



Evaluation Summaries

Promoting Youth Employment in Latin America (PREJAL)

Original report in Spanish

Quick Facts

Countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Dominican Republic.

Mid-Term Evaluation: Jan 2009

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Youth Employment

Evaluation Management: Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Evaluation Team: José Carlos Galdo, Arancha Villarejo

Project Start: November 2005

Project End: October 2009

Project Code: RLA/05/04M/SPA (MTAS)
RLA/05/05M/SPA (AECI)

Donor: Government of Spain (US\$ 5'540,605)

Keywords: youth employment.

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

PREJAL aims to contribute to the implementation of the compromise reached in the Millennium Declaration to "develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work".

In particular, the PREJAL project has 3 objectives:

(1) raise awareness among governments, social

actors and youth organizations on youth issues,

(2) analyze and discuss policies and employment creation programs and promoting employability for young people,

(3) develop training experiences and demand-based employment insertion opportunities for 12,000 poor youths.

The PREJAL Project is part of the efforts of the Youth Employment Network (YEN) of the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) and the Global Employment Program and the Youth Employment Program of the International Labour Office (ILO). The Project is implemented through the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the International Labour Office and is financed by the Government of Spain and a group of Spanish companies under the coordination of the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations (SCBO)¹.

The geographic scope of intervention includes 8 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and the Dominican Republic. The initial duration of the project is for 4 years, from November 2005 to October 2009.

Present situation of project

¹ Telefonica Foundation, Adecco Foundation, the Real Madrid Foundation, Endesa International, Santander and Prosegur.

Lack of opportunities to find decent and productive employment is a structural problem for youth in Latin America. In this context, the logic of intervention of PREJAL is relevant because it faces a structural problem that directly affects a significant portion of individuals whose labour development is important for political and social stability in the region. It is relevant because the actions of the Project are consistent with the specific objectives of the Project. In particular, the actions of the project go beyond the scope of a temporary training program and/or employment to promote employment policies for young people. The focus is consistent with studies that show that youth employment has also a well defined face. The temporal structure of the intervention is timely given the historical peak in the region of youths between 15 and 24 years with structural problems in accessing decent jobs.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This evaluation report focused its efforts on:

- (i) identify the strengths and weaknesses in the design, the intervention strategy, and the project implementation to date;
- (ii) evaluate the management of the project considering its organizational structure, the levels of decentralization of activities and services offered, and institutional and managerial capacities;
- (iii) identify any bottlenecks that prevented or delayed the implementation of activities, resource use and its compliance with specific objectives;
- (iv) evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation, provide a set of recommendations and lessons learned from project implementation to date.

Methodology of evaluation

For the analysis and measurement of variables or key evaluation factors, the following methodological tools have been taken into account: a review of basic documents, progress reports, and publications of the

Project, working meetings with the PREJAL team in Lima, Chile, Argentina, and personal interviews with project partners (Government, trade unions, business associations, consultants).

Main Findings & Conclusions

- In the countries high on the development of the project's objectives, it can be explored a more geographically targeted strategy that replicates and adapts the Project activities on a regional scale. This is quite interesting and challenging opportunities that could be implemented in a second phase of the project and with the participation of local companies. There is some consensus in the project, both in Chile and Argentina, concerning the need and feasibility of the project at a regional scale.
- The level of public/private interaction is a new aspect of the PREJAL Project. However, there is a great lack of dialogue between ILO / PREJAL and private actors with respect to objective 3 of the program, which has sparked strong doubts to the legitimacy and effectiveness of this objective. As a result, there is a lack of articulation of objectives 1 and 2 with the objective 3, which has meant in practice two different strategies and two different modes of operation.
- The PREJAL Project has a monitoring system of its activities, based in 5 half-yearly evaluation papers. It is good to systematize monitoring activities and it has enabled the generation of knowledge, the identification of strengths and weaknesses, as well as a careful analysis of the progress and difficulties in managing and implementing the Project. However, those reports do not have a quantitative

monitoring of the activities or indicators for monitoring.

- Objectives 1 and 2 of the program have been met in very heterogeneous ways in the Project's intervention countries. Argentina and Chile are the countries that have achieved a high development in terms of awareness and discussion of policies for decent and productive employment for youth. Agreements and/or commitments made with the participation of the tripartite bodies were not able to emulate in Peru and Brazil, despite the efforts of the project; it was never a real possibility in Colombia and Mexico, and it is unlikely to happen in the Dominican Republic and Honduras.
- 5 factors were identified whose convergence could explain the relatively high development of objectives 1 and 2 in Argentina and Chile: (i) when the issue of youth employment is a priority (flagship) declared by the government, (ii) when there is a strong culture of dialogue in the tripartite (iii) where there is maturity within the social actors on the need to reach concrete agreements, (iv) when there are existing spaces of understanding and lack of conflict between employers and unions (v) when the economy is performing relatively well.
- Analyzing the cost structure of the PREJAL Project reveals inefficient distribution of resources for any public or private investment project. The costs in human resources have consumed about 35% of the total budget, a percentage well above what is recommended for any type of social investment in developed or developing countries. This is a very sensitive and important issue that transcends the PREJAL's mechanisms of operations

and directly involves operating and recruiting policies of the International Labour Organization.

- The policy on recruitment of human resources in the PREJAL Project did not follow a work plan and/or defined methodology. It is guided by the development of PREJAL activities in the countries where the project is implemented. In particular, the sporadic and short duration of contracts of national coordinators was a miss, as it affects the future sustainability of the project in participating countries.
- The media campaign, a key activity of PREJAL Project, has been developed in an unsatisfactory manner. 8 factors that explain the poor performance have been identified including: (i) the absence of a coordinated communication strategy from the start of the Project (ii) the absence of a technical counterpart in the Project team that has made impossible a more fluid technique with the selected firm, (iii) the ignorance of the ILO's contractual and operational mechanisms by the selected firm.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

- PREJAL has a complex design as well as innovative. The involvement of public and private schools as well as various entities within the ILO (Geneva, Madrid, Lima) makes PREJAL a pilot complex, heterogeneous experience with levels of cooperation and coordination rather complicated and at the same time with a quite centralized and expensive management structure. **There is a need for more flexible procedures,**

payments, and human resources recruitment.

- It is advisable to incorporate as a Project activity the efforts towards national governments to establish a "Fund for Social Dialogue" that institutionalize and facilitate greater dialogue between employers and unions regarding the issue of youth employment. There is a precedent in Chile that could be studied and adopted.
- A potential economic crisis in the region will significantly alter the priorities of the program and increase the levels of mistrust between them. Unfortunately, it is a variable external to the project. **In the absence of national coordinators, the involvement of staff in the national ILO offices should be formalized to monitor the results achieved by the Project in light of economical changes. It is important to strengthen partnerships achieved, to promote the agreements reached, and to disseminate the knowledge gained.**
- The dialogue initiated by the Project with employers regarding the issues of youth employment was concentrated in the call of the major business organizations (e.g. CONFIEP in Peru) and/or who have employer legal representation in front of civil society (e.g. UIA in Argentina). **It is necessary to identify and include in this dialogue the business organizations that have a more detailed and programmatic approximation of the issue of youth employment. For example, the Association of Banks of Peru (ASBANC) offers short training courses whose profiles fit quite well with the criteria of PREJAL Project.**
- **It is advisable to encourage the participation of local companies in the future efforts of PREJAL.** There is an ideological bias with some partners who see the Project as something completely "foreign". The involvement of local businesses will give greater sustainability to the efforts of the project to generate local capabilities and greater legitimacy against some negotiators who perceive the project as a "political machinery for the promotion of Spanish companies".