

FUNDED BY THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Independent Midterm Evaluation of the Alternatives to Combat Child Labor Through Education and Sustainable Services in the Middle East and North Africa Region (ACCESS-MENA) Project

CHF International

Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-4-0049



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS	v
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
I INTRODUCTION	1
II EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	3
III EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	5
3.1 Data Collection	5
IV FINDINGS	7
4.1 Program Design	7
4.2 Project Design and Implementation	8
4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation	32
4.4 Partnership and Coordination	34
4.5 Management and Budget Issues	38
4.6 Sustainability and Impact	40
V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	43
5.1 Lessons Learned and Good Practices	44
5.2 Recommendations	46
ANNEXES	
Annex A: Definitions	
Annex B: TOR Questions Keyed to Areas of Report Where Answered	
Annex C: Terms of Reference	
Annex D: Lebanon Itinerary for March 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8	
Annex E: List of Attendees, ACCESS-MENA Stakeholders' Meeting, March 12, 2007	
Annex F: List of Key Stakeholders	
Annex G: List of Project Schools, Abyan and Hajja	
Annex H: Itinerary for Abyan Field Visits	
Annex I: Itinerary for Hajja Field Visits	

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACCESS-MENA	Alternatives to Combat Child Labor Through Education and Sustainable Services-Middle East and North Africa
AMIDEAST	America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc.
AVT	Accelerated Vocational Training
CERD	Center for Education Research and Development
CHF	Cooperative Housing Foundation International
CLMS	Child Labor Monitoring System
CSSW	Charitable Society for Social Welfare
CLU	Child Labor Unit
EFA	Education for All
EI	Education Initiative
GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft fuer technische Zusammenarbeit</i>
HCC	Higher Council for Children
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
KFW	<i>KREDITANSTALT Fur WIEDERAUFBAU</i>
KOL	KidzOnline
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MOP	Ministry of Planning
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MOSAL	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor
MOTEVT	Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NLC	National Literacy Committee
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking
RMF	Rene Moawad Foundation
SFD	Social Fund for Development

SCLM	Student-Centered Learning Methodology
TO	Task Order
UNESCO	United Nations International Children's Fund
USDOL	United States Department of Labor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this midterm evaluation is to assess the progress of the Alternatives to Combat Child Labor Through Education and Sustainable Services-Middle East and North Africa (ACCESS-MENA) project toward reaching its objectives and targets at midterm. The scope of the evaluation includes an assessment of all project activities under the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) cooperative agreement with Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) International.

ACCESS-MENA was launched in August 2004 under the USDOL cooperative agreement with CHF International. The project includes four subcontractors: Rene Moawad Foundation (RMF), Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW), America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST), and KidzOnline (KOL). The project is being implemented in Lebanon (RMF) and Yemen (CSSW), with a MENA regional component implemented by AMIDEAST. The project is a USDOL Education Initiative (EI) project that aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through the provision of education to child laborers and those at risk of working. It supports these governments' commitments to the United Nations Child Labor Convention No. 182 and the Minimum Age Convention No. 138. In addition, its strategic framework supports policies for education for all and poverty reduction.

The project's design seeks to achieve the EI's four goals:

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

The midterm evaluation found that these goals require project interventions at the macro (national) level; however, this project's design and implementation have been primarily at the micro level, with the exception of the AMIDEAST component, which is designed to function at the MENA regional level. Project activities at the macro level are limited to raising awareness, performing advocacy, and establishing partnerships and cooperation. Yet, the project has made some impact at the national level, especially in Lebanon, by representatives of the project serving as members on several national committees who are advocating a ban on corporal punishment and are promoting free, compulsory education.

Three factors influence project design and implementation: (1) budget, (2) technical capacity of the project implementers, and (3) technical assistance provided. Consequently, Yemen—with a significantly small budget in relation to the size of the country, a large population under the age of 15 years, and high rates of unemployment and poverty—has had to implement interventions not based on supply and demand, but rather on the dictates of the funds available. Second, both RMF and CSSW, prominent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in their respective

countries, have different technical capabilities. RMF, for example, has experience working in child labor, is involved in many development projects in Lebanon, and has partnerships with more than 30 local NGOs around the country. Hence, RMF has more outreach capacity in the implementation of project activities and interventions. Furthermore, RMF's relationship with CHF is a partnership. CSSW, on the other hand, has centers in most governorates; has more experience in charity work, especially in the health sector; and has recently become more involved in development projects. Consequently, CSSW requires more technical guidance, which is provided by CHF-Yemen. Finally, the technical assistance provided to each country for the various project activities, such as remedial education, is interpreted differently. For example, in Lebanon, remedial education is defined as academic support provided to enhance the performance of weak students in certain subject matters. The aim is to prevent these children from failing and leaving school to work. These classes are taught by teachers whom the project has trained in student-centered learning methodologies (SCLM). In Yemen, the project's interpretation of remedial education is based on targeting students with learning difficulties and having them attend a resource room to be instructed by teachers also trained in SCLM. The design of this activity was also influenced by the CHF-Yemen project manager.

By midterm, both countries had almost already reached their target numbers of beneficiaries, despite unfavorable exogenous factors. In Lebanon, for example, the Israeli conflict of last summer, 2006, caused delay. In Yemen, there was almost a one-year delay in starting the project because of delays in the subcontracting procedures to finalize the Master Contract, which was not signed until April 2005.

The project purpose and outputs are measured by USDOL common indicators. The project has a computerized tracking system database that employs USDOL's common indicators. There is ongoing monitoring of the project, and an evaluation of project performance is conducted every 6 months and reported in the Technical Progress Report to USDOL. USDOL common indicators provide appropriate mechanisms to accurately measure project performance. Approximately 1 year ago, USDOL changed the name of one of its indicators from children "enrolled" in project education programs to "withdrawn" or "prevented" children to emphasize that children must be both enrolled in the project's programs and withdrawn from or prevented from engaging in exploitive work.¹ This change caused some confusion and difficulty; first, the project had interpreted "enrolled" children as those enrolled in the project but who were working fewer hours and/or removed from hazardous types of work. When USDOL introduced the term "withdrawn," USDOL emphasized that this indicator was only to include children fully withdrawn (see Annex A for precise definitions). Yet, the project understood the indicator as a different target group. Second, the project was not sure how to adjust its data with this change, i.e., to include previous data on "enrolled" children with the "withdrawn" data. Consequently, working children were to be counted separately as *partially withdrawn* and newly enrolled *withdrawn* children were defined by the project as *fully withdrawn*. Both RMF and CSSW

¹ OCFT-USDOL revised the **name** of its "enrollment" indicator to "withdrawn/prevented." The *definition* and measurement of this indicator has **not changed**, but rather only its name has changed in order for USDOL to maintain consistency between the wording of its ILO-IPEC and EI indicators for GPRA reporting purposes. In addition, ICLP-USDOL wanted to ensure that the children being counted under this indicator were indeed withdrawn or prevented from exploitive work. GPRA Questions & Answers for Education Initiative Grantees. January 2006, p. 6.

thought that including only *withdrawn* children was inappropriate in the context of these countries with extreme poverty, as it excluded children most in need from the project. Moreover, the project did not provide parents an alternative to help them substitute the income they lost from their children withdrawing from labor.

The evaluation also found that the project successfully selected the project's target beneficiaries. This selection was conducted by social workers in Lebanon and volunteers in Yemen employing a set of criteria (such as children not enrolled in school, working, or poor), making field visits to the poorest villages in the selected governorates, selecting children from the workplace, and also visiting homes to find working teenage girls, especially the illiterate. In Yemen, however, two schools selected in Hajjah are in close proximity to one another. Although they are both very poor, their selection confines the project outreach. In addition, no fishing villages were included in Abyan for logistical reasons.

The project aims to improve the quality of education, but it is confined to the project schools, teachers trained, and the project's beneficiaries. The project measures education quality by the number of teachers using SCLM and competency-based methodologies in class. In Lebanon, the Center for Education Research and Development (CERD) has taken notice of the improved teaching methods and would like to replicate these methods in its teaching training program. In Lebanon and Yemen, basic education systems suffer from poor performance of teachers and overcrowded classrooms. Consequently, it is unrealistic to expect that the project can contribute to improving education quality in these countries by training a small number of teachers in the project schools. Conversely, the project can be regarded as a pilot study on how education quality may be improved.

Partnerships and cooperation have been established between the project and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon, in addition to partnerships with approximately 30 local NGOs. ACCESS-MENA Lebanon also has Memoranda of Understanding with CERD, the Higher Council for Children, and the National Literacy Committee surrounding child labor and education that will remain regardless of changes in government. In Yemen, the project is cooperating at the governorate level with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, and the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training. In both countries, there are no ongoing cooperation activities with the Ministry of Labor's Child Labor Unit. There is also no substantial cooperation with the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC). The project, in Lebanon and Yemen, needs to consider offering parents a sustainable compensation for the loss of income due to withdrawing their children from work. This compensation could be achieved by providing parents and/or older siblings with skills training to assist them in starting their own income-generating activities or in gaining employment. In Lebanon, ACCESS-MENA and IPEC have parallel projects. There could be more cooperation if IPEC's activities were complementary, such as having IPEC provide technical support to strengthen ACCESS-MENA's capacity, advocacy, or training of inspectors. In Yemen, there is little opportunity for partnership with IPEC because the IPEC project has only recently launched its activities.

Management and budgeting of the project is overseen by the CHF Office in Lebanon. The project follows a logframe that includes expected activities and outputs by each subcontractor. It also has a fiscal budget and workplan. Each subcontractor must submit a three-month task order (TO) showing implementation activities, outputs, and budget. Upon approval of CHF, the subcontractor receives 75 percent of the TO budget. At the end of the three-month period, the subcontractor must present a progress report, final report, and invoice to receive the remaining payment. The evaluation found two management issues: first, subcontractors, particularly RMF and KOL, have complained of the intensive paperwork involved with the TO. This paperwork has been particularly burdensome to RMF, who is managing the largest component of the project. RMF considers it too time consuming and disruptive of the flow of project activities, as it needs to stop activities at the end of the three-month period, then resume after the paperwork has been submitted and approved. During this evaluation, the evaluator was informed that RMF and CHF had come to an agreement to extend the TO to a six-month period.

Second, CSSW, which is managed by CHF-Yemen, needs more technical support in steering the project more toward combating child labor. CHF-Yemen does not have this expertise, either, and is instead focusing on improving education quality. The project in Yemen also needs more supervision from the Beirut office.

Another important finding is that project resources between Lebanon and Yemen are not efficiently distributed. Lebanon is a much smaller country, but has a budget of US\$3 million, while Yemen, a much larger country, has US\$1 million. Yemen also has higher rates of poverty, student dropout, and child labor. Furthermore, project activities are geographically dispersed, raising the operation costs. As a result, project activities are constrained. CSSW significantly contributes its resources to cover overhead costs of the project.

In both countries, steps are being considered toward ensuring the sustainability of the project. Both RMF and CSSW have plans to maintain educational activities after project completion. CERD is planning to include the project's teacher training in its teacher training programs. The Ministry of Education in Yemen is interested in the project's remedial education interventions and has expressed interest in replicating them at the national level, depending on the project's final results.

The experiences and outcomes in each country present important lessons learned that also at times reflect complementary strategies. The evaluation report concludes with three sets of recommendations:

ACCESS-MENA:

1. For AMIDEAST's second term, it would be an added value if stronger links were made with CSSW, keeping track of their activities and including Yemen as another case study similar to that done in Lebanon, as it represents another MENA country with different economic, social, and political contexts.
2. The project needs specific awareness interventions to address employers in the formal and informal sectors, as they are the offenders in putting children in hazardous and

abusive working conditions. This activity should be conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor (MOL)/CLU and ILO-IPEC.

3. As a measure to protect children of legal working age (at or above age 14 in Lebanon; at or above age 15 in Yemen) from being exploited in their wages, as is often the case, the project should consider advocating a national minimum wage policy intended to protect children.
4. The project should advocate for the removal of policies exempting employers in the informal sector from inspection by MOL inspectors, as that is where most working children become most vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. This advocacy should also include more training of the MOL child labor inspectors to improve and increase their inspection skills.
5. KOL's work should be applied as a pilot study, for example, in one school and one vocational center in Lebanon and Yemen to test the different possibilities and appropriateness of this component.
6. As the project has reached midterm, it would be in the project's interest to have a workshop for participants in the two countries to share experiences, lessons learned, and consequently plan strategies for the remaining duration of the project. Participants should not only consist of project staff, but also a sample of remedial class teachers, social counselors, and volunteers.
7. The project is due to end in August 2008, and should be extended for the following reasons: (1) to make up for the time lost in Lebanon due to the war and in Yemen due to delay in its launching; (2) the project is breaking new grounds in relation to the issue of combating child labor, which is critical in both countries, consequently its extension would ensure the establishment of an institutional infrastructure and thus sustainability; and (3) it would give the project an important opportunity to begin mainstreaming child labor concerns into social and economic development programs, which would be in line with ILO objectives.

