



# Evaluation Summaries

## Evaluation: SYNDICOOP - Poverty Reduction among Unprotected Informal Economy Workers through Trade Union – Cooperative Joint Action

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania

**Final Evaluation:** December 2005

**Mode of Evaluation:** independent

**Technical Area:** Cooperatives

**Evaluation Management:**

Employment Sector

**Evaluation Team:** Cilla Ross, Jack K'Odera, Gérard Ndamage, Gideon Richard R. Mandara, Simeon Okoth Obbo

**Project Start:** March 2004

**Project End:** April 2006

**Project Code:** RAF/04/52/NET

**Donor:** Netherlands (US\$ 1,103,880)

**Key words:** Informal Economy, Cooperatives, Trade Unions

### Background & Context

**Project Background:** SYNDICOOP was developed through the ILO's DECENT WORK agenda and the project concentrated its work on three immediate objectives:

- To strength trade union and cooperative capacity to organize unprotected informal economy workers.
- To reduce poverty through improved working and living conditions among informal economy workers and creating decent job opportunities for young women and men.
- More inclusive and more participatory Poverty reduction strategy Papers

(PRSP) for the informal economy in each country.

The SYNDICOOP strategy is to bring together trade unions and cooperatives to work at all levels: local, national, sub-regional and interregional and aims to provide a framework for both the strengthening of existing trade union and cooperative initiatives and for the development of new programmes to promote DECENT WORK in the informal economy and to organize unprotected workers.

**Evaluation Context:** For each country, an independent evaluation was conducted. An independent international evaluator synthesised the results in an overall review. This abstract summarises the results of the synthesis.

A number of methodologies have been used by the various evaluators to produce their reports. Qualitative methods included questionnaires, focus groups and one-to-one interviews and quantitative methods – such as statistical packages – also appear to have been used.

### Main Findings & Conclusions

**Design:** The design reflected relevant and timely problem analysis and met the socio – economic and cultural contexts of partner countries. In particular, the objectives reflected the ILO DECENT WORK agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and flowed from international and national informal economy debates and agendas on poverty and the informal economy.

Evaluators recorded that it is important to ensure that objectives were designed SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound). The collection of baseline data took place but there were some gaps. This is likely to be because baseline data – particularly in relation to national data in the informal economy – is not always available or possible to capture. The timescale available for baseline data collection was also limited.

**Relevance:** In terms of relevance evaluators agreed that the project has significantly helped partner organizations to develop their capacities for preparing and implementing local job creation schemes in the context of the informal economy.

However, national partner organisations are likely to require further technical and financial support to continue to improve and grow their capacities. Finally, the project has benefited the programmes/activities of the ICFTU and ICA in important ways – such as meeting the existing organizing and poverty reduction strategies of partners. There was in many cases evidence of community support ‘on the ground’ for the project which clearly indicates relevance.

**Effectiveness:** In terms of effectiveness evaluators agree that the project has enabled partner organizations, trade unions and cooperatives in each project country to collectively plan and implement their own pilot projects. Capacity building activities have been very effective and will need to be ongoing so as to enable partners to continue to take a full role in future project planning and implementation.

Evaluators agreed that the project has significantly contributed to reducing the DECENT WORK deficit in the informal economy and to enhancing income and employment opportunities for poor workers. Partners were unanimously agreed that quality jobs have been created through SYNDICOOP. Partners at the four different levels in each country obviously demonstrated different capacities for engaging with the project. Some

found it easier than others to participate – usually for historical reasons. In some cases there were some communication challenges between social partners and informal economy groups.

**Sustainability:** It is clear from discussions amongst project partners that SYNDICOOP has provided the groundwork for the organizing of informal economy workers through joint trade union and cooperative partnerships. Although partners agree that further consolidation will need to take place, a tremendous start has been made.

Evaluators and project partners agree that the sense of ownership of the project by partner organizations is very strong. This sense of project ‘ownership’ might be less emphatic amongst the informal economy groups but there is strong evidence that the philosophy underpinning SYNDICOOP – that of organizing – has taken root amongst such groups. Project partners are already considering how to work further with diverse informal economy groups.

It is likely that further ongoing support and training will need to be given to the local institutions of the informal economy to enable them to monitor and further develop the project. Commitments have been made by, for example, national governments, to continue helping the partner organizations, mechanisms have been formulated and activated in preparation for ILO withdrawal. All partners are now working through SYNDICOOP ‘exit strategy’ which includes agreement that some ILO presence will continue after the completion of this phase of the project. It is clear that this continued presence plus ongoing training and technical assistance would further enhance the prospects for sustainability.

**Gender Mainstreaming:** Gender mainstreaming is one of the successes of the project. Country evaluators report that gender participation and representation has been strong in all projects and there has been the successful building of capacity at regional / local level within the groups. Both women and

men were involved in the stakeholder analysis and in planning the project activities. Importantly the majority of indirect beneficiaries (e.g. informal economy workers) have been women. However one evaluator made the point that it is important to continuously check that gender mainstreaming is genuinely and not superficially embedded and Gender Focal Points recognize that some issues relating to women's leadership, participation and decision-making at informal economy group levels continue to pose a challenge.

In conclusion, it should be said that SYNDICOOP is a powerful model which should be rolled-out and replicated in other countries. A manual was also created to help the replication process. The groundwork has been done and consolidation and growth is now possible. This model promotes the idea of decent protected work amongst the very poor and unorganized as well of ways of organizing that are democratic, inclusive and equitable. SYNDICOOP should be delighted with its progress to date and looking forward to the next phase.

### Recommendations & Lessons Learned

**Recommendations:** SYNDICOOP project design was SMART but the timescale and lifespan of such projects should be continuously reviewed to make sure that the time available for baseline data collection etc, is realistic. This gives participants an even greater chance of project success and sustainability.

SYNDICOOP will need to continue to strive for strong channels of communication to exist between all levels of the project. This may well mean reviewing additional methodologies to enable further ways of working with informal economy groups.

SYNDICOOP partners should explore and experiment with diverse organizational models. This could be done through training and further knowledge sharing. If diverse organisational models are explored (such as workers co-operatives) then even more groups can be targeted.

The ways in which trade unions and co-operatives have worked together in SYNDICOOP has much wider application. It is important to ensure that information about the project is disseminated thoroughly.

A very good start has been made in relation to gender mainstreaming. This needs to be built on and consolidated through further awareness raising and training. Although it is not always easy, efforts must continue to be made to ensure democratic and equitable participation in terms of policy making, decision making and leadership at informal economy levels.