



Evaluation Summaries

Boosting Youth Employment (BYE) using an integrated approach in the framework of DWCPs in Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan

Quick Facts

Countries: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan
Mid-Term Evaluation: December 2008
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Technical Area: Youth Employment
Evaluation Management: ILO Sub-regional Office Moscow.
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Project Start: July 2006
Project End: July 2010
Project Code: RER/06/52/NET
Donor: Netherlands
Keywords: Youth employment

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project is based on the national priorities, identified by the governments, employers and workers during technical discussions leading to the development of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) in Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan.

The project aims on the development of an Integrated Strategy boosting Youth Employment on the basis of proofed experiences in the Republic of Azerbaijan and

the Kyrgyz Republic. To achieve this strategy three objectives had been developed:

- (i) Creating an enabling policy environment (within the frame work of Decent Work Country Programs.
- (ii) Institutionalize employment and self-employment service packages.
- (iii) Establish four pilots (in each country two) for a practical proof of the development of an integrated youth employment strategy.

The project is oriented to strengthening the capacities of social partners to develop their approaches to youth employment, and use social dialogue and expert advice as effective instruments to address the existing employment-related challenges. The ultimate goal is to combine employment creation with decent and safe working conditions so as to simultaneously boost productivity.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- a) Determine if the project is moving towards the achievement of its stated outcomes and explain why/why not;
- b) Provide recommendations on how to improve project performance and further implementation;
- c) Where necessary, identify the possible need to refine strategy.

The evaluation covers the project as a whole and in both target countries, Azerbaijan and

Kyrgyzstan, to serve the following - external and internal - clients' groups:

- Ultimate beneficiaries of the project – young men and women at the age of 15 to 29;
- ILO tripartite constituents and national project partners, including youth groups;
- The Donor;
- ILO management and technical specialists (in the SRO/Moscow and the Headquarters);
- Project staff.

In a nutshell the evaluation may assess the state of the affairs of the project in order to identify the most important actions to achieve the objectives during the remaining project duration.

Methodology of evaluation

The following methods had been conducted in preparation and during the mission:

- Document Review
- Team planning meeting
- Individual and/or Group Interviews
- Field visits
- Debrief in the field

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project has a good image in both countries. Especially the strong performance of the implementation of the gender mainstreaming activities and the good performance of the service packages (MST, SIYB and KAB) made a good contribution for this impact.

The **Relevance of the project is given** there is no need to change the design (log frame of the project), though there are some inconsistencies. The **state of effectiveness** and **efficiency** may be described as follows:

(i) The achievement of the objectives 1 and 2 is adequate. The likelihood attaining these objectives is high. The project fits with the Decent Work Country Programs (DWCP) and shows an identifiable contribution to the visibility of the DWCPs in both countries.

(ii) There are more problems are within objective 3. The pilots are at an early stage. But to get better informed (research based) action plans and a real proof for an Integrated Youth Employment Strategy. Time limits are here highest risk, because the remaining project duration is short for developing, implementing, and assessing four pilot activities in different environments (sector based and area based <urban – small town – rural>). Another risk is the need to recruit adequate expertise and management capacity in all the pilot areas and within the capacity of the constituents (including social partners). There is a need for training of staff, number of qualified staff and in some cases creating awareness of the problem of project management and monitoring.

(iii) Lastly to mention: the global problem of the financial crisis may induce problems (e.g. the selection of construction as a pilot sector or the return of young labour migrants from abroad) for the implementation of the sector pilot 'construction' in Azerbaijan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

(iv) Efficiency aspects:

The real project start up was definitely too late. The Chief Technical Advisor and the National experts started between six and nine months after the official project start. This small team organized efficiently and effectively the technical and financial resources of the project and the ILO as a whole, but the loss of time is considerably and it is difficult to make up time now.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

A. General Recommendations

(i) ILO internal process of co-ordination of planning must be handled before or with a limit of a month after the official start of a project as the maximum period of delay. All input coming later than this period should only

be considered by the project management if time at disposal allows.

(ii) The project management should develop concrete milestones to be achieved. For the remaining time there should be quarterly schedule oriented at the most important results.

(iii) The time frame seems to be the real challenge. There are time consuming procedures (f. i. approval of curricula or co-ordination with Moscow office of ILO) which are to be arranged in the country for the progress of the project. So the project management in coordination with the main constituents should set priorities.

(iv) Re-Organization of (management) work load:

- a) For the remaining time of the project the CTA or adequate functionally equivalent experts from the management team in Moscow should have a substantial higher frequency and duration of stays in the country. In the case of the CTA it may be considered having the CTA in the countries with a substantially higher number of working days (e g. at least 75 working days in each of the countries).
- b) To improve the quality and the likelihood of sustainability of the necessary institutionalization of the service packages (especially in Azerbaijan) international experts for the development of the MST and the KAB/SIYB should spend a substantial amount of working in the countries, if not be based for several months in the countries.
- c) Each project office should have an additional position of a project assistant.
- d) The implementation of the pilots (especially in the rural areas or in the case of the small town of Kizil Kia) will be done with a much higher success if local experts can be hired to manage the whole process of implementation.