ACCESS-MENA, Lebanon

8. Remedial classes at ACCESS-MENA should be offered two or three times a week, instead of once a week.
9. ACCESS-MENA (RMF) should try to get an agreement with the National Literacy Committee (NLC) to provide children with diplomas after completion of Accelerated Vocational Training (AVT).
10. The project should try to persuade Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to accept documentation other than ID cards (such as birth certificates) to allow withdrawn children to enroll in school.

ACCESS-MENA, Yemen

11. CSSW and CHF-Yemen need technical assistance to direct the project more into the context of child labor, such as learning more about policies and strategies in combating child labor, how to participate in national advocacy campaigns, and awareness-raising strategies to be implemented at the national level.
12. ACCESS-MENA should be given resources (funds and technical assistance) to include work on child trafficking, as this component is within OCFT's objectives.
13. CSSW's budget should be increased to enable them to provide more training for teachers and social counselors to adequately strengthen their capacities, and to hire several individuals responsible for awareness-raising activities on child labor and education. This is a crucial activity needed in Yemen and has not been implemented effectively at the national level. It would be advantageous if these individuals are trained by members of the Lebanon project (or having a trainer from the Lebanon project provide training in Yemen) to learn from their experience.
14. The project should introduce remedial classes to withdrawn and prevented children as the project has done in Lebanon.

I INTRODUCTION

The United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking (OCFT) provide grants to support efforts to address child labor through the promotion of educational opportunities for children. These Education Initiative (EI) projects are designed to work toward the elimination of the worst forms of child labor through the provision of basic education. EI projects are designed to ensure that children in areas of high incidence of child labor are withdrawn and integrated into educational settings, and that they persist in their education once enrolled. In parallel, the program seeks to avert at-risk children from leaving school and entering child labor. The EI seeks to nurture the development, health, safety, and enhanced future employability of children around the world by increasing access to and quality of basic education for working children and those at risk of entering work. EI projects may focus on providing educational services to children removed from specific sectors of work and/or a specific region(s) or support a national Timebound Program that aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in multiple sectors of work specific to a given country.

In addition to providing direct education and training opportunities to working children and those at risk of engaging in exploitive work, the Child Labor Education Initiative has four goals:

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

On August 16, 2004, Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) International received a 4-year Cooperative Agreement worth US\$8 million from USDOL to implement an EI project in Lebanon and Yemen aimed at withdrawing and preventing children from exploitive child labor by expanding access to and improving the quality of basic education and supporting the four goals of the USDOL's Child Labor EI as outlined above.

The project includes four subcontractors: Rene Moawad Foundation (RMF), Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW), America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST), and KidzOnline (KOL). The project is being implemented in Lebanon (RMF) and Yemen (CSSW), with a MENA regional component implemented by AMIDEAST.

As stipulated in the Cooperative Agreement, Alternatives to Combat Child Labor Through Education and Sustainable Services in the Middle East and North Africa (ACCESS-MENA) consists of country-specific and regional components with the overall goal of dramatically reducing the level of exploitive child labor. The country-specific component of the project aims to reduce the level of exploitive child labor in Yemen and Lebanon through the provision of education, skills training, and entrepreneurial opportunities and building the capacity of civil society, educational institutions, and communities to provide education alternatives for target

groups. It supports these governments' commitments to the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 182 and the Minimum Age Convention No. 138. The regional component aims to develop a framework for awareness-raising, best practices-sharing, policy reform, gender-inclusion, and capacity-building in 14 nations across the MENA.

In Lebanon, the project is targeting 1,805 children for withdrawal and 2,695 for prevention from work in seasonal agriculture in Akkar; small industries; domestic settings in Bab el-Tebbaneh, the urban informal economy in Beirut; and tobacco cultivation in southern Lebanon. In Yemen, the project is targeting 2,500 children for withdrawal and 500 children for prevention from work in agriculture in Ibb, in the fishing industry in Abyan, and in agriculture in Hajja. Children vulnerable to trafficking in Hajja are also targeted.²

² The section above is based upon the Terms of Reference for this evaluation provided by USDOL.

II EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

Macro International Inc. conducted a midterm evaluation of the ACCESS-MENA project in March–April 2007. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess ACCESS-MENA’s activities, progress, and achievements in reaching its targets and objectives by midterm. Accordingly, the evaluation examines the project in relation to its design, implementation, impact and sustainability, highlighting lessons learned and recommendations for similar, future projects. In doing so, the evaluation aims to achieve the following:

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

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III EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology employed is qualitative, based on an evaluation framework that encompasses five project categories: program design, project implementation, partnership and coordination, management and budget, and sustainability and impact. The purpose of employing this framework was to collect accurate and reliable data that assess the various project dimensions. Accordingly, the evaluator applied different data collection methods as required for assessing each category.

3.1 DATA COLLECTION

In accordance with the evaluation framework, data collection and analysis consisted of two phases. The **first phase** included a review of related project documents, primarily the project's technical progress reports, conference calls with Macro International, USDOL's evaluation staff, CHF's Project Director in the field, CHF's project desk officers in Washington, and KOL's U.S. office. These communications solicited information on the project's background. Project documents were the primary source that provided background data on the project's activities from its start-up until its midterm.

The **second phase** of the evaluation included primary data collection from the field. Consequently, the evaluator traveled to Lebanon for nine days and Yemen for eight. In Lebanon, project sites visited included Beirut (Burg Hammoud), Akkar, and Tripoli (Bab el-Tebanneh). In Yemen, the project sites visited included Abyan and Hajjah. The evaluator selected these project sites based on logistics to minimize travel time due to the time constraints of the evaluation.

During this phase, the evaluator assessed the project by applying the evaluation framework's five categories. Accordingly, data collection consisted of the following:

1. **Program Design** included individual interviews with the project staff (CHF), subcontractors in the field (RMF, CSSW, AMIDEAST), project partners, and relevant government officials in Lebanon and Yemen.³ The evaluator also conducted focus group meetings with key personnel in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the implementation of the project, school principals, teachers, social workers, and local community leaders. The objective of these focus groups was to solicit these participants' views on the appropriateness of the project design and its relevance to their local contexts.
2. **Project Design and Implementation** is central to assessing the project's performance in attaining the EI goals. Several data collection methods were applied. After a review of project documents, the evaluator conducted individual interviews with CHF staff, subcontractors, and stakeholders. Focus group discussions were conducted at each project site with indirect beneficiaries (e.g., parents, school principals, social workers, teachers, trainers, and community leaders) to solicit their views of the project. Many of the

³ KOL does not have an office in the field. The evaluator conducted this interview by conference call in the United States, in addition to the review of the project's progress report.

questions addressed also highlight the project's impact on raising awareness of child labor and education in these communities. Separate focus group discussions were conducted with the direct beneficiaries, children. The evaluator during the field visits observed project activities implemented at partner NGO centers, schools, and vocational training centers. Finally, additional information regarding project implementation was collected at a stakeholder meeting conducted at the end of the field visit in Beirut on March 12, 2007, and a debriefing in Sana'a on March 26, 2007.

3. **Partnership and Coordination** consisted of interviews with the CHF project director, RMF, CSSW, relevant government officials, and key persons at the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) and partner NGOs. These interviews solicited information regarding the challenges and opportunities in establishing partnerships and the direct and indirect value added to the project as a result of these partnerships. This information was complemented by the progress reports, which describe the project's experiences in policy dialogue and cooperation.
4. **Management and Budget Issues** entailed interviews with project staff and finance officers (CHF-Beirut, Sana'a, RMF and CSSW) to assess the strengths and weaknesses of different project management and budgeting issues.
5. **Sustainability and Impact** included interviewing representatives from CHF, RMF, CSSW, AMIDEAST, and KOL; and stakeholders (such as relevant government officials at the central and regional level and partner NGOs). Focus group discussions were also conducted with beneficiaries, school principals, teachers, social workers, and community leaders. Additional information was solicited during the stakeholder meeting in Beirut and the debriefing in Sana'a.

IV FINDINGS

4.1 PROGRAM DESIGN

The starting point of the evaluation was to assess whether the EI program is compatible with the policies and strategies of the host governments of Lebanon and Yemen.

The evaluation found that ACCESS-MENA is important to the governments of Lebanon and Yemen, as it is in line with their commitments to ILO Conventions Numbers 182 and 132. It also responds to two other critical government policies: education for all (EFA) and poverty reduction. Moreover, it comes at a time when these two countries are witnessing a high rise in child labor as a consequence of political crisis and economic stagnation.

The program aims to combat child labor by means of education initiatives and by supporting the efforts of the governments of Lebanon and Yemen to combat the worst forms of child labor. Interestingly, an analysis of the program design finds that the EI translates into various activities depending on its level of operation, i.e., the regional, national, and community levels. For example—

At the **regional** level, the EI is characterized as knowledge dissemination. The project's subcontractor, AMIDEAST, functions at a regional level by overseeing the dissemination of knowledge on child labor and education in the MENA region through hosting conferences and workshops, posting to its website, and publishing a newsletter.

At the **national** level, the program design involves raising awareness at the government level by performing advocacy, participating in policy dialogue, using mass media, networking, establishing partnerships, and involving a wide array of actors such as key government officials, NGOs, universities, community-based organizations, teachers, and children. This awareness-raising component helps the governments of Lebanon and Yemen sustain their commitment to combating child labor in their policy agenda and pursue means to enforce child labor laws. In addition, the project assists these governments' EFA policy by providing education interventions to withdraw, prevent, and retain children in basic education and/or training programs.

At the **community** level, the project's aims are twofold: first, to withdraw children from labor, especially the worst forms of labor, and integrate them into an educational setting; and second, to prevent children at risk from leaving school and entering child labor by providing them with educational support to resume their education. These efforts include several strategies such as, (1) increasing access to education by paying school fees and providing children with school uniforms and school supplies, thus reducing the cost of schooling to parents, and (2) improving the quality of education by training teachers and social workers and sensitizing them to the needs of working children.

Hence, the program design has translated into different forms of EI interventions; yet, each is directed toward the same goal of combating child labor.

4.2 PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The evaluation of the project design and implementation examines each subcontractor's performance in achieving the ACCESS-MENA goals. These goals include the following:⁴

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

The **objectives** of the project are the following:

- Development Objective: To reduce the level of exploitive child labor
- Immediate Objectives:
 - *Regional:*
 1. Promote behavior change in the MENA region.
 2. Stimulate positive action to reduce child labor exploitation.
 - *Country:*
 1. Increase retention for target groups.
 2. Mainstream or transition target children into informal or vocational training.
 3. Build capacity of civil society, education institutions, and communities to provide education alternatives for target groups.⁵

What is highlighted in these goals and objectives is an unusual project design, as the project has four goals rather than the usual one, while the objectives, which should translate a goal into measurable actions, instead represents a subset of goals, thus not providing pragmatic measures. Accordingly, the evaluation employs the goals in assessing the project's achievements by its key implementers.

⁴ See Annex C, Terms of Reference.

⁵ ILAB Technical Cooperation Project Summary.

4.2.1 Goal 1: Raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures

This goal can be divided into two parts: (1) *raise awareness of the importance of education for all children* and (2) *mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures*. Regarding the first part of this goal, the project is not actually designed to raise awareness of education for all children, but rather specifically targets working children and those at risk of leaving school to work. Regarding the second part, *expand education infrastructures* was not actually included in the project design. The project was only to include rehabilitation of infrastructure. Interestingly, no reference to child labor is mentioned in this goal.

The evaluation found, based on the project design and implementation, that the project implementers' interpretation of this goal was as follows: raise awareness of child labor and the importance of education by mobilizing a wide array of actors. This interpretation may not have been intentional, but it has been to the advantage of the project, as it is more relevant to the project.

AMIDEAST

AMIDEAST represents the project's regional component and thus functions to raise awareness of the importance of education and child labor in the MENA region, which includes 14 countries. The project design of this component includes the following interventions:

- Host conferences
- Conduct workshops to sensitize key actors in governments, NGOs, and international organizations on child labor issues
- Create a website
- Issue a biannual newsletter.

An important strategy AMIDEAST employs is to disseminate information by networking with local NGOs active in child labor, representatives from ministries of education and labor, and international organizations. By midterm, AMIDEAST had conducted two workshops: one in Morocco in June 2006 and one in Jordan in January 2007. The objectives were to promote the understanding of the importance of child labor and education and strengthen the capacity of local NGOs involved in child labor in the MENA region. For example, in the workshops, AMIDEAST uses ACCESS-MENA in Lebanon as a case study for participants to practice situation analysis. Participants are then encouraged to develop their own projects applicable to their country's situation. These workshops have helped participants to network and exchange experiences on combating child labor.

AMIDEAST has also been focusing on dialogue with international organizations, such as UNICEF, as it believes these organizations are fundamental to promoting child labor initiatives.

Currently, AMIDEAST is preparing to host a conference in Beirut in May 2007. The aim of this conference is to allow decision makers, activists, and organizations from the region to learn about each other, their initiatives, challenges, and best practices.

