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World Vision Relief and Development

**Life Skills Center Project  
Final Evaluation Report**

Evaluation Team

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## ACRONYMS

HSP	Handicapped Services Project
LSC	Life Skills Center
SCB	School Center at Bistrita
USAID	U S Agency For International Development
UNICEF	U N Children s Fund
WVR	World Vision Romania
WVI	World Vision International

# **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **A OVERVIEW OF PROJECT AND EVALUATION**

For the past five years, WVR has been involved in providing services to handicapped persons residing in institutions in Romania. In Fall 1994, WVR proposed an expansion of their HSP to develop a LSC in collaboration with the SCB in Valcea County. The LSC would be a residential program where orphaned/abandoned adolescent boys with mild developmental handicaps would be prepared for independent living in the community. The LSC would present an organized curriculum in life skills training and a supervised "home like" group living situation. The program was approved and funded until September 1996 by WVI and USAID.

After delays, a vacant building on the SCB campus was renovated by the HSP and opened in December 1995. The program began immediately as the boys moved into the group home while continuing to attend school. They lived at the LSC and participated in typical home activities and in life skills instruction taught by a team of educators. This first "class" of clients completed the LSC program and their last year of professional school in June 1996. They have demonstrated competencies in life skills, social behavior and self-esteem. The clients are prepared to move into the community to work and live independently.

The LSC staff has developed a teaching curriculum for life skills training and policies/procedures for the operation of a LSC. WVR and the Ministry of Education are discussing transferring the LSC at SCB to the Ministry and disseminating information about the program to other schools and institutions for handicapped and/or orphaned/abandoned adolescents in Romania.

At this time, USAID sponsorship of the LSC project is ending and WVI is considering an extension of their sponsorship of LSC. Therefore WVR has requested an evaluation to assess (a) achievements of the project according to the project objectives, (b) influence of unanticipated situations on the project (c) effectiveness of the project management (d) impact and sustainability of the project. Recommendations for sustainability of the project were requested. An evaluation team of William Saur, Laurentiu Zolotusca and Viorel Ispas addressed these issues during a five-day period in July 1996. The methodology of evaluation included observations at the LSC, interviews with staff, collaborators and clients, review of pertinent documents, and an analysis of data about clients' attainment of life skill competencies. The findings and recommendations are presented in the evaluation report -- to be submitted to WVR.

## **B SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The LSC project has five objectives. This paragraph is a summary of the findings

concerning achievement of these objectives (1) WVR in collaboration with SCB has established a fully functioning LSC on the SCB campus. Appropriate memos of agreement were signed and a vacant building on campus was renovated. They hired and trained staff for the LSC and clients from SCB were selected. The LSC program opened in Dec 1996. For six months, up to ten clients lived at the LSC and received training in skills necessary for independent living. At this time the LSC is a fully operational residential program. (2) They have developed a teaching curriculum in 15 areas of life skills training and tested field at the LSC. They organized and taught this curriculum to the clients by the LSC educators. They are now writing the curriculum for publication and distribution in Romania. (3) They tested clients for life skills competencies with a non standardized instrument, at the beginning and at the end of the program. All demonstrated improvement in at least 85% of areas of deficiency. Based on these results, some revisions in the assessment instrument and curriculum are being made. (4) The LSC has established an environment that encourages clients to develop independence through active participation in supervised group living. Clients are encouraged to develop personal responsibility through individualized instructions from the LSC staff. (5) The HSP manager meets regularly with Education officials from county and national offices to discuss the LSC program. At this time, the Ministry of Education has not assumed responsibility for LSC, though interest in pursuing this objective has been expressed.

A summary of the findings concerning unexpected problems which have affected the LSC program, follows. Problems concerning future ownership of the building and acceptable renovation services caused delays in completing the building, thereby necessitating postponement of the opening of LSC until Dec 1995. This in turn caused the LSC program to operate for a shorter period of time and with fewer clients than planned. The curriculum for life skills training was developed but not written because of the limited time. The LSC staff has assumed responsibility to assist clients with job placement because the staff of the SCB has not as planned. Due to delays in fully operating the program and therefore incomplete attainment of some objectives, the Ministry of Education has not committed to taking over the LSC at SBC. In response to various unexpected situations, the HSP manager has acted with persistence, commitment and flexibility.