(v) Communication of the project management with the constituents and the stakeholder community must be improved:

- a) More direct interaction on working level is necessary. This includes the CTA as well as all the other experts involved in the project.
- b) Advisory board in Azerbaijan must be established as soon as possible. It should be used to inform the constituents on the structure, the design and the targets of the project to make it clear to all constitutes which activities fits to which objective of the project. The advisory board may also be used to increase the participation rate of the social partners in planning and implementing the project.
- c) The project management may use the discussion on the results of this evaluation to involve the social partners more actively in the discussion on the finalization (planning!) of the project.

(vi) Project specific information policy:

- a) Regularly information (email based newsletter) should be handed out to the all stakeholders and to interested experts and the public. All relevant materials produced by the project should obligatory be send to relevant leading staff of constituents and other relevant stakeholders.
- b) Improve the project's media policy. Co-operation with mass media helps also the constituents improving their image; for example by organizing together with the constituents press conferences to inform the public on the progress of the project.

B. Country Specific Recommendations

Azerbaijan

(vii) The project management must take care to involve the social partners more active in future activities, like monitoring or further planning the NAP-YE.

(viii) The project has to give substantial more input in the area of MST and SIYB.

(ix) The final planning of the pilots and the project as whole should also give additional governmental constituents much room to be involved more actively in the planning and implementation of the project. This will also assist the creation of ownership among these constituents.

Kyrgyzstan

(x) If the decision will done to develop a NAP-YE for the Kyrgyz Republic it should be started as soon as possible. The SCME and the social partners may also be asked on its concrete input to guarantee the necessary progress of such a NAP-Y, because this activity needs support from the project management as well as from the main constituents in the country.

(xi) The development of support in the area of 'Career Guidance' must be intensified. The planned career guidance kit shall be developed in cooperation with the SCME, especially the Youth Labour Exchange Office. The chapters on Occupational Safety and Health for the service packages shall be developed (for both countries) timely in Moscow ILO office.

(xii) The project management shall consequently go on with the participatory way to involve the social partners and other relevant stakeholder in the planning and development of the pilots. The project should continue the active participation in the VET donors' Round Table and also the successfully implemented bilateral cooperation with Helvetas and GTZ.

(xiii) The project may support the implementation of the study on the State of the Affairs of Social Dialogue in the Kyrgyz Republic and involve the social partners actively.

(xiv) The next Steering Committee meeting shall be conducted as kind of planning workshop.

Important lessons learned

(i) The indicators of such projects should be planned more carefully and for projects being implemented in at least two countries the planning may be done more country specific, so that is clear from the very beginning what will be conducted in which country.

(ii) The planning of the project resources, especially the human resources/staff is in projects of such complexity a very important success factor. This project is a little understaffed, especially the number of staff's person months deployed in the two countries. During the planning of such a complex project specific analysis of the capacity of the constituents particularly with regard to the human resource potentials should be conducted. This may clear up to which degree a tri-partite approach is a realistic tool to achieve project objectives.

(iii) There was a massive delay for the real (not formal) start up of such a project. The real implementation in the countries started between six and nine months after the formal beginning of the project. The reason behind was ILO internal procedures and processes of co-ordination and planning. This has to be avoided in future projects.

(iv) Comprehensive projects like the Boosting Youth Employment project which have a short of only four years duration are always on a high risk. At least project duration of two times three years may be adequate. An evaluation of such a comprehensive project implemented in two countries should be conducted with two international experts and a larger (time) budget.

(v) The establishment of a Steering Committee (or a functional equivalent body) is indispensable for a successfully information

and communication strategy with the constituents and main stakeholders.

(vi) According to progress of project implementation and the information made by the interviewed national experts the ILO service packages (MST, KAB and SIYB as well as gender audit) are well designed for the target group of youth and can be adapted to the country specific needs with limited efforts.

The main conclusions:

(i) There is adequate progress in achieving objectives 1 and 2, but there are high risks achieving objective 3, especially because of a lack of time and staffing (esp. in the countries). Consequently more resources in the countries (staff and other) are necessary to achieve the intended very complex objectives timely.

(ii) Implementing project pilot activities and using this for empirical analysis drawing deductions for an integrated youth employment strategy is time consuming. To get clear and proofed results the remaining project duration is may be not long enough. If possible the project may be prolonged by at least one year. Another option may be having a follow on project to assess the outcome of the pilots.