

Appendix 12: External Project Evaluation Report

for

“Improving producer livelihood in Swaziland” Project



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Table of contents

Table of contents	2
Acknowledgements	3
List of Acronyms	4
1.0 Executive Summary	5
2.0 Introduction	10
2.1 About the Assignment.....	10
2.2 About the Project	11
3.0 Methodology and Limitations	11
3.1 Data Collection and Analysis.....	15
3.2 Data Interpretation	15
3.3 Sampling method used.....	15
4.0 Findings	16
4.1 Effectiveness	16
4.2 Relevance of the project.....	19
4.2.1 Project Relevance Area 1: Internal Relevance	19
4.2.2 Project Relevance Area 2: Alignment to the Need	20
4.2.3 Project Relevance Area 3: Approaches used for execution	21
4.2.4 Project Relevance Area 4: Relevance to policy.	24
4.3 Efficiency	24
4.4 Impact	25
4.5 Sustainability.....	27
5.0 Lessons learnt, Conclusion and Recommendations	29
5.1 Lessons Learnt and Innovation.	29
5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations	30
6.0 Annexures	32
6.1 Profile of Key Informants Interviewed	32
6.2. Project Effectiveness Matrix.....	35
6.3 Key Informant Interview Guides	36
6.4: Terms of Reference for the assignment	39

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List of Acronyms

SWIFT	Swaziland Fair Trade
SIPA	Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority
SIF	Shared Interest Foundation
SWABCHA	Swaziland Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS
MTN	Mobile Telecommunication Network

1.0 Executive Summary

1. With financial support from Comic Relief, Shared Interest Foundation and Swaziland Fair Trade-SWIFT- have been implementing a project aimed at supporting business development and work place wellness in handicraft industry in Swaziland (now Eswatini). Launched in 2015 the project phased out in December 2018.

2. In line with good practice in project management and aid effectiveness principles, the partners commissioned an external evaluation of the project for accountability and learning purposes. The evaluation was conducted by Midas Management Concepts- a project and knowledge management consultancy based in Malawi. The evaluation examined the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project- through a series of interviews and extensive literature review.

3. *Effectiveness.* It is the opinion of this evaluation that the project effectively delivered on most of its outputs and potentially contributed to the intended outcomes and impact. The project sought to increase the volume of sales for micro-enterprises by 30% during the period under review. Records show that the sales volume for levels 0 and 1 businesses increased from R104159 in 2014/5 to R 2,277,006 in December 2018- a 2186% increase. This category of businesses did also employ an estimated 72 (38% women) producers/employees during the period. This was 36% of the planned 200 new producers. Among the medium to higher level businesses, a total of 3214 new people were directly employed as producers or company employees against a target of 200 people. This represents 3114% achievement. In total, 15 companies (against an initial target of 13) were supported to establish work place wellness policies. A total of 26 businesses accessed new markets during the period against a baseline value of 16 in 2015. During the project period, SWIFT secured a total of 13 orders valued at R 1218145.08 for its members.

“we have greatly reduced the amount of time we take working on our products due to streamlining of production process after training by SWIFT” Level 3 Business owner. 2019

4. *Relevance.* This evaluation found that the project was relevant to need and aligned to internal policies of the key partners involved in it. It was a market-based solution to a felt need in a highly deserving population group. A Key Informant reported that the handicraft industry is the third largest employer in the country and

mainly driven by rural women as the primary producers. Intervening in this sector was thus suitable for poverty reduction as it targeted a vulnerable segment of the population-rural women. The project was based on research, broad consultation and lessons from a previous intervention. It was aligned to SWIFT strategic plan and was within the priorities of Shared Interest Foundation as well as Comic Relief. It was complementary to local and regional government initiatives for Small and Micro Enterprise development. In implementing the project, SWIFT used appropriate approaches for adult learning, peer learning, coaching and mentorship to transfer skills. Overall assessment of the internal consistency of the project showed that it was founded on a theory of change with specific assumptions that the international market for handicraft products would remain stable. SWIFT reasoned that by increasing business sales, business owners would: i) hire more employees; and ii) pay higher wages. New employment and better pay were expected to improve the livelihoods the producers. The project implementation strategies and approaches were inclusive and responsive to the needs of men, women and people with disability.

“for me, the major problem was pricing and I was able to conquer that” Level 2 Business Owner. 2019

The evaluation established gaps in the internal relevance of the project in that while the theory of change was strong, the project did not in effect have standard “outputs” that would deliver the outcomes. Outputs are lower level deliverables/results achieved through activity implementation. According to the logical framework analysis, a project should have a hierarchy of change consisting of an impact, outcome/s, output/s and activities. Due to this gap, output indicators were used as outcome indicators and the project did not have livelihood specific indicators.

Project relevance was also in part undermined by a rapid change in the business environment especially in the HIV/AIDS sector. During the project period the government and partners invested significant resources in making treatment and care for those affected available. As such, most of the people hitherto targeted by outcome 4.0: *support for HIV/AIDs and wellbeing issues in the workplace* had access to the same benefits from the public health system of the government. This in a way made the sub component redundant and partners adjusted it to include a focus on other long- term illnesses including cancer.

5. *Efficiency.* Anecdotal evidence shows the project management was efficient. The number of people directly reached by the project is 1762 above the planned 5845 people. This shows a “stretch” of the initial budget to benefit more people.

The per capita cost of reaching the direct beneficiaries was 55 Great British Pounds (GBP) compared to the initial budget of 71 GBP. This cost reduces to 47 GBP when both direct and indirect beneficiaries are considered. SWIFT leveraged different opportunities to not only deliver the project but also add value to its products. For example, SWIFT engaged with Technoserve to reach more young people with entrepreneurship awareness among the youth. It also worked with strategic partners including the Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority-SIPA to both organize buyer tours and facilitate participation of members in international trade fairs. Working with other organizations ensured that more members benefitted from the combined resources-hence stretching the value of available budget.

6. *Project Impact.* The ultimate impact of the project was to improve the livelihoods of target beneficiaries by increasing sales which would result in better payment of producers and employees. As a result of the project, 3214 producers/employees are paid above the minimum wage gazetted by the government, and the companies are aiming at paying the living wage. As an organization, SWIFT has gained *social*

“my children were out of school in 2016. I contemplated getting out of the handicraft business but SWIFT came to my aid in 2018. I now have my children back to school and can feed” Level 1 business owner. 2019

*capital*¹ with strategic stakeholders in the sector, and is more visible as a leader in the industry. A Key Informant reported that previously the network was seen as a “cartel” out to dominate the handicraft industry, and as such its services were not appreciated by many in the country - especially in government. This has however changed through strategic interactions initiated by the network. The resultant effect has been formal recognition of SWIFT by government departments when they are developing key national programs and plans. Relevant government departments are now quick to refer people to the network for services. SWIFT is seen as an authority in the Small and Medium Enterprise development in Swaziland.

7. *Sustainability.* Project sustainability was examined at two levels: the business continuity of SWIFT and the continuity of the beneficiary businesses. The assessment of this evaluation is that most businesses owners are inspired to continue running their business, particularly because of the support they received from SWIFT related to knowledge and skills. Even for those who received seed

¹ Social capital is defined by the OECD as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups” <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>

funding, most of them have since diversified their income sources. While some of the level 0 and 1 business owners indicated need for financing, they felt they were able to keep innovating their products and growing sales. *Level of business resilience* measured by SWITF using 9 spoke Star tool rating showed that business resilience has almost doubled between 2015 and 2018 from 2.12, while confidence level of business owners in the future of their business has increased from 1.9 in 2015 to 4.30 in 2018. Some business owners did however express concern should SWIFT be unable to support the popular MTN Bushfire Art festival where most of them display and sell their products. There is also concern that the training received by the current business owners relate to their current business levels. Those skills may not be sufficient for the next higher level of business and this may “stagnate” or slow some of the businesses if higher level trainings stopped altogether.

