Evaluation Summary

International Labour Office

Evaluation Unit

Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Western and Southern Africa Programme (Zimbabwe Component) – Midterm evaluation

Quick Facts

Country: *Zimbabwe*
Mid-Term Evaluation: *25th March-25th April 2013*
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Technical Area: *Skills and Employability*
Administrative Unit: *ILO Country Office-Harare*
Evaluation Manager: *Gugsa Y. Farice-ROAF-Addis Ababa*
Evaluation Team: *Stanley Karuga & George Zimbizi*
Programme Start Date: *January 2010*
Programme End Date: *December 2014*
Programme Umbrella Code: *RAF/10/52/M/DAN*
Programme TC Symbol: ZIM/10/01/DAN
Programme Title: *Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Western and Southern Africa Programme (Zimbabwe Component)*
Project Budget: *US$ 6.813 (US$ 2.773 million for phase I 2010-2011 & US$ 4.040 million for phase II 2012-2014)*
Donor: *Government of Denmark*

Background & Context

In its final report of May 2009, the Danish Commission for Africa launched five (5) initiatives aimed at promoting private sector-led growth and employment. One of the initiatives was on "*Promoting Post-Primary Education* as a means of demonstrating and promoting innovative ways towards expanding technical and vocational skills development focusing on "out-of-school" youth by developing demand-driven technical and vocational training in under-served rural communities and upgrading existing informal apprenticeships. The "*Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Western and Southern Africa* programme was launched towards the end of 2009 in response to this initiative. This report focuses on the Zimbabwe component of the programme. The overall objective of the programme is "to strengthen skills development systems that improve employability, promote access to employment opportunities and increase incomes for inclusive and sustainable growth". This overall objective is pursued through four main immediate objectives/outcomes (i) *Immediate Objective1:* "Increased capacity of rural community groups to identify local economic opportunities, develop appropriate training programmes to access jobs and provide post-training support to community and private small-scale enterprises"; *(ii) Immediate Objective 2*: "Public and private training institutions are enabled to better deliver demand-oriented services to rural, informal economies"; (iii) *Immediate Objective 3*: "Strengthened systems of informal apprenticeship through upgrading the skills of master crafts-persons and apprentices while facilitating access to new technologies"; and (d) *Immediate Objective 4:* "Enhanced capacity of stakeholders and institutions at the national level to apply tools, methodologies and strategies developed under the programme for broader outreach". The Programme seeks to increase opportunities for young women and men to find gainful and productive employment through strengthening systems for technical and vocational skills provision with focus on the informal economy.

The Programme, which is a five (5)-year initiative consisting of phase I (2010-2011) and phase II (2012-2014), is funded by the Government of Denmark at a total cost of DKK 85 million or approximately US$ 16.4 million for three countries-Benin, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. The total budget for the Zimbabwe component is US$ 6.813 million with phase I being allocated approximately US$ 2.773 million and phase II approximately US$ 4.040 million. Programme implementation was scheduled to start in January 2010, but effectively started on 1st June 2010 as a result of delays in the approval of the programme and budget which were received by the ILO on 18th March 2010 and 25th March 2010 respectively, as well as the time needed to set up implementation infrastructure and recruitment of staff-with the CTA and the NPC starting work on 1st June 2010 and 13th October 2010 respectively. The first CTA however left the programme in June 2012 and it took about three (3) months to recruit a 2nd CTA who joined the Programme in October 2012.

Direct beneficiaries of the programme staff of local implementation partners, Master Craft persons and their trade associations, community organizations, micro-finance institutions, business development service providers, public and private training service providers, local workers' and employers' organizations, while ultimate beneficiaries the unemployed and marginalized young women and men in rural and semi-rural areas, as well as wider group of individuals including community level-based adult entrepreneurs, facilitators and master trainers. Having started with only five (5) sites during the inception phase (2010-2011), programme activities have now been rolled out to 35 districts across Zimbabwe. The TREE programme covers 9 sectors-horticulture, apiculture, aquaculture, poultry, livestock production, dairy, piggery, potato production and cattle fattening, while the QIA programme covers 8 trades- carpentry and joinery, art and craft, auto mechanics, clothing, catering, hair-dressing, home décor and welding.

While the programme is currently at its 1st year of phase II or 40th month of the overall planned project cycle, actual implementation has so far been for a total of 31 months on account of the inadvertent loss of 9 months of implementation time occasioned by the aforementioned delay factors.

Purpose, Scope and Clients

This Evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with two main provisions: the technical Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Demark and the ILO as stipulated in the Project Document; and the standard ILO Evaluation Policy adopted by the Governing Body in November 2005. The overall objective of evaluation is to analyse progress made towards achieving established outcomes, identify lessons learned during phase I and make recommendations for improved delivery of quality outputs and achievement of outcomes during phase II. The evaluation serves two main purposes, namely give an independent assessment of progress of phase I to date across the four outcomes; assess performance as per the foreseen targets and indicators of achievement at output level, strategies and implementation modalities chosen, partnership arrangements, constraints and opportunities; and provide strategic and operational recommendations and also highlight lessons learned for improved project performance. The primary clients of the evaluation are the Government of Zimbabwe; Government of Denmark; ILO constituent organizations and other stakeholders; and relevant ILO offices.

