



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Gender equality and women's empowerment (Palestine) - Mid-Term Joint Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: *Palestine (Occupied Territories)*

Mid-Term: *January 2011*

Mode of Evaluation: *Independent Joint*

Technical Area: *GENDER*

Evaluation Management: *RO-Beirut;*
consultant: Joel Beasca

ILO Project Code: *PAL/09/50/UND*

Donor: *MDG AF US\$ 9,000,000*

UNDP: 2,043,229 UNIFEM: 2,026,484

ILO: 1,649,245 UNRWA: 1,179,354

UNFPA: 1,325,163 UNESCO: 776,525

Keywords: *Gender equality, empowerment of women, armed conflict, peace building, poverty alleviation, economic reconstruction*

Taken from the Executive Summary of the MDG Joint Evaluation Report

There were changes in the political and security context of the programme area after the finalization of the programme document. Armed conflict occurred in Gaza which resulted in the closure of the area from the West Bank. Internal fighting between Palestinian groups also led to the inactivity of the PLC and difficulty of the PNA to operate in Gaza.

Preparations for the conduct of a mid-term evaluation of the joint programme entitled

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territory) started in May 2010, until an arrangement was reached to hold the field mission in early November 2010. The evaluation sought to discover the programme's design quality, understand how it operates and assess its efficiency, and identify the programme's degree of effectiveness. Aside from the conduct of the field mission, the evaluation was designed along MDG-F and UNEG standards which involved a review of documents, preparation of an inception report, and consultations with various informants.

The programme being evaluated generally aims to promote Palestinian women's social, economic and political empowerment through the following outcomes: reducing gender-based violence and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; increasing the representation of women and women's issues in decision-making bodies; and enhancing the opportunities for women to participate in the economy.

Most of targeted institutions were able to participate in the consultations organized during the mission. However, the planned visit to Gaza did not push through because of security constraints and a video conference with the Gaza Team was held instead. There are also limitations in the financial data used in this report because the reports were unaudited

and not all the UN Agencies were able to submit updated data.

The changes in the larger context surrounding the programme are both challenging and favourable to the programme. Developments in the political and security situation have made the programme more difficult to implement in Gaza. Outcome 2 of the programme has also been placed at risk because of the inactivity of the PLC. At the same time, the PNA has remained optimistic to the achievement of the MDGs, particularly Goal 3, which is good for the programme.

The programme also had to pass through a process of re-design because considerable time had lapsed between the design phase and implementation phase. There was a need to review and re-design the programme because of changes that had already occurred within the intervening period. Nevertheless, the programme has remained highly relevant to the current situation in the OPT.

It was further found that the programme had been highly effective in terms of the quality of its work, its adherence to the joint programming standards and the development of national ownership over the programme, and on its synergistic, innovative and immediate effects. However, these successes are being pulled down primarily by problems in the achievement of results, and also by the limited outreach in Gaza.

There is a significant delay in the completion of programme activities, and this delay is putting the achievement of results at risk. The causes of the delay are: (a) a Lengthy Start-Up Period, covering both the need for a re-design and the late staffing of programme personnel; (b) the Newness of the Undertaking; (c) Extensive Procedures in place among the UN Agencies; (d) the Combined Commitment Rate System adopted for the MDG-F programmes; (e) Political and Security Constraints in the programme area; (f) Internal Agency Constraints in some UN Agencies; and (g) a Need to Harmonize Schedules in the

local setting. Nevertheless, the programme has already accomplished several key output indicators and milestones.

Because it is the first time that a joint programme is being implemented in the OPT, there have been some management inefficiencies that the evaluation has noted. There are also some issues raised in the report that are related to management accountability and administration. At the same time, there are of innovative approaches. Performance on financial efficiency has also shown mixed results: cost efficiency is high, but budget efficiency could stand serious improvement.

There is also no sustainability strategy yet which has been formally adopted for the programme, although there are indications that the programme has potential to become sustainable. There are notable features in the programme which are cited in the report. These include: (a) a conscious effort to deliver high-quality activities and outputs; (b) the collaboration with a broad spectrum of organizations from the PNA, NGOs, business groups, and the academe; (c) an openness to adapt to local demands; (d) the potential pioneering efforts in gender equality and women's empowerment in the area and in the region; and (e) a willingness to make further experiments on the joint programme concept.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation identified the following lessons from the programme experience thus far:

- There are significant participation costs incurred when the gap between the programme design phase and its actual implementation phase is too wide, especially for a joint programme in which the element of national ownership is highly valued.
- Further guidance from the MDG-F Secretariat on programme inception and revision of the Results Framework would have

been helpful to the programme implementers. Technical assistance on programme planning and RBM would have also been productive.

- Timely release of financial inputs does not necessarily lead to timely implementation of activities. UN Agency procedures and practices are among the factors that create a lag in the results chain. Hence, for a future similar programme, these procedures and practices should adapt to the assumptions underlying the results chain.
- In programme planning, it is important to distinguish the start-up activities from the core activities within the implementation phase. It is also important to allot a period for the exit of the programme.
- The management of a joint programme is more complicated than it is for a regular programme or project, because of a wider span of participation from various stakeholders. While there are costs associated with this arrangement, there are also synergies that can make up for these costs.
- The commitment rate system is a weak method for fund releases if there is a large difference between it and the actual disbursement rate. Applying this system given such a difference will result in budget inefficiency.

Recommendations

The evaluation recommended the following:

1. The programme implementers should apply for an extension period until the maximum time allowed, and the MDG-F Secretariat should consider its approval.
2. The programme implementers should review and finalize the Results Framework.
3. The MDG-F Secretariat should consider the application for programme extension.

4. The new work plan and budget should include disaggregated interventions and inputs specific to

Gaza and the West Bank, and the activities under the exit phase.

5. The activities and budget to be developed should include the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation capacities at the level of the UN Agencies and the partner-organizations, as part of the overall sustainability strategy.

6. A Monitoring Plan should be adopted for the programme.

7. The TOR for the various management structures, as well as for the special function units (i.e. Technical Lead Agency, Coordination Office, Administrative Agent, and Programme Manager) should be revisited and improved, and an organizational structure should be defined based on these TOR.

8. Based on these TOR, the programme should also develop its communication plan.

9. The risk factors affecting the programme should be reviewed, and clear measures should be taken on some elements which are doable.

10. The actual synergies being created may now start to be defined and elaborated by the programme.

11. The programme should document its experiences on joint programming because it has several interesting experiences in joint programme planning and management that can be useful in the future.