The evaluation team found that the LSC management has been effective. The manager and staff have a commitment to the goal and objectives of the LSC program. The staff is highly motivated, well trained and technically competent. The HSP manager has excellent abilities in a wide range of management and leadership skills. The LSC operations are guided by written policies/procedures which were developed through participative staff meetings. The HSP manager maintains a positive collaboration with local and national Education officials. He is developing collaborative relations with community leaders.

Regarding impact and sustainability it was found that the LSC is fully functional. It

serves as a model program for mildly handicapped adolescents, influencing Ministry of Education to consider modification in current programs and services for this population. The LSC has shown that orphaned/abandoned adolescents who have been institutionalized can be taught necessary life skills, for independent living in community. This project is beginning to be identified as appropriate for other institutions serving this population in Romania. The adolescent boys who completed the LSC program have the competencies to work and live in the community. The preliminary success of the program and clients has confronted the mentality that handicapped persons and orphaned/abandoned adolescents have very limited capabilities. Various community members who have contact with the LSC and its clients have expressed changes in their attitudes. In particular, they have recognized advantages of community-based services for mild handicapped and orphans/ abandoned adolescents. The LSC at SCB possesses the structure, organization, technical competence and personnel to be sustainable but requires adequate funding. When the teaching curriculum for life skills training and the LSC operations manual is available for dissemination, the LSC could be replicated at another site. The Ministry of Education is interested in assuming responsibility for the LSC at SCB and in replicating the LSC at another school with WVR collaboration.

## **C SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1 That WVR fund and operate the LSC at SCB for another year
- 2 That HSP review and revise the LSC project objectives and implementation plan
- 3 That the LSC at SBC operates a full ten-month program with 20 clients
- 4 That the LSC continues to serve orphaned/abandoned mildly handicapped adolescents
- 5 That the LSC staff complete the writing of the teaching curriculum for life skills
- 6 That the Ministry of Education publishes and distributes the teaching curriculum

- 7 That the HSP manager increase collaboration with community leaders in Valcea County
- 8 That a community advisory council is formed for the LSC at SBC
- 9 That the LSC administrator and psychologist continue to assume management functions
- 10 That a LSC operations manual is compiled and available for distribution
- 11 That the LSC staff continues to assist clients in finding jobs and housing
- 12 That the LSC considers hiring a social worker for following up client services
- 13 That the LSC and Ministry of Education sponsor a seminar about the LSC project
- 14 That WVR and the Ministry of Education plan to replicate the LSC at another site
- 15 That the Ministry of Education requests state funds for the LSC in 1997 budget
- 16 That the HSP and Ministry of Education collaborate to transfer the LSC to the Ministry

## **II. EVALUATION REPORT**

### **A DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT**

#### *1 Background*

For the past five years, WVR has been working to improve the lives of handicapped children and adults who reside in institutions in Romania. The HSP of WVR has provided direct services to clients, training to caregivers and professionals delivering services, consultation to institution administrators and Ministry officials developing policies and programs for handicapped persons. Since 1991, the HSP has conducted multiple programs in services for handicapped persons at four locations in Romania, under the sponsorship of USAID and WVI. In fall 1994, HSP proposed to develop a LSC for mildly handicapped adolescent boys at SCB in Valcea County. The LSC would function as a model residential program for orphaned/abandoned boys attending professional school. The LSC program would teach these adolescents the practical life skills necessary to live independently in the

community

In cooperation with the Secretariat for Handicapped and Ministry of Education, the HSP has been working at SCB in Valcea County since 1993. The SCB is a residential facility for approximately 800 boys. It consists of a residential school for 150 boys between ages of 7 and 13 who have been diagnosed as moderately developmentally disabled and a professional school for 600 boys between ages of 14 and 18 who have been diagnosed as mildly developmentally disabled. The professional school at SCB is one of 30 similar schools in Romania designed to provide vocational education for mildly handicapped adolescents. At the professional school at SCB, the students receive training in one of 14 professions such as carpentry, plumbing, tailoring, farming.

