



Evaluation Summary



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Partnerships for Youth Employment in the Commonwealth of Independent States – Midterm evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: *Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation*

Mid-Term Evaluation: *February – May 2015*

Mode of Evaluation: *Independent*

Administrative Office: *DWT/CO-Moscow*

Technical Office: *SKILLS*

Evaluation Manager: *Irina Sinelina*

Evaluation Consultant: *Svetlana Bronuyk*

Project End: *December 31, 2016*

Project Code: *RER/12/01/LUK*

Donor & Project Budget: *Lukoil Open Joint Stock Company (US\$ 6,000,000)*

Keywords: *youth employment, skills*

Background & Context

The project is aligned with the ILO's global Decent Work agenda. The Project specifically targets two ILO Programme outcomes: "Employment Promotion" and "Skills Development". The project is the result of a public/private partnership between the ILO and LUKOIL Company. The development objective of the project is to contribute to the creation of decent work for youth in CIS countries.

The Immediate objectives of the project:

Immediate objective 1: Policies and strategies for Decent Work for youth are adopted and/or

revised as a result of priorities identified within the regional network

Immediate objective 2: Action plans and programmes promoting Decent Work for Youth are implemented in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation

The project relies on interventions at regional, national and sub-national levels. The regional intervention constitutes the overall framework of the project. It serves to develop joint approaches to address youth employment issues common to CIS countries and to establish a mechanism for regional cooperation on youth employment. The national components target Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia where the project supports the development and implementation of pilot programmes and initiatives that take into account the specificities of youth employment challenge.

The sub-national components focus on youth employment action in three pilot areas of the Russian Federation (Republic of Kalmykia, Permsky Territory and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region) with a view to creating a framework for cooperation among local institutions, the social partners and other actors. These partnerships will promote decent work for youth at the district level or local territories.

Project management arrangements:

The project is working under the supervision of the ILO Decent Work Team and Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in

Moscow. The DWT/CO-Moscow Senior Employment Specialist is appointed as focal point for the project. The project is staffed with Chief Technical Advisor, Youth Employment Officer and two administrative assistants. In addition, a Junior Professional Officer based in Moscow provided input into the technical documents, as well as advice on project strategy. A technical cooperation specialist in the ILO's HQ Programme on Youth Employment provides technical backstopping.

Present Situation of the Project

The project made progress under each of the two objectives in 2013-2015. The sub-regional meeting in Almaty in October 2013 marked the project's launch and establishment of a network which convenes bi-annually and performs youth employment policies peer reviews. Sub-regional meetings facilitate functioning of a youth employment network that serves as a ground for conducting peer reviews of youth employment policies, programmes and institutions. The first round of the peer review was conducted in Kyrgyzstan in July 2014.

Activities in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation at the national level, as well as in the pilot regions of the Russian Federation, are on-going. This includes work on the draft policy review in Kazakhstan and technical advice in the development of a National Action Plan on Youth Employment; development of draft Roadmap for Youth Employment in Russia; launching of Youth Employment Pacts in the regions of Russia; piloting youth targeted active labour market programmes in Azerbaijan

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the progress made in achieving the project objectives and to make recommendations on how to improve the implementation approach for the remaining duration of the project.

The evaluation covers the project as a whole, from its start until the time of evaluation missions to Baku/Azerbaijan (February 26-27,

2015), Astana/Kazakhstan (March 11-13, 2015) and Elista/Russia (March 24-26, 2015). Interviews with the Project Team were conducted in Moscow, February 9-11, 2015.

The evaluation serves the following clients' groups: ILO management, technical specialists at the HQ and in the field; Project staff; Tripartite constituents in the target countries; The Donor; Direct beneficiaries, including policy-makers and practitioners; Ultimate beneficiaries, including young people.

Methodology of evaluation

The project was evaluated in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. OECD/DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance were used to interpret the answers to the evaluation questions. The methodology included: a) Desk review of project reports, studies and documentation; b) Interviews with the ILO DWT/CO-Moscow staff; c) Interviews with the national constituents, technical experts and stakeholders; d) Observation of the project events in Kazakhstan and Russia; e) Visits on site of the final beneficiaries, participants of pilots in Russia, Azerbaijan.

Limitations of evaluation: The project log frame was not fully elaborated, so the assessment of progress towards achieved results was not always possible. A few social partners were not aware of the Project as such and their perspective could not be assessed. The evaluation of the project performance in terms of gender was limited as the evaluability of this aspect was estimated as "medium." The pilot projects implemented within the Project were not evaluated as such but assessed in terms of validity of the Project Design, future implementation and replication.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance

- The focus of the project was chosen correctly. The project fits into the constituents' and national policy agenda on youth employment;

- The project is timely and topical for the region and target countries;
- The project's approach to use a combination of capacity building, political mobilization, inter-regional cooperation and piloting of youth targeted active labour market programmes has proven to be relevant;
- The approach to involve all categories of project stakeholders in implementation with an emphasis on tripartite cooperation was chosen correctly.