As for the continuity of SWIFT as an organization, sustainability of the *expanded*² responsibilities may not be likely without direct donor support. Although the project sought to strengthen the organization with a view to reducing dependency on donor funding, SWIFT is yet to self-finance its recurrent expenses, with only 14% of revenue having been raised from non-donor sources during the period of the project. Shared Interest Foundation has supported the organization to strengthen both management and governance. In the second year of the project, for example, Shared Interest Foundation supported strengthening of monitoring and evaluation function. This saw the organization take charge of project monitoring which had earlier been outsourced to a third party. The management has also embarked on an aggressive marketing of their services to local and regional organizations. The organization is currently negotiating assignments in Botswana and has had discussions for a regional consultancy with the USAID. Despite these efforts however, the original plan to have SWIFT financially independent within 4 years was ambitious. Key Informants admitted that the proposal did not consider the entire business ecosystem of SWIFT: Management, Governance (Board) and Staffing (competence and head count) to appreciate their respective capacities as at the time of project planning in 2014.

8. *Conclusion.* It is the conclusion of this evaluation that the project implemented by SWIFT was effective, desirable and a useful contribution to the overall government strategy. The project management harnessed useful lessons and applied them to improve quality of their services. SWIFT has remained steadfast in promoting the principles of fair trade among its members and is emerging as a

² Referring to the training and business development support undertaken under the “Improving Producer Livelihoods in Sawziland” project.

leading resource for Small and Micro Enterprises development, especially in the handicraft sector. The organization is easily adaptable to environmental changes and has passionate staff and members. The business continuity of the organization is likely in the short term if it exclusively focuses on promoting fair trade principles beyond the handicraft sector of the economy. Recurrent expenses are likely to be met through membership fees and commissions. It may however be difficult for the organization to continue offering business development services to its members as was the case during project implementation. SWIFT urgently needs a medium range business continuity plan that outlines how it can resource its recurrent expenses. The plan should outline specific revenue streams and targets. The streams should have very specific and accountable leadership.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 About the Assignment

This is a report for a final independent evaluation of a four-year project implemented in Eswatini by the Swazi Fair Trade (SWIFT) in partnership with Shared Interest Foundation- a UK based international development charity. The project, named “Improving producer livelihood in Swaziland” was funded by Comic Relief. It was implemented between December 2014 and December 2018. As outlined in the Terms of Reference, evaluation was to be guided by the following key evaluation questions³:

1. What difference has the project made?

- To what degree has the project met its objectives and outcomes?
- Were there any unexpected outcomes?
- How effectively and efficiently (resources used against cost and results) was the project implemented?
- Who has benefited (women, men, boys and girls) and in what ways?
- What was the impact of the project and were those changes relevant to people’s needs?
- To what extent has the achievement of the changes/ outcomes been influenced by external context and other factors?
- What sustainability is in place?

2. How has the project made this difference?

- What has worked well (good practice) and what has not (lessons learned)? Who has the lesson learning been shared with?
- How have relationships between partners throughout the relationship chain helped or hindered the delivery of change /outcomes?
- How effective have the project’s management, monitoring, learning and financial systems been? How have they helped or hindered the delivery of lasting change?
- Has the project delivered in terms of value for money?

³ These evaluation questions are as outlined in the Terms of Reference

3. Approaches used by Comic Relief

- How have Comic Relief's grant making policies and processes (e.g. how we define our programme strategies and outcomes, how we assess applications) helped or hindered the delivery of lasting change?

Implicit in the questions above is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-OECD evaluation criteria⁴ (currently under review) which identifies the key domains of project evaluations as i) Effectiveness; ii) Impact; iii) Relevance; iv) Efficiency; and v) Sustainability⁵

2.2 About the Project

The project was designed to contribute to the alleviation of poverty and social deprivation in Eswtini by supporting enterprise development to create economic opportunities. It was to support local businesses to grow sustainably and create employment opportunities. It also sought to improve the revenue stream of beneficiary businesses so they can increase wages to meet the needs of the working poor; ensure a sustainable support network was in place for on-going support to Swazi enterprises; and address HIV/AIDS and general well-being at work place for increased productivity.

3.0 Methodology and Limitations

The first step in determining the methodology to be used was to identify the specific information requirements and possible sources. This was done by breaking down the indicators as shown in the matrix below.

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

⁵ The OECD criteria was also confirmed during an interview with Shared Interest Foundation before the official commissioning of the assignment.

Outcome	Indicator	Key Evaluation variable/s	Respondent/Data source	Tool/s
1.0 Swazi micro-enterprises are operating as sustainable businesses providing local employment	% change in sales	Sales volume over time	-Business owners -Review of sales records for past 3 years - Review of monitoring data by SWIFT	Secondary data review tool
	Net change in employment	Employment	-Business owners -Review of Monitoring data by SWIFT if it was capturing new employment	Secondary data review tool
	Level of business resilience	Business Resilience	Business owners	Business Sustainability Scorecard
	Confidence level of business owners in the future of their business	Business sustainability	Business owners	Star Tool
2.0 Medium and higher level enterprises have expanded their businesses and contribute to the improvement in the livelihood of	# of businesses that have increased their annual sales above 25% of their baseline sales figure disaggregated by medium and high level enterprises	-Sales volume	-Review of income records for medium and higher-level enterprises	-Secondary data review tool

their producers and employees	# new producers employed	-Job creation by medium and higher-level enterprises	-Review of employment records for medium and higher-level enterprises	-Secondary data review tool
	# of producers employed paid above minimum wages disaggregated by piece rate, daily rate and monthly rate.	-Job creation by medium and higher-level enterprises	-Review of employment records for medium and higher-level enterprises	-Secondary data review tool
	# of businesses accessing and growing new markets	Business Growth data	-Review of business records for medium and higher-level enterprises -Interview with business owners	-Secondary data review tool -Interviews
	Level of business resilience	Business resilience	Business owners	Business Sustainability Scorecard
3.0 SWIFT operates as a viable and sustainable membership network, providing quality services to members and advocating for	% SWIFT income from non-donor sources	SWIFT income disaggregated by source/s	Review of financial reports -Interview with the management	Secondary data review tool -Interview guide
	# of new businesses joining the network	Membership	Review of membership records	Secondary data review tool -Interview guide

Fairtrade in Swaziland	# of new orders/contracts secured on behalf of members	Business Growth	Review of business records -Interview with SWIFT	Secondary data review tool -Interview guide
4.0 Employees and producers of SWIFT member businesses have improved support for HIV/AIDs and wellbeing issues in the workplace	# businesses developing HIV/AIDs in the workplace policy	Workplace HIV/AIDs policy	Monitoring data by SWIFT	Secondary data review tool
	# sick days taken (businesses with regular employees)	Sick leave/absence from work	Monitoring data	Secondary data review tool
	# of cases referred by peer educators for services	Referrals	Monitoring data	Secondary data review tool

Based on the information needs and sources identified in the matrix above, the evaluator elected to use a mixed method concurrent approach. Mixed method uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data. The approach is concurrent when both qualitative and quantitative methods are deployed at the same time. Time constraint necessitated the two methods to be deployed concurrently. Quantitative research method was used to collect and analyze data on quantifiable variables of investigation including sales and employment. Qualitative research method was used to collect and analyze data on unquantifiable variables including the perceptions of business owners on the sustainability of their businesses.

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data was collected by SWIFT through a routine monitoring report prepared every month. A planned Knowledge Attitude and Practice survey was launched but its data was not available for use in report. Qualitative data collection was done through interview with 15 Key Informants. Document review was extensively used to provide the background and status of project performance as at December 2018. Key internal documents reviewed included the project proposal (narrative and logframe); Annual Narrative Reports (4)⁶; Baseline Report; and monitoring reports.

