” rate during the project period. In addition, high levels of support (by partners) and retention rates have been recorded up to 14 months after subcontracts were completed.

Child organizations and clubs have reinforced the changes in children’s personal development. These clubs are still dependent but are beginning to develop their own institutional capacity.

The small number of subcontracts that include an objective to influence local policy, coupled with the short subcontract periods, has resulted in limited impact in this area.

There is potential to scale up many of the interventions—supplemented by the lessons learned and the BPs identified. When scaling up these interventions, it is important to ensure that the close link between the implementing partner and the community, which results in a high level of accountability by the NGO, is not lost in the process.

Many best practices have been identified by the partners and by WI. There has been little discussion and dissemination of these to date. There is an opportunity to both further develop and share these lessons with implementing partners and other organizations.

Many of the written materials developed by the NGO partners in order to support their training and awareness-raising are now out of print. A specific limited grant may be effective in making these more widely available.

Some best practices in terms of the overall CIRCLE project were identified and are as follows:

- **Subcontract design:** Although the RFPs clearly stated the objectives to which the subcontract should contribute, the strategy and targets were created by the subcontractors. This method enabled local organizations to develop a proposal that would be their own project, linked to the specific needs, opportunities, and context of the area. This has resulted in innovations from local NGOs, their sense of ownership of the subcontract, and their strong sense of responsibility to the community.
- **Partner selection process:** The output of the selection process, particularly in terms of the commitment and capability of the partners, has been markedly high. This output must reflect on the process used, which was well advertised, included clear instructions and presentation, used a transparent process, had well-thought out and clear criteria, used a clear system to assess proposals against the criteria, involved independent technical experts covering all the regions, and was well supported by the WI staff.
- **Regional launch meetings (RLM):** RLMs were held at the beginning of each implementation round and provided orientation and training to implementing partners regarding management requirements of the CIRCLE project; explanations of monitoring requirements, including clarification on the meaning of important terms; and an opportunity to finalize details of the proposed subcontract. They provided a useful means to develop a working relationship and establish working norms and expectations.

- **Partnering with NGOs experienced in wider development issues:** Partnering with NGOs previously uninvolved in child labor has been an effective way of integrating child labor into the NGO's broader development agenda within their target communities. There are opportunities for greater sustainability when child labor elimination is seen in the context of other development issues such as health, local government capacity development, and livelihood enhancement.
- **Partnering with NGOs with a long-term commitment to work in the locality:** Partners who have "grown up" locally or who have made a commitment to work in a locality over a period of time are subject to accountability to the community and local authorities and will strive to maintain support, particularly to beneficiary children.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

1. Subcontract proposals should indicate if any of the proposed activities are a continuation of a previous or existing project. If they are, they should specify what the innovations are and what the added value of the new proposal is.
2. Where community-based child labor monitoring (CLM) is being developed, additional attention should be given to the development of knowledge and awareness of child labor legislation to ensure monitoring is based on national standards.
3. RFPs should be made accessible to organizations not currently working with children in order to facilitate the integration of child labor issues into wider development agendas.
4. When quality proposals are greatly in excess of available resources, there should be some means to narrow the catchment for proposals, possibly on a geographical basis.
5. Revisions to budgets and timeframes of proposals should consider carefully the technical viability of the reduced project.
6. If developing networking among partners is an important objective, additional resources need to be provided by either giving the partners the responsibility and budget to do this or by having the regional office call partners together.
7. Alternative methods for making financial disbursements from the grantee to the subcontractors, should be analyzed before commencing another project with dispersed subcontracts.
8. When a project has overlapping phases, there should be some flexibility in allocating the budget of the two phases so that it does not hinder project implementation.
9. Future projects implementing child labor elimination strategies through local organizations should include technical capacity development of these partners as one of its intended outcomes.

10. The short timeframe of the subcontracts has had both positive and negative consequences. Specific direct services have been provided to a large number of children and partners are maintaining many of these. However, outcomes have been limited in terms of strong local groups and institutions that could provide a positive influence from within the community.
11. Narrowly focused projects provide specific services but do not significantly impact the overall number of child laborers or child labor trends.
12. Implementing partners with both experience and current activities in community development were able to integrate child labor into their existing development work with positive consequences for sustainability.
13. Partners with a long-term link to the community and a sense of responsibility are at the minimum likely to provide ongoing support to the assisted children and, if resources allow, continue key work for the elimination of child labor in that locality. The predicated condition for this ongoing support is the partner's link and sense of responsibility with the local community. Most of the partners selected were already established in the subcontract locations and they are intending to continue to work in that same location even if they are not a "local" organization themselves.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The project should report against the same framework or hierarchy of objectives that was used to develop and present the project in the project document (subject to revisions). If additional criteria are needed, they should be added to, rather than replace, the indicators in the framework.
2. The process for identifying and documenting BPs should make use of the regular review and analysis, prepared by the regional offices, of the best practices identified by the partners in their reports.
3. NGO partners should be included in the process of peer reviewing completed projects to facilitate better identification of BPs, as well as increased dissemination of experiences.
4. Detailed plans should be developed for the effective dissemination of the contents of the BP document, either at the national or subregional level. These plans should incorporate opportunities for interactive review and contextualization of the BPs.
5. A case study of the Aasman project should be made in order to identify and develop best practices in the area of resource mobilization from the community and from government when the security situation allows.
6. A system needs to be developed to estimate and recognize children W/P from child labor through indirect interventions in order to encourage more sustainable interventions.

7. CIRCLE II should facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices among its partners and other organizations with shared objectives through national (possibly regional) interactions. The objectives should reflect the concepts of both refining and disseminating best practices.
8. Materials developed by CIRCLE partners should be reviewed for their usefulness and the potential demand for them with a view to printing and disseminating them more widely. Some form of peer review could be used during a partners' workshop if one was held.

This report describes in detail the evaluation of the CIRCLE project in Asia which took place during April and May 2007. The report was prepared by Macro International Inc., according to guidelines prescribed by USDOL, Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT). The evaluation was conducted and documented by Keith Jeddere-Fisher, an independent development consultant, in collaboration with USDOL/OCFT staff, members of the project team, and stakeholders in the Philippines, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

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# I PROJECT BACKGROUND

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

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

In July 2002, Winrock International (WI) signed a five-year, US\$5 million Cooperative Agreement with USDOL—Community-Based Innovations for the Reduction of Child Labor Through Education (CIRCLE I)—to implement a global EI project aimed at withdrawing and preventing children from exploitive child labor by expanding access to and improving the quality of basic education and supporting the four EI objectives:

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

WI subsequently signed a four-year, US\$3 million Cooperative Agreement with USDOL (CIRCLE II) in 2004 for a second phase of the CIRCLE project, and a US\$500,000 contract in 2004 for the Sierra Leone component.

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## II PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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The CIRCLE project aims to prevent or reduce child labor through education<sup>1</sup> by identifying and promoting innovative, locally developed, and community-based pilot projects and documenting their “Best Practices” (BPs) and replicable aspects. CIRCLE project activities contribute directly to the four EI objectives and the two project purposes identified by WI:

- Community-Based educational innovations aimed at preventing child labor are developed and documented
- At-risk children are prevented from child labor and educated in programs relevant to communities in which they live.

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

**Table 1: Project Countries Managed by Winrock Offices**

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

By April 2007, 101 NGO projects had been funded in 23 countries: 42 in Asia, 41 in Africa, and 17 in Latin America (LA); 23,000 children had benefited from educational opportunities as a result of CIRCLE initiatives and thousands of other adults and children had participated in awareness-raising, advocacy, and training activities.

Under CIRCLE I and II, 1,200 proposals were submitted for funding by NGOs in response to five solicitations (three global and two for Sierra Leone). The three global solicitations or requests for proposals (RFPs) and the subsequent subcontracts are described as “Rounds 1, 2, and 3.” Regional Selection Committees (RSCs) made up of specialists in relevant fields worked on a voluntary basis to review the proposals and make funding recommendations for small, medium, and large awards; Urgent Action Contracts (UACs) for small amounts addressing an immediate need; and Commissioned Contracts. Individual project funding ranged from US\$9,000 to US\$113,000 and the period of intervention from 6 to 24 months. Regional Launch Meetings (RLMs) on each continent brought successful NGO subcontractors together for orientation and training in CIRCLE systems.

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in the CIRCLE project document, education, for this purpose, includes both educating the public through information campaigns and targeted instruction, such as traditional classroom education, vocational or alternative education, or teacher training.

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

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

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<sup>2</sup> CIRCLE I in July 2007, as a result of a project extension approved by USDOL, and CIRCLE II in April 2008.

### III EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

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CIRCLE I began in July 2002 and is scheduled for final evaluation in 2007. CIRCLE II started in April 2004 and is scheduled for midterm evaluation in 2007, so the current evaluation covers both requirements.

The evaluation reviews and assesses the activities carried out under the USDOL Cooperative Agreements with WI, particularly the progress of the project toward reaching its stated targets and objectives. Taking into consideration all the activities implemented over the life of the project, the evaluation addresses issues of project design, implementation, lessons learned, reliability, and recommendations for future projects. The evaluation also aims to—

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

Evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations are grouped under the five major headings below. Findings are presented according to the specific questions raised in the USDOL Terms of Reference (TOR) that are attached in Annex F.

1. **Overall project design/implementation** addresses how the project fits with EI objectives within both the WI portfolio and national government child labor and education policies and practices. Initial implementation, monitoring, and sustainability strategies are analyzed in light of experience and progress toward project objectives assessed. The concepts of innovation and BPs—key aspects of CIRCLE—are also reviewed.
2. **Subcontract design/implementation** examines NGO subcontractors’ progress toward achieving the goals of their respective projects and the degree of satisfaction and ownership of activities of the communities concerned. The measurement of USDOL’s common indicators is assessed, as well as the effectiveness of the selection process and the relevance and innovation of the project design.
3. **Partnership and coordination** examines how WI and subcontracting NGOs have achieved the challenges of working together and networking at national and international levels, particularly in relation to national (and local) child labor and education policies

and practice. The functioning of RSCs is examined, as well as any links with other U.S.-funded child labor initiatives in the project zone.

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

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

## IV EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was carried out by three evaluators—one each for Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This document is one of three regional reports that are summarized in a global analysis and synthesis of regional findings. The Asia region, covered by this report, is divided into two subregions; South Asia (SA) and Southeast Asia (SEA). The key stages of the evaluation methodology are outlined below:

- Prior to fieldwork, a **desk review** of key project documents was completed (see Annex B).
- **Countries and projects were selected** in consultation with WI, based on practical considerations such as location and distance. The selection process also ensured the inclusion of both active and completed projects, CIRCLE I and CIRCLE II projects, and awards of varying amounts (see Annex D for more details on the projects in the region). Nepal and the Philippines were chosen because the regional and subregional offices are located there. Bangladesh was selected as a country with no regional office and with some projects that were completely closed in order to assess sustainability issues. The evaluator visited two project sites in detail (minimum of a two-day visit) in each country and also held meetings with the staff of four other projects. The evaluator also met with representatives from the majority of partners at the National Stakeholders Meeting (the Philippines) and at the Partners Meeting (Nepal). The table below summarizes the projects visited. Representatives met at the two national meetings are not included in this table.

