International Labour Organization

Evaluation Office

i-eval Discovery

Internal Mid-term Evaluation of the “Supporting Youth Employment in Africa by Strengthening the Capacity of the African Development Bank and RMCs” Project

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Regional

Evaluation date: 24 June 2024

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: ILO Regional Office for Africa

Technical Office: EMPINVEST, SKILLS, EMPLAB, Social Finance, DWT/CO-Dakar

Evaluation manager: David Huysman

Evaluation consultant(s): Noha Hassan

DC Symbol: RAF/21/09/BAD

Donor(s) & budget: African Development Bank / Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation Multi-Donor Trust Fund (YEI MTDF), USD 1,7 M

Key Words: Youth Employment, Decent Work, Skills development, Conditions of employment, Data collection and analysis, Banking, Sustainable Investing, Financial Sector *Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery*

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	
Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	In order to accelerate the implementation of the Jobs for Youth in Africa (JfYA) Strategy and to mainstream jobs impact within the AFDB's operations, the African Development Bank and ILO entered a technical partnership for the development of a "Jobs Marker", framed under the 'Supporting Youth Employment in Africa by Strengthening the Capacity of AfDB and RMCs' joint project. Based on the signed agreement, the partnership aimed at "Accelerate the delivery of the Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy in RMCs through a Jobs Marker and staff training". The implementation of the project is under the direct responsibility of ILO Regional Office for Africa (ROAF), in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The project is managed by a Technical Specialist based in Abidjan and benefits from technical assistance and support of ILO colleagues based in the Africa region, ILO HQ and ROAF.
Present situation of the project	The project is currently preparing the pilot phase which is supposed to start from 1st October 2024 after the official approval of the Operations Committee (OPSCOM) at the AFDB's level.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The main purpose of this internal mid-term evaluation is to provide an assessment of the progress to date, regarding project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Moreover, the evaluation will identify areas of improvement through specific actionable recommendations for the remaining period of the project life. The mid-term evaluation is covering the period January 2022 to 31 March 2024 and the evaluation will cover all the planned outputs and activities of the project within that period. It will cover all AfDB offices in Africa.
Methodology of evaluation	The mid-term evaluation applied qualitative methods, and a participatory approach following ILO's Guidance Note 4.5: Stakeholder participation. The focus on qualitative methods matches the nature of the project, project's scope and stakeholders involved in the project. Qualitative methods enabled the stakeholders to share their feedback on the project implementation, their perception of project's results, sustainability potential and recommendations to

	address caveats. The adopted evaluation's approach was participative and collaborative, in which the independent and critical analysis of the Evaluator was complemented with an active and systematic consultation with key stakeholders and partners, particularly the Project Team/ILO, AfDB team and Peer Review participants from other IFIs. Due to the nature of the project stakeholders and their diverse locations, a field mission did not take place, and therefore, data collection was exclusively carried out online. Group and personal Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 key informants (8 Males, 5 females) from the Project Team, ILO Regional office, AFDB team and Peer Review participants from other IFIs.
MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	**Relevance** Overall, JSMS project is high-level strategic project for the ILO as it offers engagement with AFDB's HQ and entail deep impact on the Bank's internal processes and functions. It is also new in the sense of positioning the ILO as a technical advisor for IFIs at strategic levels. The project design proved to be relevant to the two partners (ILO and AFDB) key strategic documents and development frameworks. The project's team showed high flexibility to stay relevant to the AFDB evolving requests and priority areas throughout the JSMS design process. On the other hand, the inclusion of more relevant senior managerial staff members from both organizations at earlier design stages would have benefited the project's design and saved resources during implementation. **Coherence** The project design is well aligned with the ILO and AFDB development frameworks such as the ILO Abidjan declaration, Programme and budget (P&B 2022-2023), P&B 2024-2025, the AU-ILO Youth Employment Strategy (YES AFRICA), the AFDB Jobs for Youth in Africa strategy (2016-2025) as well as its mid-term evaluation findings and recommendations, the AFDB 10 years strategy at the center of African's transformation strategy (2013 – 2022) and Skills for Employability and Productivity Action plan SEPA (2020-2025). **Effectiveness**

AFDB's internal feedback and consultation process directly affects the progress of the projects and its achievement of planned results. Currently the project is waiting for the AFDB's operations committee (OPsCOM) approval of the JSMS concepts document to start the piloting of the JSMS. The JSMS expansion of scope while being inclusive to AFDB's priority areas, may add complexity to the marker and affect its integration into the AFDB's processes. The JSMS pilot and capacity building plan allocated resources to support their implementation although critical are not clear at the moment. Both physical meetings and IFIs/DFIs engagement and peer review events proved to add value to the project.

