Evaluation Summaries

International Labour Office

Cooperative Facility for Africa (COOPAfrica)

Quick Facts

Countries: Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia

Mid-Term: October 2009

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Cooperative Development

Evaluation Management: Regional Office for Africa

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Project Start: October 2007

Project End: December 2010

Project Code: RAF/06/53M/UKM

Donor: DFID (US$ 9,339,192.)

Keywords: Cooperative Development

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The COOPAfrica programme pursues the overarching goal of contributing to the achievement of the MDGs (in particular MDG 1) in Africa by promoting self-help initiatives, mutual assistance in local communities, and cross-border exchanges through the cooperative approach. This is to be achieved through the following three outcomes:

- Outcome 1: The governance, performance and efficiency of ***local cooperatives*** significantly improved.
- Outcome 2: Cooperative ***support institutions*** have improved their capacity.
- Outcome 3: National cooperative ***apex organizations*** have acquired greater technical capacity and political influence.

COOPAfrica is built on a mandated supply-driven approach, providing services, policy and technical advice, and a demand-driven approach by running a Challenge Fund mechanism.

The key elements of its approach are:

- Establishing an enabling legal and policy environment;
- Support services through centres of competence;
- Promotion of effective co-ordinating structures;
- Establishing Challenge mechanism.

The regional programme is built as a partnership initiative gathering at international level the African Union (AU), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), the Co-operative College of the United Kingdom (UKCC), the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives (COPAC), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in Africa. For implementation at the country-level, the programme relies on country Focal Points and National Advisory Groups composed of key cooperative stakeholders (e.g. the cooperative colleges, the Department of cooperatives, the social partners and civil society organizations).

Present situation of project

The core programme is structured around the DFID funding and has increased its outreach thanks to other donors, as per the project document "The programme will seek to mobilize support from other development partners to supplement the contribution of DFID" (page 27). It provides backstopping to a number of projects funded by other donors, notably SIDA, AGFUND, the Government of Finland and the ONE UN in Tanzania, Rwanda and Mozambique. This approach enables to structure the programme's interventions around a series of key strategic and programmatic areas corresponding to the DWCP in the countries and priorities of the African region, beyond the initial DfID funding, namely:

- Cooperative policy and legislation in Africa;
- Institutional capacity building of cooperative stakeholders in Africa;
- Youth employment and income generation;
- HIV and AIDS in the world of work;
- Gender equality;
- Fight against child labour;
- Advocacy and awareness raising, among others.

In the ONE UN reform pilot countries as well as in several others, the work of the programme is integrated in the joint programming processes of the UN agencies and contributes to the implementation of the UNDAF.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The main purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to:

1. Determine if the programme is moving towards the achievement of its stated outcomes and explain why / why not.
2. Identify potential areas for improvement and needs for adjustment in the programme's approach and activities for the remainder of the programme duration.
3. Identify good practices and lessons learned for future use by stakeholders in implementing related initiatives.

   Scope: In terms of the timeframe, the evaluation covers the first half of the Programme duration since the start of its implementation in January 2008. In terms of geographical coverage, the nine focus countries (targeted by the Challenge fund) are the focus of the evaluation, though the evaluation also analyzes the leverage effect to mobilize and extend its outreach in other countries.

   Clients: The evaluation was carried out to provide information for the following:
   1. The programme steering committee and managing team,
   2. Key programme partners including the 9 country focal points
   3. The ILO and its technical units at HQ and offices in the region, notably ILO's Area Office for Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda and the Regional Office for Africa
   4. The donor supporting the programme at headquarter and field level

Methodology of evaluation

This evaluation was carried out by an independent evaluation consultancy, Khulisa. Based on an indicative methodology provided for by ILO, Khulisa developed the following methodological approach:

1. Document review of programme reports and other documents to identify progress made.

2. Interviews with key stakeholders to identify challenges, opportunities and outcomes – immediate or expected. These interviews included:

- Selected ILO officials in Africa and Headquarters
- Programme management staff, funded by DFID, SIDA, and Government of Finland
- Steering Committee members

- COOPAfrica Focal Points in eight countries (note: there are nine Focal Points in the programme due to Tanzania and Zanzibar having one Focal Point each)
- Selected National Advisory Group Members
- UN organisations, donor representatives and other key partners

3. Site visits to three cooperatives in Tanzania, one cooperative in Ethiopia and three Cooperatives in Kenya to obtain evidence on interventions received in the context of the cooperative movement in each of those countries.