**Table 2: NGO Subcontractors and Projects Visited in Asia**

Country	NGO/Location	Type of Visit	Project
Philippines	HOPE Bacolod	Office meeting	Reducing Child Labor Risk Of Children Of Sugar Farm Workers Through Education. Round 3, US\$25,000
	Quidan Kaiserhan Sipalay	Field visit	Promoting Community-Driven Initiatives in Combating Child Labor in Sipalay City Through Education. Round 3, US\$60,000
	SCM Cebu	Field visit	Children and Youth for Child Rights Protection: Creating Partnerships with Communities and Schools. Round 2, US\$9,900 and Round 3, US\$25,000
Nepal	CWISH Kathmandu	Field visit	Education To Reduce Child Labor. Round 2, US\$9,300
	CWIN Kathmandu	Office meeting	From Exploitation to Education. Round 1, US\$113,000
	BASE Banke and Dang	Field visit	Awareness-Raising of Freed-Bonded Labor, Porter, and Conflict Victims Children. Round 2, US\$41,500
	STC Dang	Office meeting	Pens Instead of Hammers: Education and Community Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Stone Quarries. Round 3, US\$24,000

Country	NGO/Location	Type of Visit	Project
Bangladesh	CSID Dhaka	Field visit	Reducing Child Labor through Promoting Education Opportunities for Working Children with Disabilities. Round 2, US\$9,000
	NDS Dhaka	Office meeting	Integrated Nonformal Functional Literacy, Semi-Skill Training, and Self-Employment for Street Children in the Urban Informal Sector in Dhaka and Chittagong Cities. Round 2, US\$43,712
	MUK Meherpur	Field visit	Nonformal Education for Children. Round 1, US\$9,989

A description of each of these projects can be accessed on the CIRCLE website at [http://circle.winrock.org/ngo\\_partners\\_asia.cfm](http://circle.winrock.org/ngo_partners_asia.cfm)

- Interviews in the U.S.:** Prior to the regional field visits in May, the three evaluators came together in Washington to meet with WI/CIRCLE Headquarters (HQ) staff and past/present project managers at USDOL. The evaluators also interviewed the consultant developing the BP document and briefly visited a child labor conference on Capitol Hill.<sup>3</sup> The visit also allowed the evaluation team to finalize all data collection instruments and ensure coherence in its approach across regions in consultation with staff of Macro International Inc., who were managing the evaluation.
- Community visits:** In the communities visited, the evaluator facilitated semistructured interviews with small groups of children, parents, local leaders, and teachers, including school management committees, parents' associations, and other relevant community groups to talk about child labor and education, the activities initiated by the project, and visions for the future. This process enabled the evaluator to assess the degree of community involvement and ownership of project activities, their level of satisfaction concerning project achievements and approaches and attitudes concerning education and child labor. Whenever possible, project activities were visited to observe the gender and general age of participants, the atmosphere and dynamics between staff and young people, the quality and content of the activity in which they were engaged, the physical environment, materials, and facilities available; in brief, whether the activity seemed likely to appropriately meet the objectives for which it was designed. The following list gives the numbers of boys, girls, men, and women who took part in discussions at the community level during the evaluation:

**Table 3: Community-level Participants in Evaluation, by Gender**

Children in project	101 boys	107 girls
Children not in project	40 boys	31 girls
Parents	20 fathers	175 mothers
Teachers	11 men	15 women
Leaders	21 men	48 women
Others (school committee, etc.)	53 men	15 women

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

Interviews in the Philippines were carried out in Tagalog, Ilongo, and Cebuna with the assistance of local interpreters; in Nepal in Nepali by the evaluator; and in Bangladesh in Bangla with the assistance of an interpreter.

- **Interviews with subcontractors:** For each project visited, the evaluator spoke with NGO staff—either collectively or in small groups—responsible for the project concerning project design, implementation, monitoring and sustainability, and the partnership with WI and the local and national child labor and education context. At the end of each site visit, the evaluator presented his initial findings on the specific project in order to verify the observations, to discuss specific issues, and to contribute to the partners’ learning. The feedback provided to each partner is in Annex C 3 to 9.
- **Interviews at national level:** Representatives of government, United Nations (UN) agencies, U.S. Embassies, and any international NGOs that had collaborated on the project were interviewed to assess the degree to which CIRCLE activities are embedded in or encouraging a national approach to “education for all” (EFA) and reduced child labor, progress made on advocacy and relevant local/regional/national policies, and to what degree CIRCLE has succeeded in networking and collaborating with others working for similar objectives, particularly those using U.S. funds.
- **Interviews at a regional level:** In-depth interviews were conducted with key WI staff in each regional office concerning all aspects of project design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, management, and sustainability. The evaluator also met with members of the Regional Selection Committees to gather their opinions about the processes involved in selection and BP evaluation.
- **Stakeholders’ meetings and debriefs:** The evaluator facilitated a national stakeholders’ meeting in Manila to bring together as broad a range of actors as possible who are or have been involved with CIRCLE and/or education and/or child labor. The evaluator also facilitated an implementing-partners’ meeting in Kathmandu. This meeting enabled the evaluator to verify draft findings on the projects visited and to facilitate discussion about the broader issues of education and child labor and the potential for ongoing activities in a particular country. These brief presentations are in Annex C 1 and 2.
- **E-mail survey:** A limited e-mail survey of the views and perspectives of NGO subcontractors consisted of questions concerning issues such as innovation, capacity-building, project sustainability, the strengths and challenges of the overall experience of working with WI, and suggestions for the future. All 31 partners were sent this survey and 8 responded. Responses are integrated into the report without any specific attribution, as these comments were given in confidence.

Information on the participants in the interviews, group discussion, and meetings; and respondents to the e-mail survey are detailed in Annex A and checklists of issues covered with each group, including the questions in the e-mail survey, are located in Annex E.

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## **V FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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This section examines and discusses how the project is achieving its objectives, the strategies it has developed, and the activities it is implementing. These findings, conclusions, and recommendations are grouped in the five categories identified under the evaluation objectives:

1. Project design/implementation at program level
2. Project design/implementation at individual project level
3. Partnership and coordination
4. Management and budget
5. Sustainability and impact

The findings of the evaluation are organized around the questions posed by USDOL in the TOR, taking the opportunity to not only respond to each question, but to expand on the issues concerned as appropriate. Any additional findings are covered after the responses to the questions. Conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations complete the evaluation of the relevant issues.

### **5.1 OVERALL PROJECT DESIGN/IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **5.1.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR**

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

The four EI goals are—

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

From an analysis of the project proposals, the subcontracts have addressed these objectives as follows:

**Table 4: South Asia**

EI Goals	EI 1	EI 2	EI 3	EI 4
Round 1	2	3	1	1
Round 2	4	7	0	0
Round 3	1	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

**Table 5: Southeast Asia**

EI Goals	EI 1	EI 2	EI 3	EI 4
Round 1	0	1	0	0
Round 2	2	6	0	1
Round 3	1	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

The majority of subcontracts have addressed EI Goal 2—strengthening education systems for working children and those at risk. Awareness-raising has also been a frequent objective. This imbalance was recognized by the project and an attempt was made to encourage proposals in Round 3 to address the policy and sustainability areas. There was an increase in the number of proposals focusing on sustainability.

Although there was only one successful proposal that identified policy development as a main objective, two of the Round 3 projects visited that were focusing on sustainability—Quidian-Kaisahan (QK) and Shree Taram Club (STC)—were having an impact on local policy development. Part of their strategy for sustainability was to facilitate local-level policy decisions.

Some subcontracts did identify more than one objective area for their projects. With small subcontracts, it was difficult for subcontractors to address more than one of the objectives and the limited time period also contributed to the difficulty of realistically developing and implementing projects that would have a priority focus on policy development and/or sustainability.

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

It is difficult to answer this question with confidence due to some important issues in the design and reporting requirements of the project.

The project document uses the logical framework to present the project purposes and outputs. Under the overall goal that “Child labor, especially the worst forms, prevented,” two purposes are stated:

1. Community-Based educational innovations aimed at preventing child labor are developed and documented.
2. At-risk children are prevented from child labor and educated in programs relevant to communities in which they live.

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

The regional (and subregional) offices do not use the logical framework for their 6-month reports to WI, although it is included in the global technical progress report. According to the Project Director, the regions report specifically on the USDOL indicators and the Project Director centrally collects information from the regions to compile the logframe in the global report. Consequences of this reporting system are as follows:

- The regional staff is only familiar with the logframe through discussions at retreats, but not as a regional planning/reporting tool.
- Some regional managers (RMs) identify the main project objective as contributing to the four EI goals (These fit well with Purpose 2 above).
- There is less familiarity with the first purpose to develop and document educational innovations (BPs).
- There is little awareness at the regional level of the project's progress toward achieving Purpose 1 above.
- Regional staff members were unaware of the inadequacies of the indicators measuring progress towards achievement of Purpose 1—the only intermediate indicator is the publication of Spotlight Stories that one regional manager had not conceptually linked with the development of the BP document.

At the evaluator's request the SEA RM prepared a regional report based on the logframe and the purpose-level section of this logframe report is included in Annex G. This section records the number of Spotlight Stories produced but makes no comment about progress on the final document on education initiatives.

Fourteen (14) Spotlight Stories have been published on the web from SA and 15 from SEA. The global target was 39 from CIRCLE I and another 39 from CIRCLE II. There is no clear regional breakdown of these targets, but based on its number of subcontracts, Asia has achieved its expected contribution.

The other main activity at the regional level that is being conducted to help achieve this purpose is the BP peer review of each completed subcontract, a process that identifies and evaluates best practices. This process is on track. The next stage of the process appears to be the preparation of the BPs document, the progress of which is discussed briefly in Section 5.1, Question 12 and will

be reviewed in more detail in the global report. However, regional staff members are not clear on what their role is in this process.

Completion of the BP document was originally an output from CIRCLE I and the first draft will be submitted in September 2007 prior to CIRCLE I close out. The final draft with additional inputs from CIRCLE II will be completed later in the year.

It is not possible from the regional analysis to say whether this purpose is on track or not. (It should be noted that WI HQ strongly believe that the project is on track with regards to this purpose.)

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

This purpose statement understates the clear intention of the project, which is also to withdraw children from child labor and include them in some form of education. The indicators in the logframe for this second purpose are also weak. However, the project developed much more rigorous indicators in order to assess progress in terms of achieving the EI goals and these effectively measure achievements toward Purpose 2.

The project design did not set universal target numbers, opting instead to set specific targets for each subcontract on the basis of local needs and opportunities. Therefore, a rolling target exists that is based on each round of subcontracts. The achievements in SEA and SA against the rolling targets of the EI objectives were prepared at the evaluator's request and are in Annex H. Most targets are being exceeded. Individual subcontractors' reports offer a breakdown by gender, which shows that there is a good balance with a larger number of girls than boys, but this depends on the type of work in which the children are involved.

Achievements against Purpose 2 are clearly on track and are being exceeded both quantitatively and in terms of a broader purpose statement. Sustainability of this impact will be discussed in Section 5.5.

***General Issues***

The weaknesses in the logframe noted above were not identified by the midterm evaluation nor by the project staff, and CIRCLE II used an identical logframe.

The reason the regions do not report against the logframe appears to be due to the requirement to report using the USDOL EI format. Though this simplifies USDOL's ability to control and accumulate figures from all EI projects, it carries the danger of distorting specific projects. One consequence of this disconnect is that the project is being planned according to the project logical framework while reporting against the EI objective framework. There is an understandable tendency to work toward those indicators which one has to report against.