3.2 Data Interpretation

Data was interpreted to respond to the key evaluation questions and indicators as outlined in the Terms of Reference-ToR. Qualitative data was used to provide confounding factors for the descriptive statistics generated by the quantitative data.

3.3 Sampling method used

Purposive sampling was used to identify Key Informants for qualitative data. Key Informants are study participants selected based on their expert knowledge of a subject matter of investigation. In this case, the evaluation team sought to understand specific aspects of the project in technical detail, including promising practices and lessons learnt in the course of project execution. This information was obtained from the project management team as well as specific business owners.

Quantitative data was collected from all member businesses and no sampling was used in this case.

⁶ Annual Reports for Year 1, 2 and 3 cover the full year while the 4th year report covers 6 months

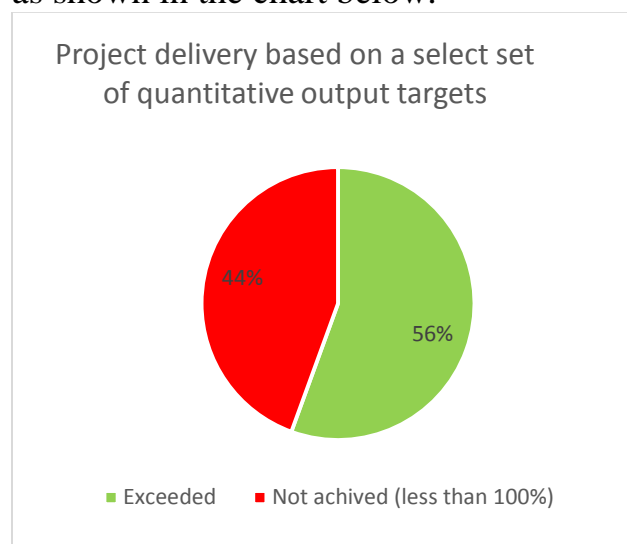
4.0 Findings

4.1 Effectiveness

Evaluating effectiveness seeks to establish the extent to which project results are realized- whether or not the inputs yielded desired outputs. According to the Terms of Reference, the client set out specific evaluation questions on effectiveness. This section of the report responds these questions, as listed below:

- i) To what degree has the project met its objectives and outcomes?

From the review of secondary data and corroboration from interviews, the project delivered against key target results. The evaluation calculated project delivery based on the targets set and the status of implementation at the close of the project in December 2018. The average delivery of the project using 9 key quantitative targets is 355%. The project delivered by more than 100% in 55% of the targets. Another 45% of the targets were not fully realized during the period under review, as shown in the chart below.



level 2 and 3 businesses were paid above the minimum daily wage (E31.20). The project reached 30% more direct beneficiaries than planned⁷.

During the period, the sales volume for levels 0 and 1 businesses increased by 168% on account of innovation in market linkages and improved product quality. Further, 72 (27 female) producers were employed by the level 0 and 1 businesses against a target of 200, constituting 38% performance. A total of 3214 producers/employees hired by

⁷ The project was designed to directly reach (benefit) 5,845 people over a four-year period. As at the time of this evaluation, a total of 7607 people had directly benefitted from the project.

The matrix below gives a summary of the achievements realized by the project during the period under review

S/N	Project Outcome	Outcome Indicator	Target	Baseline	Achievement-cumulative	% Performance
1	Swazi micro-enterprises are operating as sustainable businesses providing local employment	% change in annual sales	30%	104,159	2,277,006	168%
		Total # of employees (producers + operational/administration staff+ management staff)	200	0	72	38%
		Level of business resilience		2.12 (2015)	4.03 (2018)	190%
		Confidence level of business owners in the future of their business		1.98 (2015)	4.30 (2018)	217%
2	Medium and higher- level enterprises have increased incomes for producers and created new jobs through increased sales	# of businesses that have recorded annual sales above 25% of baseline value	25	5	49	196%
		# of producers paid above minimum wage	200	26	3214	1607%
		# of businesses accessing and growing new markets	29	16	26	90%
3	SWIFT operates as a viable and sustainable membership network providing quality services to members and advocating for fair trade	% SWIFT income from non-donor sources	80%		18%	23%
		# of new orders/contracts secured on behalf of members		0	33 orders valued at E1 218 145.09	

	in Swaziland	# of new businesses joining the network	35	5	42	120%
4	Employees and producers of SWIFT member businesses have improved support for HIV/AIDs and wellbeing issues in the workplace	# of businesses with HIV/AIDS and wellbeing policies and/or committees at work place	70	N/A	15	21%
		# of sick days taken by employees		647	2475	
		# of cases referred by peer educators for services	95	42	890	934%

4.2 Relevance of the project

According to the OECD-DCA⁸ evaluation criteria, evaluating project relevance entails examining the extent to which the objectives of an intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partner/donor's policies. This evaluation did extensively examine the relevance of the project because of its centrality to learning. Data from secondary sources and Key Informants was used to provide the perspectives presented in the proceeding section. Four broad areas that underpin project relevance were examined: internal consistency; relevance to need; alignment to policies; and relevance of implementation approaches used.

4.2.1 Project Relevance Area 1: Internal Relevance

Internal relevance of a project examines the consistency or the clarity of the logic/theory of change underpinning an intervention. Internal relevance implies that the project objectives and outputs are likely to yield the desired short and long-term results: that there is no mis match in logic from the activities, outputs, outcome, goal, indicators and assumptions of a project. Project documents reviewed in this evaluation-especially the project proposal- showed that the project sought to increase sales volumes for the different categories of businesses so as to spur job creation and a rise in wages. This was to be achieved through a combination of actions including capacity building in product/business development and market linkages. This theory shows consistency in outcomes and activities. Assumptions are also relevant to the desired change. The indicators were fairly defined and their means of measurement clearly outlined. Well defined indicators often lead to good monitoring which is essential in improving project delivery. While the theory was found to be strong and the changes at the different levels consistent, this evaluation identified specific areas that would have been improved to further strengthen the internal logic of the project. These are:

- a) The application of the concept of “livelihood”. The project was designed to improve the livelihoods of beneficiaries and assumed that increased sales would directly result in improved wages hence impacting the livelihoods of the beneficiaries positively. Two elements that would have needed better measurement in the course of this project are business profitability and the wellbeing of the beneficiaries. Increased wages may not always result in improvement in livelihoods, and while the volume of sales is important to a business, profitability of a business has a more direct correlation with payment of higher wages than sales. In theory, it is possible to have

⁸ Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development- Development Assistance Cooperation.

increased sales and a decline in profits and this would affect the wages paid by business owners. Because profitability was not the focus of the project, it is unclear how much profits the businesses actually made. Further, tracking profits and profitability would have generated some industry-level benchmarks on the amount of investment necessary for typical level 0 business to break-even.

- b) The project was mainly designed as a market-based intervention to improving livelihoods of the beneficiaries. Despite this however, SWIFT proposed to train artisans and cluster them under existing members. This approach was contrary to a market-based solution which requires creating specific demand from the existing businesses to engage new artisans. As reported during the evaluation, SWIFT had challenges clustering the trained artisans into functional associations under existing members.
- c) The project design did not have project outputs. Popular practice in project design is to ensure there are at least 4 distinct hierarchies of change: i) Activities; ii) Outputs; iii) Outcomes; iv) Impact/goal- in ascending order. The project under investigation did not clearly identify outputs but had activities and outcomes. In the absence of outputs, most outcome indicators were misaligned to that hierarchy of change: they were in the form of number “# *of*” which is typically used for outputs. It is important to stress that despite the gap, progress reports developed by SWIFT were specific to the output indicators.