Impact

- AMIDEAST's workshops have been an important contribution in the region to promoting awareness on child labor and education and to building the capacity of local NGOs in the region that are active in child labor issues.
- The website is an important regional resource in the region that tracks developments in child labor issues and activities in different MENA countries. It is accessible to the public. The website is almost complete, and already has references on child labor available.
- The newsletter presents new projects in the MENA region and discusses ACCESS-MENA visits to different country projects. To date, two issues have been published; the third was being prepared at the time of the evaluation. AMIDEAST prints and distributes 5,000 copies to a wide array of national and international stakeholders.
- AMIDEAST's contribution is an important component of the project, as it provides regional awareness and promotes working toward a common goal.

Challenges, Constraints, and Issues

- The political situation has been the main challenge for AMIDEAST. The Israeli conflict in the summer of 2006 cancelled and/or delayed many activities such as traveling in the region, attending conferences, and publishing the newsletter. In addition, at the time of the evaluation, due to the ongoing political crisis, there was no Minister of Labor in Lebanon, which restricted AMIDEAST from communicating with the appropriate government officials in the country.

ACCESS-MENA, Lebanon

RMF has invested significant time and resources in raising awareness on child labor. Their strategy to achieve this goal encompasses a macro- micro-level approach, i.e., at the national and community levels.

At the national level, raising awareness includes the following:

- Designing posters illustrating child labor and posting them in municipalities, NGO offices, public buildings, and schools.
- Hosting conferences and workshops for key government officials from relevant ministries and members of the media to sensitize them on issues of child labor and the importance of education.

- Making press releases when launching certain activities to keep the issue of child labor and education nationally visible.
- Maintaining dialogue with relevant government officials (Center for Education Research and Development—CERD, Higher Council for Children—HCC, and Ministry of Social Affairs—MOSA) and advocating policy amendments concerning child labor, corporal punishment, and free compulsory education.

At the community level, RMF conducted several workshops as a major method of raising awareness and launching project interventions. For example—

- Workshops to train social workers in their centers and partner NGOs on how to raise awareness, increase their knowledge about interacting with parents and working children, and applying participatory techniques when presenting a child rights-based approach on the importance of education.
- Workshops for parents to explain the importance of education, the convention of child rights, and consequences of leaving school and entering child labor. Sessions were also given to children separately, which included role-playing and animation.
- Workshops for community leaders such as religious leaders; mayors; representatives from community-based associations, local NGOs, and MOSA centers to raise their awareness, in addition to soliciting their involvement in and support of the project.

In the parents' workshops, social workers observed that the majority of attendees were mothers who were very poor and often illiterate, yet were very receptive to the information and eager to learn more about other issues concerning their children such as how to deal with adolescent and behavioral problems. The social workers did not feel equipped to respond to these inquiries, while some were getting emotionally involved and personally wanted to help. This issue was to be addressed by the project.

Employers are invited to the workshops and to the awareness sessions, yet few attend. RMF has tried to reach employers by conducting a survey soliciting information about their work, children working for them, and possible hazards in the work place. They were also asked if they would support children working for them attending accelerated vocational training (AVT). RMF considers this survey successful because 500 employers responded. Yet, during the evaluator's field visits and focus group discussions with working children (age 14–17) attending AVT, the majority were having their wages deducted for the hours spent attending these classes. These wages are low to begin with, on average US\$15 per week, which reflects another means of exploiting working children. Thus, a question arises: What is the significance of having a high number of respondents to the survey if employers are not substantially changing their behavior in favor of working children?

Impact

- Workshops were an effective means of training social workers and raising awareness among the different participants.
- Parents were persuaded to enroll their children in project education programs, evidenced by the significant number of withdrawn children, especially those under the age 13 and enrolled in school (1,597 children).
- The number of children enrolled in AVT at the project's midterm is close to the project's target.
- Public representatives at the government and community levels became more sensitized to the correlation between education and child labor and the role of ACCESS-MENA. As a result, RMF was able to gain their support in facilitating implementation of project interventions.

Challenges, Constraints, and Issues

- Social workers realized that awareness-raising sessions are more complicated than they had assumed, as these sessions involve not only delivering a message, but also changing attitudes and behavior embedded in a social and cultural milieu that differs in each geographic project area. There were also a wide range of children's problems to deal with such as adolescence, behavioral problems, learning disabilities, and parents' illiteracy and poverty. Consequently, the social workers felt they were not well-equipped to effectively deliver awareness-raising sessions within this complex context. As a result, RMF changed the strategy and format of their awareness-raising activities. First, an awareness officer was hired in RMF's headquarters in Beirut and field officers were appointed to take over responsibility of awareness-raising activities, thus creating an "awareness team," referred to as the "A-team." Their tasks include conducting awareness-raising meetings with the communities that are more responsive to parents and children's socioeconomic background and needs, and providing support to social workers in partner NGOs. Furthermore, discussions on raising awareness were modified under the subject of *problems of education and finding solutions*. The participatory approach continues to be employed as awareness trainers have found it to be the most effective method.
- A psychologist has been contracted to assist in preparing the A-team in discussing and dealing with different social issues in the awareness-raising sessions with parents, and how to avoid becoming emotionally involved with parents' problems. The psychologist also assisted the A-team with preparing a questionnaire that establishes a social profile on each child and identifies those in need of counseling. This psychologist will also oversee eight other therapists who have recently been subcontracted for the field, and assist in the development of a manual for awareness-raising officers.

- Raising awareness regarding child rights is a sensitive topic. The project has overlooked the importance of social and cultural interpretation and the age group. Consequently, there have been some negative reactions. For example, there were incidences where children told their parents that they have rights that must be respected. Parents, particularly fathers, interpreted this as offensive and defiant. Their response was severe physical punishment of the child.
- Employers who are principal offenders of child labor have not been effectively targeted. Although they are invited to attend awareness-raising meetings, their attendance rate is low.
- Poverty is a major factor influencing parents to require their children to work rather than attend school. The project's inability to provide an alternative to parents such as training them or older siblings in a professional or income-generating skill will limit the overall success of the project.
- The Child Labor Unit (CLU) at MOL was not involved in awareness interventions. The CLU should be an important stakeholder in child labor and education.
- Finally, the political situation during the summer of 2006 has affected project activities and caused many delays. For example, dialogue with government stakeholders was suspended because of these officials' preoccupation with the political situation or, in some cases, the resignation of ministers such the Minister of Labor. The economic paralysis has also pushed more families into destitution, thus raising child labor rates. Schools, especially those in the north, were damaged or used as shelters and consequently began the school year late. On the other hand, in spite all of these complications, RMF made every effort to pursue its activities in the field, which is commendable.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned from RMF's experience with their awareness-raising methods include the following:

- The social workers' communication skills and sensitivity in their interactions with members of the community (e.g., parents, children, employers, and community leaders) are essential to gaining community members' cooperation.
- Awareness-raising needs to be conducted with sensitivity to the cultural milieu, which differs in each region.
- In response to the complexity of awareness-raising activities and creating an A-team, RMF strengthened the technical capacity of this cadre to reach the community more effectively and respond to parents concerns. Moreover, having this cadre will ensure the sustainability of this activity after project completion.
- A participatory approach in awareness-raising sessions and workshops is most effective.

- The involvement of local NGOs and community-based organizations is important in raising awareness; they are respected in the community and have an influence when delivering social messages.

ACCESS-MENA, Yemen

In Yemen, CSSW's strategies and methods to achieve the goal of raising awareness are on a much smaller scale and different from those implemented in Lebanon, for several reasons. First, CSSW has a significantly smaller budget. Second, CSSW is the sole implementer of the project, unlike RMF who is in partnership with many local NGOs and thus has more outreach capacity. Finally, CSSW's national efforts are more focused on the governorate level due to the decentralization of the government.

At the community level, CSSW's awareness-raising interventions are conducted by soliciting the support of prominent community members such as religious leaders, local councils, and NGOs. For example, religious leaders discuss the importance of education in their sermons and female representatives from NGOs discuss the issue with women and girls attending literacy classes or training in income-generating activities. Their message also emphasizes the importance of girls' education. In addition, local councils hold village meetings. CSSW has also been able to promote awareness through local newspapers and radio stations. Furthermore, they have sponsored two festivals and a mobile theater. The theme of one of the theater's plays was the worst forms of child labor and the importance of education. It was performed in simple, local dialect and was culturally attuned. CSSW also offered transportation to families living in distant villages so that they could attend the play. There was a high turnout and parents in the evaluator's focus groups referred to the play and mentioned how they were touched by it. Evidently, it proved to be an effective means of delivering the message. CSSW also prepared and distributed posters and pamphlets in schools and various public centers and mosques, illustrating examples of hazardous child labor as they relate to the local culture such as working with poisonous insecticides, prevalent among children working in agriculture; transporting heavy objects on their backs; and working on construction sites.

CSSW does not use a child rights approach in explaining the worst forms of child labor. Instead, it explains them in the context of the importance of education as it relates to children's religious, social, and economic development. On the one hand, this approach is successful as it is culturally sensitive; yet on the other, based on the evaluator's focus group discussions, there is no clear understanding of what constitutes exploitive child labor, especially in such poor societies. For example, a child working at home or on a family farm is not regarded as a child laborer; rather, he or she is considered a child participating in family chores. Yet, it is the context of this work that needs more emphasis, i.e., working conditions and time spent on such activities (for example, farming in a hot climate without any sun protection is hazardous). The project coordinators and volunteers include information on hazardous work in their awareness-raising effort; however, this type of information is subjective, and as the volunteers explained, it is not always easy to persuade many parents who are mostly illiterate. In addition, poverty often propels parents to overlook how many hours their children are working, even if it is working on the farm or doing family chores. Consequently, they are unable to assess if it is interfering with their children's education as the impact of this work is often indirect. For example, a child

spends half the day in school, then work, and by the evening is too tired to concentrate on homework. Teachers explained that working children often come to school the next day tired and unable to focus in class. Abyan and Hajja, for example, are in the poorest governorates in Yemen. Poverty in these areas is exemplified by many single women heads of households, fathers with disabilities, and staggering unemployment rates. These factors highlight the cultural and economic context of child labor and its implications in raising awareness.

As the CSSW budget does not permit it to have awareness officers as RMF does, it has to rely on recruiting volunteers from the community. These volunteers include school teachers, university students, unemployed educated persons, and members of other NGOs. The volunteers were given some training to increase their knowledge on child labor and education, how to make house calls, and communicate with parents. In addition, they were trained on how to implement a survey to identify households most in need, the results of which were to be used for selecting children for the project. The fact that these volunteers are members of the community has been an asset. As a result, people welcome them to their homes and are receptive to hearing what they have to say. Their approach on raising awareness is presented in the context of the importance of education in relation to economic benefits, religious obligation, and social and national benefits.

Many parents appreciated the information on the importance of education and the risks involved in allowing their children to work in hazardous and exploitive forms of labor. Yet, due to their severe poverty, they had no alternative but to keep their children working. Moreover, the project design did not include alternative means to substitute for the loss of income when a child is removed from work. On the other hand, similar to the social workers' experience in Lebanon, the volunteers found that convincing parents was a very difficult task, as it involved changing the attitudes and behaviors of illiterate and very poor families. Their training was limited in this sense.

As for raising awareness on the importance of girls' education, based on the evaluator's focus group discussions with beneficiary parents in Hajja and Abyan, parents realize the importance of educating their daughters and desire to do so; however, due to their severe poverty, they give priority to their boys' education. One parent explained that it is more costly to send girls to school because they have more expenses such as clothes and shoes.⁶

At the time of the evaluation, CSSW had not implemented activities that address child trafficking. It is a major problem in Hajja and the deputy governor and Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL) official told the evaluator about their great concern over this issue. This issue is also important to USDOL, especially the OCFT. Yet, CSSW does not have sufficient funds or the technical expertise to tackle this problem. The issue of child trafficking is complex and cannot be an add-on activity to the project. It requires substantial financial and technical resources to be effectively solved. Without this support, it is unrealistic to expect CSSW to take any action on this issue.

⁶ Although both girls and boys wore school uniforms, girls needed additional clothing items such as headscarves and tights to go to school modestly dressed.

Challenges, Constraints, and Issues

- Poverty is a major factor causing a continuous increase in child labor at a young age. Parents need an alternative such as skills-training courses to enable them to generate income rather than depend on their children.
- CSSW is functioning with a small budget, which limits their activities. Although their performance is impressive, such as their ability to mobilize community support and have volunteers assist them in many project interventions, this will not contribute to sustainability as no investments are made in capacity-building.
- Volunteers are dedicated to their work in the project, but they require more training, which CSSW is not able to provide because of its limited budget.
- The media at the national level has not been effectively targeted because journalists require remuneration for reporting on a certain issue, which the CSSW budget cannot afford. Fortunately, the issue of child labor in Yemen has been a frequent subject in the press as a result of an ongoing campaign on human rights. Consequently, many articles on child labor have been published during the lifetime of the project.

4.2.2 Goal 2: Strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school

The project design does not include efforts to strengthen formal and transitional education systems at the macro level, nor are there direct interventions to do so. The project is limited to selected geographic locations, schools, and NGO centers. Yet, it can be considered a pilot study, from which lessons learned from its implementation and impact can be replicated at a national level to achieve this goal.