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

Based on the discussion in the immediately preceding section, it is not possible to say whether the first purpose will be achieved or not. Given the poor indicators used to measure the process and to set intermediate milestones, it seems that the overall process for developing the BPs document had not been thought through thoroughly enough at the planning stage. However, within the context of the overall project activities, the purpose of producing the BP document is a realistic one.

The achievement of the second purpose, given the effective process for selecting partners and proposals, and managing the subcontracts has been shown to be completely realistic.

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

The USDOL common indicators, though few in number, are quite complex. The question-and-answer guide developed in 2006 is 19 pages long and the indicators have been revised during the project implementation, either in order to make them more appropriate or to reduce ambiguities. For most of the implementing partners, these indicators and their explanations need to be translated into a second language, sometimes a third language.

Project management is confident that, at least by the end of the project, the project will be able to accurately measure and report on these indicators. Reports from partners are reviewed at the regional and central levels and frequently enquiries are made to verify the figures and their interpretation. The two RMs have a clear conceptual understanding of the indicators. Reporting formats for Round 3 projects have been improved to make it easier to see the progress from one reporting period to another.

Partner project management staff members acknowledge the difficulty in understanding the requirements. Their ability to report on these indicators is reviewed in more detail in Section 5.2, Question 3.

The reports on the common indicators are probably reasonably close to the correct figures, although certainly some errors have occurred due to the following:

- The level of understanding of child labor by WI and partner project staff
- The complexity of the definitions and conditions
- The number of transfers these explanations must go through to reach the appropriate person
- The language translations/interpretations required
- The limited capacity in terms of numbers of CIRCLE supervisory staff

Section 5.2, Question 3 identifies some specific issues where errors appear to be occurring.

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

No direct information on this question was obtained from the region, as none of the staff had been involved. This issue will be addressed in the global report. However, one of the areas of technical assistance was on the logframe development and Section 5.1, Questions 2 and 8 raise some questions about the quality of the resulting product.

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

The project has developed good indicators to measure project outputs in relation to the EI objective to “Strengthen formal and transitional educational systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school.” The project reports also give information on four output indicators relating to “education quality” (see Annex H) but there are no specific measurements of change or impact (impact indicators) in any specific school or location.

Improvements in the quality of transitional education, which is often controlled by the project partners, have a clear link with enrollment, completion, and withdrawal/prevention (W/P). Changes in the quality of formal education are more likely to have an impact on the sustainability of project interventions. Children are more likely to continue in school while the project is providing incentives. When these incentives have stopped, the motivation must come from the benefits of education. Children are more likely to drop out and start/return to work if educational quality is low with an uncomfortable environment and a low teacher-to-student ratio.

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

As a global project with a major focus on knowledge generation, there has been limited impact on any one country. One of the requirements in the RFPs was for the partner to demonstrate their knowledge of the policies and laws of the country as they relate to child labor and education. In all three countries visited in Asia, the CIRCLE projects were actively contributing to the implementation of national child labor elimination policies and were complimentary to EFA programs. Coordination with government programs mainly occurred with local government structures on an informal basis.

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

### **Logical Framework**

Section 5.1, Question 2 includes discussion on the use of the logframe in the context of reporting project achievements and weaknesses in its indicators. The project document was finalized some months into the project with some technical assistance.

Some observations on the logframe are as follows:

- The indicators for Purpose 1 (BP documentation) are very limited and make little indication of progress toward achieving this output.
- Output 2 refers only to “children at risk” being educated. Fortunately the project has ignored this limitation.
- The indicators for Purpose 2 only address issues relating to the second of the EI goals (strengthening education and enrollment in school). Again, fortunately, the project ignored this and pursued outputs that would contribute to all four EI goals, even though progress would not have been included in a report against the logframe indicators.
- As there has been no requirement to report against the logframe at the regional level, most of the staff is not familiar with it and the weaknesses identified above have not become apparent.

### ***Capacity-building of Implementing Partners***

There is no mention of the capacity-building of implementing partners in the project document or in the logframe. USDOL program managers said that they always considered partner capacity-building as part of a project and WI management note that they have in practice carried out much capacity-building, although only in those areas that needed it for efficient project implementation.

The Statement of Work in the Cooperative Agreement states, “the program will promote the capacity development of local NGOs...to respond creatively and effectively to the complex challenges of educating children removed from child labor or at risk of entering it” (p. 2). This direction is not reflected in the project document.

Capacity-building of partners in practice is discussed in Section 5.2, Question 8.

#### *9. Was the community-based approach successful?*

See response in Section 5.2, Question 4 on the community-based approach at the subcontract level.

#### *10. Did the project result in sufficient innovation?*

The CIRCLE project certainly did result in innovation. One of the keys to this innovation was the foundation provided by USDOL through making resources available for projects that would contribute to some clear but quite broad objectives while leaving the strategies open to a transparent competitive process. WI was able to manage this process, resulting in the selection of some very effective national and local NGOs—some of which were quite innovative.

Rather than attempting to discuss whether this was “sufficient” or not, it may be more beneficial to identify and examine some of the hindrances to the project being “more innovative.”

- USDOL does not have subgrant authority. The grant to WI was fairly flexible and enabled them to implement a project that did not have defined output targets. However, implementing partners were required to enter into a subcontract with strictly defined targets. Innovation was encouraged in the design, but there was little scope to develop the intervention based on experience and to respond to community initiatives. In practice, this lack of scope appears to have been less of a hindrance than expected although this may have been because the subcontracts were not as specific as the auditor would have liked (page v of audit Executive Summary).
- As proposals were competitive, it was not appropriate for CIRCLE staff to be involved in dialogue on the technical content. It is likely that innovations would be increased if it was possible to share experiences and ideas during proposal preparation.
- Although innovation was one of the criteria in the RFP, it was not systematically monitored during subcontract implementation. There are no specific paragraphs in the bimonthly or six-month reports asking the partners to identify and discuss their innovations.
- Similarly, some of the partners were unclear on what their innovations were. There was greater focus and increased learning when there was clarity on what the innovations were that they were implementing.
- Some of the subcontracts implemented by “established” child labor partner organizations appear to be replicating and possibly refining best practices that they have identified from their previous experience. They are useful interventions contributing to the W/P from child labor, and these practices can be incorporated in the BP document, although the projects are not innovative in themselves.
- A few subcontracts included elements that were largely from a continuation project from a previous donor. For example, a class management committee (CMC) for a nonformal education (NFE) class had had the same members for four years. The NFE center was providing NFE to new children each year and there was potential to introduce innovation, but the practice was closer to replication of a tried-and-tested method. Another project was continuing an established child club in one location while establishing new clubs in other areas. There may have been innovations within the child club concept, but these were not clear and it appeared to be more of a scaling-up exercise.
- The timeframe for the subcontracts range from 6 to 24 months, with most of them between 12 and 18 months. Although this range may be sufficient time to try an innovative activity, it is very short if the aim is to develop and establish an innovation in a community or in a workplace (e.g., a community watch group or a class management committee).

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

Following on from the “hindrances” identified above, strategies for achieving further innovation could include—

- Building as much flexibility into the subcontracts to partners as the Audit Office will allow. Control and quality can still be maintained by the regional office. Many possible innovations are only recognized during project implementation and flexibility in implementation is needed in order to be able to try them.
- Maintaining the focus on innovation that is started at the time of proposal preparation throughout implementation by requesting a report on the innovations at each reporting period.
- Ensuring that all projects are new or significantly different from any previous project that partners have implemented in the same area.
- Requiring longer periods of support to establish innovative community structures.

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

As the BP document is one of the two project purposes, there has already been some discussion on its progress in Section 5.1, Question 2. The current status of the document and its ongoing development is mainly being handled centrally and will therefore be reported on in the global synthesis report. This section will examine the main activities at the regional level that are contributing to the BP document—identifying best practices in the regular reports, Spotlight Stories, and BP reviews.

***Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices in Six-month Reports***

Implementing partners are required to report on lessons learned and emerging best practices in their six-month reports, which are then compiled into the regional six-month report. It appears as if some regions “cut and paste” from the partners’ reports, while others present their own analysis illustrated by the points raised by the partners. This additional analysis by the RM adds much value by initiating the process of sifting out important lessons and identifying the BPs. The regional reports are then accumulated in the global six-month technical progress report (TPR). The last two global TPRs (September 2006 and March 2007) have not included this section (although they were submitted by the regions) due to the fact that the process for documenting BP (the peer-review process) had started at this time.

This process has been described in detail here as one of the RMs considered that this, along with the BP reviews, was the main process for identifying BPs and was surprised that the regional analysis had been left out of the global TPR. Her own presentation of best practices to the evaluator was based on the regional reports rather than on the Spotlight Stories or on the BP reviews. There is a concern that some of this knowledge may be lost, as the BP reviews appear to be seen as the main process for identifying the BPs.

However, WI HQ is confident that the process of development of the BPs for the document includes using all of the resources: the spotlights, the report packs that are extensively provided, and the evaluations of the individual reviewers and summaries made by the RMs.

### ***Spotlight Stories***

The publication of Spotlight Stories is identified in the logframe as the only process indicator for the development of the BP document. The spotlights illustrate some positive change, usually in the life of an individual or a group. They do point to potential BPs, but—on their own—do not contain sufficient information on the context or on the “how” of the change illustrated.

The RLM for Round 3 contains a presentation on how the Spotlight Stories will contribute to the BP document. This presentation identifies an intermediate step of “Follow-up/M&E of the spotlight intervention: Is the practice innovative, successful, sustainable, and replicable?” (p. 28).

However, with few exceptions, spotlights have not been followed up on in order to provide further details or to present a further stage in the same situation that could have demonstrated the sustainability of the change.

One RM felt that if these stories were to contribute to the BP documents, it would have been more useful if they had been in the form of case studies in order to illustrate the points that partners identified as “lessons learned and emerging best practices.”

### ***Peer Reviews of Completed Projects to Evaluate BPs***

Conducting peer reviews in order to evaluate BPs following the completion of a subcontract is the main strategy being used to identify BPs. WI developed a comprehensive system that is both clear and rigorous. Clearly defined criteria covering effectiveness, innovation, educational/vocational relevance, stakeholder involvement, replicability, and sustainability are defined and a grading system is explained. Desk reviews are carried out by WI staff and by professional volunteers, who are often RSC members. The reviews by five to six reviewers are summarized by the RM and are being used as the basis for identifying BPs to include in the document.

The strengths of this process are that it has called a wide range of people to look at the project and that it has highlighted a good number of specific potential best practices.

Although the review process is described as a “peer” review, no NGO implementers have been included amongst the reviewers. The potential for increasing the insights on the BPs and for shared learning through the involvement of other CIRCLE implementing partners has been recognized and it is planned to be introduced in the next round of reviews. Field visits by BP reviewers are also being discussed as part of a more intensive review and knowledge-sharing process.

## ***Beyond the BP Document***

Apart from publishing and translating the finished document, there are no definitive plans yet on how the BPs will be disseminated to different groups of stakeholders. There is potential to use the network of CIRCLE partners to disseminate—and possibly modify to the local context—the BP document through national or subregional interactions. CIRCLE has just been awarded a cost increase of US\$85,000 in order to fund additional activities for the dissemination of the BP document to the regional stakeholders. Details have not yet been finalized for the number or location of workshops.

*13. Additional findings relevant to Project Design/Implementation Issues—Program level.*

### ***USDOL Program Manager Turnover***

During the five years since the project started in 2002, there have been six different program managers responsible for the CIRCLE project. WI reports that the support and communication with USDOL has been very good. However, the level of understanding and consistency of support must have been compromised to some degree given this turnover rate.