4.2.2 Project Relevance Area 2: Alignment to the Need

It is the assessment of this evaluation that considerable effort was expended by SWIFT towards ensuring project relevance to the need of the handcraft industry players in Swaziland. Research, lessons learnt from previous work and consultation with stakeholders underpinned the project design. For example, SWIFT surveyed 339 producers working for SWIFT members to get insights into their livelihoods situation. The survey showed that over half -53%- were the sole income earners with an average family size of 5. Focus Group Discussion with 22 lower-level entrepreneurs highlighted the need for further coaching on costing and product pricing. SWIFT did also consult an ethical buyer: Traidcraft Plc and the Prime Minister to understand the buyer and government perspectives on the challenges in the handcraft industry. Broad stakeholder consultation in the design and execution of a development intervention is key to ensuring relevance of the project to the needs of the target beneficiaries. The main problems/needs identified and addressed by the project were:

- 1) High unemployment, particularly for rural women. Unemployment is estimated at 41% (Swazi Population Census). Handcraft business have fewer entry barriers for women, but they need support to become strong, sustainable employers.
- 2) High economic dependency. Swazi economic dependency ratios are high. For every 10 people working 23 people depend on them (MDG report 2012) pushing the working poor into poverty. An estimated 36% of the producers surveyed by SWIFT report household finances getting worse even though wages had increased. This created a need to increase wages towards a living wage for improved quality of life.
- 3) Need for a sustainable support network to Swazi enterprises to continue addressing poverty alleviation through socially oriented economic development.
- 4) The need for a supportive work environment, especially for female workers living with HIV/AIDS

The assessment of this report is that the project was well aligned to the needs of the target beneficiaries. A few exceptions were identified, especially with regard to the HIV/AIDS and wellness component. The project did not factor ongoing and planned public investment in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the country. While the need was enormous, the government was mounting an extensive assault that increased HIV testing and treatment. As such, at the time of project implementation, most of the population- including the target beneficiaries- were already aware of Voluntary Counseling and Testing facilities/services as well as treatment for those infected. The overall need had substantially evolved by the time SWIFT was ready to execute the wellness subcomponent and this brought in the need to shift attention to respond to emergent needs including cancer awareness. Peer educators were trained on the new public health issues and disseminated the information to the members. Despite the shift, Key Informants felt the evolution in the wellness space would have been foreseen if better problem analysis had been undertaken at the design of the project in 2014.

4.2.3 Project Relevance Area 3: Approaches used for execution

In project evaluation it is a requirement to examine the appropriateness of implementation strategies used to execute an intervention. The premise is that it takes appropriate implementation approach/es to achieve a desired change. Approaches are the “how” of a successful project implementation. The approaches used in implementing this project were based on lessons learnt from a previous

project by the same partners and on a strong theory of change. They sought to improve entrepreneur capacity; strengthen SWIFT and improve the work environment for producers. This evaluation has clustered these approaches as shown below:

i) *Training, mentoring and coaching of business owners*

The project organized and delivered modular training courses for different business owners with a view to improving their business development skills. Training for some business owners used a graduated approach where they were recruited as “fresh” participants and trained until they graduated from one level to another. Level 0 and 1 were trained on customer service, social media marketing, practical product development and the process for creating mini catalogues to inspire new designs. Level 2 and 3 businesses were trained on lean production techniques, people management, Fairtrade awareness creation and grant proposal writing. The project did also attach business school students into specific enterprises with a view to providing focused support. Training, mentoring and coaching are seen as appropriate approaches used in this project. The training content was well thought through and responsive to the business needs of the participants. Embedded support from the students was also a fitting support to the businesses. Reports by SWIFT show that some of the members supported during year three of the project were feted at the Swaziland Entrepreneur of the year competition in 2017. This competition is organized by Swaziland Economic Development Company (SEDCO) and is aimed at recognising and rewarding business excellence. That some of the successful applicants were from the SWIFT network may be evidence of the quality of training offered by the project.

“I attended the training. They provided transport money so that I can use a car due to my condition. SWIFT training was an eye opener for me. I entered a national business competition and won. I bought basic supplies”. Level 0 business owner. 2019

ii) *Partnerships and networking*

SWIFT developed strategic partnership and networks with different entities within and outside the country. It leveraged these networks to “add value” to the services they delivered to the project beneficiaries. Some of the notable partnerships/networks include:

- Partnership with “All Out Africa”-a development organisation- that resulted in SWIFT hosting a group of 15 students studying Business and Economics from VU University of Amsterdam. They were attached to SWIFT, working with four levels 0,1 and 2 businesses. The businesses received technical

support and funding for equipment upgrade. Further, the volunteers contributed to the institutional strengthening of SWIFT by developing three new manuals for SWIFT on Costing, Basic Record Keeping and Branding. These were used by level 0 and 1 businesses for refresher courses. The students further donated a laptop computer and other equipment to the organization. They sponsored all level 1 businesses to attend a workshop on basic computer skills.

- In partnership with Technoserve, the project reached 190 high school students (in year 3 alone) on Fairtrade. The students were introduced to the concept and principles of Fairtrade among other topics.
- Networking with Standard Bank Swaziland enabled SWIFT to launch an Easter Craft market in year 3 to expose the handcraft artisans to the local and tourist market.
- Networking with the Coordinating Assembly for Non-Governmental Organization (CANGO) enabled SWIFT to benefit from capacity building programmes meant for Non-Governmental Organizations as well as providing linkages to domestic and international partners interested in supporting trade issues in Swaziland. It also made it possible for SWIFT to profile the handicraft businesses and to market the SWIFT model to bilateral partners.
- A partnership with Crossroads International (CI) led to CI assigning a Resource Mobilisation manager to SWIFT hence strengthening their fundraising capacity.
- Partnership with the Swaziland Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (SWABHCA) helped secure important capacity for workplace policy (staff care and wellness) development for medium and higher-level member businesses.

There is overwhelming anecdotal evidence of benefits of partnerships and networking as an approach in the project. Through them, the project leveraged capacity and financial resources to deliver value. There was also a bad experience in which partnerships and networking did not yield the desired positive results, as was the case in the failed partnership deal with Trade + Impact that left SWIFT in a weaker financial position, as did the loss of the income from the BCT contract, which was a bad business decision on the part of SWIFT. In both these cases, the organization learnt useful lessons on managing partnerships.

iii) Competitive seed funding

The project launched a seed funding competition for level 0 businesses with a view to helping successful applicants capitalize their businesses for growth. Making the financing competitive was appropriate for businesses as opposed to managing the fund as “aid/charity” because it is in line with market-based solutions that underpinned the project.

iv) Market Linkages, product promotion and trade fairs

SWIFT continued to raise the profile of handmade products both at national and International markets. This was meant to promote both the products offered by the different businesses and the value the organization brings to its members. Strategic marketing events helped business owners increase their sales. For example, through the “MTN bushfire festival,” members have doubled their sales between 2014 and 2018 reaching a total of 33,000 GBP. A notable game changer in market linkage was the “buyer trips” where SWIFT mobilized international buyers to visit the country and buy products. By adopting the buyer trips, the organization substantially reduced the cost of product promotion. It also allowed more members to access high value market unlike in the past where only a few businesses would be supported to attend an international trade fair.

“we have been doing outward missions which are very expensive. With inward missions you do not spend a lot and the impact is high” Key Informant. 2019

4.2.4 Project Relevance Area 4: Relevance to policy.

The project was aligned to the government policies on HIV/AIDS and poverty alleviation. It was also aligned to the strategic plans of SWIFT, Shared Interest Foundation and Comic Relief-the donor. The Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority- SIFA confirmed that promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises was a key focus for the government. SIFA reported having had close working relationship with the project owing to its alignment.