Approximately 100 of the 650 boys enrolled in the SCB professional school are orphaned or abandoned and without families or external support systems. These orphaned/abandoned boys have spent most or all of their lives in institutions. At age 18, they must leave the institution and are expected to find employment and live on their own. Government services available to these boys after age 18 range from very minimal to none. While these adolescents have some vocational skills, they do not have the experience or knowledge to live in the community after years of institutional life. They are without jobs, money, possessions, housing, family or friends outside of the institution. All too frequently, these adolescents end up living on the streets or in inappropriate adult institutions or in prison.

The HSP proposal for a LSC proposed to renovate a vacant building on the SCB campus to use as "home like" residence for 20 clients. Then in cooperation with SCB, HSP would hire and train a staff of educators for the LSC and select 20 orphaned/abandoned boys in the last year of professional school as LSC clients. The clients would live at the center for up to ten months. The LSC staff would supervise the group living situation and teach life skills in 15 areas such as personal care, housekeeping, cooking, health and safety, interpersonal relations, school behavior, job finding to the clients. Upon completion of the program, the client would have competencies necessary for independent living in the community. Some continued follow up services would be available from the LSC. Finally it was proposed that when the program was fully operational, the Ministry of Education would assume administrative and financial responsibility.

In fall 1994, the HSP proposal for a LSC was accepted by WVI and USAID and a detailed implementation plan was written. The LSC project has been sponsored by USAID through a no cost extension to the HSP grant until September 1996 and by WVI. The LSC has been funded by \$ 150,000 from USAID and \$75,000 from WVI. In September 1995, all other programs

sponsored by USAID through HSP grants were completed

## *2 Goals and Objectives*

The goal of the LSC project is to support boys with mild intellectual disabilities who are students at the SCB to develop skills which are necessary for independent living within society

The objectives of LSC project are

- 1 Establish a life skills center located on the SCB campus through a collaboration between the SCB and WVR
- 2 Develop a teaching curriculum which will teach those skills that are learned in a family as well as skills to help with finding and keeping a job
- 3 Evaluate the success of the project through pre and post testing utilizing a standardized assessment tool for life skills
- 4 Create an environment in the center which allows increased responsibility on the part of the client in moving toward independence
- 5 Actively work with the Ministry of Education to assume complete responsibility for the LSC at SCB by September 1996

Various sub-objectives and indicators of achievement were defined in the LSC project proposal and detailed implementation plan

## *3 Current Program*

The LSC facility is a large two story building renovated as a group home. It has eight rooms including living room, dining room, bedrooms, kitchen, staff office, bathrooms, showers, laundry room. The building is comfortably furnished and each boy has his own bed, locker, chair and desk space. Initially there were some problems with heat and hot water but that has been corrected. Two HSP vehicles are available for use by the LSC.

The LSC staff are an administrator, a psychologist and six educators who operate the LSC for 24 hours a day, seven days a week including holidays. Usually there are two educators working during weekday afternoons/evening and one educator working during mornings, nights and weekends. The HSP manager serves as the LSC director. He is assisted by a part time program assistant and a driver. The LSC staff is at least high school graduates and between ages of 22 and 35 years old. They were hired based on personal characteristics, experience with adolescents and skills in special life skill areas. Currently, the staff is equally divided between males and females. The LSC educators received training in supervision of group living and teaching of

life skills from the HSP manager, LSC psychologist and expatriate consultants. The LSC operates according to written policies/procedures with weekly staff meeting. The staff participates fully in decisions concerning operation of the center, life skills training and supervision of clients.

During the 1995-96 academic year, 24 boys were identified as orphaned/abandoned in the last year of professional school. Because the initial program was reduced to six months, only ten boys were enrolled in the LSC program. Boys with the greatest potential to live independently were selected. Of this group, the clients with the most life skills deficiencies began the program first and the others joined the house' later. All of the boys in this first "class" completed the program.