## **5.1.2 Conclusions**

The majority of the subcontracts addressed the EI goals to strengthen education systems and to raise awareness on education. An attempt was made to work more on the other two goals and this was successful in getting projects to focus on sustainability. Little has been attempted toward the policy objective. However, some Round 3 projects focusing on sustainability were facilitating local-level policy developments as part of their strategy for sustainability.

From the information available in the region, it is not possible to confirm whether the project is on track to achieve its first purpose—developing and documenting best practices—due to the paucity of indicators and also because regional offices do not report their progress toward this purpose. The project is on track to achieve and exceed its rolling targets for the second purpose—the education of at-risk children.

The reports on the USDOL common indicators are probably reasonably close to the correct figures.

Serious weaknesses in the project logframe were identified. As the project makes little use of the logframe for planning or reporting, these weaknesses have not been identified by the project, nor have they had much negative impact on implementation.

The framework and process used to call for subcontract proposals have led to a high degree of innovation by many of the implementing partners. Some constraints to achieving greater innovation have been identified and some suggestions on how to overcome these have been presented.

The BP document is being developed using the Spotlight Stories and the BP evaluation process. The potential contribution of the regional analyses of the BPs that have been identified by the

partners has been highlighted. The planned involvement of NGO partners in the BP evaluation process will have a range of benefits. There are no plans as yet on how the BPs will be disseminated to different groups of stakeholders. There is a potential to use the network of CIRCLE partners to disseminate—and possibly modify to the local context—the BP document through national or subregional interactions.

### **5.1.3 Lesson Learned**

1. Subcontract proposals should indicate if any of the proposed activities are a continuation of a previous or existing project. If they are, they should specify what the innovations are and explain the added value of the new proposal.

### **5.1.4 Recommendations**

1. The project should report against the same framework or hierarchy of objectives that was used to develop and present the project in the project document (subject to revisions). If additional criteria are needed, they should be added to, rather than replace, the indicators in the framework.
2. The process for identifying and documenting BPs should make use of the regular review and analysis, prepared by the regional offices, of the best practices identified by the partners in their reports.
3. NGO partners should be included in the process of peer reviewing completed projects to facilitate better identification of BPs and increased dissemination of experiences.
4. Detailed plans should be developed for the effective dissemination of the contents of the BP document, either at the national or subregional level. These plans should incorporate opportunities for interactive review and contextualization of the BPs.

## **5.2 SUBCONTRACT DESIGN/IMPLEMENTATION**

### **5.2.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR**

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

Overall, the reports and field visits verify that the quantitative targets have been achieved.

The majority of projects visited had already completed their activities. Based on a review of their reports, these have all nearly achieved, achieved, or overachieved their output targets. The USDOL common indicators of the completed projects in the two Asian regions are summarized in the table below. Details for each project are in Annex D.

**Table 6: USDOL Common Indicators, by Region**

Region	Completion Target	Actual Completion	Percentage Completed	Withdrawn/ Prevented Target	Actual Withdrawn/ Prevented		Percentage Withdrawn/ Prevented
					W	P	
Southeast Asia	1,548	1,675	108%	1548	942	772	111%
South Asia	6,235	9,067	145%	7,947	10,227		129%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,783</b>	<b>10,742</b>	<b>138%</b>	<b>9,495</b>	<b>11,941</b>		<b>126%</b>

The main project contributing to the high excess over target completing and withdrawn/prevented (W/P) figures in South Asia is Aasman in Nepal (397% of its completion target and 183% of its W/P target). It was not possible to visit the field area due to security concerns, but a meeting with the project management was held in Kathmandu in order to discuss the project. The excess achievement has come about due to a high level of mobilization of both financial and in-kind resources from the community and government agencies.

With one exception, all of the projects were able to show impact in the field and robust management systems. The only exception was an office visit (rather than one of the main partner visits that included visits to the field sites) to the NGO of a completed subcontract where the evaluator had concerns about the capacity of the NGO staff. It is likely that quantitative outputs had been achieved in accordance with the written reports but there was probably little sustainability of impacts. Without some field visits and interaction with stakeholders, it is not possible to draw any firmer conclusions. WI was aware of weaknesses in this partner during implementation and had carried out an additional site visit. This was the only partner organization visited that did not impress the evaluator with their commitment and capability.

There are two Round 3 projects visited that look as if they will have difficulty in achieving their output targets. These two projects are working well and learning lessons that will be useful for the BP documentation. Reasons for possibly not achieving their outputs include the following:

- Highly ambitious targets for the W/P of child labor in a completely new working area where the situation was not well understood
- A very low awareness level of all stakeholders in these new areas on the risks and hazards of child labor, which will take time in addition to effective messages to develop
- Shortage of suitable work for older children that would be acceptable
- A strong motivation for enrollment in alternative education; but without the awareness of hazards of child labor and the availability of suitable alternative work, there is limited withdrawal from hazardous work
- Family dependency on the children's income
- Reluctance of older children to take up education

- The high geographical disbursement and wide variety of work of children in rural areas
- A lack of awareness of the concept of appropriate work for children so that there is an unrealistic expectation of withdrawing older children completely from work

The RM is aware of these situations. She is providing advice and is also encouraging the partners to maximize learning.

*2. Were subcontract purpose and outputs realistic?*

Based on the points made in the preceding section, it can be concluded that for most of the partners, the purpose and outputs were realistic. The main challenges identified by the partners were—

- Achieving the outputs when the original budget and time period were reduced during the approval process. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.3, Question 3 on the functioning of the RSCs.
- Sustaining the achievements and outputs after the end of the project period given the short implementation time. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.5 on sustainability and impact.

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

Section 5.1, Question 4 responded to this question at the level of the whole project with the conclusion that the reports on the common indicators are probably reasonably close to the correct figures, although acknowledging that some errors were introduced. The reasons for these errors will be dealt with here.

***Level of Understanding of Child Labor By WI and Partner Project Staff***

Child labor is a specialist technical subject requiring knowledge of International Labour Organization (ILO) international conventions, national legislation, and a number of definitions that vary according to the institution using them. Some of the WI staff and some of the partner organizations were not previously working on children's issues and few were involved in child labor before the CIRCLE project. Section 5.2, Question 8 will discuss the fact that there has been little capacity-building of the partners in terms of their child labor expertise.

The definitions and instructions for reporting on the USDOL common indicators are quite complex and even those partners that seem to have reported on them correctly have indicated that they find them quite challenging. Additionally, there have been changes in the definitions during the project period. Added to this is the number of transfers these explanations have to go through to reach the appropriate person and the language translations/interpretations required.

Although in some countries, the issue is a lack of knowledge of national legislation; in others, the legislation is either absent or extremely vague (e.g., defining what constitutes hazardous work).

One output from one of the partners in the Philippines has been a primer on child labor in the sugar industry and this has been used by other partners.

Standard monitoring profiles have been developed globally in order to capture initial child profiles and to track students. Reporting formats in Round 3 have also been improved to facilitate easier recording of periodic and accumulative outputs. Additionally, the regularity of reporting on the common indicators has been increased to every two months.

### ***Retention/Completion***

The retention figure is sometimes used incorrectly. Children should only be recorded as “retained” if they are still in school *and* have satisfied the conditions for W/P. There are many children in current projects in the Philippines who are enrolled in part-time NFE and whose working hours have not been reduced. They have been reported as “retained” but not as “withdrawn.” WI was already aware of this and was in the process of correcting it. One of the problems from the partners’ perspective is that there is nowhere else in the reporting format to record the significant achievement of enrollment that they are expecting will lead to withdrawal in the future.

In Rounds 1 and 2, “completion” was only used for those students who completed a course of education. In Round 3, it has been modified to signify that they are still in school at the end of the subcontract period (i.e., they have not dropped out).

### ***Monitoring of Children’s Work Status***

The definition of “withdrawn” is dependent on a change in the child’s working situation. Attempts to record the children’s work status was started in Round 2, although this did not usually track changes in this status. A survey of child labor monitoring systems from Round 1 and 2 projects found that although education status was tracked in many situations, very seldom was the child’s work situation tracked. In Round 3, the student tracker form was introduced, which enables the recording of some information on the work situation, but still neglects to record the number of hours worked.

Monitoring work status is considerably more difficult than monitoring education for the following reasons:

- Obtaining access to children in their workplace is often difficult and the workplaces are geographically dispersed.
- Community stakeholders are more interested in putting effort and resources into education improvements than investing in monitoring children’s work.

Monitoring of the work status of the children by the CIRCLE subcontracts is still weak and therefore the figure for children withdrawn is dependent on the assumption that enrollment in an education program leads to a sufficient improvement in working conditions.

### ***Community-Based Child Labor Monitoring***

One partner in the Philippines (QK) is supporting the development of a community-based child labor monitoring (CLM) system that is run by the Barangay (local council). This idea is a significant achievement—the Barangay taking responsibility to monitor the education and work situation of children, prioritizing those who are out of formal school. In this situation, the challenge of having a sufficient knowledge of child labor reaches the next level.

The partners' monitoring reports are based on the information supplied by the Barangay Monitoring Committee. In interviews with the Barangay Monitoring Committee members, it was clear they possessed quality information on school dropouts and what was happening to them. They were also beginning to use the school dropout data to initiate their response. It was also obvious that basic misunderstandings exist concerning the minimum age and what child labor is—they were much stricter than the national legislation. This misunderstanding means that the partners' monitoring reports are flawed and, consequently, the figures for the common indicators are inaccurate.

However, in terms of the sustainable W/P of CL, this is an acceptable stage to go through. It is more important that the local committee takes this responsibility than having accurate data under the control of the project. Alongside this community-based CLM, there needs to be strong support for developing their understanding and capability.

### ***Children Under the Minimum Age for Work***

A number of partners in Nepal and Bangladesh are enrolling children age 7 to 12 in NFE, and despite still engaging in some form of work, they are recorded as “withdrawn” on the basis of a reduction in working hours. The Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) guidelines state, “Children under the minimum age must be completely removed from all forms of work before they may be counted in GPRA.”

### ***Children Previously Enrolled in School***

In interviews with children supported by two partners in Nepal, it was identified that some of the children had been in school prior to the support from CIRCLE. It became apparent that the children had been supported in school by a previous donor and that the partner was “sustaining” this achievement through the CIRCLE project. Due to the situation of these children who were in child labor (child domestic work and stone breaking), it seems appropriate to record these children as “prevented,” since keeping them in school prevented them from going back into a hazardous form of child labor. However, they had been reported as “withdrawn.” The WI staff were not aware that these children had been previously enrolled in school.

### ***Indirect Beneficiaries***

The GPRA guidelines state that children can only be included in these figures if they have been a direct beneficiary of the project. This guideline makes sense on the basis of having a clear attribution link. However, it gives an incentive for partners to focus on direct assistance rather than the presumably more sustainable interventions on awareness-raising, policy development,

and long-term sustainability. Two partners in South Asia claim to have been responsible for considerable indirect enrollment of child laborers in school. Visits were not made to these partners and it is not possible to comment on these claims. With the objective of developing more sustainable approaches to the elimination of child labor, the challenge of monitoring such approaches needs to be investigated.

#### **Capacity in Terms of Numbers of CIRCLE Supervisory Staff**

One final point should be made here and this will be expanded in Section 5.4, Question 6 on the support of partners by CIRCLE project staff. The time available for detailed support to the partners is limited given the regional nature of the area covered by each office.