4.3 Efficiency

Efficiency. Efficiency measures the “value for money” or the worth of a project. A project is efficient if it delivers quality results at reasonable cost. The project implemented by SWIFT shows it was efficiently executed. It, for example, directly benefitted more people (7,607) than was planned (5,845) at the same cost-reducing the per capita cost from 71 British Pounds to 55. This cost declines from the initial 63 GBP to 47GBP when both direct and indirect (8849) beneficiaries are considered. This clearly demonstrates a deliberate effort to ensure value for money

was realized. The evaluation did also establish that efficiency was realized through other actions taken by the project during the period under review:

- i) Partnership with strategic partners that, at their cost, supported the project to deliver value to the beneficiaries. For example, SWIFT worked with Technoserve to reach more young people with entrepreneurship awareness among the youth. It also worked with SIPA to both organize buyer tours and facilitate participation of members in international trade fairs. Working with other organizations ensured that more members benefitted from the combined resources-hence stretching the value/worth of available resources.
- ii) Innovation in market linkages to focus more on buyer tours as opposed to external trade fairs that would have cost more resources and benefitted fewer people.
- iii) Peer learning where small business owners learn from level 2 and 3 business owners. This did not cost the organisation but had a good impact on the members
- iv) Introduction of a more rigorous recruitment process for level 0 businesses which improved the overall graduation of such businesses to higher levels. The evaluation team was informed that level 0 businesses recruited by this project “graduated to the next business level faster” compared to the previous lot. Among the main reasons for the accelerated growth was that the new businesses were more adaptable for the dynamic business environment including the use of social media for marketing.

While this anecdotal evidence shows clearly that the project was “worth it”, the ultimate efficiency test is a comparison between alternatives-which this evaluation and indeed the project did not employ.

4.4 Impact

An impact of a project is defined as “sustained change (positive or negative) in systems, behavior or condition of life among a defined group of people over a defined period of time”. The evaluation observed short term changes that demonstrate possible long-term impact of the project. These include:

- i) *Application/use of skills acquired from the project.* Key Informants interviewed in this evaluation reported having acquired and used specific business skills to run

“I knew how to sew clothes. I could design my own sewing but I did not know how to turn these into a business. I now know how to run a business. My business is now registered. I entered a business competition and won”. Level 0 business owner living with disability. 2019

their businesses. They reported being able to improve the quality of their products hence fetching better prices in local and international markets.

A beneficiary (level 3) business manager reported that through the project the company had streamlined the production system to make it more efficient: “we spend less time and manpower in the production process. Previously our staff walked all over the factory until we reconfigured the physical setting of the factory to reduce frequent movement”. Improved production efficiency is likely to lead to reduced cost of production which will increase profitability of the company. Training was highly cited as the main benefit from the project by the business owners. Nothing illustrates this better than how some of the trained entrepreneurs entered and won national level business competition in the country⁹. A level 0 business owner reported using the business skills acquired from the project to pitch her business proposal to external financiers. As a result of training, one level zero business graduated to level one after recording annual sales in excess of ZAR 50,000. Three level two businesses graduated to level three after recording annual sales exceeding ZAR 100,000.

- ii) *Impact on livelihoods.* Empirical data from levels 2 and 3 businesses indicate that they hired and paid 3214 producers above the minimum wage. This is an indication of business commitment to the welfare of its staff. It also implies the likely improvement in the livelihoods of the staff. This evaluation, and indeed the project did not collect data on the changes in the livelihoods of the employees. Lower level business owners did however report that their wellbeing had greatly changed as a result of their business growth: *“I live with disability but because of my business, I do not depend on my father for my basic needs. I pay fees for my son and buy a lot of things for myself”*- Level 0 business owner told the evaluation team. These sentiments were also expressed by a level 1 business owner when he emotionally said *“I was considering dropping out of the handcraft business. My shop had been vandalized. My children dropped out of school and I could not feed my family. I wanted to go and*

⁹ i) Nomcebo Design and Melane Investments both Level 0 businesses were awarded R15,000 each (approx. £800); ii) Level 0-member, SWAB Swazi Beauty was a regional winner in the competition; iii) The Pride of Family, a Level 0 business also came second being the runner up in the Women Farmer of 2017 (Level 0 honey agri-business).

become a brick layer. Then SWIFT approached me and helped me secure a new outlet for my products. My children are back to school since February 2018. SWIFT is like my parents”

- iii) *Profile and visibility of SWIFT.* Through the project, SWIFT is reported to have become more visible to strategic players in the economy. Government officials were reported to have sought the input of SWIFT while developing an official national plan for Small and Micro Enterprise development. The Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority informed the evaluation consultant that they were in the process of preparing an Export Readiness Manual and “we will engage SWIFT to help us”. The rising profile of SWIFT has attracted 43 new members to join the network. Some of these have come from the non-traditional handicraft sector.

4.5 Sustainability

The OECD/DAC guidelines define sustainability as “the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time¹⁰”. It is evident from the previous sections of this report that the project implemented by SWIFT delivered specific benefits to the target beneficiaries. Some of the lower level changes-like the increase in sales volume- have been associated with improved wages for employees and producers. The evaluation sought to establish if indeed the resultant benefits will be enjoyed without external assistance. Two distinct areas were assessed: sustainability of SWIFT as an entity providing the services that the project has provided for the past 4 years, and the sustainability of the individual businesses of SWIFT members, especially levels 0 and 1.

“I have my business plan ready for expansion. I need to hire one more person to help me because I now cannot cope alone” Level 2 Business Owner. 2019

Sustainability of level 0 and 1 businesses. The evaluation interviewed different proprietors of level 0 and 1 businesses to establish their confidence and preparedness for business growth beyond the support from SWIFT. The overall impression was that the businesses would continue to grow beyond the support received from the project. The main reason cited for the buoyed confidence was business skills acquired from the project. The respondents reported that the project had greatly helped their business development capacity through training and

¹⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/47069197.pdf>

mentorship. They had assimilated the skills and were already seeing the benefits. Some of them have acquired new markets beyond what was facilitated by SWIFT. The proprietor of Bantwana (a level 2 business), for example, reported that she had gained a new market at the National Game Parks. She also said that she was pursuing other major local markets at her own initiative. Overall, there is a positive outlook towards business continuity across the different business categories. A survey to gauge the resilience level of businesses in the project showed that the resilience score had almost doubled (from 2.12) between 2015 and 2018. There has also been an improvement in the level of confidence of business owners with respect to the future of their business. Most of them have reported a positive change in their business operations as they score 4.30 in 2018 as against 1.98 at baseline in 2015.

Business sustainability of SWIFT. The project invested in the institutional strengthening of SWIFT with a view to making the organization self-sustaining. It was envisaged that by the end of the project SWIFT would be able to mobilize 80% of its recurrent costs from non-donor sources. Data reviewed during the evaluation showed that the organization had been able to raise less than 20% of its budget from non-donor sources in the course of the project period. Interviews with Key Informants- including staff and board members- reported that the core business of SWIFT was likely to be sustained through the member/user fees and commissions generated by the organization. These resources may however not be sufficient to support business development initiatives started under the project. A key partner with the organization reported that SWIFT “may have to reduce the non-core functions so as to cope with a decline in funding”. This was also supported by a board member. The evaluation team did not review a business continuity plan but was informed that there were a number of initiatives aimed at revamping the organization’s revenue- ranging from consultancy to charging user and membership fees.

The assessment of the evaluation team is that:

- i) Neither the core business nor the business development services of SWIFT would be stable without external financing. The membership fee is not enough to keep the organization running mainly because of the number of members. Similarly, other income generating initiatives (consultancy) which seemed to have peaked in pace during the second year of the project and have not grown to a level where they can support the organization’s operations.