During the weekdays, clients attended academic and vocational classes at the professional school at SCB. After school the boys returned home to the LSC facility. Here on afternoons, evenings and weekends, they were involved in all typical activities of a family home such as socialization, recreation, household chores, homework, eating and sleeping. At weekly house meetings, rules and regulations for group living were decided and assignments of responsibilities and chores were determined. The boys shared responsibility for household tasks and chores were rotated among all of the boys. Educators provided the clients with guidance about tasks and behaviors through individualized attention, always encouraging positive social behavior and interpersonal relations. Educators also helped the clients with academic assignments, study habits and computer skills.

During some afternoons or evenings, the clients participated in group instructional sessions on life skills. The life skills classes covered about 40 topics using didactic and experimental approaches to learning. The educators provided individual follow up and monitoring of skills during subsequent weeks. Popular topics included relationships with opposite sex, money management, public transportation, leisure activities, holidays, hospitality. Examples of other topics were communication, decision making, personal values, laundry, food preparation, cooking, personal hygiene, cleaning, job finding, job applications. Sessions were designed and taught by the LSC educators and psychologist and the HSP director. In general topics related to household tasks and interpersonal behavior were present at first and topics concerning personal responsibilities, community interaction and employment related skills were presented later in the program. Once a week, an Orthodox priest met with the boys to discuss religious and spiritual themes.

In the summer when school was no longer in session, the clients with assistance from the LSC staff are involved in finding a job and housing, usually in small groups of three. Once a client is established in a job, he moves to housing in community but may visit LSC on weekends. In October,

the next "class" of boys will begin the LSC program

#### *4 Monitoring and Evaluation*

The clients were formally evaluated for life skill competencies in 15 areas, at the time of admission, three months later and at time of completion of the program at the LSC. Each client was evaluated each week by the educators for appropriate social behavior and interpersonal relations. Situations involving serious behavior or life skill problems of clients were discussed at a staff meeting and a plan for intervention was developed. The final measure of the impact of the LSC program will be clients' ability to find and keep a job and live independently in the community.

The program has been monitored directly and regularly by the WVR director and WVR operations officer. The HSP manager submitted a monthly report of progress and problems to the WVR director and attended the monthly managers meeting at the WVR Bucharest office. The program has been guided by specific objectives, sub-objectives and implementation strategies that were presented in the detailed implementation plan and logframe. An independent evaluation of the LSC project was conducted in July 1995 and now in July 1996. Results of these evaluations have been or will be presented to USAID and WVI by the WVR office.

## **B PURPOSE OF EVALUATION**

This evaluation serves as a summative evaluation for USAID sponsorship of the LSC project and as a formative evaluation of WVI sponsorship of the LSC project. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the accomplishments, barriers, impact and sustainability, of the project and to provide recommendations for the future of LSC. The evaluation team addressed the following questions:

- *Have the goal and objectives of the project been attained?*
- *What influence did unexpected problems have on the project?*
- *Was the project managed effectively?*
- *What impact did the project have on clients, community, institutions and government policy?*
- *How is the project sustainable?*
- *Should the project be changed and for replicated?*

The results of this evaluation may assist USAID in determining current achievement and future directions of projects for handicapped citizens of Romania. The findings and recommendations may be helpful to WVR and the Ministry of Education in

planning for continuation, modification and/or expansion of the LSC project and in developing policies and programs for orphaned/abandoned adolescents with disabilities in Romania

## **C     METHODODOLOGY**

The evaluation was conducted in Valcea County and Bucharest during five days in July 1996 by William Saur, Ph D , Laurentiu Zolotusca, MD and Viorel Ispas. Dr Saur is a social worker and independent consultant working in Romania, Dr Zolotusca is medical advisor and operations officer for WVR and Mr Ispas is HSP manager for WVR

The evaluation team reviewed pertinent documents including project proposal, detailed implementation plan, midterm evaluation, monthly reports, life skills teaching modules, LSC policies, procedures, schedules, assignments, staff meeting minutes and client records including assessments, plans, implementation strategies and evaluations. The pre and post test results of clients scores on instruments measuring life skills competencies were analyzed