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

Due to the selection requirements, all of the partners were NGOs and not community-based organizations (CBOs). Some operated at the national level and some were locally based. One partner in the Philippines was a network organization of CBOs with no salaried staff and was able to effectively achieve its objectives. In some instances, locally based partners struggled with the financial and reporting requirements but they were all successful in achieving their outputs.

Projects varied considerably in their effectiveness of working with and developing capacity in the community. This issue is reviewed in Section 5.5 on sustainability and impact.

The establishment of community-based CLM by one partner in the Philippines has been described in the previous section.

A partner in Nepal managed to more than double its school-enrollment target through mobilizing additional resources from both local and government sources.

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

Publicity occurred through electronic means using e-mail lists of other organization and NGO networks. Notices were also posted on the WI website and some newspaper advertising was used in order to increase the response from certain areas.

Respondents to this question were obviously a selected group who had all been successful in hearing about the funding opportunity. They were all content that the system was effective and it was impressive that organizations in remote locations had received information, even some that had no Internet access.

Despite advertising in Thailand for all three rounds, including preparing translations and advertising in newspapers, there was limited response and none of the proposals were selected.

Dissemination generally used the networks of child-focused organizations. One of the partners in the Philippines, QK, specialized in the capacity development of local institutions and only picked up on the Round 3 RFP. By integrating child labor issues into their longer term capacity-development work, they have created a potentially sustainable child labor elimination program that will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.5, Question 1. This case illustrates the importance of advertising beyond the circle of organizations already active in children's issues. When projects like QK are successful in winning funding, it carries the advantage of possibly providing quite innovative approaches for combating child labor. Additionally, there is a good chance they will begin to incorporate child labor issues into their programs supported by other donors.

There were some questions concerning the appropriateness of advertising so widely when the number of awards—particularly for Round 3—were so limited, prompting the suggestion that each round could have more limited geographical coverage. The cost-effectiveness for NGOs in terms of time spent on proposal preparation was low. One suggestion is to make the selection process based on concept notes so that only the selected partners would develop a full proposal. After completion of the competitive stage, the WI staff could be more involved with supporting the development of proposals, producing added benefits for all parties. Innovation in proposals could possibly be increased if the details were developed through dialogue.

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

Satisfaction was expressed concerning the work of the partners in all interactions with community members. In almost all situations, a previously unmet need was being addressed. Community members were most thankful for the provision of accessible and free education and often requested that the project be supported for a longer period.

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

The need for improved livelihood alternatives for both older children and their parents was the only issue raised consistently. Apart from that, they were very happy with the work of the implementing partners.

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

This section contains a summary of the capacity-building elements of the project for subcontractors. Critical discussion of these elements is in Section 5.4, Questions 5 and 6 in accordance with the questions in the TOR.

WI does not understand the CIRCLE project to be a technical assistance project and therefore no planned activities existed to provide capacity-building (with some small exceptions) beyond what was required for the management of the subcontracts. This issue is briefly discussed in Section 5.1, Question 8 as a project design issue.

The only formal capacity-building by the project was carried out in each of the RLMs. At these meetings, information and training were provided on the following subjects.

- Technical reporting
- Financial reporting
- Spotlight stories/lessons learned/best practices
- Sustainability strategies
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Student tracking by cohort (GPRA)
- Child labor monitoring
- Child profiles and tracking
- USDOL definitions

Subcontractors received a comprehensive manual containing training materials and sample formats to complement the training.

After the RLMs, support in these same areas was continued on an individual basis by phone, e-mail, and through office and site visits. Financial and progress reports would frequently be returned with guidance and requests for clarification/improvements. Partners with easy access to the regional offices would often call in to discuss and clarify issues.

This informal support was strongly influenced by the knowledge and skills of the regional staff, especially the RM. Where the RM had expertise in the area of child labor, technical support was also provided informally. Of the two RMs interviewed, one possessed more knowledge and experience in child welfare, protection, and labor issues, which was illustrated in the greater knowledge that was demonstrated by the partners in these subject areas.

*9. Additional findings relevant to project design/implementation issues—Project level.*

***Partnering with NGOs and Integrating Child Labor Into Other Development Agendas***

This point will be expanded in Section 5.5 on sustainability, but it should be noted here that significant achievements have been attained by partnering with NGOs that are already active in an area, although not in child labor and sometimes not even in child issues. Child labor has then been integrated into the NGOs' longer term and broader development agenda with their target community. This integration is illustrated particularly well by Manab Unnayan Kendra (MUK) (Bangladesh) and QK (Philippines).

### **Revisions to Budgets and Timeframes of Proposals**

The budgets for some of the accepted proposals were cut significantly in all three rounds. The main reasons for this were—

- All proposals within a budget range were submitted at the very top of the range.
- Some good proposals were reduced so they could be given projects from a lower category due to high competition for the “large” category.

Some proposals also had their timeframes reduced significantly in Round 3. For example, the STC proposal was reduced from 16 months to 9 months (and later extended to 10 months). The RFP stated, “subprojects may range in duration from 9-15 months.” The reason for this is because the STC project was funded under CIRCLE I and therefore had to be completely finished by July 2007. One of the main planned outputs of the STC project was a significant policy decision by the town council. By the close of the project, this decision was agreed upon, though not formalized, and dependent on the ongoing advocacy of STC working with their own resources.

RSC members said that their recommendations were based on the budgets and timeframes contained in the proposals and if these were significantly adjusted, their technical recommendations might be invalid.

### **5.2.2 Conclusions**

Virtually all projects are on track to meet their stated output targets. Overall, the percentage of education completion against target is 138% and the percentage of W/P against target is 126%. Most projects are close to their targets. One project in Nepal greatly exceeded its targets due to a high level of mobilization of resources from local and government sources.

All projects visited were able to show impact in the field and robust management systems with one exception.

Two ongoing Round 3 projects in the Philippines are unlikely to meet their targets due to the particularly challenging rural environment in which they are working.

Overall, projects are accurately measuring results in terms of the USDOL indicators, although there are a number of issues that have resulted in (in most situations) overreporting. The most important are—

- Level of understanding of child labor by WI and partner project staff
- Confusion over retention/completion and how to record children in education but not yet withdrawn
- Limited monitoring of children’s work status

- Community-Based CLM where the concepts of child labor and minimum age are not yet well-developed
- Children under the minimum age for work and enrolled in education recorded as withdrawn while still working
- Children previously enrolled in school and recorded as withdrawn rather than prevented.

The RFPs have been effective in reaching child-focused organizations throughout the region. RFPs have not been so effective in reaching organizations not working with children. NGO investment in proposal preparation achieved a low level of return due to the high level of competition.

Communities are very satisfied with the interventions that the partners are providing and, in most cases, these are addressing previously unmet needs.

Capacity-building of partners has been mainly on project management to enable partners to efficiently fulfill CIRCLE requirements. Technical capacity-building has been on an informal basis and dependent on the knowledge and skill of the RM.

Partnering with NGOs who have previously not been involved in child labor has been an effective way of integrating child labor into the NGOs' longer term and broader development agenda with their target communities.

Many project proposals have been significantly reduced in budget and some in timeframe. This reduction has affected both the target numbers and the viability of some of the planned outputs.

### **5.2.3 Lessons Learned**

1. Where community-based CLM is being developed, additional attention should be given to the development of knowledge and awareness on child labor legislation to ensure monitoring is based on national standards.
2. RFPs should be made accessible to organizations not currently working with children in order to facilitate the integration of child labor issues into wider development agendas.
3. When quality proposals are greatly in excess of available resources, there should be some means to narrow the catchment for proposals, possibly on a geographical basis.
4. Revisions to budgets and timeframes of proposals should carefully consider the technical viability of the amended project.

## **5.2.4 Recommendations**

1. A case study of the Aasman project should be made in order to identify and develop best practices in the area of resource mobilization from the community and from government when the security situation allows.
2. A system needs to be developed to estimate and recognize children W/P from child labor through indirect interventions in order to encourage more sustainable interventions.

## **5.3 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION**

### **5.3.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR**

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

The strongest partnerships in support of the project have occurred at the local level and are dependent on the interest, commitment, and skill of the implementing partners. Some of these are formalized, for example, Share a Child Movement's (SCM's) membership of the Regional Child Labor Committee in Cebu, the Philippines. QK has been instrumental in developing the City Technical Working Group in Sipalay, the Philippines, that was formed specifically to coordinate with QK's work for local capacity development. The partners display stronger links with other NGOs than with government agencies.

At the national level, the partnerships are weak. As the CIRCLE project is spread over many countries, it does not have a strong presence in any one country and in many countries there is no staff presence. RSC members and BP reviewers represent the main linkage at both the national and regional levels, which will be discussed in Section 5.3, Question 4.

Although one of the objectives of the RLMs was to initiate networking among CIRCLE partners, this has not been successful with only isolated instances of interactions and sharing. The main constraint to networking has been the lack of any subsequent meetings at either the country or the regional level. The partners' meeting in Kathmandu (where the Kathmandu-based partners met with the evaluator) was the first time they had met since the launch meeting. The sharing of experiences in this half-day meeting was fruitful and they were keen to continue the process. Similar benefits and interest were expressed at the stakeholders meeting in Manila.

The regional nature of the project makes networking among partners more time consuming and expensive, however even in countries with a considerable number of partners, there has been little networking. If the project seeks to establish closer networking and sharing, then it will have to take a more proactive role, either by organizing interactions at the national or regional level, or by encouraging partners to include networking within their proposals and budgets.

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

Coordination with ILO-IPEC, other international organizations, and with national governments has been varied. In the Philippines, WI is a member of the education subcommittee to the National Child Labor Steering Committee under the Department of Labor and Employment. Although the main committee is not that active, the subcommittee has representation from both government and NGOs and is active. This group and some of the CIRCLE-implementing partners were keen to discuss the CIRCLE experiences at the stakeholders meeting held in Manila.

In Nepal, despite the presence of the regional office, there is no formal linkage with ILO-IPEC or with World Education (the EI grantee). There is some sharing of information through the participation of a senior IPEC staff member on the RSC and BP reviews. Contact with World Education (WE) was only made at the regional grantees conference. WE and CIRCLE are both concentrating on education issues for child laborers and it is very likely there are lessons and experiences that could be shared. Certainly WE had developed education materials aimed at improving school and classroom quality which CIRCLE is not aware of.

In Bangladesh there is no formal linkage with ILO-IPEC.

A greater level of coordination occurs through some of the implementing partners, as some are also partners of IPEC and/or the EI grantee.

*3. How well have the Regional Selection Committees functioned?*

The criteria and process used for the selection of partners and proposals is well-documented. RSC members reported that the process and materials (monitoring format) provided were good and that the management had a neutral role. There is clear agreement among the RSC members and the partners that the process is clear and transparent.

The outcome is very good in terms of the partners selected. As mentioned earlier, with only one exception, the quality of the partner organizations met during the evaluation was excellent. Partnerships have been made with well-established and experienced NGOs with medium- to long-term commitment to the community in which they are working. Partner selection was performed well and this has had a major impact on implementation and particularly on sustainability. The volunteer RSC members have contributed significantly to this success.

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

As mentioned earlier, although one of the objectives of the RLMs was to initiate networking among CIRCLE partners, this has not been successful. There have only been isolated instances of subsequent interactions and sharing. The main constraint to this has been the lack of any subsequent meetings at either the country or the regional level.

