



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: Skills Development for the Reconstruction and Recovery of Kosovo

Quick Facts

Countries: United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK)

Final Evaluation: July 2007

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Skills Development

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Project Start: June 2000

Project End: Jun 2007

Project Code: RER/00/05/ITA

Donor: Government of Italy US \$2,617,208

Keywords: Skills Development, Economic Recovery, Apprenticeship, Employment Service

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Funded by the Government of Italy with a contribution of US\$2.6 million, the Project Skills Development for the Reconstruction and Recovery of Kosovo had an initial duration of three years, which was then extended through the donor's provision of additional funding. The project was implemented by the ILO in two distinct, albeit interconnected, phases that went beyond the originally planned timeframe. The first phase (2001 – mid 2004) supported the establishment of labour market institutions (i.e. the Ministry of Labour, the Public Employment Service and a

network of eight regional training institutions), while the second (end 2004 – mid 2007) focused on the development of a youth employment policy and action plan, as well as on the piloting of active labour market programmes targeting disadvantaged youth.

The reconstruction and recovery of Kosovo was considered, at the time of project formulation, a pressing issue and an essential contribution to lasting peace and stability of the Balkans. To maximize the employment impact of the reconstruction and recovery programmes, a provision was made for integrating demand-driven, employment-oriented training into the overall recovery strategy. The aim was to tackle the depleted stock of human capital inherited from the previous decade, during which stronger demographic pressures, a low skills-base, and strategies favouring low employment-absorbing sectors made the employment levels of Kosovo the lowest of former Yugoslavia.

Building on prior achievements, the second phase of the ILO project revolved around the strengthening of the capacity of labour market institutions and the social partners to tackle the youth employment challenge. Technical assistance was provided in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of youth employment policy and programmes, as well as in the pilot-implementation of active labour market measures targeting disadvantaged youth. The project established an employment and training fund that sponsored a number of school-to-work transition programmes (apprenticeships, internships and in-company training) as well as wage- and self-employment measures).

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the performance of the two phases of the Project in a

comprehensive, systematic and objective manner in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The evaluation assessed the relevance of the objectives and identified the extent to which the strategy had proved efficient and effective. Particular emphasis was placed on the review of project sustainability and impact, as well as on possible innovative technical cooperation features in employment and training. Given the particular context and the project duration, the evaluation also looked into the relevance of ILO's approaches to rapidly evolving situations (from post-conflict to institutional set up, institution building and policy development). It also assessed the effectiveness of pilot programmes (direct assistance) and their instrumentality to the institution building and policy development processes.

Methodology of evaluation

Given the nature and length of the project, the methodology of the evaluation was based on quantitative and qualitative methods and included the analyses of various sources of information, including desk review of survey data and project files; interviews with government counterparts and project partners, direct beneficiaries, partner agencies, project management and staff; and direct observation.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The evaluation team was given access to stakeholders, beneficiaries, partners and other people and organizations associated with the Project. It found universal acclaim for the Project in terms of achievement of objectives and outputs, as well as management style and timeliness of response. More specifically:

The Project was able to achieve its objectives because, since its inception, it has upheld a clear vision and mission –the establishment of an employment and training infrastructure – that has never wavered. The Project's intervention logic has been both realistic and coherent; the implementation approach adopted allowed the Project to be flexible and thus to retain its relevance to Kosovo's rapidly changing needs;

The Project was able to keep a developmental approach, bridging the reconstruction phase with long-term policy and institutional development objectives;

Capacity and institution building were always at the forefront of project implementation and this guaranteed sustainability and helped planning exit

strategies and modalities that strengthened the sustainability of project's outcomes.

The combination of education, training and employment in a coherent whole was another key feature of the success of the Project. In addition, the achievements of the first phase of the Project allowed moving to more targeted and specific policy and programme priorities of the government and the social partners;

There was ample evidence to show that the Project achieved leverage far in excess of its funding. This was done through the establishment of co-sharing and partnership mechanisms. This practice became a model that the Government expects other projects to follow.

Conclusions

The evaluation team remarked that the ILO Project played a catalytic role by: (i) attracting many "outsiders" into the institutional framework of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), thus fostering a system's approach; and (ii) pulling together a wide array of line ministries, agencies and donors. During its second phase, it also obtained full support of the Prime Minister and its staff. Also, the technical assistance provided by the Project – spanning the government, the social partners and local and international actors – had an impact on policy and institutions governing the labour

Virtually all the lessons learned from the project are positive ones. However, the most important ones are described below:

- The added value of networks that link employment and training institutions and services. Such networks allow providing integrated services, fostering jobseekers' employability and ensuring that employment and training services are targeted to the needs of individuals and to the requirements of the labour market. In addition, the availability of such networks of institutions and their experts allow the design of measures that respond to labour market requirements as well as to the needs of disadvantaged groups.
- The importance of leveraging on knowledge and expertise of employment and training institutions. Investment in capacity building and human resources development has been the underpinning strategy of the Project throughout its lifetime. Such strategy was instrumental to the impact and long-term sustainability of the Project. Trained staff and institutions

can quickly adapt the provision of effective services to changing labour market needs.