- ii) The drive to raise funds to sustain the business development support component of the organization may gain prominence at the expense of the charity mandate of a non-profit organization. This would be the case even if the two functions of the organisation are separated and one is run as a profit making entity. Most NGOs- even well- established ones- do not generate 80% of their recurrent budget from non-donor sources.
- iii) SWIFT has built social capital and goodwill in the past few years that can gradually be exploited for its sustenance. A Key Informant indicated that the organization was previously viewed as “an exclusive cartel that was out to control the handicraft industry”, and as such the government did not support its work. This view has however changed owing to networking efforts done in the “past two years”. The Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority reported that they would recommend SWIFT to any partner-including the Minister of Trade- because they now understand the purpose and core business of the organization. Goodwill is an asset that SWIFT should cost whenever they have a partnership opportunity as it is done by established institutions in the sector.
- iv) Whether SWIFT pursues profit or non-profit purpose in the next phase of its existence, it is imperative that it develops a clear business continuity plan. This will help mobilize efforts and support from internal and external source.

5.0 Lessons learnt, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Lessons Learnt and Innovation.

The evaluation investigated the lessons learnt by asking the respondents to state what worked well during the period of the project. The following lessons stood out.

- i) Innovative market linkages. The project introduced the “buyer tours” or “inward missions” where established buyers were invited to the country to not only buy but also interact with the business owners. This is credited with astronomical growth in sales and improvement in product quality. SIFA, for example, called this a “game changer” in this sector.

“...by organizing buyer tours into the country, more businesses had opportunity for one-on-one contact with the buyers. Lower level business owners had opportunity to appreciate the product quality that the market needs right from the buyer. Buyer tours did also help the local economy beyond the handicraft industry. It also reduced logistical challenges/ costs associated with international freighting of merchandise for trade fairs. This resulted in savings which were ploughed back into more buyer tours...”. A Key Informant explaining the application of lessons learnt by the project management.

- ii) In Project Management “listening” is very important. This was reported by a staff member as the basis for the impact realized under this project. The more the project management listened to the members and buyers, the more the project became responsive to their needs.
- iii) Rigorous recruitment of level 0 businesses has yielded a younger and committed business owners who have been able to embrace a dynamic business environment. They are quick to use technology to promote their products. While this is good, the project has concerns about the adaptability of the earlier recruits that are slow in adapting to changing business environment.
- iv) Inclusive targeting and in engaging with persons with disability. SWIFT was pragmatic in reaching out to men, women, youth and people with disabilities. They ensured that the disabled participants had as much chance as everyone else.
- v) Business training services need to be flexible when targeted at micro-entrepreneurs who may require more time to address their needs and to adjust to market based approaches. When the choice of the enterprise is left to the entrepreneur, there is commitment and willingness to mobilise resources and to ensure success in the long-term.
- vi) The use of industry experts to facilitate trainings and the use of tailored training modules are very effective. There was higher attendance anytime training sessions were facilitated by industry experts.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

This evaluation has established that the project was successfully implemented and there is evidence of specific benefits to very specific businesses. Astronomical growth in sales among the beneficiary businesses; enactment of staff wellness policies in the work place; recruitment of new businesses into the SWIFT network and payment of decent wages among the producers/employees are some of the clear deliverables realized by the project. There is confidence among the business owners in levels 0 and 1, that they will continue to grow their businesses beyond the life of the project. The evaluation does make the following recommendations for improvement in both project planning and execution:

- i) *Project Planning.* It is essential that project planning is done on the basis of a strong, logical theory of change that outlines the different hierarchies of change. In practice, project implementation is focused on project outputs to deliver outputs, as such the output hierarchy should be clearly defined. Similarly, project indicators should correspond to and be appropriate to the level of logical hierarchy. Outcome indicators should seek to measure change in behaviour or knowledge and attitude, and

- should be expressed in rates or percentages. Outputs indicators are lower level and should be expressed in absolute count of deliverables. The two set of indicators should be used appropriately.
- ii) *Sustainability of SWIFT as an institution.* There is an urgent need for a business continuity plan for SWIFT. This will act as a guide to all efforts made by different stakeholders including donors, the board, and management of the organization. Although the management highlighted what they were doing to generate revenue, they did not produce a clear plan/roadmap that they were using. A plan would help challenge and channel efforts. The plan should clearly define the business model and a cost structure that SWIFT would like to operate. It should recognize the goodwill and cost it as an asset through a fee. This fee would help absorb some recurrent costs. The plan should be based on an independent institutional capacity assessment.
 - iii) *Sustainability of Levels 0 and 1 businesses beyond the initial years.* While the report highlights high enthusiasm and confidence among this beneficiary group, there is need for continued business mentorship support beyond their formative years. Continued support may be provided by SWIFT on a “user-pays basis” or through other specialised institutions in the country.
 - iv) The project recruited a new generation of entrepreneurs that are more adaptable to the changing business environment and are non-rural in their business setting. This new group may need special attention to ensure they keep their growth momentum. An even greater challenge may be how SWIFT will responsively manage the two separate business groups. For the younger, more dynamic group, SWIFT may consider using technology to offer remote business support. SWIFT may also develop an online business suite where key resources are accessible to the members. An immediate resource for this group would be a business data management tool as some of them cited having challenges keeping journals.

6.0 Annexures

6.1 Profile of Key Informants Interviewed

The evaluation interviewed the following Key Informants who were purposively selected.

1. **Julie Nixon.** She is the country Manager for SWIFT for past 2 years, and a founder member of SWIFT. Has been working in the handicraft sector for 18 years. Julie is leading the sustainability agenda of SWIFT.
2. **Kodzo Korkortsi.** Mr. Korkortsi is the project Manager for the “Improving Producer Livelihood in Swaziland” project at Shared Interest Foundation in the UK. He has had direct oversight of the project for 3 years and has on occasions been involved in direct project activities under outcome 3.0. Mr. Korkortsi was the recruiting manager for the evaluation.
3. **Vanessa Stephens.** She is a level 2 business owner and a board member of SWIFT. She has long engagement with SWIFT
4. **Cebile Wendy Dlamini.** She was the project manager at SWIFT for 4 years.
5. **Subusiso Mnisi.** He is the external Trade Promotion manager at the Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority-SIPA. He previously worked at the Ministry of Trade and had known SWIFT while there. He collects artefacts from SWIFT for display and sale whenever he is attending international trade fair.
6. **Fudzi Dlamini.** A level 2 business proprietor and a board member of SWIFT. Her business makes and sells clothes and accessories. She has been a member of SWIFT since 2012. She is the current chair of SWIFT’s board
7. **Nomcebo Dlamini.** She is the proprietor of Nomcebo Designs (a level 0 business) and a member of SWIFT. Nomcebo is a living with a disability

and has benefitted from business training from SWIFT. She is a recent winner of a nationwide business competition.

8. **Iyanda Sigudla.** She is a staff member responsible for Business Development among level 1 businesses.
9. **Singati Dlamini.** She is the Business Development Manager for level 2 businesses at SWIFT. She has been in the role for 4 years.
10. **Mr. Wonder.** The proprietor of Wonderful Handicrafts. He started handicraft business in 1999 and joined SWIFT in 2012/12 after he heard about the work and benefits of SWIFT over the radio. Mr. Wonder benefitted from training and market linkages initiative of the project. He also got financial support to grow his business.
11. **Nonhlanhla Maseko.** A female project staff that has been with the project from the start and with the organization since 2011. She was responsible for outcome 4.0 of the project. She facilitated training of peer educators and monitored them to ensure they disseminate their knowledge after training by SWABCHA.
12. **Jabu Mkhwanazi.** The manager of Quaz Designs Manager. Quartz Design is a level 3 business specializing in recycling of waste paper into decorative items. The business has been a member of SWIFT from the beginning. It is an exporter of its products. The company benefitted from the project through training and market linkages.
13. **Lugile Beuta.** Level 2 female business owner and a member of SWIFT from 2013. Specializes in gift items. Has been a beneficiary of the project through training and market linkages.
14. **Makhazane Mnisi.** A female business owner of KE Designs (a fashion designer with a focus on African wear) who joined SWIFT in 2017. Ms. Mnisi started her business from school and was inspired by SWIFT when the project visited her college to talk to them about entrepreneurship. KE designs has participated in training and market linkage initiatives by the project.