Three Round 2 partners based in Kathmandu had decided at the RLM to meet every 3 months, but this did not materialize in practice. Sharing is usually appreciated when it occurs as part of some other activity, but it is seldom given sufficient priority for organizations to meet solely for that objective. Information sharing and networking could be established if partners were to meet together as part of a periodic or mid-project/end-of-project review, as will be discussed in Section 5.4, Question 6.

BP reviewers have benefited from the experience of learning about other projects, but these are remote “teams” and do not meet and discuss their observations.

The CIRCLE electronic newsletter was introduced as an attempt to promote networking among partners and has been partially successful. Partners do not see it as a priority and RSC members consider it only for the implementing partners.

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

The selection criteria ensures that all partners are registered NGOs and have a certain level of capacity. The most consistent challenge has been to get the partners to submit quality reports, in particular the figures for the USDOL common indicators. A significant factor was whether the appropriate staff attended the RLM. As the RLM involved a “foreign trip” for most participants, it sometimes attracted NGO members that were not going to be involved directly in project management. In some cases, “consultants” attended.

In the third RLM, clearer directions on who should attend was given and all projects, whatever their size, were required to send two staff including an accountant. This arrangement resolved some of the problems, but not all.

### **5.3.2 Conclusions**

Project partners generally have good links with other NGOs at the local level, but this is limited with government agencies. Networking between CIRCLE partners is very limited and the one meeting at the RLM has not been sufficient to make this happen.

Links with ILO-IPEC and with other EI grantees is varied: good in the Philippines and limited in Nepal and Bangladesh.

RSCs have been an effective method of selecting good partners and projects. The process is recognized as clear and transparent.

### **5.3.3 Lesson Learned**

If developing networking among partners is an important objective, additional resources need to be provided either by giving the partners the responsibility and budget to do this or by the regional office calling partners together.

## 5.4 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

### 5.4.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised by USDOL

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

All of the stakeholders that have been involved directly with the project management have been very satisfied with their efficiency. The following points have been highlighted:

- There has been consistency of senior staff throughout the project in all positions with the exception of some changes in the Project Manager.
- The CIRCLE Director has provided good leadership and formed good relationships with the grantor and colleagues.
- The Regional Managers (RMs) have been given responsibility and a clear framework for reporting and have been trusted to implement the work.
- RMs received support quickly when needed.
- The RMs have an informal forum to discuss and clarify issues.
- There is a good learning environment and systems and formats have been revised based on experience.
- All of the subcontract managers/directors report that the RMs are very cooperative, provide good support, and respond quickly to all communications.

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

Communication between headquarters and regional offices has been good. The RMs were required to submit a biweekly report, which proved a useful and easy way of keeping central management up-to-date with regional activities.

Communication relating to the Spotlight Stories was slow and the website (Spotlight Stories) was not updated as regularly as the RMs would have liked.

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

An obvious challenge to a global project of this nature, with four regional offices and each region covering a number of countries is the communication and support system. The more specific subcontract implementation support is discussed in Section 5.4, Question 6. Management communications at both the regional and subcontract levels have functioned extremely well as detailed in the preceding sections.

Many of the implementing partners have found the bimonthly technical report requirement a burden, especially since they indicate that most other donors are working on a three-month cycle. However, first-round guidelines required the submission of a monthly report, so the situation has improved.

There is some debate on the most efficient means of disbursing payments to subcontractors. The present system of disbursing directly from WI headquarters enables financial control to be maintained centrally, but suffers from two disadvantages relative to disbursement from the regional offices:

- Fees include high minimum bank charges whatever the size of the transfer.
- The regional office is not in control and not always aware of the current disbursement situation.

One solution includes transferring funds to the regional office so they are able to make the smaller individual disbursements. This system could work well in the country of the regional office, but may face difficulties and expenses in the other countries covered by the region.

Section 5.2, Question 9 identified the issue of the timeframe of some proposals in Round 3 being drastically reduced before being approved, and lesson learned #5 addressed the technical aspects of this. This timeframe seems to be a bureaucratic requirement that compromises the outcomes of the project.

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

WI already had offices in the two countries where the CIRCLE regional offices were established. Some (but not all) of the other countries had WI offices. Where a country office existed, there was easier access to information on NGO networks for the distribution of the RFPs. In addition, some logistical support was available when CIRCLE staff visited the partners. Neither of these issues was a serious constraint on management and implementation.

5. *Was the management structure (U.S. headquarters and three regional offices) able to provide sufficient oversight (site monitoring) and capacity-building of local organizations?*
6. *How satisfied were the NGOs with the orientation, training, and support received by CIRCLE project staff?*

These two questions in the TOR will be answered together.

The Asia region has a regional office in Kathmandu covering South Asia and, since May 2004, a subregional office in Manila covering Southeast Asia. For Rounds 2 and 3, the SEA office has functioned as a regional office apart from the RLMs that were carried out jointly with SA. For a period the SEA reported to headquarters via the Kathmandu office but there was little added

value and they returned to direct reporting. In effect, the CIRCLE project has had four regional offices.

The CIRCLE director considers the structure to be functional and thinks that sufficient support and capacity-building were achieved through delegation to RMs and resulted from their presence in the field.

The main means for capacity-building of partners and subcontract supervision/monitoring were the RLMs and site visits, complemented by regular communication from the office.

### ***Regional Launch Meeting***

The RLMs were the main tool for developing the required management capacity in the partner organizations. They have been described in Section 5.2, Question 8. RLMs provided a thorough introduction to the project-reporting requirements and introduced some child labor technical information, mainly in connection with USDOL definitions and monitoring requirements. In general, these launch meetings achieved their objectives. The main weakness from the project perspective was the turnover and/or the inappropriate representation of NGO staff.

The partners found these launch meetings a very useful basis for establishing their subcontract management, giving clear parameters for project implementation and monitoring. Partners who were new to child labor were appreciative of the technical input on terms and monitoring requirements, whereas those partners that were already experienced in child labor felt they missed an opportunity to develop their technical knowledge in this area.

Members appreciated the invitation of accountants to Round 3 because NGO directors were often unable to follow the financial instructions.

It was also noted by one NGO that the cost of the RLM was high in relation to the budget of some of the subcontracts. A national launch meeting could be a more cost-effective option, although this may prove more expensive in terms of CIRCLE staff time.

### ***Site Supervision and Monitoring***

The midterm evaluation recommended an increase in the frequency of site visits by CIRCLE staff and that is endorsed by the current evaluation. Since that recommendation was made, CIRCLE aimed to make at least two site visits per project with at least one of these by the RM. A review of the comprehensive “trip log” of site visits to partners selected for this evaluation maintained by CIRCLE staff indicates they have achieved that target. For the partners working in the country of the RM, there are a number of informal discussions in the regional office in addition to the site visits.

Some visits have been made by non-CIRCLE WI staff, but these are not as useful for the partner, do not provide clear feedback to the RM, and do not contribute to relationship-building that is important when providing remote support. They may be useful as “additional” visits, but should not be counted as CIRCLE site visits.

Implementing partners were appreciative of visits, especially by the RMs, but would like to have had more regular visits and support. In particular, partners said that it would be useful to have a review meeting after six months or halfway through the subcontract with the RM in order to review progress and discuss challenges/alternatives. The SA RM felt that child monitoring was stronger in Nepal than in the region's other countries because of the increased possibility of interaction with other partners.

### ***Subsequent National/Regional Meetings***

An issue frequently raised was that since the RLM, there have been no further national or regional meetings in which to review progress and share experiences and ideas. It would be useful to implement a periodic review of progress with all of the active partners, which would also encourage sharing and networking.

### ***Capacity-building***

One CIRCLE project goal was to provide capacity-building to partners only in the area of management and reporting to enable the partners to carry out these functions effectively. The strategies implemented to facilitate this goal were to hold the RLMs and offer distance support and a limited number of site visits. There is consensus that this capacity-building was of good quality and was generally successful. The fact that there are still difficulties in reporting on the USDOL common indicators (see Section 5.2, Question 3) shows that more could be done.

Many of the partners were disappointed that there were very few opportunities to develop their understanding and skill in the area of child labor elimination. Some CIRCLE partners were already experienced in child labor interventions, but for many, this was a new area. These comments came from both groups. Suggestions for specific topics included the following:

- Concept of child labor
- International and national legislation on child labor
- Education and the consequences of child labor
- Interventions for the elimination of child labor
- Child rights

Though technical support was provided for child labor issues, it was limited to only what was needed for the implementation of the project. Bal Ashram Trust (BAT) in India, an organization with experience in child labor, was appreciative of the student tracker that was introduced by CIRCLE.

Capacity development in the area of child labor elimination would have contributed to the implementation of the subcontracts but, more importantly, would have significantly contributed to the ongoing work of the (ex)partners. Many of the CIRCLE partners, including those not previously active in child labor, are continuing their involvement through other projects.

The technical capacity of the RMs was one of the limitations in providing support. The SEA RM had considerable experience and was able to provide advice and support as part of regular monitoring and support. Although the SA RM did not have this background, there are other ways of providing this support, for example by using the expertise of the RSC members. The main point is not the knowledge of the RMs, but that CIRCLE did not see the technical capacity development of the partners as an important potential additional output.

#### **5.4.2 Conclusions**

Project management at global and regional levels has been efficient and partners feel well-supported. Communication at all levels of the project has been effective.

The RLMs achieved their objectives for developing the required management capacity in the partner organizations. Site supervision has increased since the midterm evaluation to approximately two visits per subcontract. These visits were useful, but partners would have appreciated more regular reviews and opportunities to share experiences with other organizations.

The project only provided limited technical capacity development on child labor, mainly in the area of monitoring, in order to enable partners to fulfill the requirements of the subcontract. An opportunity has been missed to develop additional knowledge and skills on child labor elimination.

One main point in this section concerns whether a regional project structure was able to provide sufficient oversight (site monitoring) and capacity-building of the implementing partners. Regarding the achievement of specific project outputs, the answer is “yes,” but there are clear calls from the implementing partners for the following:

- More frequent monitoring/review/support visits
- Interactions with other partners to discuss progress and share experiences and learning
- Support to develop their knowledge and abilities in child labor elimination.

Probably the main constraint to providing these areas of support was the national and regional disbursement of the subcontracts. The costs (in time and money) for site visits and for calling partners together would have been high. The negative consequences of a regional management structure were as follows:

- High cost of the initial RLM for each round
- Costly, and therefore limited, monitoring and support by CIRCLE staff
- The absence of further regional or national meetings/workshops
- Limited networking/interaction among partners

It can be argued that for a knowledge-generation project like CIRCLE, the benefits obtained from the wide geographical spread justified the regional strategy. Looking ahead, it is recommended that any scaling up and replication should be done at the national level.

### **5.4.3 Lessons Learned**

1. Alternative methods for making financial disbursements from the grantee to the subcontractors should be analyzed before commencing another project with dispersed subcontracts.
2. When a project has overlapping phases there needs to be some flexibility in allocating the budget of the two phases so it does not hinder project implementation
3. Future projects that are implementing child labor elimination strategies through local organizations should include technical capacity development of these partners as one of its intended outcomes.

### **Recommendation**

CIRCLE II should facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices among its partners and other organizations with shared objectives through national (possibly regional) interactions. The objective should reflect the concepts of both refining and disseminating best practices.

## **5.5 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT**

### **5.5.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised in the TOR**

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

As part of the training of partners, the CIRCLE project made a clear statement of what they understood by sustainability (see boxed text).