- The link with work experience (simulated enterprises, on-the-job training, ALMPs) and the mix theory/practice were key to ensuring high placement rates. The design of programmes that addressed labour supply and demand simultaneously through links with the world of work was essential to improve employment outcomes of participants. It fostered the relationships of public employment and training services with enterprises, allowed a better understanding of labour market needs and enabled the targeting of employment and training programmes.
- The availability of broad packages of training and employment services (e.g. wage- and self-employment, vocational and non vocational skills) enhanced jobseekers' employability and broadened the avenue of labour market opportunities. The Kosovo labour market is characterized by a rapid pace of enterprise creation and destruction. Workers are increasingly required to be adaptable and to be able to transfer their skills from one enterprise to another. The availability of a wide range of services provided workers with multiple opportunities to (re)enter the labour market and to make their career choices on the basis of a broader menu of opportunities, including the establishment of their own economic activity.
- The need to develop methodologies and tools that are context-related and locally owned. The value added of the Project was the development of local human resources able to design or adapt methodologies and tools to improve employment and training services. This ensured the sustainability and replicability of the reforms introduced through the Project.
- International staff "advising" rather than "doing" is key for replicating and expanding knowledge and services. Such an approach promoted ownership, increased local knowledge and capacity through learning-by-doing approaches and enhanced the longer-term impact of the assistance provided by the Project.
- Communication strategies that are part of technical cooperation projects give visibility to institutions and donors, but

also raise awareness on policy issues and reforms. The use of communication strategies centred on the ILO's principles and values contributed to raise the awareness of labour market institutions, the social partners, other agencies and organizations partnering with the project – as well as the wider public - on issues such as equality of opportunities, social dialogue and decent work. Such principles have now become integral part of the policy discourse on employment promotion.

- Both tripartite activities and needs-based assistance to employers' and workers' organizations are essential to promote social dialogue on employment and training. The Project worked together with the government and the social partners on the promotion of tripartism on employment issues. In parallel, it supported the strengthening of the capacity of employers' and workers' organizations to deal with the government on employment and training issues. Such approach ensured broader participation of the social partners in policy and programme development. In addition, it helped the social partners discuss a number of policy issues that were not part of the government agenda (e.g. strategies to address the informal economy, working conditions and gender equality in employment and training).
- The formulation of appropriate and realistic objectives and performance indicators are of the essence. The establishment of clear management and monitoring procedures and indicators were key to monitor progress, adjust activities to changing needs and to ensure Project transparency.
- Combining technical cooperation activities with regular programmes of the ILO can only result in a win-win situation. Technical cooperation can provide a framework for piloting innovative approaches, methodologies and tools that can be up-scaled and replicated in other contexts through ILO regular programmes. At the same time, regular programmes can support technical cooperation activities by sharing knowledge and expertise gained in other countries and regions.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

During the evaluation, stakeholders expressed the request that the evaluation report highlighted their request that the ILO continued its activities in the area of employment promotion. The following recommendations were formulated by the final tripartite Project Steering Committee that discussed the report prepared by the external evaluators.

Upon approval, develop a time-bound plan of action to implement the main pillars of the employment strategy (2008-2013), namely:

- Expand investment in human capital, ensure an inclusive labour market, and reduce the incidence of employment in the informal economy;
- Establish a co-ordination and monitoring mechanism for the mid-term strategic policy framework on youth employment and related action plan, as well as social pacts on youth employment at local levels;
- Maintain efficiency, coherence and relevance of current employment and training system. The consolidation and monitoring of the existing system is instrumental to its future expansion;
- Keep flexibility in the definition of the mix of training and employment services (institution- and enterprise-based) also through targeted ALMPs;
- Keep on investing in competency-based methodologies to ensure consistency of adult training approaches throughout Kosovo;
- Conduct a review of the overall labour administration system to identify priority areas of intervention;
- Complete the modernization process of the Public Employment Service and strengthen the Labour Inspection System;
- Increase resources for employment and training measures targeting groups that are disadvantaged and/or discriminated against in the labour market;
- Develop strategies and programmes for both affirmative action and gender mainstreaming in employment and skills development;
- Further the decentralization of decision making to regional and local levels;
- Commit human and financial resources to the development of a policy/programme monitoring and evaluation system, including the establishment of clear performance indicators;
- Invest in enhancing the technical skills of the social partners on employment and adult training issues and fully engage them in the crafting of employment and labour market policies.