15. Caroline Baker. Senior Partnership Manager. Comic relief. She had been with the project for 6 months before the interview. She is the Grant Manager at Comic Relief.

6.2. Project Effectiveness Matrix.

The tool below was prepared and used to consolidate data on project implementation. An updated version of this matrix is included in the “effectiveness section” of the report.

Outcome	Indicator	Target	Baseline Value	End of Project Value
1.0 Swazi micro-enterprises are operating as sustainable businesses providing local employment	% change in sales			
	Net change in employment			
	Level of business resilience			
	Confidence level of business owners in the future of their business			
2.0 Medium and higher level enterprises have expanded their businesses and contribute to the improvement in the livelihood of their producers and employees	# of businesses that have increased their annual sales above 25% of their baseline sales figure disaggregated by medium and high level enterprises			
	# new producers employed			
	# of producers employed paid above minimum wages disaggregated by piece rate, daily rate and monthly rate.			
	# of businesses accessing and growing new markets			
	Level of business			

	resilience			
3.0 SWIFT operates as a viable and sustainable membership network, providing quality services to members and advocating for Fairtrade in Swaziland	% SWIFT income from non-donor sources			
	# of new businesses joining the network			
	# of new orders/contracts secured on behalf of members			
4.0 Employees and producers of SWIFT member businesses have improved support for HIV/AIDs and wellbeing issues in the workplace	# businesses developing HIV/AIDs in the workplace policy			
	# sick days taken (businesses with regular employees)			
	# of cases referred by peer educators for services			

6.3 Key Informant Interview Guides

This tool was used to gather information from specific individuals who, by their position or expertise, are believed to hold useful information relating to the specific domains of project evaluation. In social

research, a Key Informant (KI) is someone who, by virtue of their knowledge or expertise is considered to hold useful information on a subject matter under investigation in research. Key Informants are purposively selected. Information generated from the KIs is not generalized but is rather used to buttress specific patterns as established by quantitative data analysis. Key Informants for this assignment will included:

Evaluation Domain	Data/information to be gathered	Key Informant				
		Swift Management	Shared Interest	Producers/employees	Government officials	Business owners
Effectiveness	-extent to which planned outputs and outcomes were realized	✓✓		✓✓		
	-factors accelerating or slowing implementation and how they were overcome	✓✓				
	-planned and unplanned outcomes of the project	✓✓				
	-project reports and other contractual communication were made on time and in prescribed quality	✓✓	✓✓			
	-Monitoring and learning functions were in place and appropriately used	✓✓	✓✓			
Relevance	-extent to which the project was aligned to/based on the needs of the beneficiaries	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Alignment of the project to internal and external (government) policies	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	
	-internal consistency of the theory on which the project is founded	✓✓				

Efficiency	Value for money (overheads to direct cost ratio)	✓✓				
	Cost of a possible alternative to the one used by the project	✓✓	✓✓			
Impact	-long term and widespread changes realized by the project in the livelihoods of the beneficiaries	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	
Sustainability	Policy /environmental changes necessary to anchor the products of the project	✓✓			✓✓	✓✓
	Business resilience for businesses at different levels disaggregated by the sex of their owners	✓✓				✓✓

Interview Guide

Theme: 1 Project Effectiveness

- i) Did the project, in your view achieve its objectives as planned?
- ii) Did the project have some unplanned outcomes?
- iii) What specific challenges did the project face in the course of implementation and how were these addressed?
- iv) Were there some planned outputs that were not met during the course of project execution? Which ones? Why were they not met?

Theme 2: Project Relevance

Sub theme a). Logic/internal consistency

- i) Was the project logic sound and consistent? Was the Theory of Change consistent? Were lower level changes sufficient to yield higher level changes as planned?

Sub theme b). Timing

- i) Was the timing of the project opportune? Why/how?

Sub theme c). Policy alignment

- i) Were there specific policies that provided a good fit for the project both within and outside the organization? Which ones are these?
- ii) Were there specific government policies or programs that supported this project? Which ones and how did the project take advantage of such policies?

Sub theme d). Need

- i) Was the project aligned to the overriding need of the target population? Were the beneficiaries consulted before the project was developed? How?

Sub theme e). Strategies/Approach.

- i) Were the approaches/strategies used in executing this project relevant to addressing the need? Were they also appropriate to the specific beneficiary groups? How?

Theme 3: Project Efficiency

The efficiency of a project is determined by the cost-effective value derived from an operation. Often the concept of Value for Money is used to assess efficiency, with the key variables being the unit cost of the operation.

- i) Would the changes and deliverables realized from/through this project have been achieved through any other approach for lower cost?
- ii) What was the per capita cost of the project?
- iii) What was the efficiency ratio?

Theme 4: Project Impact

- i) What specific changes in the lives of people have been realized by the project? How does this affect both men and women beneficiaries?

Theme 5: Project Sustainability

- i) What was the exit strategy of the project? Was it executed? Did it yield desired results?
- ii) What proportion of the current beneficiaries can run their businesses to the next higher level without requiring recurrent external support? Why?
- iii) What specific policy or changes in the business environment have been realized during the course of the project so as the make SMEs thrive?
- iv) How did the project build business resilience both for SWIFT and beneficiaries?

6.4: Terms of Reference for the assignment

1. Summary

A full independent project evaluation is required for this four-year donor funded project delivered by Swazi based fair trade network, Swaziland International Fair Trade (SWIFT) in conjunction with Shared Interest Foundation, a UK based international development charity.

2. Background

This is a 48-month project aimed at contributing to the alleviation of poverty and social deprivation in Swaziland through supporting enterprise development to create economic opportunities. The project set out to support local businesses to grow sustainably and create employment opportunities. It also sought to improve the revenue stream of beneficiary businesses so they can increase wages to meet the needs of the working poor. In addition, the project was to ensure a sustainable support network was in place for on-going support to Swazi enterprises. It was also to deal with the issue of HIV/AIDS and general well-being at work place for increased productivity. The project began in 2014 and will conclude in December 2018. The project has been developed jointly by Shared Interest Foundation and the Swaziland Fair Trade Network (SWIFT). The training is carried out by suitably qualified local trainers and a local Project Manager is coordinating the project from Swaziland with close guidance and support from SWIFT. Shared Interest Foundation has provided technical and financial support for the successful implementation of the project.

Increasing non-agricultural employment in Swaziland is crucial for lasting poverty reduction. Swazi households headed by a paid seasonal agricultural worker (75% of those in work) are 24% more likely to live in poverty than those headed by a paid non-seasonal worker (MDG report 2010). Handcrafts offer a unique and accessible alternative income generation opportunity for Swazis, particularly the most vulnerable, 85% of whom are women¹¹. However, the sector has relatively few sustainable handcraft organisations. This programme works with Swaziland's most promising handcraft groups, and aims to improve the livelihoods of Swazi producers and their families by improving capacity, networks and access to local, regional and international markets.

