



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: “Increasing Employability of Disadvantaged Young Women and Men and Other Marginalized Groups in Caucasus and Central Asia through Skills Development and Entrepreneurial Education”

Quick Facts

Countries: Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia

Final Evaluation: January 2006

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Employment Creation and Gender Equality

Evaluation Management: Europe

Evaluator: Elena Zotova

Project Start: March 2004

Project End: February 2006

Project Code: RER/04/52/MNET

Donor: Netherlands (1,236,999 US\$)

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The Project “Increasing Employability of Disadvantaged Young Women and Men and Other Marginalized Groups in Caucasus and Central Asia through Skills Development and Entrepreneurial Education” was one of the instruments utilised by the ILO Sub-regional Office (SRO) in Moscow to address the situation in Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.

Project assistance was provided in priority areas identified by the ILO in its operational objectives and operational shared policy

objective or directly by the partners in the appropriate countries.

Present situation of project

The revolution in Georgia and the administrative reform in Russia before the start up of project implementation; the revolution in Kyrgyzstan with a subsequent change of the President and the Cabinet during the project implementation and presidential elections in Azerbaijan accompanied by the change of key ministers including the Minister of Labour and Social Protection at the final stage of the project – all these contributed to high turnover among policy officials and decision-makers and shifts in the governments’ political and socio-economic priorities.

Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation assessed project design, implementation and performance in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. Due to the political developments in Azerbaijan at the final stage of the project, the mission to Azerbaijan was cancelled. This report represents an overall evaluation of the project based on the interviews with the project staff, international and national consultants, progress reports and other materials made available for the evaluator, as well as an in-depth evaluation of the Project implementation in Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

The scope of the evaluation includes the qualitative analyses of the quality at entry,

project outputs and achievement of project objective, project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and is based on the indicators listed in the project document and other relevant benchmarks. The evaluation also identifies lessons learned and provides practical recommendations for future planning of the ILO programs and projects of a similar nature in the countries of the sub-region.

Main Findings & Conclusions

1. The project was aimed at increasing employability of disadvantaged young women and men and other marginalised groups through skills development and entrepreneurial education. The introduction of modern training methods and approaches to the daily practice of employment services, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, training institutions of social partners, and allows to provide better services to those in need – young men and women, unemployed, underemployed, and those who wish to start their businesses. This objective is highly relevant to the needs of the majority of the countries in the region. It is also relevant to the ILO's strategic objectives and regional priorities for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

2. The project was well designed in spite of the short preparatory period. Partially it was possible due to the fact that the project was not designed from scratch, but was based on the lessons learned during implementation of the previous activities in the target countries and the experiences from other similar projects. The competence of project team members has also contributed to a successful project design. At the same time deeper involvement of the project counterparts in the project at the design stage could have resulted in better country-tailored project implementation plans.

3. The creation of National Steering Committees for implementing the project at the countries' level is a very positive outcome. The Steering Committees could become real instruments, facilitating collaboration between social partners and facilitate their interaction not only during the period of a specific project but be used also for coordinating cooperation

between the ILO and social partners while implementing other activities/projects. Such committees may become an effective facilitating mechanism and play a role of the ILO "focal institutions" in the countries.

4. The project has been successfully implemented. The majority of the initially planned activities were completed, while some were substituted or adjusted along with the evolving priorities of the client countries. The countries have demonstrated active interest in the implementation of the project and are interested in getting further support in addressing labour market issues. Project monitoring (every half year) allowed the introduction of necessary changes in the list of planned activities. In the course of the project implementation, an electronic monitoring and evaluation system was developed, which will contribute to the success of ILO programme implementations in the future.

5. Coordination between different ILO projects is very important and should be strengthened, especially in countries where ILO offices do not exist. Such coordination is needed first of all for better positioning of the ILO in these countries, and for getting better results of project activities. Cumulative effect of impacts of different ILO projects should be more visible as a result of such in-house coordination.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

1. The ILO's interventions in support of labour market skills development, entrepreneurial training and support to SMEs by introducing modern training tools and methodologies should be continued. The project has been able to involve constituent partners to test new tools and methods to promote employment creation and job quality. Different products have been developed and adapted to meet the needs of the sub-region and many were implemented with good results, which have not been sufficiently disseminated. The national governments have expressed their desire to adopt the different products as these

were successfully pilot tested, so the stage of product development and piloting should now be coupled with subsequent stages of broad-based introduction, consolidation and maintenance. The external evaluator strongly recommends to provide the donor support for continuation of the Project.

2. The gender mainstreaming focus of the Project has become an effective tool for fine-tuning the social and labor policies of the countries in the region. It is recommended to include similar gender components in all ILO technical cooperation projects with broader technical objectives to support national efforts to integrate gender issues in national development policies and programmes.