Accordingly, under this goal, project design and implementation consist of improving the **quality** of and **access** to education within the selected project sites in Lebanon and Yemen. This goal is implemented through several interdependent interventions:

1. Improvement of school infrastructure
2. Provision of school fees and supplies
3. Improvement of quality of education

Improvement of school infrastructure: Both RMF and CSSW have completed rehabilitation of the project's selected schools. The aim in improving school infrastructure is to ensure student retention. Classrooms are often dilapidated or without a school wall, making parents feel that they are unsafe. Several studies have shown that girls' dropout is due to lack of latrines. In all seven project schools in Yemen, CSSW has completed rehabilitation of their targeted seven schools, installed latrines for girls, and provided some learning materials and a first-aid kit.

Provision of school fees and supplies: The evaluation found that the most effective intervention in making education accessible to poor, working children in Lebanon and Yemen is assisting poor families in sending their to school children by reducing the cost involved. Thus, the project offers children most in need of assistance help with paying for school fees, school uniforms, and school supplies (such as school bags, notebooks, etc). This intervention has significantly contributed to increasing enrollment of working children in both countries (Tables 1 and 2). Parents explained that the major reason they withdrew their children from school was the cost involved, and thanks to the project, they were able to re-enroll them. In many cases, a family sends one or two children out of six or more to school. It is usually the girls who are not sent or withdrawn, but now the project has made it possible for them to re-enroll.

Table 1: Project Performance in Lebanon

Lebanon	Year 1 09/01/2004– 08/31/2005	Year 2 09/01/2005– 08/31/2006	Year 3 09/01/2006– 02/28/2007	Total as of 02/28/2007	Project Targets
Withdrawn	368	439	548	1,355	1,805
Prevented	356	2,574	2,174	5,104	2,695
Total	724	3,013	2,722	6,459	4,500

ACCESS-MENA Technical Progress Report No. 5, March 2007.

Table 2: Project Performance in Yemen

Yemen	Year 1 09/01/2004– 08/31/2005	Year 2 09/01/2005– 08/31/2006	Year 3 09/01/2006– 02/28/2007	Total as of 02/28/2007	Project Targets
Withdrawn	80	609	1,018	1,707	2,500
Prevented	0	679	927	1606	500
Total	80	1,288	1,945	3,313	3,000

ACCESS-MENA Technical Progress Report No. 5, March 2007.

In both Lebanon and Yemen, the Ministries of Education canceled school fees that went into effect for the academic year 2006–2007. In Yemen, for example, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in its EFA efforts cancelled school fees for boys in grades 1–4 and for girls’ in grades 1–6. Nonetheless, the hidden school costs continue to prohibit families from sending their children to school. Throughout the school year, students continue to be asked to buy additional notebooks or other items or pay for miscellaneous school expenses. School principals, on the other hand, explained that their budgets have been drastically reduced due to the MOE’s cancellation of school fees; therefore, they are obliged to ask students to contribute to some of their expenses.

Parents, teachers, and social workers said that withdrawn children were happy to return to school and it boosted their self-esteem. Parents also felt better about themselves for being able to give their children an education.

Improvement of quality of education: The project pursues this goal through project schools, teachers trained, and the project's beneficiaries. The project measures education quality by the number of teachers using student-centered learning methodologies (SCLM) and competency-based methodologies in class. Yet, in both Lebanon and Yemen, basic education systems suffer from poor performance of teachers and overcrowded classrooms. Consequently, it is unrealistic to expect that the project can contribute to improving education quality in these countries by training a small number of teachers in the project schools. Conversely, the project can be regarded as a pilot study on how education quality may be improved.

Accordingly, the following section explains the performance in each country.

ACCESS-MENA, Yemen

Project implementers' (CSSW and CHF, Yemen) viewpoint is that providing quality education is key to enrollment of working children and retention of those at risk of dropping out of school. Consequently, based on this principle, their interventions include the following:

1. Remedial education
2. Vocational and literacy training
3. Summer camp for withdrawn children
4. Teacher training
5. Training of social counselors

Remedial education focuses on children with learning difficulties and offers them academic support by using teaching aids and resource materials in a resource room. In the resource room, a child is taught by teachers who have been introduced to the concept of learning difficulties, how to identify them, and how to use an appropriate testing scale to measure them.⁷ In each of the seven project schools, a resource room has been equipped with a table, chairs, a computer, various learning materials, and a filing cabinet containing files of all the students diagnosed.

Selecting students for remedial education is a team effort that includes the classroom teacher, social worker, and the remedial education teacher. Usually these children are between 7–10 years old, in grades 1–3. When a child exhibits learning problems in the classroom, he or she is sent to the remedial education teacher and the social worker to be diagnosed. The remedial education teacher and the social worker collaborate in diagnosing students with learning difficulties. Students diagnosed with learning difficulties attend the resource room for certain subject matters (mainly Arabic, math, and social science classes). Between five to eight students can be in the resource room at one time. Teachers explained that there has been significant improvement in student achievement as a result of remedial education. Based on the evaluator's observations, students are motivated to learn, participate eagerly, and enjoy being in a small group and receiving individualized attention. The resource room also has a more pleasant learning

⁷ CHF International ACCESS-MENA. Technical Progress Report. March 1, 2005–August 31, 2005. p. 11.

environment due to the learning materials surrounding the classroom, and is a sharp contrast to the common, dilapidated classrooms in these schools.

Literacy and vocational training classes are offered to girls in CSSW centers and in the MOE Directory of Girls' Education centers. Vocational training for girls and boys is provided at the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training (MOT EVT) centers. A significant accomplishment of CSSW was to persuade the MOT EVT to allow working children age 14 and up to enroll in vocational training centers without fulfilling the requirement of being middle school graduates, as most of them are school dropouts. In addition, the MOT EVT agreed to grant these students a formal training diploma upon completion of their training. This diploma gives more credence to these children's training when seeking jobs.

The evaluator visited vocational training centers in Zanjibar and Abs in Abyan, and in Hajjah. In Zanjibar, for example, there were 10 boys (there had been 12 but 2 had dropped out) between 15 and 17 years old learning car mechanics. This course was for 60 days. They had already learned how to assemble a car engine. The students explained that they had learned a profession, but needed a toolkit to enable them to do freelance jobs. Their instructor explained that a toolkit was important because it will not be easy for them to find jobs, since most car mechanic shops are family run. In Abs, children were learning computer skills. There were two separate classrooms, one for girls and the other for boys. It was interesting to see that girls, especially those who were illiterate or semi-illiterate, had learned how to create files and use PowerPoint and other programs. Their instructor explained that this was a challenge, yet at the same time these girls were able to improve their literacy skills by learning how to use the computer. Both boys and girls said that they had never dreamt of having an opportunity to learn computer skills. A few of the boys had already secured part-time jobs working for small businessmen, such as entering data into computers. This is a significant project achievement. None of the girls had received any jobs and the possibility of doing so in this very poor area will be a challenge as there is little demand, especially since they live in small villages where there is an intermittent power supply.

In another nearby center, boys were being trained in electricity. They had already learned how to wire a house. They also requested a tool kit to enable them to freelance until they could find employment. Yet, one should ask about the risk involved with these young students (between the ages of 15 and 18 years old) with training but no experience taking on electricity jobs without supervision.

Summer camp was provided for withdrawn children age 8 to 13 for one month. The objective was to reorient working children who had dropped out of school and provide them with some academic instruction and extracurricular activities before beginning the new school year. Once in school, they are provided with assistance in school fees, uniforms, and school supplies but do not receive any additional academic support.

Teacher training entailed innovative child-centered methodologies. This training also included sensitizing teachers to the needs of withdrawn children. However, teachers interviewed told the evaluator that their training was not adequate for preparing them to deal with the challenges of withdrawn children who suffer from behavioral and conduct problems and frequently disrupt the classroom. Furthermore, the project (CSSW & CHF-Yemen) assumed that by training a group of

teachers, there would be a snowball effect, i.e., the trained group of teachers would share the information with their colleagues, who would then practice these new teaching skills. Yet based on focus group discussions with teachers, although the information was shared between trained and untrained teachers, it was not sufficient for untrained teachers to master these innovative teaching skills.

Training of social counselors entailed psycho-social counseling. Most social workers had received training from a previous *Gesellschaft fuer technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ) project in activating parent councils and community mobilization but had minimal skills, if any, in student counseling. Social counselors in each governorate received 1 week of training, which may not be sufficient to take on this activity effectively. Nonetheless, training social counselors in psycho-social counseling is an added value to the school, as many withdrawn children are expected to need counseling. It is also a step toward building the capacity of the social counselors and the schools and is a sustainable attribute. However, more training is required.

Selection of Beneficiaries

According to the project design, the **target group** is to include 2,500 children for withdrawal and 500 children for prevention from agricultural work in Ibb, from the fishing industry in Abyan, and from agriculture in Hajjah, and includes prevention of child trafficking (i.e., a total of 3,780 children).⁸ Consequently, CSSW selected seven schools from these three governorates (two in Abyan, two in Hajja, and three in Ibb).

Volunteers selected children for the project by conducting a survey in the poorest neighborhoods. For children to be selected, they must meet the following criteria: they are between age 7 and 13 years old; have dropped out of school not less than a year ago; and are working in the worst forms of child labor. Children 15 years and older were selected for enrollment in literacy or vocational training using the criteria that they were very poor and working in the worst forms of child labor.⁹

Selecting these beneficiaries based on these criteria was not a difficult task as they are in abundance in Yemen. CSSW had to turn back many parents who wanted their children to be included in the project. Hence, by the midterm evaluation, the project had reached its target number.

Three issues concerning targeting beneficiaries were highlighted during the evaluation:

1. In Abyan, CSSW did not include a project site with children working in fishing villages as suggested in the project proposal, but rather inland villages. CSSW explains this decision was based on the logistics involved with the long distances to reach a fishing village and the increased cost of implementing project activities there. There were also no facilities to provide vocational training. Moreover, the two villages (Zanjibar and Abs) that CSSW selected were among the poorest in Abyan.

⁸ According to the Technical Cooperation Project Summary, children vulnerable to trafficking are also targeted. This will be discussed further in proceeding paragraphs.

⁹ Priority was given to girls, as the project requested.

2. The two schools selected in Hajja are next to each other, consequently limiting the outreach of the project. CSSW explains that these two schools capture the poorest people. Nonetheless, the evaluator believes another village should have been included to distribute project impact more widely.
3. The issue of child trafficking is not included as a project activity. This issue was included in the project documents, but not in the log frame. Yet, there are no resources or technical expertise to perform this intervention.

Project Impact

Despite CSSW's limited budget, its efforts and performance toward achieving the goal of strengthening formal education in the sample schools is impressive. This achievement is mainly due to CSSW's dedicated staff in the field and their closeness to the community, ranging from the governorate officials to community members.

As for remedial education and the set up of a resource room, this is a new concept being introduced to Yemen's educational system. When it was first launched, the project schools had some difficulties understanding the concept. At present, school principals in project schools are proud that their schools are first to have this innovative program. The MOE is also impressed with the project for several reasons: (1) the project is reaching a group of children who would have been overlooked (i.e., working children), thus contributing to EFA; (2) it offers another preventive measure for retention; (3) they are intrigued by the concept of remedial education for children with learning difficulties, as it does not exist in the country. The MOE's inclusive education strategy, for example, targets only children with disabilities. At the time of the evaluation, the MOE official explained that the ministry is waiting to see the effectiveness of this delivery system. If it proves to be successful, the ministry is interested in replicating remedial education in schools nationwide.

Challenges, Constraints, and Issues

- School principals in the project schools are very supportive of the project, yet some thought that they should have been included in the teacher training workshops so as to have a more participatory role and know how to support the teachers.
- School supervisors are having a difficult time assessing and supporting remedial teachers since they are not familiar with the teaching methods employed. Including them in training may have enabled them to understand these teaching methodologies and accordingly provide support to these teachers, if needed. Moreover, they could have gained new teaching skills that could be integrated into the educational system.
- The increase in enrollment of students assisted by the project (e.g., in Al-Khansa school in Hajja, 500 additional children were enrolled) has overburdened the school. Classrooms that were already crowded have become worse; teachers do not have any office space or sitting areas and in one school, a storage room was converted into a classroom; students

have to wait in long queues during the break to use the latrines and often have to return to class without having had their turn.¹⁰

- Remedial teachers' schedules are overloaded. These teachers have to teach and prepare lessons for students in the resource room, which is very demanding, in addition to attending to their regular teaching duties. They are receiving a small stipend for putting in more time, yet it is not sufficient. They are overburdened and are requesting to be freed from other school responsibilities and assigned only to remedial education.
- Remedial education targets predominantly children with learning problems, who represent one type of children at risk, and the argument can be made that this is a preventive measure for their retention. Conversely, this intervention targets a small group of children, thus excluding children with poor academic performance, such as those withdrawn and recently re-enrolled and thus needing academic support. This latter group of children may represent a much larger group, yet they do not qualify for remedial classes.
- The project's small budget prohibits CSSW from implementing activities to their fullest. Interventions are dictated by their budget and not by demand. This is most evident in the lack of additional training for teachers and social counselors to ensure their capacity-building, the inability to recruit staff for the project, and the need to depend on volunteers.
- The project has not included interventions for employers, who are crucial in addressing in child labor issues and who need to be informed about labor laws, children's rights, and the consequences of exploiting children and involving them in hazardous work.
- The issue of child labor is not effectively addressed in the project as a whole. This issue is complex due to several social and economic factors such as the cultural notion of child labor, severe poverty, and ignorance of the dangers of exposing children to the worst forms of child labor. Instead, the project is concentrating on improving the quality of education.
- Poor quality of teachers in basic education will continue to negatively affect student achievement and consequently produce children at risk.
- Poverty is a major factor forcing parents to send their children to work. Thus, the project can only reduce working hours and prevent children from entering the worst forms of child labor, but cannot stop them from working. The only way to do the latter would be to offer families a substitute means of raising income, such as providing a parent or older sibling training in a vocational or income-generating skill.