The team visited the LSC at SCB for four days, observing a staff meeting, house meeting, life skills teaching lesson, meals, interactions among clients and staff. Eleven individuals were interviewed including WVR director, USAID representative, HSP manager, selected HSP and LSC staff, Director of SCB, General Inspector for Valcea County Schools, Chief Inspector for Special Education of the Ministry of Education and collaborators from the Orthodox church and International NGOs. A focus group interview which involved all ten of the LSC clients was conducted

This report contains the major findings of the evaluation and is organized according to the questions discussed in the purpose of the Evaluation section. Based on the findings, recommendations for sustainability of the project are presented. Verbal debriefings have been given to the USAID representative, WVR director, Chief Inspector for Special Education, HSP and LSC staff

## **D     FINDINGS**

### *1     Achievement of Objectives*

Regarding *objective #1*, WVR has established a LSC in collaboration with SCB. The LSC building opened in Dec. 1995 and LSC program began the same month. The program was delayed due to problems with completing the renovation of the building and with the future ownership of the building. However these problems were resolved and the building was completed and is very adequate for the LSC program. WVR and the Ministry of Education signed a memo of agreement concerning the LSC program.

In Nov. 1995, the HSP hired and trained seven staff for the LSC and developed criteria for the selection of clients. Ten boys who were

orphaned/abandoned and in their last year of professional school at SCB were chosen. The LSC program operated for six months and served ten clients who received training in over 40 life skills while residing in a "home like" group house. The boys obtained the competencies needed to work and live on their own as citizens of Romania.

Concerning the *objective #2*, the HSP manager and LSC staff designed and field tested a teaching curriculum in 15 areas of basic living skills which included personal hygiene, housekeeping, cooking, laundry, shopping, communication, social behavior, community interaction, job skills. Over 40 lessons, some with multiple sessions were taught to clients in a small group setting by the LSC staff during spring 1996. Each lesson included some follow up activities for the application of skills taught. The clients were monitored individually by the LSC staff in the performance of follow up activities. The sequence and schedule of the lessons were organized by the LSC staff. The curriculum was developed by a Romanian professional with knowledge of adolescent behavior, institutional life and community life in Romania. It was very well received by the clients. They participated in the lessons and followed up activities with commitment and enthusiasm and they demonstrated mastery of the skills taught.

The curriculum has not been written and published as planned due to the limited time that the program has been operating. The HSP manager and LSC staff have reviewed and reorganized the teaching modules modifying some content. With the assistance of an expatriate consultant the LSC staff is writing the curriculum with the goal of finishing a first draft by October 1996. The complete curriculum will include approximately 40 lessons organized into 14 modules. The publication of the life skills curriculum is essential for sustainability of the LSC at SCB and for replication of the project at other professional schools for handicapped adolescents in Romania.

As to *objective #3* the LSC clients were tested at the time at program entrance and time of program completion. A non standardized inventory which assesses life skill competencies on 135 behaviors in 15 life skill areas was utilized. The inventory was designed by the LSC staff with consultation from an expatriate rehabilitation specialist. It is directly related to the institutional life in Romania. For this reason, it seems preferable to an instrument developed and standardized in USA or Western Europe. With wider use over time, this inventory could be standardized for a Romanian population. An analysis of the data, found that at time of completion of program, 100% of the clients improved their life skill competencies in at least 85% of the areas where deficiencies were present at time of entrance into the program.

Based on review of data, LSC Psychologist and educators are reducing or

modifying or adding some items to inventory. The data was also used to review of life skills curriculum. For example, there will be less time spent on some personal care issues and more time on interpersonal relations and social behavior. Both the revised assessment inventory and curriculum should be completed by October when new group of clients begins LSC program.

Regarding *objective #4*, the LSC has established an environment which encourages clients to develop independence and autonomy. The LSC group living situation provided adequate public and private space. There were weekly house meetings, where clients and staff together considered and developed procedures for group living including individual responsibilities to others. Schedules of responsibilities, chores and activities were agreed upon, posted and maintained. The home like atmosphere functions well for individuals learning through cooperative living. The clients became more independent by assuming increasing responsibilities for household operations such as cleaning, washing, meal planning, cooking, shopping, hospitality.