3. The project

The project's selected target group is handcraft businesses across Swaziland. The training programme has been split into four levels and caters for newly registered fledging businesses (level0s), established small businesses (level 1s), medium businesses (level 2s) and large, exporting businesses (level 3s). Over the course of four years, the project has been training individuals to develop their business to the next level and offering the additional advice, support and mutual security that a strong in-country network provides. By passing on effective business and financial management skills, the project works towards transforming their organisation's performance, resulting in economic empowerment.

The main outcomes of the projects are:

Outcome 1: Swazi micro-enterprises have grown and are operating as sustainable businesses providing local employment

Outcome 2: Medium and higher-level enterprises have expanded their businesses and contribute to the improvement in the livelihood of their producers and employees

Outcome 3: SWIFT operates as a viable and sustainable membership network providing quality services to members and advocating for fair trade in Swaziland

Outcome 4: Employees and producers of SWIFT member businesses have improved support for HIV/AIDS and wellbeing issues in the workplace

¹¹ Investor Roadmap and the Commonwealth Report of 2007

The key results expected out of the project are:

- *Increased membership for SWIFT and enhanced capacity to member businesses*
- *Increased sales amongst micro-enterprises by 30%*
- *Increase in the number of employed producers paid above the minimum wage*
- *Increase in the number of businesses accessing and growing new markets*
- *Increased resilience and sustainability of all member businesses*
- *Reduce donor input into SWIFT to 20% by Year 4*
- *Raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and the importance of wellbeing in the workplace*
- *70 businesses will develop a policy regarding HIV/ AIDS and wellbeing in the workplace*

The main project activities are:

- *Provide tailored training to micro-enterprises with a focus on growing them sustainably to create jobs*
- *Provide business training and support to all enterprises to suit different levels of development*
- *Increase access to market for all businesses*
- *Build the capacity of SWIFT and increase their self-sustainability*
- *Partnering with SWABCHA to provide best practice training on HIV/AIDS procedures and wellbeing in the workplace to all members*

The budget for the delivery of the project totals £569,891. The Improving producer livelihoods in Swaziland Project is designed with an exit strategy in mind so that local ownership and buy-in, sustainability, and momentum will all help to extend the influence of the project after it has ended. Shared Interest Foundation has a proven track record in delivering producer training and SWIFT's strong regional presence maximises the potential of success for this project.

4. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

As part of the funding arrangement with the donor, UK based funder Comic Relief, it was agreed that all grant holders would, in the last year of funding, arrange for an independent external evaluation of the grant for the period of 2014 – 2018.

The objective of the evaluation is to assess how far SWIFT and Shared Interest Foundation have gone towards achieving the mutually agreed outcomes as stated in the business plan. The evaluation will also derive lessons, which will enable Shared Interest Foundation and SWIFT to inform future strategies, programmes, approaches and set-up.

The target audience and the main users of the findings of the evaluation will be Shared Interest Foundation, SWIFT and the funder, Comic Relief. However, Shared Interest partners and other stakeholders may also benefit from the findings (this could include but not limited to Shared Interest partners and other donors).

In terms of the scope, the evaluation will focus only on the period stated above (December 2014 – December 2018), and specifically the Comic Relief Funded Project, Improving producer livelihoods in Swaziland. Shared Interest, SWIFT and Comic Relief would like the following questions answered in the evaluation:

What difference has the project made?

- To what degree has the project met its objectives and outcomes?
- Were there any unexpected outcomes?
- How effectively and efficiently (resources used against cost and results) was the project implemented?
- Who has benefited (women, men, boys and girls) and in what ways?
- What was the impact of the project and were those changes relevant to people's needs?
- To what extent has the achievement of the changes/ outcomes been influenced by external context and other factors?
- What sustainability is in place?

How has the project made this difference?

- What has worked well (good practice) and what has not (lessons learned)? Who has the lesson learning been shared with?
- How have relationships between partners throughout the relationship chain helped or hindered the delivery of change /outcomes?
- How effective have the project's management, monitoring, learning and financial systems been? How have they helped or hindered the delivery of lasting change?
- Has the project delivered in terms of value for money?

Approaches used by Comic Relief

- How have Comic Relief's grant making policies and processes (e.g. how we define our programme strategies and outcomes, how we assess applications) helped or hindered the delivery of lasting change?

5. Methodology

The evaluation should use a participatory methodology and engage all key stakeholders in the process. In particular the successful bidder will:

- Arrange and chair a series of meeting/interviews with SWIFT and Shared Interest Foundation staff to review and assess the Improving producer livelihoods in Swaziland project and an evaluation of their contribution to the achievement of the agreed outcomes of the project.
- Undertake a review of monitoring reports received by Shared Interest Foundation from the partners and in-country office.
- Review a range of evaluations for the Improving producer livelihoods in Swaziland project
- Undertake interviews/surveys of key partners on the ground, project beneficiaries, SWIFT, Shared Interest Foundation and Comic Relief Team by different means including tele/videoconference and field visits
- Review the annual self-assessment "end of year report" and supplementary materials, which have been submitted to Comic Relief.

Information available

The following pieces of information are available to assist with the end of project review:

- End of year internal evaluations
- Mid-year report
- Quarterly reports

- M&E framework & data
- Baseline data (including income levels, employment numbers)
- Case studies
- Photos
- Original project contract documents

6. The report

The report produced should be a tool for shared learning for all project partners. It is important that the process of developing the report is participatory and that SWIFT and Shared Interest Foundation feel a part of this process and have a stake in the ownership of the final product.

The report should be clear and simply written, free of jargon. The main body of the report should **not** exceed 30 pages of A4 and should include an executive summary and recommendations. Technical details should be confined to appendices, which should also include a list of informants and the evaluation team's work schedule. Background information should only be included when it is directly relevant to the report's analysis and conclusions.

The report's authors should support their analysis of a project's achievements with relevant data and state how this has been sourced. Recommendations should also include details as to how they might be implemented.

The report should include guidance on the process by which findings will be shared and discussed with all stakeholders including those who are benefiting from the project and how any resulting changes in the report will be included.

Following the submission of the evaluation report all project partners will review and respond to the findings. The evaluator will also be required to present their findings directly to the SWIFT team and board. All project partners will then develop a plan for disseminating this information and for incorporating the learning.

The report should include, but not limited to, the following sections:

1. **Summary section** This summary will focus on the main findings and will specifically state how far the evaluator feels the partners have gone towards achieving the mutually agreed outcomes.
2. An **Introductory section** which should include the methodology used in undertaking the evaluation.
3. A section covering **Lesson learning and innovation**. This section will highlight lessons learnt throughout the grant period and how/whether these have been taken up by the project partners.
4. A section on **Issues to be addressed**. This section will highlight any specific issues which arose during the evaluation which the evaluator feels need to be address by the project partners.

In submitting the final report, we would request that you include appendices which contain:

- Details of the final agreed TORs
- A list of people and organisations interviewed
- A list of documentation reviewed

Skills and Qualifications

The successful bidder will be expected to have:

- A strong understanding and experience of evaluation methodology
- A comprehensive background in working with NGOs in the field of international development
- Knowledge of markets and livelihoods projects in Africa

Budget

A budget breakdown should be availed with the proposal submission including all costs related to conducting the exercise. The final total budget available will be negotiated with the preferred candidate.

Timetable and application process

The deadline for expressions of interest is **9th November 2018**. The shortlisted applicants will be invited for an interview and the successful candidate will be notified thereafter.

Following their appointment the successful bidder will negotiate the methodology proposed and make arrangements with the project partners, ready to start the evaluation process on **26th November 2018**.

An initial draft report should be provided to the project partners by no later than **12th January 2019**. A final report is then required by no later than **22nd January 2019**.

Interested applicants should submit a CV of no more than 3 pages with an accompanying cover letter. All enquiries should be submitted to **julie@swazifairtrade.org/ cebile@swazifairtrade.org**