¹⁰ It is important to note here that latrines, or the lack thereof, is a factor causing girls' dropout. In this situation, if the project schools have latrines but cannot use them, the problem may not be solved.

ACCESS MENA, Lebanon

RMF's efforts to encourage working children and those at risk of leaving school to work include the following interventions:

1. Remedial education
2. Reintegration of students
3. Teacher training

The objective of **remedial education**, as applied in the project in Lebanon, consists of enhancement classes to strengthen children's skills in weak subject matters such as math, Arabic, and science to prevent them from failing. Failing classes often leads to children dropping out of school and taking on a menial job. Remedial education is provided as a preventive measure for children at risk of failing and dropping out of school and as a curative measure to support withdrawn children reintegrated into the formal education system. The target group is students between 4th and 6th grades because the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) policy of automatic promotion ceases to exist at this level. Students from this grade, therefore, must attain passing marks to be promoted to the next level; consequently, it is at this time that dropout rates begin to manifest. Remedial education is offered once a week at the project's selected schools, RMF, and NGO centers.

Many NGOs were already offering students enhancement classes prior to the project, but were charging students a fee of 25,000 Lebanese Pounds (US\$17.00). Yet, because of their partnership with RMF in which they share costs, NGOs were able to drop these charges and consequently enable more students to enroll. Most of these NGOs, however, did not follow the project's approach to providing remedial classes once a week for children in grades 4–6. Rather, they believe remedial classes should be offered more frequently to students from earlier grades to prevent them from establishing a weak academic foundation.

Remedial classes have had some repercussions from some school teachers. Public school teachers, who are generally considered to have poor teaching skills, were giving some children who had still not mastered basic skills by 4th grade, higher grades to convince people of their good teaching skills. These children were identified during a study conducted by CERD to help the project identify students at risk. These children were enrolled in remedial classes and when their academic performance improved, these school teachers began to purposely lower these children's grades to disprove the impact of remedial classes.

Efforts to reintegrate working children back into the formal education system depend on the MEHE's enrollment policy. Children who have been out of school for one year or less are allowed to re-enroll; those who have been out of school for more than a year are not permitted to re-enroll. Therefore, RMF tries to reintegrate withdrawn children who may still be eligible to re-enroll. In some cases, the enrollment of these children is obstructed because they do not have an ID card, which is a prerequisite for school registration. This is not an uncommon problem, as many working children come from broken families who are illiterate and poor and do not have ID cards. For example, single female heads of households or parents with disabilities find the

bureaucratic process of applying for an ID overwhelming and therefore avoid applying. RMF social workers often try to assist these parents by advising on how to apply for ID cards. They also tried to persuade the school administration to accept some other document, such as a birth certificate, but they refused. Consequently, these children are excluded from entering the system.

RMF provides children who cannot reintegrate into formal education with literacy classes. Children 14 years and older receive vocational training, but if they are illiterate, they must first attend literacy classes for 9 months. AVT includes activities such as electricity, woodwork, mechanics, computer skills, hair dressing, and catering. After completion of training, RMF and the NGOs try to help them find jobs, which is a significant contribution to ensuring that these children's transition continues to a secure working environment.

During the evaluator's focus group meetings with withdrawn children from the younger age group at an NGO center in Akkar, they explained that they enjoy and prefer learning in the center rather than attending school; the reason being that school teachers hit them. Almost 90 percent of children interviewed explained that they left school for this reason and not because of failing grades. They were also adamant about not wanting to return to school for this reason. These findings depict another critical factor contributing to student dropout, and the importance of banning corporal punishment to ensure retention.

In another focus group discussion with children from the older age group in an RMF center in Bab-el Tebbaneh who were receiving vocational training, they explained that they were gaining a professional skill that would secure them better paying jobs. They would like to receive a diploma after completing their training, as it would give more credence to their training and they would have something formal to show when applying for work.

Teacher training included training in SCLM, (i.e., teachers are trained on how to consider a student's potential and needs using competency-based methods). The training also encourages the students to develop their skills by means of a participatory learning interaction.

This training was given to teachers who were to teach remedial classes in the target schools and those in RMF and NGO centers. This activity was implemented with the cooperation of CERD, who selected a cadre of teachers to teach remedial classes in the project school. CERD selection criteria were that teachers have a four-year teacher training diploma and specialize in a subject. In other words, they have higher qualifications than their counterparts in formal education schools who generally have a two-year teacher training diploma and whose performance is poor.

Teachers said that the training has improved their teaching skills, yet, their major complaint is the challenge in dealing with withdrawn children's conduct, especially those 14 years and older and who have spent a significant time in downtrodden social environments. Most of these children have behavioral problems and often cause disturbances in class. At the beginning of the school term, teachers often have to take away hand knives and other sharp gadgets the students bring with them to school. Interestingly, teachers that taught working children in the RMF centers explained that after a month's time, they notice a significant improvement in these children's conduct and they become eager to learn. As this was not expressed by school teachers,

it may suggest that smaller, more personal environments such as that at the RMF centers have a positive impact on these children.

Selection of Beneficiaries

The **target group** includes 1,805 children for withdrawal and 2,695 children for prevention from work in seasonal agriculture in Akkar, small industries and domestic work in Bab el-Tebbaneh, and tobacco cultivation in Nabattiyeh (i.e., a total of 3,780 children).

RMF selected the beneficiaries using different approaches. For example, social workers visited working sites such as car mechanic shops and farms where children are commonly seen working. The social workers spoke with working children and their employers to encourage them to send these children to AVT. They also visited homes in underserved rural areas and spoke with parents of younger children to inform them of the importance of education and the risk of their children working. In some cases, social workers heard—by word of mouth—of teenage girls not enrolled in school, illiterate, and often working as domestic workers. In this case, they visited the girls in their homes and convinced them to attend the project.

The project, with the assistance of CERD, also identified young children who were in literacy classes but should have been in formal education and facilitated the children's re-enrollment in school. Schools and municipalities also assisted in the selection of beneficiaries by identifying children at risk of leaving school due to their family's poverty. In both cases, the project paid the school fees to the families.

At midterm, the project's recruitment numbers are close to reaching the project's target (Table 1, p. 17), thus highlighting RMF's achievement in withdrawing young working children and re-integrating them into the educational system.

Project Impact

- The project's interventions contributed to strengthening teachers' capacity at the project sites and have been successful in encouraging working children and those at risk of working to attend formal or informal education.
- CERD has been impressed with the result of these interventions (enhancement classes and teacher training), the improvement in student achievement, and increase in student retention. As a result, CERD is interested in providing the same training to all primary formal education teachers. It would also like to include remedial classes, but does not have the financial resources.
- Teacher training in new teaching methodologies is a significant contribution to capacity-building and will be sustainable.
- Remedial classes based on student scores show that they are effective in improving student achievement.

- The project has given poor, working children an opportunity to reintegrate into formal education by paying their school fees and providing school supplies.
- Children have higher self-esteem because they are learning and do not feel left behind.

Challenges, Constraints, and Issues

Overall, the project's interventions are not free of challenges, mostly due to the poor quality of education, socioeconomic background of working children, and the political situation in the country.

- Remedial classes are not provided until 4th grade, which allows a child to go without needed academic support for a significant period of time, instead of beginning at an earlier grade.
- Remedial classes offered once a week are insufficient, especially since they include several subject matters.
- Withdrawn children between the ages of 10 and 13 years who cannot enroll in formal education also cannot enroll in vocational training because they are below the required age of 14 years. Consequently, after completion of literacy classes, they are left with nothing to do, which may lead them to return to work.
- Poor-quality teachers in formal education will continue to cause low student achievement, consequently putting children at risk of engaging in exploitive labor.
- Very poor families will continue to make their children work if no sustainable alternative is provided to them such as vocational or income-generating training.
- The MEHE enrollment policy makes it difficult for children who have been out of school for more than 1 year to re-enter the formal education system.
- The MEHE requirement that children have an ID card to register in school is an obstacle. Poor families are overwhelmed by taking on long, bureaucratic procedures and indirect costs.
- Corporal punishment is a serious cause of student dropout, which highlights the importance of prohibiting it.
- The political situation has further crippled the economy, thus increasing poverty and child labor. This situation is a major challenge for RMF's efforts at withdrawing children and reintegrating them into formal education or skills training.

KOL

This component, which introduces children to computers, is another project means to encourage children to remain in school. The KOL component is designed primarily to offer a digital education component, to make learning more interactive and interesting for children, and to improve the quality of education. At the macro level, the aim of this component is to reduce the digital gap among poor children between the ages of 8 and 17 years. This component's outputs include—

- Interactive CDs
- Videos teaching children in Arabic how to use the computer
- Computer software in Arabic accompanied by an Arabic teacher's manual
- A documentary portraying the implementation of ACCESS-MENA.

There are two additional outputs expected from KOL: a documentary film, which is in its early stage of production; and the web-casting of the upcoming ACCESS-MENA conference hosted by AMIDEAST in Beirut, May 2007. The purpose of the film is to document ACCESS-MENA activities over the four-year life of the project. It is intended to serve as a testimonial to the project's accomplishments, as an educational and informative resource, and as an important means of promoting awareness of child labor and education initiatives worldwide.

Challenges, Constraints, and Issues

This component has not yet been effectively applied to support the goal of strengthening formal and transitional education systems, i.e., within the boundaries of the project. KOL made efforts to produce materials that are culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate; however, it faced several challenges:

- It produced a video in Arabic to teach children how to use the computer for two countries with different dialects. As a solution, KOL chose the Egyptian dialect, assuming that it is the most familiar in the region. However, when CHF tested this video, it found that children had difficulty understanding the Egyptian dialect. KOL altered the dialect, but the project has not used this video.
- The project did not account for the fact that the digital component was for schools in poor villages with limited power supply and no computers. Yet, the software could have been used in the project's vocational centers that offer computer skills classes for children between age 14 and 17. The manuals that accompany the software could have been beneficial for both instructors and students as they were in Arabic and English, thus making English commands familiar to teachers and students.
- This component was introduced at project commencement, which was not an appropriate time, as the project implementers were preoccupied with logistics, familiarizing

themselves with the sociocultural and economic context of the beneficiaries, and training teachers and social workers.

- The task orders of RMF and CSSW were already committed to interventions of basic education activities, which they believed took priority, thereby delaying implementation of KOL's interventions.
- KOL's performance in producing its outputs was affected by the political situation in Lebanon because its staff could not travel to the field, thus causing delays in the production of materials.

KOL has not been content with its participation in the project for several reasons. First, the project has been more difficult and time-consuming than anticipated, mainly because the software needed to be produced first in English and then translated into Arabic. Second, there has been an issue of a lack of partnership regarding CHF, RMF, and CSSW. Consequently, KOL feels that aside from being the supplier of digital products, it has had little input in the project. For example, KOL was not involved in the training, use, or dissemination of its materials. Finally, KOL felt that the paperwork involved, i.e., preparation of task orders for every output every three months, was an overwhelming and very time-consuming task relative to their level of involvement.

4.2.3 Goal 3: Strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor

This goal of the project design and implementation translated into collaborating with relevant government ministries to promote discourse on child labor and education, and advocating policy change to reduce child labor and increase access to education.

ACCESS-MENA, Lebanon

RMF has taken a prominent role in promoting national discourse on child labor and education by mobilizing a wide array of stakeholders. For example, since the project's launching, RMF has hosted several workshops and a national conference in cooperation with the HCC. This conference brought together different representatives from government, parliamentary committees, NGOs, and international organizations. The outcome of this conference was a draft of the law against corporal punishment. At the time of the evaluation, this law was being considered by Parliament.

The project has indirectly contributed to strengthening the capacity of several national institutions. For example, it has trained a cadre of MEHE teachers in SCLM, which the MEHE aims to incorporate in its teacher-training programs. Furthermore, CERD is taking the lessons learned from the project and considering how it can apply them.

HCC also considers that its capacity has been strengthened as a result of its partnership with the project. The project has assisted in learning how to identify target groups and communicate with communities and municipalities. In addition, due to ACCESS-MENA's resources, methodology,

and expertise, HCC gained knowledge on how to address the problem of child labor in its activities.