The LSC staff has created individualized programs for clients to encourage personal responsibilities and independence. Each educator submitted a weekly observation of clients report which addressed ten areas of personal behavior. Based on these observations, the educators planned individualized interventions to help clients develop skills in interpersonal behavior, problem solving, decision making, implementing activities. The LSC staff has been committed to using principles of emotional support, positive reinforcement and behavior modification to foster improved self confidence and self esteem in the clients. Both clients and staff have expressed enthusiasm about group the living situation at LSC.

Considering the *objective #5*, the HSP manager met regularly with the SCB Director, Valcea County Schools General Inspector, Ministry of Education Chief Inspector for Special Education to discuss progress, delays and achievements of the LSC program. A memo of agreement defining collaboration between WVR and the Ministry of Education was signed. This memo notes the specific responsibilities of WVR-HSP, SCB and Ministry of Education for the LSC project. Subsequently, an agreement concerning employment of LSC educators by SCB was signed.

Because of delays in starting the LSC program, some project objectives have not been completed. Therefore, the Ministry of Education had not been asked to assume responsibility for the LSC at SCB for 1996. The various local and national Education officials involved with the project have been positive about the program and its effect on clients. The SCB Director in particular, noted the improved behavior and academic achievements of clients of the LSC. The General Inspector for Valcea County Schools indicated that he would request funds for 1997 for the LSC. The Chief Inspector for Special

Education expressed support for funding the LSC in 1997. He plans to publish and distribute the life skills curriculum and sponsor a seminar to disseminate information about the LSC to teachers and administrators of other professional schools. The Chief Inspector is interested in replicating the LSC at another location and noted that this will be an increase in budget for special education in 1997.

## *2 Unanticipated Influences*

A number of unexpected problems occurred which directly effected the project and required significant adjustments from the original proposal and implementation plan. The opening of LSC was considerably later than planned because of difficulties concerning the ownership of building. The building constructed in 1939 was originally owned by the Orthodox Church and was acquired by the Communist government without full agreement of the Church. After the 1989 revolution, the SCB campus which includes the building was placed under the authority of the Secretariat for Handicapped but was later transferred to the Ministry of Education. The reestablishment of ownership of property that was private prior to 1945 is complex issue in Romania. The HSP manager negotiated a memo of agreement that was signed by the Bishop of the Orthodox Church, Ministry of Education and WVR -- giving WVR permission to operate LSC in the building for five years. A second problem causing delay in the opening of the building was the difficulty in hiring an appropriate contractor for renovation. Because the building was formerly part of an ancient Orthodox Monastery, renovation required some historical and cultural restoration. In Valcea County it was very difficult to locate a building contractor with expertise in restoration work. Again with persistence the HSP manager resolved the problem and a contractor with restoration experience was hired.

Because of the delay in opening the building, the LSC program operated for six months during 1995-1996 rather than ten months as planned for initial year and fewer clients, ten rather than twenty were enrolled. This lower ratio of staff to client allowed more individual attention and intense teaching of life skills. The decision to restrict enrollment was made by the HSP manager in consultation with a rehabilitation expert. It has proven to be a sound decision. The LSC staff was able to design teaching modules for life skills training and to present these modules in an organized schedule despite the reduced time period of the LSC program. However, they did not have the time to write the curriculum. Recently with the assistance of an expatriate consultant, the staff reviewed and reorganized the curriculum and began writing the modules. They anticipate completing this task by October.

In the memo of agreement with SCB, the responsibility for client job placement was assumed by SCB. However because limited staff at SCB, this

has not occurred

The HSP manager and LSC staff have assumed this responsibility and have begun to find jobs and housing for the clients. They expect that all the clients will be working and living in the community by September. Clients have been encouraged to form groups of three and to seek work at the same employer and share housing together. This approach fosters peer support and increases the likelihood of successful independent living in community. The LSC staff has recognized that over the next year, the clients will need some follow up monitoring and services, to assure integration into the community. This seems particularly necessary because these clients participated in a shorter program that was more intense but provided less opportunity for mastery of skills and attitudes over time. The HSP manager plans to request funding for hiring a social worker for follow up services. The original LSC proposal contained this job line and description.

