



# Evaluation Summaries

## *Poverty Reduction through Decent Employment Creation in Liberia*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Liberia*

**Mid-Term Evaluation:** June 2008

**Mode of Evaluation:** *Independent evaluation*

**Technical Area:** *Labour-based employment creation, capacity building of tripartite partners and social dialogue*

**Evaluation Management:** **ILO/Abuja**

**Evaluation Team:** *Eugenia Date-Bah*

**Project Start:** *January 2007*

**Project End:** *30 December 2008*

**Project Code:** *LIR/06/50M/NET*

**Donor:** *Netherlands (US\$4.2 Million)*

### Background & Context

#### **Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure**

With the high level of unemployment, underemployment and poverty in Liberia and the threat it poses to the country's long term peace, decent work promotion has become one of the government's priority areas of action (as reflected in the IPRS and also the current PRS) and has also stimulated ILO's involvement in addressing this issue.

The Government has, with ILO technical assistance - drawing on its Global Employment Agenda and its experience in job creation in other post conflict countries - spelled out a strategic framework for immediate job creation - LEEP/LEAP, launched by the president in July, 2006.

Apart from the launch of the LEEP/LEAP in 2006, the 'Poverty reduction through decent employment creation in Liberia' programme launched in February 2007 is the immediate response of the ILO to the PRSP and to the employment situation in the country. It contributes specifically to LEEP's Key Initiatives 1, 3, 4 and 5. It is also instrumental for operationalizing the LEEP framework, as it provides initial technical and financial support to its Secretariat.

The programme, with a total budget of US\$4,200,000 and duration of 2 years, has three inter-related components: (i) labour intensive road works and cooperative development; (ii) solid waste management, and (iii) strengthening the role of the tripartite constituents.

#### **Present situation of project**

Component 1 has almost completed the 11 kilometre Barclay-Bannersville Road and has commenced the rehabilitation of the remaining 16 kilometre Bannersville - Todee Road. Only 5 kilometres of the latter will be completed by the end of December 2008. The second part of this component, namely cooperatives in charcoal making, is yet to begin. Component 1 has had considerable impact in terms of attracting the attention of the President and other high level political and technical people and reducing the poverty levels of the neighbouring area and the workers involved in the project. It has already generated 25,565 person work days.

Component 2 has mobilized 8 community-based solid waste management groups out of a target of 10 and provided them with relevant tools, protective clothing and loans. The groups are operating at different levels of efficiency. Many require their operational capacity to be strengthened, further support to review their business plans and to increase community awareness of the health hazards of poor waste management as well as training in occupational safety and health.

Component 3 has focused on revitalizing the LCC, promoting the merger of the two competing workers' federations into one central body – the LLC -, strengthening the secretariat of LEEP/LEAP, LMI, employment services, National Tripartite Committee and social dialogue. A draft National Employment Policy has been elaborated together with a strategic plan for the MOL, plans for the transformation of the LEEP/LEAP and review of the country's labour law. Unlike the coordinators of the other components, the national project coordinator of component 3 lacks transportation to be able to meet the spatial demands of his role.

#### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

Both a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation are envisaged in the programme document. The mid-term evaluation was undertaken from the last week of April to last week of May 2008 to assess progress in the programme's implementation and impact, to make recommendations for improving implementation, delivery of outputs and outcomes and to identify lessons learnt and good practices. The evaluation should be a platform (its process and its outcomes) for ILO officials in Monrovia, Abuja, Addis and Geneva. It should yield a set of knowledge to help guide future ILO's integrated programme in post-crisis operations. The results of the evaluation, lessons learnt and good practice will be posted on the Liberia platform for knowledge sharing among ILO staff. The knowledge produced through the evaluation will be centralized in the LEEP/Secretariat and shared with relevant national stakeholders through the LEEP/Secretariat. Apart from this,

the lessons learnt would be shared with other UN agencies within the context of the current UN-system effort to formulate a policy for employment promotion in post-conflict settings which might lead to the preparation of an operational guidance note.