3. Knowledge-sharing is recommended to be included as an implementing strategy while designing projects, supported by specific activities integrated into the logical framework of the project, as well as relevant human and financial resources.

4. A beneficiary assessment of ILO projects should be undertaken, because it could provide another rationale for different ILO interventions. It is important both for the client countries and for the donors who provide funding for the ILO projects.

5. National Steering Committees that have been established by the project need to be preserved as effective mechanisms to coordinate the ILO's work at the country levels and to facilitate the process of developing and implementing decent work country programmes which is one of the priorities for the countries of the region.

Technical lessons learned

1. Labour market development issues are of high relevance to Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries' economic development. The improvement of labour market efficiency and provision of financially viable, adequate and efficient support to the unemployed are on the agendas' of majority countries of the region. The labour legislation, labour market programs and employment services are in need for further development and modernisation. National governments are undertaking activities aimed at making labour market

policy mechanisms more effective, including but not limited to:

Comprehensive review of the existing unemployment and labour market monitoring systems;

Design of effective services and procedures accompanying job matching activities and support to the unemployed;

Development of methodologies to forecast labour demand with a view to facilitate balanced development of the labour and training services markets

Organisation of training and retraining of job seekers based on modern training methodologies and techniques.

2. Gender Equality becomes more broadly addressed by the national governments and partner organisations, though it still remains a difficult issue in the countries of the region. In many countries, national gender strategies and national gender action plans are developed. Often special commissions on gender issues are established and gender focal points appointed in governmental ministries and agencies. Efforts to mainstream gender in the activities of social ministries and agencies are undertaken. To broaden the scope of these activities and to make them more efficient and effective, the national governments need better involvement of civil society institutions, substantive analyses, country gender assessments and monitoring. All these activities first of all require in-depth basic and special training of the decision makers and staff of public agencies.

3. Governance and public administration modernisation including strengthening the collaboration of governmental organisations and social partners remain in focus of the national Governments. As mentioned, the project was implemented in a very turbulent environment – revolutions, presidential elections, changes of governments, etc. The implementation of the project showed inter alia that the development of public administration and modernisation of governance principles are crucial for the success of the reforms on going in the countries. The best practices results

dissemination and public administration training could be of significant value to the national Governments.

Managerial lessons learned

1. Focusing the project on an universally understandable and recognised topic such as “skills development for more productive work” as well as clearly stated project development objectives were essential for the project success. The relevance of the Project objectives to the immediate needs of the client countries was an important prerequisite for its successful implementation.
2. In an uncertain political environment, flexibility in the project design was essential in terms of offering a wide variety of tools and approaches to be applied in accordance with the countries’ priorities and socio-economic situation. The Project had a sufficient degree of flexibility to provide adequate reform-oriented technical assistance to the national governments in an uncertain environment. Project implementation involved a variety of partners and stakeholders at the national and regional levels. The relevant ministries and regional social authorities actively participated in decision-making and evaluation of work to date.
3. Involvement of national governments and social partners in the countries contributed to a positive outcome. The national governments and partner organisations in the countries in which project was implemented were actively involved in project implementation which contributed to the success of project activities.
4. The high level of competence of the ILO project staff was an important pre-requisite for the project success. Though the ILO project team was relatively small, their professional level allowed to successfully manage a complex project implementation in 6 countries, which are very different and require specific approaches for similar interventions. Proper selection of international and national consultants to provide technical expertise for the project activities, has also contributed to the overall success of the project.
5. The project preparation stage is as important as the project implementation and results

dissemination stages. This should be taken into account while developing a new project proposal. The extension of duration of the preparation process is needed first of all for the client countries as it allows the counterparts to get more in depth involved in thinking over of the project activities and planning project implementation, which in turn provides for better ownership and higher motivation in gaining positive results.

6. A more active dissemination strategy would have yielded better results. As the project involved numerous activities and application of many tools and approaches, more proactive dissemination strategy could have been used to provide access to the experience obtained, for example, putting materials on internet or preparing these for dissemination in the form of electronic multimedia disks. Though many publications and promotional materials were being disseminated through different seminars and other events, it seems to be not enough to meet the demands of constituents (especially in the regions and local communities) in the target countries.

7. Both at the preparation and implementation stages, the project would have benefited from a greater effort to explain its role in the reform process through a PR campaign to explain to a wide audience, especially to policymakers, the objectives and expected impact of the project. This could have greatly facilitated many aspects of processing the project implementation. Those journalists who were involved in the project training and capacity building activities could have been attracted to participate in the project PR campaign.

8. In future projects, the monitoring and evaluation system developed by this project should be properly used and agreed upon with the national counterparts at the very start-up.

9. It seems the project team could have been enforced by adding a project financial/procurement officer to facilitate financial arrangements, monitor procurement procedures and to track project disbursement.