The Ministry of Education has not assumed responsibility for the LSC at SCB as initially planned. One reason is that the accomplishment of objectives of the project have been incomplete because of the delay in starting the LSC program. In other words, the project has not been ready to be taken over at this time. Officials at SCB, Valcea County Schools and the Ministry of Education have expressed their support at the project, their anticipation of the success of LSC and their willingness to pursue Ministry funds for the LSC for 1997. These statements were confirmed in conversations between evolution team and Education officials in July. Throughout the course of LSC Project, the HSP manager has met regularly with national and local Education officials informing them of delays, progress and achievements of the program.

### *3 Effectiveness of Management*

The staff of the HSP and LSC were able to express an understanding of the mission of WVI and an investment in the goal and objectives of the LSC project. They stated that the work they do is important for Romania and they indicated respect for the worth and dignity of each individual client. The LSC staff has been appropriately selected, well trained and well supervised. They are highly motivated, team oriented and technically competent to meet the needs of the clients and objectives of the program. They reported a high degree at job satisfaction and there was no indication of tension or conflict among the staff.

The HSP manager has demonstrated excellent leadership and management skills in coordination, delegation, problem solving, training, communication, team building and adequate skills in planning and evaluation. He is well liked and respected by colleagues, collaborators and clients. The LSC administrator and psychologist have shown interest and potential to assume increasing

responsibilities and authority for day to day program management. The LSC governance structure utilizes participatory decision making with weekly staff meetings that are followed by house meetings with the clients. Adequate procedures and policies for the successful operation of the LSC have been developed. They have been written as memo and statements but have not been assembled into a manual. Policies and procedures for the staff have been written as guidelines that have opportunity for flexibility depending on the situation. Policies and procedures for clients such as house rules were appropriately more concrete and specific.

The HSP manager has positive ongoing relationships with the SCB director, county general inspector and national chief inspector for special education. These relations which developed over the two years are marked by a spirit of collaboration. Recently, the HSP manager has expanded his collaborative involvement with representatives of the Orthodox Church and the County Chamber of Labor. Cooperative relationships with government and business leaders have been positive but limited and sporadic.

#### *4 Impact and Sustainability*

The LSC is a well managed, fully functional residential program for mildly developmentally handicapped adolescents. It serves as a model program for the Ministry of Education. Officials in the Ministry have noted the preliminary success of the program and expressed interest in seeking state funding for the LSC at SCB, disseminating information about the LSC program and teaching curriculum to other schools for mildly handicapped adolescents and replicating the program at another professional school in collaboration with WVR. The LSC is demonstrating that orphaned and abandoned adolescents who have lived most of their lives in institutions can be taught the necessary skills and attitudes to obtain jobs and live independently in the community. There is beginning interest within the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to define the LSC as a model program for various institutions serving orphaned/abandoned adolescents, such as the Children Houses.

The adolescent boys who have completed the LSC program have the self confidence and life skills to live happily and productively in the community. They have demonstrated improved academic achievements, appropriate social behavior and increased self esteem. Some of the clients have already found jobs and are working regularly, while living independently in the community. The LSC staff expects that the other clients will locate a job and housing within a few weeks time. The preliminary success of LSC Program and of the LSC clients has challenged the mentality that persons with handicaps cannot hold jobs and that orphaned/abandoned adolescents who have lived in institutions cannot be self sufficient members of society.

Attitude changes about adolescents who are handicapped and/or orphaned/abandoned have been observed among teachers, government officials, clergy and employers. Serious conversations about the need for community-based services for children and adolescents are occurring among citizens who have contact with the LSC and clients.

If adequate funding is available, The LSC at SCB seems to be sustainable. Clarity of mission and objectives, effectiveness of management structure and organization, as well as competence and technical expertise of the staff have been observed. There is emerging interest in Valcea County among selected clergy, government leaders and business owners to support the continuation of LSC and commitment among Education officials to request state funding for the LSC. With the availability of the teaching curriculum for life skills training, the assessment instrument for measuring life skill competencies and a policies/procedures manual, the LSC program could be replicated at another location. There is interest in the Ministry of Education to explore this possibility with WVR, in conjunction with the WVR Area Development Program.