#### **Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation adopted a combination of methods – desk review; interviews of relevant ILO staff and units in Geneva, Abuja and Addis Ababa; interviews of the programme staff, implementing and other partners and beneficiaries in Liberia.

### **Main Findings & Conclusions**

The findings indicate that the programme has made significant implementation progress despite facing a number of challenges including: weak institutional capacity of local implementation partners, like the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Public Works, the Monrovia City Corporation, the revitalized employers' organization – Liberia Chamber of Commerce (LCC) - and the merged workers organization – Liberia Labour Congress - (LLC); under-qualified counterparts; late recruitment of some of the programme's staff; and delays in receiving some procurements. On the whole an average of 40 per cent of the planned work and outcomes under the programme's three components has been completed. The percentage varies from component to component. The components have been implemented separately without the collaboration required in an integrated programme.

### **Recommendations & Lessons Learned**

#### **Main recommendations and follow-up**

A number of recommendations are made for the programme's remaining one year and also to extend the programme initially for a transitional period of one year to complete its current planned work and later for a full scale second phase of 3 years. Other recommendations relate to local counterparts, the need for ILO Turin Centre's speedy assessment and tackling of the programme's

training needs and more strengthening of institutional capacity and gender mainstreaming capacity. There are also recommendations on each of the three components as well as to promote cooperation between them. Additionally, several lessons and good practices are identified.

### **Important lessons learned**

- A programme on decent work in a post-conflict country requires a long-time horizon because of the unpredictability of the environment and the tendency for institutions to have low absorptive capacity.
- Support for programme/project implementation in a post-conflict context with desperate needs has to be quick and should not be weighed down by heavy bureaucracy and management arrangements.
- One should not always assume that a new institution has to be established but invest time and effort to know the environment and the situation before the war as it is less time consuming to revitalize existing institutions than to establish a new one from scratch.
- A post-conflict programme with a strong focus on capacity building should have a training needs assessment to underpin the development of a comprehensive training strategy for timely delivery. This should be spearheaded by the ILO Turin Centre and should be undertaken right at the outset.
- In the design of post conflict programmes, time should be allocated to looking also at the coping capacities of beneficiary groups and communities as they move from relief services to pay for services. When this is overlooked, it could threaten the sustainability of such programmes.
- When the social partners after war are given appropriate skills in negotiation, collective bargaining and social mediation, they can contribute meaningfully not only to decision-

making around decent work creation but also to national reconciliation, peace building as well as rapid recovery, and sustained regional peace and stability.

- In a post-conflict environment such as Liberia, a certain level of administrative flexibility is needed on the part of development assistance organizations to ensure timely delivery of project activities.
- More communication and faster approvals and release of funds by the ILO field office responsible for a post-conflict response would speed up programme implementation.
- In addressing the merger and capacity building needs of the trade unions and employers associations in a post-conflict context, sufficient time is needed for genuine consultation and conflict-resolution. This is because electing new leaders, developing a new constitution and other vital processes take time and there is a need to do them carefully and according to proper procedures to avoid refuelling tensions.
- When the communities of a location for a project intervention, like road construction, have a high sense of ownership, the communities can provide ready assistance to the project anytime such help is needed. For example when the labour-based road construction work reached Barnersville, a built up and waterlogged area, component 1 of the ILO Liberia programme faced problems in locating and acquiring a borrow pit to win gravel material for the construction. An old woman offered one plot of land and a man also offered 3 plots of land free of charge for the construction.
- Furthermore, when there is considerable enthusiasm among the local communities for the project, often tools and equipment are not stolen nor tampered with. This is what has been noted in the locations of component 1. Furthermore, one observed

considerable willingness of both the male and female workers to learn, as was evident from their constant prying questions to understand how the project was organised. Most of them, especially the women, after a short time understood the technology and were able to utilize it with little supervision. Most of them were later promoted and made to supervise others in some activities.