

Local Economic Development Planning in Iraq

Lessons Learned Workshop – Istanbul, 27th-28th November 2012

Introduction

In Iraq, since 2008, the ILO has been a core partner of two among the widest inter-agency Programs implemented in the country in the aftermath of 2003 war: the Private Sector Development Program for Iraq (PSDP; 2009-2012) and the Local Area Development Program (LADP; 2008-2012).

Among ILO's areas of work in the two projects, was the capacity building for seven provincial-level teams on Local Economic Development (LED) planning. After reviewing the multi-sectoral, annual planning procedures adopted in the Provinces of Iraq and based on the guidelines of the Ministry of Planning, the ILO developed a participatory methodology for LED planning that would enrich the existing procedures. Between 2011 and 2012, the ILO supported the first roll out of the methodology in seven Iraqi Provinces: Anbar, Babel, Basrah, Erbil, Missan, Thi Qar, and Sulaymaniah. Five out of them succeeded in completing their first Economic Development Compact, which includes a territorial diagnosis of economic issues and opportunities, and a menu of project ideas for economic development.

A final Lessons Learned workshop was held in Istanbul (27th-28th November 2012). Participants from the targeted Provinces (i.e. Governorate Offices, Provincial Councils, members of the planning Groups nominated by the Governors, project team and national experts) presented their first Economic Development Compact, shared their experiences, discussed the lessons learned throughout the first roll out of the LED planning methodology, and made suggestions for improving the planning process and the ILO LERD Guidelines. Two International LED Experts attended the workshop as resource persons: Mr. Alfredo Lazarte-Hoyle, Director of ILO/CRISIS, and Prof. Pike, Director of the Center for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) of the Newcastle University.

A lessons-learned report and a set of recommendations for the revision of the LERD Guidelines and for the follow-up have been produced in partnership with the Newcastle University.

Objectives

The objective of the workshop was twofold:

1. **Complete the first LERD planning cycle** by: Presenting their first Economic Development Compact (i.e. territorial diagnosis and project

charters); Sharing their experiences and discussing the lessons learned; Drawing conclusions in terms of does and don'ts, good practices, success factors, and shortcomings of the proposed planning methodology based on the positive and negative experiences.

2. Receive feedbacks from international experts on how to improve the quality of Provincial Development Plans by ensuring that: They are based on a situation analysis and actual needs, not on available funding; Address social and economic needs in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, in both urban and rural areas, through multisectoral projects; Prioritize projects based on urgency and importance of needs, possible impact, and attainability based on available resources.



Lessons Learned and Conclusions

The lessons learned exercise was structured along the following topics: capacity building by the ILO and UNOPS (including the LERD Guidelines); institutional arrangements and governance for economic planning at the provincial level; expert group composition; the inclusion of LERD planning within the broader IPAP process; the territorial diagnosis process; and the project identification and planning process.

According to field-teams' and experts' feedbacks, the Guidelines have been a useful and effective tool for self-learning, as they provided step-by-step guidance; suggestions were collected on how to improve them including by an LED Expert of the Newcastle University (UK).

There are expectations for the ILO to continue supporting the economic development planning at the Provincial level. The field teams pointed out, that it is necessary to practice the methodology for several subsequent planning cycles in order to refine it and to achieve proficiency in its field-based

application. Continuing to work in this area would allow for capitalizing on the efforts and investments made so far in the pilot phase, which indeed cannot be expected to produce fruits in the short run. The change proposed in the planning methodology at the Provincial level is radical and triggers other similarly radical institutional changes (among which a greater decentralization of powers), whose difficulty shall not be ignored and which have clearly emerged across the implementation of this project.

If the ILO intends to continue providing this type of support, the delivery modality should be revised and enhanced in light of the challenges experienced in first pilot. The field teams have suggested a few interesting upgrades to the capacity building process and instruments, which can be further elaborated. In first place, it appears evident that the members of the Groups who participated in this project appreciated the exposure to international expertise and experiences, asking for increasing and systematizing the opportunities to be guided and advised by International Experts. In this regard, they requested that International Experts are deployed to the field to support the planning teams for an on-the-job type of training. On-the-job training is particularly required to strengthen the introduction of this new methodology; it is indispensable to complement training delivered through workshops.

In line with field teams' recommendation, future applications of the methodology could be carried out in partnership with accredited institutes/universities with a recognized expertise in the LED domain; in this way their learning could also be certified and recognized. The involvement of the University of Newcastle in the lessons learned exercise as well as in the review of the LERD Guidelines, was indeed aimed at reaching out to a well-established and reputed institution with a three-fold purpose: provide the Iraqi counterpart with the opportunity to get access to high-level advice on their work; expose the Iraqi counterpart to worldwide experiences; raise the profile and credibility of the approach, by getting it evaluated by an international expert, not linked to the ILO.

Another important aspect raised by field teams is the one related to cross-boundaries and peer-to-peer collaboration among groups involved in economic development planning in different Provinces. This could be done through more occasions to interact (e.g. dedicated seminars); study tours to other Provinces; dedicated planning activities targeting inter-Provincial issues and involving the Governors of neighboring Provinces; a web-based platform on

local economic development for Provincial planners, where to find learning and reading materials as well as examples from other regions/countries, and where to have a space for interacting with other users and tutors. With respect to the web-based platform, despite sounding innovative and useful, its feasibility should be studied, as it appears that web-based tools are not very popular and used in Iraq.



Other lessons concerned the ownership and sustainability of the capacity building process. In order for future capacity building efforts in the area of local-level planning to be effective and productive, the following conditions should be created: (1) the planning methodology – with an indicative timeline – is first discussed with the Governor and other stakeholders as appropriate; it is adjusted in consultation with them and endorsed through a Memorandum of Understanding between the capacity building provider and the Governorate; (2) the cost of capacity building is shared between the Governorate's offices and ILO/UNOPS (or more generally the UN) and, more specifically, the counterpart would at least shoulder trainees' travel costs, while the ILO would make available the trainers and cover the costs of catering and venue; (3) training fees are also cost-shared and incentives are given to promising trainees, for instance through scholarships and/or rebates on fees for the best ones among the nominees; (4) The training plan and effort required by trainees after each training are made clear and formally agreed upon from the start, including by the Governors; (5) The members of the Groups are chosen by the Governors with appropriate guidance by the ILO concerning their tasks and qualification requirements; (6) for even better results, the members of the Groups should be financially compensated by the Governorates, which are the contracting agents of their services.