## **E RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are suggested to develop and maintain sustainability of client achievements, the LSC program at SCB and an expanded LSC project throughout Romania.

### **It is recommended**

- 1 That WVR continues to fund and operate the LSC at SCB through, as a model residential program for integration of institutionalized adolescents with developmental disabilities into Romanian communities.
- 2 The HSP manager with input from collaborating Education officials, review and revise the LSC objectives and formulate a detailed implementation plan for the next year.
- 3 That LSC at SCB serves 20 clients during the next academic year and provides a 10-month program of life skills training for independent living, using policies, procedures and a teaching curriculum developed in Spring 1996.
- 4 That LSC continues its method of selection of clients selecting orphaned/abandoned boys with mild developmental disabilities who are in the last year of professional school at SCB and who show potential for independent living.
- 5 That HSP and LSC staff complete their review of the life skills teaching modules developed during Spring 1996 and complete written teaching

curriculum for life skills training The curriculum would include approximately 40 life skills organized into 14 modules

- 6 That the LSC teaching curriculum would be reviewed and published by the Ministry of Education, perhaps in collaboration with UNICEF and then distributed to other projects and institutions working to integrate institutionalized adolescents into independent living in the community
- 7 That the HSP manager focus on external relations during the next year and expand collaboration with Valcea County leaders and representatives from government, businesses, schools, churches
- 8 That a community advisory council with prominent representatives of the local community be organized to assist and support sustainability of LSC at SCB
- 9 That the LSC administrator and psychologist assume increasing responsibility and authority for the management of LSC and that they be provided management training as needed
- 10 That various policies and procedures of LSC be reviewed and revised as necessary and compiled into an operations manual for LSC This manual would be available for distribution to similar programs
- 11 That the LSC assist clients in finding jobs and housing, after they have completed the program and assist the clients in adapting to independent living in the community by periodic contacts during the subsequent year
- 12 That a social worker or community worker be employed by the LSC to provide follow up services to clients for one year after they complete LSC program This is to assure successful community integration and independent living
- 13 That the HSP manager provide any assistance needed to General Inspector of Valcea County Schools, Director of SCB and Chief Inspector for Special Education at Ministry of Education to formally request funding of the LSC at SCB in the 1997 Ministry of Education Budget
- 14 That the HSP manager continue to collaborate with Ministry of Education to assume complete responsibility for the LSC at SCB

## **F APPENDIX**

### *1 Observations*

LSC Staff Meeting

LSC House Meeting  
LSC Life Skills Training Session  
LSC Mealtimes  
LSC Client and Staff Interactions

## *2 Interviews*

Charles Dokmo	WVR Director
Viorel Ispas	HSP Manager
Tamara Ispas	HSP Program Assistant
Nicolae Brozba	HSP Driver
Constantin Ionascu	LSC Administrator
Marilena Matacuta	LSC Psychologist
Andrei Borascu	LSC Educator
Traian Vrajmas	Chief Inspector for Special Education in the Ministry of Education
Gheorghe Dumitrascu	General Inspector of Valcea County Schools
Mihai Diaconescu	Director of SCB
Filip Ionascu	Priest, Romanian Orthodox Church
Randal Thompson	USAID Representative

## *3 Focus Group*

## *4 LSC Clients (10)*

## *5 Documents*

HSP Revised Project Implementation Plan (Nov 94)  
HSP Final Evaluation (July 95)  
HSP LSC Program (June 96)  
HSP Monthly Reports (Nov 95-May 96)  
LSC Curriculum for Staff and Clients (July 95)  
LSC General Instructions for Staff (Jan 96)  
LSC Weekly Program, Schedule, Assignments (Selected)  
LSC Daily Activities (Selected)

LSC Weekly Observations of Educators (Selected)

LSC Staff Meeting Minutes (Selected)

LSC Client Intake and Plan (all clients)

LSC Client Skills Assessment (all clients)

WVR Policies and Procedures Manual

## **6** *Statistical Data*

Pre and Post Test Scores on LSC Client Skills Assessment instrument