Finally, the project activities have been a catalyst in amending policies that will significantly improve conditions of child labor and retention of children in formal education; these include corporal punishment and compulsory free education. There is a consensus among CERD, MOSA, NCL, and HCC that their capacity has been strengthened by learning from the strategies RMF employs in implementing ACCESS-MENA. These include—

1. **Networking.** An underlying strategy RMF exercises in the project is networking, which is evident in its involvement of a wide array of participants in implementing the project, from government officials to community-based associations. Representatives from these ministries said that they have realized the importance of networking as a result of their collaboration with RMF and now employ this strategy.
2. **Comprehensive approach.** The project's design and implementation encompass a comprehensive approach and RMF has been effectively applying it. This approach includes taking into account the different project facets and employing a holistic process. Representatives from the partner ministries said that they appreciate this process and its effectiveness in problem-solving and policy-implementation.
3. **Raising awareness.** They appreciate the importance of raising awareness as fundamental to mobilizing different actors, ranging from government to community, to combat child labor.

ACCESS-MENA, Yemen

In Yemen, CSSW has been collaborating with officials in MOSAL, MOE, and MOTEVT at the governorate level. As a result, these institutions have become sensitized to the importance of child labor and education and support ACCESS-MENA/CSSW's activities. In all three governorates, the MOE was impressed with the project's impact in enabling a large group of working children to re-enroll in formal education. These ministries are consequently requesting that the project be expanded to include more districts and schools. At the grassroots level, local NGOs and local councils are continuously kept informed about CSSW activities that combat the worst forms of child labor and promote education.

In regards to policy, CSSW advocacy at the national level is limited because of their restricted financial and technical resources. For example, unlike RMF, CSSW is unable to host national conferences and workshops to discuss policies regarding child labor and child rights and advocate implementation of policy. Yet, if CSSW had appropriate resources, it would be a good candidate, as it is a prominent NGO in Yemen and has the clout to advocate for national policies on child labor and education. Conversely, it has limited technical expertise in child labor issues and the project should consider strengthening the capacity of CSSW to take on this critical role, as it would ensure sustainability of project activities after its completion.

In conclusion, although child labor and student dropout are monumental problems in Yemen and are on the national social agenda, it has been a lost opportunity that CSSW could not take a

leading role. It would be another lost opportunity if this situation were not reversed in the second term of the project.

4.2.4 Goal 4: Ensure long-term sustainability

The evaluation found that ACCESS-MENA has made a significant impact on raising awareness, encouraging discourse, and promoting interventions related to child labor and education initiatives that are sustainable after project completion.

ACCESS-MENA, Lebanon

RMF has gained extensive experience while implementing ACCESS-MENA. The RMF Director is convinced that its activities in child labor and education have gradually been integrated into its NGO program. RMF understands the different dimensions of what is involved in combating child labor, and its institutional capacity has been strengthened in the process. Consequently, it will be in a good position to sustain project activities. For example, in appreciating the importance and complexity of raising awareness on child labor and education, an awareness team (A-team) for this task was formed. This team consisted of permanent NGO staff members whose expertise will continue to develop with the project and afterwards. Furthermore, by representing ACCESS-MENA on several national committees advocating policy on child labor, RMF has gained national recognition and will most likely continue to be included as a participant in national debate and policy.

At the community level, many local NGOs in partnership with RMF have become sensitized to the issue and magnitude of the problems of child labor and education in their communities. The capacity of their teachers has been strengthened by receiving training from the project in child-centered learning methodologies. Consequently, these NGO centers will be able to continue to provide remedial education to support working children and those at risk of dropping out of school.

Challenges

- In spite of RMF's capability to sustain its work on child labor, these efforts will continue to encounter challenges. For example, the political situation will compound problems of poverty and thus, child labor. Already it is expected that for the academic year 2007–2008, many children will be at risk of leaving school because the support they received last year from foreign donors after the summer conflict will end. Consequently, parents without any financial support will not be able to keep their children in school.
- The introduction of remedial education in schools is a value added to formal education. Yet, after project completion, the MEHE may not be able to take on the costs of this service due to its budget constraints. Consequently, measures to prevent children at risk of leaving school to go to work will be halted.
- The adverse combination of poor-quality primary school teachers and the MEHE policy of automatic promotion until grade 4 will continue to be a factor in allowing weak students to go unnoticed in the early grades. Consequently, dropout rates may persist

from grade 4 onward due to the lack of a school safety net to provide children with academic support before it is too late.

- Political crises and instability will continue to paralyze economic development, thus compounding problems of poverty and child labor.
- Lack of awareness of employers in the formal and informal sector will continue to expose children to the worst forms of child labor.
- Lack of effective MOL inspectors to identify and penalize offenders will continue to allow employers, especially in the informal sector, to hire young children unnoticed.
- Finally, if the project does not introduce some alternative support for parents such as vocational or income-generating skills training to reduce dependency on their children, once project support of paying school fees and providing school supplies ends, parents will be obliged to withdraw their children from school.

ACCESS-MENA, Yemen

CSSW in implementing ACCESS-MENA has gained experience and interest in child labor and education and has included this work in their five-year plan. CSSW will also add the governorates of Sana'a, Taiz, and Hodiedah. This inclusion is a major measure indicating its commitment to pursue working on child labor education initiatives post-project.

Moreover, some project interventions will be sustainable as CSSW was offering them prior to the project; for example, assisting poor families with school fees or school supplies. These activities post-project will resume, but within the context of child labor and education rather than charity, which will ensure that withdrawn children do not drop out and that CSSW continues to enroll more children into formal and informal education.

There is also a strong willingness in the community to ensure the sustainability of the project's impact. CSSW has been discussing with local councils and parent councils how to participate in funding project activities after its completion. The establishment of a community council in Hajjah with representatives from the governor's office, MOSAL, women's local NGOs, businessmen, and members of the chamber of commerce to plan and oversee the sustainability of the project is also a significant measure that confirms commitment to ensuring the sustainability of the project activities.

In the seven project schools, remedial education by means of treating children with learning difficulties appears integrated in the project schools, especially since teachers have been trained in diagnosing children and the resource rooms have been equipped. If the MOE adopts remedial education, this will ensure the sustainability of this education intervention at a national level and will be a noteworthy achievement of the project.

CSSW has also been discussing with other organizations such as KFW and SFD the possibility of obtaining support to continue rehabilitation of infrastructure of more schools.

Challenges

- Poverty is the foremost factor and challenge that will continue to augment child labor in Yemen.
- Once children complete vocational training, it is difficult to find employment due to the country's stagnant economy.
- Lack of awareness-raising among employers in the formal and informal sector will continue to put children at risk of employment in hazardous and exploitive forms of labor.
- The small budget of CSSW has limited its capacity.

AMIDEAST

Sustainability of AMIDEAST's activities with child labor and education in the MENA region is an interesting issue due to its role as a project supplement. This institution has achieved its objectives in the project such as creating a website and a newsletter, and conducting workshops to strengthen local NGOs capacity regarding child labor. Its scheduled conference in May 2007 will also no doubt be an important forum to promote regional discourse on child labor in the region and may lead to policy and/or action plans. Yet, at the same time, the role of AMIDEAST could be regarded as a component performed by an intermediary agent to implement activities at the regional level. The question that arises is how will these activities continue after project completion? Who will take over hosting the website, which is an important means to continue disseminating information on child labor education initiatives? At the time of the evaluation, AMIDEAST expressed this concern and is considering the possibility of continuing to host the website after project completion.

KOL

As of the evaluation, there were no activities being implemented by KOL. It has completed its task of preparing the digital materials, but the project has not applied them. Consequently, it is premature to assess the sustainability of this component.

4.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The project, through the CHF office in Beirut, oversees the monitoring and evaluation of project performance. Each subcontractor, RMF and CSSW, is responsible for monitoring its project activities. For example, in Lebanon, RMF conducts its monitoring activities with partnerships with CHF. Similarly, in Yemen, CSSW monitors its project activities with supervision from the CHF office in Sana'a; CHF then sends data to CHF, Beirut. The output is a technical progress report (TPR) prepared every six months by the Project Director. It includes, among other issues, progress on the project's nine outputs and children's enrollment in the different education interventions under USDOL's common indicators.

The project's evaluators find USDOL common indicators useful for classifying children according to their attributes—*withdrawn/prevention*, *retention/completion*—and tracking their position in the project. As a result, it enables the evaluators to keep accurate measure of the status of the beneficiaries. USDOL provided project staff with technical assistance on project design and monitoring, which has been useful to the project staff in helping them develop their workplans, task orders, and monitoring capacity according to USDOL requirements. Both RMF and CSSW developed their own computer tracking systems and incorporated USDOL common indicators.

The project trained RMF and CSSW staff on how to apply USDOL common indicators. RMF then also conducted a workshop to train its partner NGOs in the field on how to apply this system. At first, RMF experienced some difficulty in tracking the beneficiaries, especially because it has so many partner NGOs, complicating the flow of information and accuracy.

The project, however, is still recovering from the change in one of the common indicators that USDOL requested 1 year ago. As the project understood the change, the indicator *enrollment* was to be changed to *withdrawn/prevented*. In other words, children age 13 years and younger in Lebanon and 14 years and younger in Yemen enrolled in an education program who continued to work but for fewer hours and/or were removed from hazardous types of work (i.e., classified as *enrolled children*), were no longer to be included and instead the new criterion for this cohort was that they be completely withdrawn from exploitive labor (*withdrawn*). In reality, there was no change in the definition, but the project had understood the two terms differently. In other words, the project had originally interpreted *enrolled children* as those enrolled in the project but who were working fewer hours and/or removed from hazardous types of work, regardless of age. When USDOL changed the name of the indicator to *withdrawn*, USDOL emphasized that according to the USDOL definition, children below the legal working age of the project country must be fully withdrawn. Thus, the project understood this indicator as encompassing a different target group. The project adjusted the data to include both groups of beneficiaries and classifying them as *partially withdrawn* and *fully withdrawn*. For children 14 years and older, *withdrawn* is defined as enrolled in a project (formal or nonformal) education program, working, but not in the worst forms of child labor, and not more than eight hours. Consequently, the following issues became of concern to CHF, RMF, and CSSW:

1. They were not sure what to do with the data collected since project initiation, or with the children already enrolled in the project but who continued to work. The project adjusted the data to include both groups of beneficiaries and classified them as *partially withdrawn* and *fully withdrawn*.
2. *Withdrawn* was a rigid measure considering the economic context of these countries.

In Lebanon, at the time of the evaluation, RMF was applying the USDOL criteria of *withdrawn* and *prevented* to target children. However, RMF explained that insisting on targeting *withdrawn* children meant excluding poor children in most need from education initiatives when they do not have a say in choosing to work or not. For example, there are cases where parents allow only one child to enroll but not another.

In Yemen, according to CSSW's understanding, *withdrawn* implies that children are withdrawn from the worst forms of child labor. Children under the legal working age continue to work, as it is considered light work, not hazardous, and their time to do school work is protected. Having children completely *withdrawn* is considered unrealistic within the economic context of Yemen.

Previous measurements included as *withdrawn* children who had been initially counted as only partially withdrawn.¹¹ More recently, and as a result of the change in criterion, modifications have been made to the data to ensure its accuracy, including adding a 4th cohort to include the partially withdrawn children. As a result, the project has appropriate mechanisms to monitor the working status of beneficiaries according to the USDOL definition.

Both RMF and CSSW have an impressive tracking system, which includes a complete profile on each child. In addition, their staff in the field makes continuous visits to make sure that beneficiaries are present in school. For example, if a child is absent for more than one day, a project staff member will contact the parents to inquire about the child's absence.

4.4 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

The project has not encountered any major issues or challenges in initiating partnership in either country. At project start-up there was some suspicion of RMF and CSSW, as both are NGOs considered to have political affiliations in their respective countries.¹² Yet these suspicions quickly subsided once these NGOs confirmed their roles as implementers of ACCESS-MENA. The following section explains the project's achievements in developing partnerships and coordinating with host governments, NGOs, and ILO-IPEC.

ACCESS-MENA, Lebanon

The project's partnership with the Lebanese **government** primarily includes MEHE and MOSA, in addition to approximately 30 local NGOs. A critical strategy that smoothed the way for ACCESS-MENA to establish partnerships and subsequently implement its interventions was to introduce the project to these partners and familiarize them with its goals and objectives as they relate to child labor education initiatives. These introductions were performed by RMF by conducting workshops, one-on-one meetings, and hosting a national conference.

In its partnership with MEHE, ACCESS-MENA has signed a four-year Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of remedial classes. In addition, they have an agreement to incorporate three thematic policy issues:

1. Free and compulsory education
2. Banning of corporal punishment in schools
3. Strategy for reintegration of student dropouts

¹¹ In Yemen, CSSW continues to monitor beneficiaries who are working since the majority of their beneficiaries do.

¹² CSSW is considered an affiliate of the Islah political party; RMF is associated with Rene Moawad, a former Lebanese President assassinated during the civil war, and whose wife is the founder of RMF.