Methodology of Evaluation

Evaluation approach was participatory in line with while the methodology entailed review of relevant documents, one-on-one and focused group as well as telephonic interviews with a wide range of respondents including but not limited covering MYDIE, MOLSS, ZCTU, EMCOZ, MOLG, MOWA, MHTE, MSMEs, VTCs, MCS, Apprentices, and TREE beneficiaries (youth), the ILO Skills Specialist (DWT-Pretoria) as well as telephonic interviews with the and the ILO Skills Department (EMP/SKILLS) and the Danish Permanent Mission both in Geneva.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The Mission found the overall performance of the Programme to have been quite good-surpassing a majority of planned targets-and in some cases by impressive margins. This is despite the loss of up to nine (9) months occasioned by the delay in approval of the programme and budget; as well as the time needed to set programme infrastructure, recruitment of project staff in the first round and the second CTA after the first one left the programme. This fairly good performance is attributed to three main factors, namely, adequate technical capacity and commitment to programme activities on the part of PMU staff; relevance of interventions and hence broad-based "buy-in" and support by stakeholders; and effective support by other ILO units especially DWT-Pretoria-which the PMU described as having been excellent. The Mission found programme resources not only to have been strategically allocated-with about 70.2% going generally going to direct support of beneficiaries, but also prudently utilized with procurement of goods and services being based on competitive bidding. The Programme Management Unit consider available financial resources as being only adequate for the implementation of programme activities in the current 32 districts in which activities have already been rolled out into and not beyond. Therefore, any further expansion should be halted unless additional funding is available. With the unprecedented roll-out, human capacity is being strained and two (2) additional staff in the form of programme officers would be required to assist the programme team to ensure effective delivery of planned outputs. While the initial time line of 5 years was considered adequate to deliver on planned outputs, the inadvertent loss of up to 9 months due to the aforementioned factors may have a bearing on the end result. It is therefore necessary for the programme management to keep close monitoring of progress with a view to determining, in good time, whether there will be need for "no-cost extension" beyond the planned end date of December 2014 or not. The Programme has also done fairly well in leveraging external resources, most prominently 39 field officers dedicated to programme activities, financial and technical support by UN-Women and SNV.

Impact Orientation & Sustainability

Programme activities have high prospects for sustainability beyond its shelf life, and also high potential for outreach and long term impact through multiplier effects as a result of the enhanced capacity of local institutions to identify local economic opportunities, develop training and deliver demand-oriented services to rural, informal economies. Having observed some impacts in terms of employment and income generation in the short time available for field visits by the Mission, it appears that the programme has attained far more impact than has been documented. It is vital that Programme management step up impact and outcome tracer activities to comprehensively and systematically document success stories and also as disseminate lessons learned as widely as possible.

Despite the inadvertent loss of implementation time of up to 9 months, the Programme has performed quite well-surpassing a majority of planned targets in some cases by impressive margin. Programme activities have high prospects for sustainability and long term impact on account of the institutionalization of its activities and management; capacity building of local institutions; post-training support in terms of facilitating finance and market access, relevance of activities, broad-based stakeholder buy-in and support, among other things.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

1. Without additional funding, the PMU should limit the roll out initiative to a maximum of 35 districts to avoid spreading resources/activities too thinly and to enhance the prospects for tangible impact per cluster;
2. Grant permission for the programme to recruit two (2) local Programme Officers (POs) to support the PMU for effective implementation of programme activities in light of the expanded geographical coverage;
3. Incorporate youth representatives in the PICs and DICs to enhance their involvement and prospects for long term ownership and sustainability of programme activities;
4. Through stewardship of the NSC, explore possible sources of extra funding for the provision of technical support to government in integrating the TREE & QIA methodologies into relevant national policies, strategies, plans and programmes as requested by MYDIE and also the feasibility of establishing a stakeholder-led "basket fund facility" at the districts level to provide an avenue for support by willing donors during and beyond the project cycle;
5. Intensify attitude and culture change activities towards financial borrowing and loan repayment among direct beneficiaries (especially the master crafts-persons) and ultimate beneficiaries (youth) with special focus on the QIA component;
6. To enhance mainstreaming of gender equality and equity, the programme to create a small budget item to: (a) support day baby care facility (crèche) for deserving young women to enhance their effective participation training at the vocational training centres under the QIA component; and (b) carry out a short and focused study on gender dynamics to determine ways and means of eliciting effective and long term " buy-in" of women's (females) participation among the male-spouses;
7. Ensure that time lag between training/apprenticeship and seed capital support in maintained less than 2 months to avoid disillusionment and fatigue among graduates;
8. Enhance tracer activities, document and disseminate success stories widely and in a systematic manner;
9. Along with the regular biannual progress (ILO TCPR), the Programme to provide a brief (1-2 pages) on project's major events and issues to the donor;
10. As a result of the inadvertent delays in project start-up of phase I and II, the PMU to *closely monitor progress in the next few months with a view to determining, in good time, whether "no-cost" extension will be needed or not.*