Design

- The Project design was based on an overall regional situation analysis and specific target countries' analysis. It included a review of the lessons learned, best practices and evaluation findings of previous youth employment projects. The design was flexible enough to address the current needs of the constituents;
- The Logical framework represents a well-developed matrix with properly formulated risks and assumptions. The design lacks activities aimed at enhancing policy makers' capacity to tackle challenges of informal economy wide-spread in the region as stipulated in the Problem Analysis, although the project supported select initiatives related to this issue;
- The vulnerable groups of young men and women were identified, however, their specific needs were not addressed in the Project Activities and / or indicators;
- Data was age/sex disaggregated in the Project Document, but no specific activities were envisaged to tackle gender disparities in youth employment.

Effectiveness

- The project is on track and likely to achieve its objectives. Understanding of challenges of youth unemployment and commitment of the government and social partners to tackle them has increased due to the project – both through policies development and implementation of Active Labour Market Programmes;

- Project achievement at the regional level has been the development of the regional youth employment network involving governments, trade unions and employers' organizations. The knowledge delivered to the stakeholders through study tours and inter-regional meetings is used in the development of youth policies;
- At the national level the Project is well on track and youth employment is a national priority in the target countries. The resulting knowledge and skills are already used for the development of policy and implementation;
- The social partners are working together to address youth employment, but not yet on a full scale. They were involved in implementation, but their involvement was not equal;
- Gender issues have been taken into account during Project implementation to some extent.

Efficiency

- The project was managed efficiently by the DWT/CO-Moscow team. It was successful in attracting additional resources for its implementation at no cost;
- Additional expertise and knowledge for the Project was provided by the Youth Employment Unit in Geneva and technical specialists from DWT/CO-Moscow. ILO's pool of international experts was involved to implement research and support elaboration of evidence-based policies and programming;
- The overall workload is adequately managed except for Azerbaijan where only one ILO staff member, National Coordinator, is located and combines his regular duties with backstopping of project activities;
- Some delays in the implementation of project activities were observed at the initial phase;
- A Monitoring and Evaluation expert was advised at the design stage, but an M&E framework has not been adopted by the Project Team as a tool for tracking project results.

Sustainability

- At policy level the sustainability of the project contributions has good prospects. A Peer

Review mechanism is being implemented providing opportunities for policy-makers for active and experiential learning through application of knowledge gained to real-time evaluations of youth policies. This contributes to the development of evidence-based policies;

- At the capacity building level the skills and knowledge are likely to be used without further presence of the project in the countries, however due to on-going changes in political leadership at ministerial level there is a risk of loss of newly gained knowledge;

- At the implementation level, much will depend on the availability of public funds for the implementation of relevant plans and actions, given the fact that target countries are currently facing economic challenges and devaluation of national currencies.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations

1. It is recommended to the ILO to sustain the inter-regional working group on Youth Employment and explore new formats to coordination on youth employment with other international organizations;

2. It is recommended to the project to consider a possibility to support the national partners in evaluating the results of the implementation of Active Labour Market Programmes and assist in their implementation;

3. To the project to consider a possibility to benefit from external gender expertise to develop guidelines on Youth Employment Policies Review through Gender lenses;

4. It is advised to develop a gender mainstreaming strategy for the Project and introduce gender-sensitive indicators to the Log frame;

5. It is advised to the project and constituents to develop clear approaches on integrating specific vulnerable groups of youth into the National Action Plans and Policies, and also

setting specific indicators on vulnerable groups of youth into the Project Design;

6. It is recommended to the project to enhance participation of employers and trade unions in capacity building activities and strengthen their social dialogue skills on youth employment;

7. It is advised to the ILO to reinforce the dialogue and enhance capacity building for governments on tackling challenges of informality in youth employment;

8. It is recommended to the ILO to examine the possibility to replicate Peer Review methodology developed under the project in other countries with similar context. In this regard, it would be beneficial to evaluate Peer Review mechanism and develop Step-by-Step guidelines to encourage replication;

9. The ILO methodology of preparation of national action plan on youth employment applied in the development of National Action Plan in Kazakhstan proved to be highly effective and is recommended for further replication within the region;

10. It is recommended to the project to support social partners, especially trade unions, in the development of Anti-Crisis Project strategy on youth employment, in order to preserve achieved project results;

11. It is recommended to make sure that the project studies are made available online in Russian and English and are searchable online.

Main lesson learned: Preparation of the stakeholders on evidence-based policy development and equipping them with knowledge on monitoring and evaluation leads to better commitment to develop evidence-based policies and measure results.