Efficiency

The AFDB's expansion of the rounds of review of the ILO submissions, AFDB's involvement of many people on the reviews process and the JSMS scope expansion requests against the original job marker design caused delays and exhausted more resources from the ILO side. The project's utilization of its resources proved to be efficient as the project kept adapting to the scope expansion requested by the bank such as the revision of the bank's internal templates, adding modules and extensive rounds of comments and discussions without adding new resources. Also, the project capitalized on the ILO internal capacities of its different departments through forming the internal working group while filling the spotted knowledge gaps among the working groups members. The ILO managerial arrangement for the project was positively rated by ILO and AFDB's team allowing direct communication through hiring a full-time project manager based in Abidjan and offering needed technical expertise by forming ILO and AFDB working groups.

Impact

There is wide ambition among the key informants about the anticipated results once the JSMS is fully integrated into the AFDB's operations. One of the anticipated results by key informants is the mainstreaming of jobs and skills in the bank's systems which allow more efficient usage of the bank's resources and generation of systematic precise data on the bank's impact of jobs and skills. Also, the awareness of the bank's staff about their project's contribution to jobs and skills impacts will be enhanced and avail an opportunity for learning and adaptation.

	Sustainability The JSMS has a good potential for sustainability as it is at the heart of the AFDB's ten-year strategy (2024-2033) Seizing Africa's opportunities for a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and integrated continent and both youth and jobs are the focus of donors and borrower's agenda and priorities in Africa. If AFDB's buy-in persisted and translated into dedicated resources to hire JSMS team and raise the capacities of relevant task managers and including the JSMS as a bank's policy requirement, the task managers will have the incentive and capacity to use the JSMS. Also, testing, learning, and adapting the system is necessary to ensure that the JSMS is not adding complexity or contradicting with other systems so not to burden the bank's staff. And later, the ILO can use the AFDB's experience as a learning product to approach other IFIs/DFIs and offer tailored technical support.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES	
Recommendations	**Recommendation 1:** Engage the AFDB's senior management level personnel more regularly in the project. **Recommendation 2:** Balanced representation of AFDB's sovereign and non-sovereign functions in the JSMS piloting, integration, and monitoring activities. **Recommendation 3:** The project's timeline needs to reflect the IFI's/DFI's anticipated review and consultation process timeline. **Recommendation 4:** ILO can further strengthen the learning around the JSMS design and integration by benchmarking the JSMS design and integration processes with similar systems and tools used by other IFIs to measure their impact on employment.) **Recommendation 5:** Establish the ILO positioning as a technical advisor for IFIs and Development finance institutions at strategic levels. **Recommendation 6:** An alternative design approach for future projects could include more frequent testing with learning and adaptation plans to the system. **Recommendation 7:** There is an opportunity to expand the JSMS rolling out to the entire project operation cycle (including implementation and closure stages) and not only the design stage.

	Recommendation 8: Include the JSMS in the AFDB's as a policy requirement and dedicate resources for funding the bank's task managers capacity building and hire core JSMS team to monitor the JSMS integration. **Recommendation 9:** Early involvement of AFDB's senior management (e.g. AFDB's responsible Vice President, Directors) and relevant technical teams from both organizations can improve the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.
Main lessons learned and good practices	**Lessons learnt** There are multiple lessons learned that were identified while evaluating the project such as: (1) the necessity to maintain flexibility addressing the bank's requests and responding to the bank's evolving priorities, yet there is a need to find a balance between JSMS comprehensiveness and inclusivity of the bank's priorities and the JSMS potential complexity and resistance during integration into the bank's operations. (2) incentive and capacities of bank's task managers are essential to ensure the JSMS integration and sustainability into the bank's operations. (3) Physical workshops enabled positive working relations between ILO and AFDB's teams and contributed to easier communication and knowledge sharing. (4) IFIs engagement throughout the project phases during the assessment stage and later to review the JSMS concepts document and share feedback offered a learning opportunity for both the ILO and IFIs and initiated trust and potential future engagements. (5) the actual length of the Internal review and feedback process by the AFDB, which shall be accounted for during designing similar projects and the need for high-level buy-in to support high-level initiatives. (6) Finally, the project's management arrangement proved to be a good practice matching the nature of the project and the need for wide technical expertise.

	Good practice ILO managerial arrangement including Project manager in house and technical Working group supporting the project proved to be a good practice.