In Tanzania, the consultants conducted sixteen key informant interviews with the ILO Director, COOPAfrica programme staff, other ILO Programme Staff members, leaders of the One UN Joint Programmes, representatives of other UN organisations and Government representatives particularly from the Department of Cooperatives, labour unions and employer federations. Beneficiaries interviewed included Challenge Fund recipients, primary cooperatives, NAG representatives, Focal Points and Secondary and Apex organisations. As well as key informant and beneficiary interviews, the consultants also held a focus group discussion in Bagamoyo, Tanzania with non-beneficiary cooperatives, nonmembers of cooperatives, the Village Executive Officer and the District Cooperative Officer.

In Ethiopia, the consultants interviewed the country Focal Point, five key informants from the ILO Regional Office, a Challenge Fund recipient and Government representatives.

In Kenya, the country Focal Point, ILO-IPEC staff, key partners including JICA representatives and the Swedish Cooperative Centre, three Challenge Fund recipients and Government representatives were interviewed.

Information about the other countries was gathered through the document review as well as interviews with country Focal Points and other key partners.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The evaluators arrived at the following key findings:

- The programme has achieved, or even surpassed, its goals with regards to its outcomes at three levels: (i) local cooperatives; (ii) cooperative support institutions; and (iii) apex organizations.

- The Challenge Fund mechanism has been proven to be an effective way to provide demand driven support to cooperatives and cooperative support institutions.

- By allocating human resources by element (e.g., Challenge Fund, Policy and Law, etc.), the programme has ensured a strategic approach where each element receives dedicated attention.

- The limited human resources seem unrealistic both to achieve the operational objectives and the programme expansion. This reveals an unrealistic programme design, which considered only three technical staff to achieve the objectives.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

Donors:

- Some characteristics of the movement necessitate a longer implementation period for outcomes to be achieved. DFID should therefore provide the programme with a one year no cost extension to allow sufficient time for outcomes to mature.

- DFID should fund a second phase of the programme, following the successful growth phase of the initiative to help enable the entrenchment of the cooperative movement as a vehicle for poverty alleviation.

ILO:

- Technical human resources should be increased from 3.5 staff members to 7.5 staff members.

- Regional human resources especially in Southern Africa should also be increased.

COOPAfrica:

- As the programme winds to completion, it should consider concentrating interventions on the stronger countries with stronger coordinating structures.

- Should the implementation period be extended, it is recommended that the programme consider developing stakeholder strategies for the movement's meso and micro stakeholders in relation to the outcome of "enabling a facilitative policy and legal environment."

- The programme should consider attempting to facilitate cross-border exchanges between cooperatives at the micro level (e.g. cross-border trade between marketing cooperatives, remittances between financial cooperatives, etc.).

- Monitoring and Evaluation should be further enhanced with the institution of an independent Data Quality Assessment mechanism.

Important lessons learned

- Funding can be stretched extensively by being creative in programming (e.g. utilizing structures such as apex organisations, focal points, and National Advisory Groups to implement a comprehensive and complex development programme).

- Innovations such as the Challenge Fund and the establishment of Centres of Competence can be a sustainable means of injecting support and ensuring continued support to final beneficiaries.

- It is important to support the movement at the government level to ensure that discussion and approval of new or revised cooperative policies and laws is done with minimum delays.

- The programme's varied and extensive partnership model, established at national, regional and international levels, can be an effective way to leverage resources and promote sustainability.

- In some countries, support structures seem limited in their capacity, due to the state of development of the cooperative movement in those regions. Cooperative stakeholders therefore face severe constraints in mobilizing partners in a coordinated manner and promoting the sector.

- Success is largely determined by the strength of the cooperative movement in each country.