“We will use the basic definition that sustainability means lasting and durable, and that achievements remain after the funding has ended. In the context of your projects, it means that systems are in place so that the benefits of the project can continue after the end of a specific intervention, or after your CIRCLE subcontract ends. Sustainability does not only involve money, but implies investing in the human capital resource base for future generations. Sustainability does not mean that the whole project must just continue, but that the objectives, impacts, or benefits of the project are met by other means and, ideally, are adopted and carried on through ownership by the community.”

***Source: Training material on sustainability for RLM***

The strategy for sustainability, as understood through interviews with CIRCLE staff, was—

1. Community mobilization. Getting community members/organizations and government bodies to contribute to the costs of education and other child labor withdrawal interventions.
2. Capacity-building. Building the capacity of NGOs to continue effective interventions to withdraw children through education. One expectation was that they would continue in this work either through their own or other funding sources.

The EI goals identify “sustainability” as one of the four goals. There is a suggestion from this, reinforced by the requirement of CIRCLE subcontract proposals to contribute to at least one of the four goals, that sustainability is a separate activity that is not required if one of the other goals is selected. In practice, CIRCLE has emphasized sustainability in all of the subcontracts.

The principle of mobilizing resources from different actors within the community was modeled by CIRCLE through the principle of “matching grant,” whereby each partner had to commit a certain level of resources from their own organization toward the subcontract budget.

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

The response to Question 1 in Section 5 attempted to identify the project’s understanding of, and strategy for, sustainability. Without specific targets and indicators for sustainability, one needs first to review the impact to date and the possible sustainability of that impact, which follows in Section 5.5, Question 3. An attempt to answer whether the project’s strategy was adequate and appropriate will then be made in Section 5.5, Question 5 on lessons learned in terms of the project’s accomplishments in sustainability.

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

This evaluation had the unusual opportunity of reviewing the activities of some projects that had already been closed for some time because of the phased nature of the subcontracts. For example, a detailed field visit was made to MUK in Bangladesh whose CIRCLE subcontract was closed in September 2005. It was therefore possible to obtain more information on the sustainability of the impact than is usual. The impact on a range of stakeholders, from the children to WI itself, will be reviewed in turn.

### ***Impact on Children***

Much information was obtained on the impact on children, both from the implementing partners, from the children themselves, and from their parents.

Children who were enrolled in education during the project have a high retention rate during the post-project period. Some examples follow:

- Fourteen (14) months after the project: Support is continuing to be provided with school support for all the 577 children who “completed” (The Laura Vicuna Foundation [LVF], the Philippines).
- Thirteen (13) months after the project: Out of 44 nonformal education (NFE) students in one center, 17 are now in school (with support for uniform and books from another donor); 15 returned home and were reunited with their families; and 12 are unknown, probably working (Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights [CWISH], Nepal).
- Thirteen (13) months after the project: From 71 children who “completed,” 50 are still being supported in school and will be supported until they leave school (Community Action Center [CAC], Nepal).
- Seven (7) months after the project: We continue to support 25 of the 100 children who “completed” (Lingap, the Philippines).
- Nine (9) months after the project: Twenty percent (20%) have returned to their rural home and 90% of the remaining children are still in school and supported by the NGO (SCM, the Philippines).
- Just completed: 98 children are in formal school and none have dropped out during the year (STC, Nepal).

There is consensus among stakeholders that there have been significant changes in the attitudes and behavior of most of the children who have been direct beneficiaries. The changes noted below are not isolated examples but points that were repeatedly made:

- Ability to study (never been to school before)
- Help to other family members and other children in paying attention to education
- Discipline and respect
- Use of more gentle language
- A good understanding of child rights
- Increased ability to resist exploitation and cheating
- A realistic understanding of what appropriate work is
- Ability to speak with confidence

- Improved personal cleanliness and cleaner clothes
- Assistance to other child laborers in need

***Illustrations of children’s awareness of child rights: (Centre for Services and Information on Disability [CSID], Bangladesh)***

*Disabled children have written to the Police Commissioner themselves requesting that traffic police assist them in crossing busy road junctions. This responsibility has now been included in the training curriculum of traffic police.*

*At the end of a discussion with a group of disabled children, a 17-year-old boy asked the evaluator, “What are you going to do with the information that you have collected from us?”*

Many children had a poor understanding of what the law is regarding child labor.

Significant changes to their life and work situations have included—

- Leaving work and either returning home or living with a relative while studying
- Leaving work and providing domestic support at home while studying
- Ceasing to be alone and thinking he was the only child laborer
- Learning skills and being given more responsible work
- Experiencing a reduction in working hours due to NFE or school commitments
- Changing to less hazardous work

One negative impacts on the work situation has also been identified:

- Occasional instances of children having to make up for the time at school by working late

Some impacts identified with a group of parents of disabled children were as follows (CSID, Bangladesh):

- After receiving physical therapy, a girl is now able to walk
- Medicine has been made available that will relieve seizures.
- Support has been provided that enables children to attend school.
- Access to health services for the family has been facilitated by Marie Stopes

The project enabled a large number of children to enroll either in NFE and/or in formal school (9,067 and 2,437 “completed” an education session in SA and SEA). At a minimum, they have received 1 year of education, but these figures indicate the majority of these children are still in

school and many are being supported by the partner organization. Often this ongoing support from the partner is a partnership with the school (reduced fees), employer (admission fee and/or uniform), and parents. The main condition for this ongoing support is the partner's link and sense of responsibility with the local community. Most of the partners selected were already established in the subcontract locations and they intend to continue to work in that same location even if they are not a "local" organization themselves.

### ***Impact on Child Organizations***

Child clubs as institutions are still dependent on their patron NGO, but are developing some independent institutional capacity and have independent action:

- Emergency funds have been raised and are used for the needs of the members.
- The members are challenging domestic employers to send their child workers to school.
- Members attend as observers at the District Child Welfare Board (Banke, Nepal).

All of those developed as part of subcontracts have continued and some additional ones have been established since the end of the project (MUK, Bangladesh).

Many of the children's attitude and behavior characteristics identified above were strongest where child clubs were established. Children's personal development and self-confidence has clearly been enhanced through participation in the child clubs.

#### ***Illustration of the personal development and sense of responsibility that members of child clubs possess:***

*In response to the question, "What suggestions do you have for [the NGO] in order to improve their work with other children who are working and not able to go to school," they replied—*

- *"We can go to the employers who have child laborers and convince them to allow the children to go to school."*
- *"We can meet with the children and talk with them and their parents."*
- *"We can talk with leaders in the community."*
- *"We can talk with the bazaar committee about not employing children."*
- *"We will invite child laborers to play and convince their parents not to engage them in work."*
- *"We will invite children to our club."*

*Quotes are from five girls and four boys who were CIRCLE beneficiaries and members of a child club that has been formed since closure of the subcontract (MUK, Bangladesh).*

### ***Impact on Parents***

Parents have been important stakeholders in most of the subcontracts and have been an important focus of many of the awareness-raising activities. In virtually every case, they are strongly committed to their children's education. The withdrawal of their children from child labor is also expressed, but with varying degrees of strength. The fact that their children are or have until recently been contributing to the family income is a significant challenge for them. The motivation to withdraw their children from work is mainly due to the need for education rather than the need to protect them from work hazards.

Parents are making sacrifices in order to achieve this and additional workloads for both the father and mother were often a direct consequence of enrolling their children in school. Another consequence and concern was that W/P often led to an increase in the debt burden carried by the family.

### ***Impact on Community Groups***

Many of the subcontracts established community organizations to support NFE centers and improve the capacity and awareness of schools. With a few exceptions, the members of these groups had little idea of what work was appropriate for children of different ages and were not aware of national legislation (18 was often considered the minimum age for work). Generally, they were extremely dependent on the ongoing support from the NGO partner and some had ceased soon after the subcontract was completed.

One subcontract that had closed seven months ago still had three out of four parents groups meeting regularly to discuss education, labor, and gender issues. They continue to receive strong support and input from the partner (SCM, the Philippines).

### ***Impact on Schools***

There has been some small-scale infrastructure support that has made minor improvements to the facilities at schools. In some places, this support has been used as a starting point for large-scale fundraising from other sources, including international NGOs and government, which has resulted in more significant development.

Some partners have also used this infrastructure contribution to negotiate reduced or zero admission fees for child laborers.

Raising the awareness and skills of teachers and school management committees (SMCs) has also been an important project output. Progress has mainly been in education improvements with limited awareness on the hazards or legislation regarding child labor.

A number of partners have been active in developing support for additional teachers in order to address the problem of overcrowding and high student– teacher ratios. One partner claims that there are still 18 “volunteer” teachers out of an original 26 (13 from the project, 13 from the community) 11 months after subcontract completion (Aasman, Nepal).

Most NFE centers are dependent on external funding for their support. One subcontract established 15 NFE centers and now, 20 months after its closure, 4 centers are continuing with community support and they currently have their second batch of post-CIRCLE students in them. Many of the first batch of non-CIRCLE graduates have also been enrolled in formal school (MUK, Bangladesh).

### ***Impact on Local Government and Policy***

Few of the subcontracts had specific outputs that would influence local government policy, but those that have occurred successfully have the potential for long-term impact.

In Sipalay, the Philippines, a partner had a working relationship with the City Technical Working Group (CTWG) due to other ongoing projects. Since winning the CIRCLE subcontract, this partner has integrated child welfare and child labor issues with their ongoing work, which resulted in the CTWG issuing an ordinance to the Barangays (village councils) to give attention to the protection of women and children. It also instructs the Barangays to allocate a budget for these activities. Some of the Barangays are now contributing to the expense of running NFE classes (QK, the Philippines).

In Dang, Nepal, a partner is facilitating the District Development Committee (DDC) to develop a Child Labor Policy that will include the development of a community fund raised from gravel contractors (the children are involved in stone breaking) and the commitment of some DDC funds. Verbal commitments were made and the partner is trying to formalize the arrangements by the end of the 10-month project (STC, Nepal).

### ***Impact on Implementing Partners***

There has been a significant impact on some of the CIRCLE partners, in particular those that were not previously involved in child labor before. In all of the partners' awareness and commitment have been developed. In terms of knowledge and skills, there has been some development based on their experience but as noted in Section 5.4, Questions 5 and 6, there was no attempt to specifically develop their technical capacity in child labor. Some significant developments have occurred in the following partners who were visited during the evaluation.

- QK in the Philippines is an organization that specializes in developing the capacity of local government and has worked for some time in the same area to achieve this. The CIRCLE subcontract has enabled it to integrate child welfare and child labor issues into one of its ongoing projects in one rural municipality. They are also carrying out capacity development in four other municipalities and they have begun to integrate child welfare issues into these projects within their existing funding. Through their work with CIRCLE, they have acquired new skills and also discovered that child labor is a useful indicator of poverty.

“Winrock gave us the opportunity [within our existing work] to focus on the poorest.”

*Teodorico Peña, Quidan Kaiserhan, Director*

- Backward Society Education (BASE) in West Nepal has, in the past year, incorporated child labor in its NGO policy and its five-year strategy. This strategy is not an impact borne solely of the CIRCLE project, since they have also been a partner to ILO-IPEC and to WE (the EI grantee in Nepal).
- MUK in the Philippines report that before their CIRCLE subcontract, they had no emphasis on education in their program. Twenty months after the closure of their subcontract they are still involved in facilitating community support for NFE centers in a scaled-down version of the CIRCLE subcontract.

“CIRCLE is not just a project; it is a social responsibility that we are trying to fulfill.”