Moreover, there is ongoing cooperation between ACCESS-MENA and MEHE/CERD, who have facilitated the implementation of core project interventions. These include the following:

- RMF and CERD jointly conducted a baseline study to identify education problems and children at risk.
- CERD selected for the project a cadre of 77 teachers from the ministry to train in SCLM to become remedial class teachers. CERD selected what they described as their best cadre to participate, i.e., those with a four-year teacher training diploma and who specialized in a subject matter, in contrast to the standard MOE teachers, who have a two-year teacher training diploma and whose performance is generally considered poor.
- CERD helped set up remedial classes in the project schools and assigned MEHE supervisors to oversee the activities in the remedial classes and coordinate activities between school principals and the remedial class teachers.

The second important project partnership is with MOSA, which includes the HCC and National Literacy Committee (NLC). With the HCC, the project has been in partnership to advocate and draft an amendment to the law against corporal punishment, as well as to implement free and compulsory education. RMF and HCC also collaborated on drafting the National Action Plan. In addition, they are collaborating on raising awareness on child protection and child labor. Through these activities, ACCESS-MENA has also played an important role in linking HCC and the MEHE.

The partnership and cooperation between NLC and ACCESS-MENA has resulted in the following:

- The project trained NLC literacy teachers in interactive teaching methodology.
- The costs of vocational training were shared.
- MOSA allowed children age 14 years and above to attend literacy and vocational training.
- MOSA and ACCESS-MENA promoted the National Action Plan, which the government adopted.
- MOSA included in the Social Action Plan a strategy to provide financial support to poor families to combat child labor and ensure children's retention in school.
- ACCESS-MENA provided indicators on child labor to the government.

The only ministry of relevance with which the project has not established a partnership or cooperation is the MOL, particularly the CLU. The CLU was created two years ago and is in need of institutional capacity-building. Moreover, it does not have a budget from the MOL, which limits its activities and makes it dependent on foreign donors, mainly ILO-IPEC. On the other hand, the evaluation also found that CLU has not made much of an effort to become

involved with ACCESS-MENA. Nonetheless, the project should collaborate with the CLU, as it is the core national institution for combating child labor. It would be in the project's long-term interest to assist in strengthening the CLU's institutional capacity, such as in support of training or policy. For example, the MOL/CLU does not have its own list of hazardous types of labor. The CLU will be undertaking a study in the near future to determine this list; this may be an appropriate matter for the project to assist in.

Furthermore, the CLU oversees a small team of inspectors, approximately eight, whose function is to inspect violators of child labor around the country. Yet, this team lacks sufficient training and it is too small to cover the entire country. This is a critical activity in combating child labor, yet is not addressed by the project. Although it is beyond the project's mandate to train inspectors, the project may advocate that the MOL increase the number of its inspectors and provide them with up-to-date training. In addition, MOL inspectors are only allowed to inspect employers in the formal sector; thus, employers in the informal sector can get away with hiring young children into the worst forms of child labor and exploiting them. Consequently, this is a policy that the project should advocate to change, as a significant portion of the agriculture sector (especially in tobacco farming) in Lebanon is considered to be in the informal sector, where many children (boys and girls) are working for long hours with very little pay.

In conclusion, involving the CLU in the project would be a significant asset for the sustainability of combating child labor after project completion.

Finally, ACCESS-MENA/RMF achievement in establishing partnerships with relevant government ministries is most evident in their membership in the following national committees:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Ministry of Education: | 1. School Dropout Prevention Committee |
| | 2. Steering Committee for the National Plan of Action on Compulsory and Free Education |
| | 3. Education for All Committee |
| Ministry of Education
(HCC) and ILO-IPEC: | 4. National Committee for Combating Child Labor |
| Ministry of Social Affairs: | 5. National Literacy Committee |
| | 6. All thematic, specialized national committees established by the Higher Council for Childhood |

RMF has partnerships with approximately 30 local NGOs, making them implementers of project activities in the different target governorates (Akkar, Beirut, Nabattiya, and Tripoli). As a result, the project is able to target a wider range of working children and those at risk, and to implement its activities in awareness-raising, literacy, and vocational training. This targeting has been a significant asset to the project.

ILO-IPEC

As IPEC is also funded by USDOL, it is expected that there would be a strong partnership with ACCESS-MENA, yet this is not the case because their activities are parallel rather than complementary. IPEC is conducting the same activities as ACCESS-MENA except on a much smaller scale with fewer financial and technical resources. Nevertheless, there is some coordination between them, for example, their membership in the “National Committee for Combating Child Labor,” and in establishing the Child Labor Monitoring System (CLMS). They are also in regular contact to ensure that there is no overlap in targeting the same beneficiaries. In regards to the role of RMF, it is only a subcontractor of ACCESS-MENA. RMF has never been subcontracted by IPEC, therefore there is no overlap in their roles.

Hence, it would have been more beneficial to the project and to USDOL if IPEC’s project was designed to compliment ACCESS-MENA, such as by focusing on different interventions that are beyond the mandate of ACCESS-MENA and more appropriate to their resources, such as training MOL inspectors and/or strengthening the institutional capacity of the CLU.

ACCESS-MENA, Yemen

In Yemen, the project’s partnerships and coordination with the central government are limited. For example, it needed the MOP approval for project implementation. Similarly, with the MOE, the project needed its approval for implementing the teacher training program. Hence, coordination has been limited to attaining these approvals. The project’s achievements in cooperation with the government are more evident at the governorate level. For example, CSSW’s implementation of interventions has been in cooperation with MOSAL, MOE, and MOTEVT at the governorate level in the project’s target governorates (Abyan, Ibb, and Hajjah). For example, with the agreement of the MOE, the project trained a cadre of teachers and social workers at the selected schools. In its cooperation with the MOE, Directory of Girls’ Education, the project was able to learn about pocket areas with high rates of illiteracy among girls and subsequently target these girls and enroll them in literacy classes. In cooperation with the MOTEVT, the project was able to enroll children 14 years and older in vocational training and have them exempted from being middle school graduates. The MOTEVT also agreed to offer these beneficiaries a diploma after completion of their training.

The MOE at the governorate level is impressed with the project’s success in reducing the number of dropouts in the project schools, especially girls. MOE is supportive of the implementation of remedial education and would like to include this in all of its schools, although this will only be possible if it obtains substantial support. In all three governorates, the MOE is requesting that the project be expanded to include more districts and schools.

NGOs and Community-Based Associations

CSSW cooperates with local NGOs and community-based associations, as it believes that the project can succeed only with their support. This support is exemplified in how CSSW was able to have many volunteers assist them with various project activities.

ILO-IPEC

At the time of the evaluation, there has not been an opportunity for ACCESS-MENA to establish a partnership or cooperate with IPEC, although both parties believe it is important to do so. However, IPEC has had a slow start in Yemen and its activities are about to be launched. Since IPEC's presence in Yemen, it has had to deal with many problems primarily related to its insufficient budget. More recently, it has experienced ongoing delays in its activities as a consequence of its partnership with the IPEC office in Lebanon. When IPEC-Beirut closes due to the political situation, the Yemen office will be paralyzed.

In conclusion, the project has been effective in cooperating with relevant government and non-governmental institutions. Nonetheless, these activities are constrained because: (1) its limited budget does not allow it to perform at the national level and advocate child labor and education; (2) it has limited technical expertise in working on child labor issues and CHF-Yemen is not capable of providing this technical support; and (3) the concept of child labor in Yemen's economic and social context is superfluous due to its amalgamation with traditional economic practices and severe poverty, which is reflected in the project's implementation. As a result, discourse on child labor has been limited to that concerning the worst forms of child labor, which is also interpreted subjectively.

Hence, although child labor and education are monumental problems in Yemen and are on the national social agenda, it has been a lost opportunity that CSSW has not received adequate project support to allow it to take a more national role, such as that of RMF.

4.5 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET ISSUES

Project management and budget activities are administered from the CHF office in Beirut. The project director is stationed in Beirut and oversees the activities of each ACCESS-MENA subcontractor. There is also a CHF office in Sana'a headed by a program manager who reports to the CHF Program Director in Beirut. The CHF Project Director is in constant contact with the Yemen office by phone and electronic mail and travels to Yemen approximately three times a year.

CHF International had been present in Lebanon and Yemen prior to their award of ACCESS-MENA. This established presence enabled them to draw on prior experience in implementation and partnerships and utilize their relations with beneficiary communities.

CHF in Lebanon works closely with RMF and AMIDEAST. Similarly, CHF-Yemen works closely with CSSW. The dynamics of these relationships, however, differ in each country. In Lebanon, the relationship between RMF and CHF is that of partnership, as RMF has the technical capacity and previous project experience in education and child labor and is therefore capable of implementing its activities with more independence from CHF. In Yemen, CSSW is more of a charity NGO with more experience in the health sector rather than education, but is shifting into more of a development modus operandi. Consequently, CHF-Yemen provides CSSW with technical support, especially in implementing the project's education interventions.

CHF International has a master contract with each subcontractor (RMF, CSSW, AMIDEAST, and KidzOnline), which includes a four-year logframe and a fiscal workplan and budget. CHF's project management and budgeting system requires that each subcontractor (in applying the logframe and fiscal workplan) prepare a three-month task order (TO) consisting of activities, outputs, and budget, to be followed by a progress report, a final report, and an invoice at the end of the three-month period. After CHF's review of the TO and its budget, CHF provides the subcontractor an advance of 75 percent of the budget. At the end of the three-month period, once the subcontractor presents its reports and shows that it has completed the TO activities and outputs, CHF pays the remaining 25 percent of the budget.

The subcontractors' finance officers were trained to apply CHF's budgeting system in a four-day training session in Beirut. RMF, CSSW, and CHF-Yemen financial officers consider CHF's budgeting system efficient and think it provides transparency of the project's operating costs. It also allows them to oversee the operation of the project activities according to the logframe and helps keep records and allows followup supervision of project activities.

Management Strengths

A major attribute of the project is the Program Director, who has a multifaceted task of working with several subcontractors. She is a pragmatic professional who has been able to keep under control the challenges of projects implemented in two challenging countries, one of which was in a state of war and continues to be in political crises, as well as a third project component implemented at the regional level (i.e., AMIDEAST). Moreover, the team effort and ongoing collaboration between CHF, RMF, and AMIDEAST is a major factor contributing to the achievements of the project.

CHF's project management and budgeting system has contributed to strengthening the capacity of both RMF and CSSW. This exercise has trained them in ongoing planning, prioritizing, monitoring, reporting, and budgeting that they had not been exposed to before, at least not as intensely. Both RMF's and CSSW's institutional capacity in this domain has been strengthened.

Management Issues

Conversely, CHF's project management and budgeting system has been a major issue between CHF and its subcontractors, as they all consider it labor-intensive. The two most outspoken about this system are KOL and RMF. Interestingly, based on their respective budgets, KOL is the smallest subcontractor, while RMF is the largest. KOL, for example, explained that it has had to spend many hours filling out the huge amount of paperwork required by CHF for its relatively small input. RMF explained that significant time is taken from project activities to be spent on preparing TOs and reports. Moreover, project interventions/activities that are assigned each fiscal year are divided into three-month increments for the TO. Therefore, each activity has to stop at the end of three months and undergo reporting and budgeting and then resume once these administrative activities are completed, thus disrupting the flow of project activities. This reporting requirement has been a major issue between CHF and RMF, but at the time of the evaluation, CHF had agreed to modify this system with RMF.

In Yemen, the project needs technical expertise to steer the project more toward combating child labor. As it stands now, directed by CHF-Yemen, it is emphasizing improving the quality of education, which is not appropriate in relation to the micro level interventions of the project. Although quality education is an important component in the project, it is a means, not an end. Consequently, CSSW, in spite of its noteworthy efforts, needs technical assistance in child labor and in dealing with matters regarding this issue, and in achieving the project's goal, i.e., combating child labor. This guidance is also critical for sustainability of the project. In addition, CSSW needs more direct support from the project director in Lebanon through more frequent visits to Yemen, instead of functioning as a semi-autonomous component.

Budgeting Issues

Project resources are inappropriately distributed between the countries. The project component in Lebanon has a budget of US\$3 million, Yemen has US\$1 million. Yemen is a much larger county, geographically dispersed, with a larger population—of which 48 percent are under age 15—a higher illiteracy rate, and, consequently, a higher child labor rate. It is not comprehensible, therefore, why Yemen has such a small budget. AMIDEAST, a smaller component, has an US\$800,000 million budget. Project costs in Yemen are also much higher because of the geographic distances and dispersion of villages. Project offices in the three governorates also have minimal administrative support; they are in need of a secretary, accountant, and copying machines. CSSW's budget for overhead costs is insufficient; consequently, CSSW has had to make up for these shortages. As a result, the project is constrained in its activities, which affects its impact and sustainability.

4.6 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT

ACCESS-MENA is being implemented in two countries that are facing grave challenges politically and economically. It is for this reason that a project aiming to combat child labor is of great importance at this time. Although there are some initiatives being taken on child labor, such as that by UNICEF and IPEC, their activities do not seem to have the impact that ACCESS-MENA has achieved until its midterm because they are on a smaller scale. A noteworthy attribute of the project is its multisectoral design, thus reflecting the multidimensional nature of child labor and education. Furthermore, it takes a vertical and horizontal strategy in awareness-raising, advocacy, networking, and partnerships among a wide array of actors. As a result, the project's impact is evident at the macro and micro levels and many of its activities will be sustainable in spite of the contextual challenges.

Macro Level

A significant impact the project has made in Lebanon and Yemen is strengthening the institutional capacity of two national NGOs—RMF and CSSW—by subcontracting them to take on project implementation. As a result, these NGOs will be able to sustain project activities after its completion.

In Lebanon, the project's policy advocacy and membership on national steering committees have led to several national policies and strategies that would protect working children and those at

risk of leaving school after project completion. These include banning corporal punishment in schools; implementing free and compulsory education; and reintegrating dropouts into formal education, the National Action Plan, and the Social Action Plan. In addition, the project signed Memoranda of Understanding with the HCC and the NLC, which are binding regardless of changes in government. These agreements include allocating budgets for child labor education initiatives beyond the life of the project. These agreements reflect critical steps toward integrating the issues of child labor and education in the political system and their sustainability.

Regarding the MEHE, the project's impact is evident in CERD's interest in incorporating SCLM in its teacher training programs, which will sustain a fundamental project intervention to improve the quality of education. Indirectly, the project has contributed to the MEHE efforts toward achieving EFA by enrolling working children who were overlooked.

In Yemen, the project operates on a much smaller scale, consequently inhibiting it from taking on a more dynamic role to advocate policy change at the national level. Nonetheless, it has gained support at the governorate level and received visibility at the national level. It has also received the attention of the MOE at the central level from its success in substantially increasing student enrollment rates at the project sites, which is critical to the MOE and its implementation of EFA. Moreover, the project's introduction of remedial education for children with learning difficulties may lead to the MOE replicating this activity at the national level, thereby ensuring the sustainability of this project intervention. Another important impact that is sustainable is the project's Memorandum of Understanding with the MOT EVT allowing working children 15 years and older to enroll without a middle school diploma in vocational centers, thus giving these children a second chance to learn a skill and thus improve their livelihoods.

Micro Level

In both countries, at the governorate and community levels, child labor, illiteracy, and high dropout rates are prevalent; yet, the relationship between these attributes and their downward-spiral impact on a child's livelihood is not observed. Consequently, the project's awareness-raising interventions were instrumental in explaining these issues to the broader community, ranging from municipalities to children. This information is sustainable, and although many poor families may find it challenging to practice due to their poverty, they are now in a better position because of their awareness to avoid having their children work in the worst forms of child labor or hazardous work.

The project's achievement in enrolling a substantial number of working children in a learning environment has improved their lives socially and psychologically. As social workers explained, their self-esteem is better, they are happy being with peers, and appreciate the opportunity to learn. Similarly, older children in vocational training are more optimistic about their livelihoods and there is improvement in their behavior and attitude. Moreover, these children are being mainstreamed in civil society rather than beginning a process of social and economic exclusion. Furthermore, parents feel better about themselves knowing that their children are no longer being deprived of an education.

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V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The midterm evaluation of ACCESS-MENA found that this project is making a significant impact on raising awareness on combating child labor by increasing education opportunities, as demonstrated in Lebanon and Yemen. It is also of particular importance in these two countries as it is supporting these governments' ratification of ILO Conventions 182 and 132, and responds to the urgent need of a growing population of children suffering from the consequences of political and economic crises, poor basic services, and increase in poverty. The domino effect of these factors has been an upsurge in child labor. Conversely, these factors are major challenges to implementing these projects.

The four EI goals in the program design are ambitious. They seek changes at the national and institutional levels, when the project's direct interventions are at the micro level, i.e., community, school, local NGOs, and children.¹³ Yet, the project is succeeding in making significant impact at the national level by establishing partnerships and cooperation, and at the regional and community level by effectively implementing its interventions and reaching its target groups.

CHF's subcontractors (AMIDEAST, KOL, CSSW, RMF) have contributed to the success of the project. AMIDEAST, for example, has efficiently been implementing project objectives, which include raising awareness, disseminating information, sharing best practices, encouraging policy discourse, and building the capacity of local NGOs in the MENA region. Schedules of some of AMIDEAST's activities were delayed due to the political situation in Lebanon that escalated in July 2006. Expected deliverables such as the newsletter and a website have been accomplished. The second subcontractor, KOL, has had a more challenging task of developing digital instructional materials suitable to both country contexts. These deliverables have been completed and sent to CHF. Yet, the evaluation found that application and dissemination of these computer materials have not been implemented. Although there is some uncertainty among project coordinators about the appropriateness of this component for impoverished school settings, its inclusion does enrich the project, especially as its rationale is to reduce the digital gap between rich and poor countries and within the country. Consequently, the project should make more effort to apply it.

RMF and CSSW are subcontractors for the country project components in Lebanon and Yemen, respectively. The evaluation found that the project is being implemented differently in each country. For example, basic education interventions, such as remedial classes to support withdrawn children and those at risk, have been interpreted differently. In project schools in Lebanon, they are applied within the context of providing enhancement classes to children at risk and to assist withdrawn children to reintegrate into the formal education system, while in Yemen the emphasis is on a preventative measure for children with learning difficulties and at risk of dropping out. Vocational training in both countries is achieving its objectives and providing skills training to older children. The teacher training program in student-centered learning methodologies has also been an important activity to strengthen the capacity of teachers. An important factor influencing project implementation in the two countries is their budget. Consequently, ACCESS-MENA, Lebanon, with a large budget, has been able to have a wide

¹³ The exception is AMIDEAST, as it is a regional component.

outreach of activities and strengthen project capacity; while in Yemen, the project's small budget has limited its ability to implement interventions with full potential, such as training teachers and social counselors or its outreach in awareness and advocacy activities. Moreover, the budget is inappropriately distributed between the two countries given the discrepancy in size (Yemen is larger), population, and poverty.

Yet, the evaluation concludes that RMF and CSSW are pioneers in implementing a project such as ACCESS-MENA within the challenging situations of Lebanon and Yemen, and have made impressive achievements in withdrawing children from the worst forms of labor and preventing those at risk from entering child labor by providing education and skills training to nurture their development and enhance their future livelihoods.

On the other hand, the project is not free from challenging issues that need attention. First, project activities in Lebanon have been significantly affected as a result of the political situation and therefore considerable time and effort has been taken away from the project's implementation. In Yemen, the project began a year later than scheduled and in reality has not reached its midterm. Due to the importance of this project in these two countries in relation to their problems of child labor and rise in student dropout rates from basic education, it is critical that the project be extended to make up for the lost time and circumstances these NGOs have had to endure, moreover to ensure sustainability of the project's interventions by further strengthening the institutional capacity of these NGOs,

Another prominent issue is that the project did little to target employers and involve trade unions or chambers of commerce. The CLUs in the MOL in Lebanon and MOSAL in Yemen were not incorporated as partners in the project. These CLUs have weak institutional infrastructures and are functioning with shoestring resources. CLUs also lack a cadre of well-trained child labor inspectors, whose role in the project has also been overlooked. Although the project cannot attend to all problems, these issues are critical and the project cannot be complete by considering only one side of the problem. These issues could at least be addressed within the context of project activities such as awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy, or policy change. They should also be pursued through cooperation and partnerships with government, international organizations, and NGOs. As for ACCESS-MENA and IPEC, they could have been more effective if they were designed to be complementary rather than parallel.

5.1 LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Due to the different experiences of the project in Lebanon and Yemen, lessons learned are deduced from the evaluation findings. These include the following:

- CHF's decision to subcontract national NGOs while supervising implementation of the project in its respective countries is an innovative development approach in capacity building of civil society. As a result, project sustainability is more ensured because it is being integrated within the national system.
- Child labor is a multifaceted problem that cannot be tackled by one project, institution, or organization. This issue is reflected in ACCESS-MENA in Lebanon and its cooperation

and partnership with a wide array of national actors that has been catalytic in advocating policy that would protect children's rights and ensure sustainability of project impact. On the other hand, ACCESS-MENA should provide support (technical and financial) so that CSSW can take on a similar role.

- There is a correlation between project budget and project impact. In other words, when a project is provided with sufficient funds to cover the costs of training and technical assistance (such as in Lebanon), project impact is more effective. When the reverse is the case, as with ACCESS-MENA-Yemen, the project is challenged in achieving its objectives and ensuring its sustainability.
- As this project depends greatly on social interactions at all levels, project staff plays a critical role. RMF and CSSW staff members (directors, coordinators, social workers, awareness-team, and volunteers) stand out for their dedication to the project and their ability to communicate with government officials, religious leaders, mayors, parents, and children. Their sensitivity to the cultural and economic attributes of the community is a fundamental asset in gaining support and participation and, most importantly, influencing parents to enroll their working children in the project.
- ACCESS-MENA in Lebanon and Yemen has successfully reached the project's target group. The common strategy among both was first to select the poorest villages and then identify the poorest families with working children by conducting a survey.
- Although it was assumed that the project would have one definition of remedial education, it was interpreted differently in each country as a consequence of the technical assistance provided to each. Nevertheless, the outcomes of these experiences provide an interesting lesson. In Lebanon, for example, academic support was provided to children at risk and withdrawn children were reintegrated. In Yemen, special academic support was provided to children with learning difficulties. Both approaches are important and complementary. In Lebanon, children with learning difficulties or disabilities were excluded from receiving project benefits, and in Yemen, reintegrated, withdrawn children were not receiving any academic support in school to help their reintegration.
- The project reintegrated large numbers of children in the selected project schools (e.g., 500 children were enrolled in one school in Hajjah), which overburdened the schools as they already suffer from overcrowded classrooms and poor physical resources. This outcome was not taken into consideration in the project design.
- In Yemen, *withdrawn* children attended summer camp as a means of reorienting them by providing some academic and extracurricular activities before the school year. In Lebanon, *withdrawn* children are given remedial (enhancement) classes once a week. Both types of interventions are important, yet insufficient when implemented individually. To attain full effectiveness, these activities should be combined; they are complementary. A summer camp is important for withdrawn children to reorient them socially and academically to formal education and to tackle any emotional, psychological, or behavioral problems they may have. Yet, it is also important that

children receive remedial education (i.e., like that implemented in Lebanon) during the academic year.

- Providing children in AVT with a formal diploma after completion (as is the case in Yemen) is important to give their training credence when applying for work.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESS-MENA

1. For AMIDEAST's second term, it would be an added value if stronger links were made with CSSW, keeping track of their activities and including Yemen as another case study similar to that done in Lebanon, as it represents another MENA country with different economic, social, and political contexts.
2. The project needs specific awareness interventions to address employers in the formal and informal sectors, as they are the offenders of putting children in hazardous and abusive working conditions. This activity should be in collaboration with the MOL/CLU and ILO-IPEC.
3. As a measure to protect children of legal working age from being exploited in their wages, as is often the case, the project should consider advocating a national minimum wage policy intended to protect children.
4. The project should advocate for the removal of policies exempting employers in the informal sector from inspection by MOL inspectors, as that is where most working children become most vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Moreover, MOL child labor inspectors should become more forceful in their inspections. Of course, this would require MOL to provide these inspectors with more support and training.
5. KOL's work should be applied as a pilot study, for example, in one school and one vocational center in Lebanon and Yemen to test the different possibilities and appropriateness of this component.
6. As the project has reached midterm, it would be in the project's interest to have a workshop for participants in the two countries to share experiences, lessons learned, and plan strategies for the remaining duration of the project. Participants should not only consist of project staff, but also a sample of remedial class teachers, social counselors, and volunteers.
7. The project is due to end in August 2008, and should be extended for the following reasons: (1) to make up for the time lost in Lebanon due to the war and in Yemen due to delay in its launching; (2) the project is breaking new grounds in relation to the issue of combating child labor, which is critical in both countries, consequently its extension would ensure the establishment of an institutional infrastructure and sustainability; and (3) it would give the project an important opportunity to begin mainstreaming child labor

concerns into social and economic development programs, which would be in line with ILO objectives.¹⁴

ACCESS-MENA, Lebanon

8. Remedial classes at ACCESS-MENA should be offered two to three times a week instead of once a week.
9. ACCESS-MENA (RMF) should try to get an agreement from NLC to provide children with diplomas after completion of AVT.
10. The project should try to persuade MEHE to accept documentation other than ID cards (such as birth certificates) to allow withdrawn children to enroll in school.

ACCESS-MENA, Yemen

11. CSSW and CHF-Yemen need technical assistance to direct the project more into the context of child labor, such as learning more about policies and strategies in combating child labor, how to participate in national advocacy campaigns, and awareness-raising strategies to be implemented at the national level.
12. ACCESS-MENA should be given resources (funds and technical assistance) to include work on child trafficking, as this component is within OCFT's objectives.
13. CSSW's budget should be increased to enable them to provide more training for teachers and social counselors to adequately strengthen their capacities, and to hire several individuals responsible for awareness-raising activities on child labor and education. This is a crucial activity needed in Yemen and has not been implemented effectively at the national level. It would be advantageous if these individuals are trained by members of the Lebanon project (or having a trainer from the Lebanon project provide training in Yemen) to learn from their experience.
14. The project should introduce remedial classes to withdrawn and prevented children as the project has done in Lebanon.

¹⁴ ILO. The End of Child Labor: Within Reach. Geneva: International Labour Office Report I (B). p. 36