*Asaduzzaman Selim, Executive Director, MUK*

### ***Impact on Winrock International***

WI has developed knowledge and skills in both education and child labor and is managing a global project implemented through local partners. Some of the key lessons from this will be recorded in the BP document as the “CIRCLE project as a whole” is being treated as a BP, which will involve highlighting some of the key features and lessons learned.

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

Most of the local community organizations established by the subcontract partners do not yet have the capacity to secure resources or to sustain their activities.

CIRCLE funding is one part of the portfolio of donors and projects for most partners, which has led partners previously uninvolved in child labor to pursue funding for additional work in this area. Sustainability of the impact is, in many situations, dependent on the partner locating further funding given the short time period of most CIRCLE subcontracts. Sometimes sustainability lasts long enough to support an ongoing activity, such as scholarships for children, and at times, it is an expansion of activities. Some examples follow:

- HOPE in the Philippines has been working in three schools to reduce the dropout rate of children. They have a proposal pending to continue in the same three schools, to start in an additional three schools, and to construct an additional room in each of the six schools. (HOPE had not been involved in education prior to the CIRCLE subcontract).
- The Centre for Services and Information on Disability in Bangladesh currently has nine donors mainly, but not all, international.
- Share a Child Movement, Inc. in the Philippines was founded on donations from local businesses and continues to acquire much of its funding from this source. SCM is using funds raised from this source to maintain the scholarship support started under CIRCLE.

There has been some access to locally available resources, but this is most often used by local institutions to continue some improvements or activities initiated by the subcontract. An exception to this is QK, which is obtaining funding directly from local government for its capacity-building work.

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

### **Timeframe of Subcontracts**

One issue to be discussed here is the timeframe for the subcontracts that ranged from 9 to 24 months, with many of them for 12 months. Without exception, the partners raised the issue of the subcontract timeframe within the context of sustainability, indicating that it was too soon to expect any sustainable change to have taken place. The opportunity to explore this issue in more detail was offered at the Kathmandu partners meeting. In response to the question below, the following responses were made:

*“What would be the added value of an additional 24 months to the subcontracts?”*

**Benefits:**

- *Schooling habit established*
- *Parents' capability and commitment increased*
- *Children enrolled in appropriate classes*
- *Local institutions strengthened*
- *More holistic projects possible*
- *Less pressure/headache for partners.*

**Negative effects:**

- *Fewer projects*
- *Fewer children assisted*
- *Less innovation.*

*Source: Kathmandu partners meeting*

The time period of the subcontracts does have an effect on the sustainability of the impact, but this needs to be evaluated in the context of its effect on other project outcomes.

The short timeframe of the CIRCLE subcontracts has been enough to provide a specific service to children. Then, either due to the partners' success in obtaining funding from a different source, or due to their local roots in the community and a sense of obligation, many of them have continued to provide support for these specific services.

However, specific services to children do not bring about lasting change in parents, teachers, employers, the wider community, and local government. It is the development of awareness in

these groups and local institutions that are going to create more significant changes in the longer term (see the boxed text for how one partner expressed this point).

*A 10-month project was only enough time to test an innovation (incentives for regular attendance) and develop some of the local institutions (Parent-Teacher Association [PTA], Barangay Council for the Protection of Children, and teachers). These local institutions were not developed enough to expect them to take on the responsibility. And it is unrealistic to expect a system/method to be sustainable when it has only been tested for one school year. Capacity of school and teachers cannot be developed sufficiently in 10 months to expect them to be sustainable.*

*Julio Labayen—HOPE Volunteers Foundation, Executive Director, Philippines*

### ***Focused Interventions***

The CIRCLE subcontracts have been generally narrowly focused; some to reduce dropout rates in schools, some to improve school quality, others to help out-of-school youth, others to re-enroll children in school, and still others focusing on recognition of hazardous work. Focusing on just one of these issues is unlikely to make a significant difference to the number of children in labor and out of school because there is no holistic program to deal with both preventive and curative measures.

### ***Child Labor and Wider Community Development***

The projects that illustrated the most likelihood of having a sustainable impact were not implemented by partners that had previously worked in education or child labor. Their expertise and experience was in broader community development and, in response to both community need and the funding opportunity, had integrated education and child labor into their existing development program.

### ***Link Between the Partner and the Community***

This link has already been referred to but needs to be made explicit. One of the strengths of the partners (and a success of the selection process) was that all of them have a long-term relationship with the community and a sense of accountability. None of the partners met had the attitude of implementing a turnkey project or had intended closing their office upon project completion. They were accountable to the community to at least search for alternative funding for the children who had been supported in school. The focus of sustainability has not been in the interventions but rather, in the partners selected to carry out the subcontract they designed.

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

The answer to this is clearly “yes” and this has already started (see the response to Section 5.5, Question 4). There are also many more opportunities to do this as well as opportunities to learn from the lessons of this project and to maximize lessons from the BP documentation to scale up the project in an effective way.

One of the dangers of “scaling up” projects is that the partner will be distanced from the community to which they are accountable. Taking these systems and practices to scale is dependent on the availability of local partners with appropriate programs with which to integrate. Scaling up may involve a larger number of carefully selected partners rather than larger projects.

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

The reporting format for the six-month technical report encourages identification of best practices and this has been done at the subcontract, regional, and central level. This reporting collected a wealth of ideas and it is expected that this will contribute to the BP document. The BP document is relying mainly on the “best practice reviews” to identify BPs (see Section 5.1, Question 12).

Spotlight stories have been communicated through the CIRCLE website but this is only moderately used by partners and likely used little outside of CIRCLE.

Little communication exists between partners, and less with other organizations, concerning the best practices, lessons learned, and other experiences obtained from implementing the CIRCLE project. The partners expressed a strong interest in a periodic partners meeting (possibly at a national level rather than regional) to review progress of their subcontracts and to share their experiences.

At least one partner (BASE in Nepal) has been informally passing on some of their identified best practices in education and working with out-of-school children to at least six local community-based organizations with whom it cooperates.

Two partners have produced their own best practices documentation (see Section 5.5, Question 8 below for details).

***Additional Findings Related to Sustainability and Impact if Applicable***

*8. Production of written materials.*

The partners developed a number of written materials, either as a formal output or a tool to support their work. Those that came to the evaluators’ notice during the visits were as follows:

- A primer on child labor on sugar farms (LVF, the Philippines)

- An advocacy package of postcard, poster, stickers, a booklet, and a training manual (Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center [CWIN], Nepal)
- A booklet on best practices in child rights forums (CWIN, Nepal)
- A draft manual including best practices on how to raise awareness on child labor issues (BASE, Nepal)
- A brief awareness-raising booklet on child labor and education (MUK, Bangladesh).

At least some of these are now out of print and there is an ongoing demand and use for them. Others may be out-of-date or not of particularly good quality.

The main investment required for these written materials has been spent and a specific limited grant may be effective in making these more widely available. The RMs are usually aware of these materials, but there have been no initiatives to reprint them as the subcontracts are already completed.

### **5.5.2 Conclusions**

The two strategies for sustainability were to encourage/enable local groups and organizations to mobilize locally accessible resources (in-kind and financial) and to build the capacity of NGO partners so they can continue effective interventions to withdraw children through education.

The short duration of all of the subcontracts has led to limited impact on the capacity of local groups and organizations (such as parents groups and child clubs) to act independently on child labor issues.

Almost all of the NGO partners are continuing to work on child labor and education within the same location following the closure of the subcontract. Some have expanded this work to projects supported by other donors in new locations. Most have been successful in obtaining at least some follow-up funding.

There have been significant positive changes in the attitudes and behavior of the direct beneficiary children, a good school “completion” rate during the project period, and high levels of support by partners. Additionally, retention rates have been recorded up to 14 months after subcontracts were completed.

Child organizations and clubs have reinforced the changes in children’s personal development. These clubs are still dependent, but are beginning to develop their own institutional capacity.

The small number of subcontracts with an objective to influence local policy and the short subcontract periods has resulted in limited impact in this area.

There has been a significant impact on the awareness and commitment of partners to work on child labor issues and most of them are either continuing some work or expanding it to other areas.

There is potential to scale up many of the interventions—supplemented by the lessons learned and the BPs identified. When scaling up these interventions, it is important to ensure that the close link between the implementing partner and the community, which results in a high level of accountability by the NGO, is not lost in the process.

Many best practices have been identified by the partners and by WI, but there has been little discussion on them and dissemination to date. There is an opportunity to both further develop and share these lessons with the implementing partners and other organizations.

Many of the written materials developed by the NGO partners in order to support their training and awareness-raising are now out of print. A specific limited grant may be effective in making these more widely available.

### **5.5.3 Lessons Learned**

1. The short timeframe of the subcontracts has had both positive and negative consequences. Specific direct services have been provided to a large number of children and partners are maintaining many of these. However, outcomes have been limited in terms of strong local groups and institutions that could provide a positive influence from within the community.
2. Narrowly focused projects provide specific services but do not significantly impact the overall number of child laborers or child labor trends.
3. Implementing partners with both experience with and current activities in community development were able to integrate child labor into their existing development work with positive consequences for sustainability.
4. Partners with a long-term link to the community and a sense of responsibility are, at the minimum, likely to provide ongoing support to the assisted children and, if resources allow, continue key work for the elimination of child labor in that locality. The predicated condition for this ongoing support is the partner's link and sense of responsibility with the local community. Most of the partners selected were already established in the subcontract locations and intend to continue work in that same location even if they are not a "local" organization themselves.

### **5.5.4 Recommendations**

Materials developed by CIRCLE partners should be reviewed for their usefulness and the potential demand for them with a view to printing and disseminating them more widely. Some form of peer review could be used during a partners' workshop if one was held.

## **VI BEST PRACTICES**

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### ***Subcontract Design***

Although the RFPs clearly stated the objectives to which the subcontract should contribute, the strategy and targets were created by the subcontractors. This method enabled local organizations to develop a proposal that would be their own project, linked to the specific needs, opportunities, and context of the area. This linkage resulted in innovations from local NGOs, a sense of ownership of the subcontract on their part, and a strong sense of responsibility to the community.

### ***Partner Selection Process***

The output of the selection process, particularly in terms of the commitment and capability of the partners, has been markedly high. This output must reflect on the process used, which was well-advertised, included clear instructions and presentation, used a transparent process, had well-thought out and clear criteria, used a clear system to assess proposals against the criteria, involved independent technical experts covering all the regions, and was well-supported by the WI staff.

### ***Regional Launch Meetings***

RLMs were held at the beginning of each implementation round and provided orientation and training to implementing partners regarding management requirements of the CIRCLE project, explanations of monitoring requirements including clarification on the meaning of important terms, and an opportunity to finalize details of the proposed subcontract. They provided a useful means of developing a working relationship and establishing working norms and expectations.

It is recommended that the RLM be used to provide some technical capacity-building, as well. It may be more appropriate to hold these at the national level in the future.

### ***Partnering with NGOs Experienced in Wider Development Issues***

Partnering with NGOs previously uninvolved in child labor has been an effective way of integrating child labor into the NGO's broader development agenda within their target communities. There are opportunities for greater sustainability when child labor elimination is seen in the context of other development issues such as health, local government capacity development, and livelihood enhancement.

### ***Partnering with NGOs with a Long-Term Commitment to Work in the Locality***

Partners that have "grown up" locally or have made a commitment to work in a locality over a period of time are subject to accountability to the community and local authorities and will strive to maintain support, particularly to beneficiary children.