



Evaluation Summaries

Start and Improve Your Business Project 2006-2007 - Qatar

Quick Facts

Countries: Qatar

Final Evaluation: December 2007

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Development of small and medium enterprises.

Evaluation Management: ILO, Regional Office for the Arab States, Beirut.

Evaluation Team: Tim Dyce

Project Start: May 2006

Project End: December 2007

Project Code: QAT/05/01/SDQ

Donor: Q-Tel (Qatar Teleco)

Keywords: capacity building, business development service, small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

This project was designed to address the problem of a lack of small business competencies, awareness and services in a rapidly expanding economy of a country where the indigenous population is in the minority, and some with less education and skills are underemployed, without the support to run their own businesses.

The project ran from 1 May 2006 to 31 December 2007 and aimed to introduce the SIYB Programme into only the second Arab

State to do so, adapting the existing Arabic version of SIYB and tailoring it to the needs of the State of Qatar.

This was seen as the foundation service of a newly created small enterprise support unit, based in the Social Development Centre - SDC (the project's counterpart partner and part of the Qatar Foundation) committed to strengthening Qatari families.

The project was funded from within Qatar by the country's Telco: Q-Tel. The CTA was recruited from Jordan; 2 training/management staff and 1 secretarial staff were recruited locally. The project was designed and backstopped by the ILO Enterprise Specialist in the Regional Office for the Arab States; the Manager of the SDC was actively involved; an advisory committee of six stakeholders supported the project.

Present situation of project

After a slow start (caused by difficulty in finding staff) the project achieved its objectives with remarkable success within its 20 month time frame.

The objective of the project was perhaps overstated as a functioning support unit for SMEs. In fact the project's more limited objective was to adapt and introduce the ILO Start and Improve Your Business Training Programme in Qatar, which it did. The Project has produced a useful Business Plan though

there is still a need for a wider sustainability strategy.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation was to assess whether the project outcomes have been achieved as stipulated in the project document. The evaluation assessed the project at the end of the 18 months on relevance, design, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability; but not impact (because of the short time frame). A sole non-Arabic speaking evaluator with experience of several SIYB programmes conducted the evaluation from 25 November to 3 December 2007.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation took the form of study of documentation supplied by the project, and interviews with: the three project staff, two of the top management (General Manager and Projects and Investment Department Manager) of the counterpart agency (Social Development Centre), the regional ILO Specialist, six of the SIYB trainers (including one who dropped out after the SIYB course), three of the IYB trainees and three of the GYBI/SYB trainees, six of the stakeholder organizations (five of them members of the project's advisory committee), including the project donor.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project has been particularly successful in its core tasks of:

- Translating, adapting and using SIYB training materials in the Qatar situation.
- Advertising the course both to trainee-trainers and trainee-entrepreneurs.
- Recruiting and training a cadre of competent local SIYB trainers (TOT).
- Completing an initial round of SIYB training for entrepreneurs (TOE).
- Developing pricing and marketing strategies and an initial business plan.

It has gained credibility with significant government agencies and the donor agency.

The project has had some administrative and communication difficulties in:

- Recruiting the staff for the Project and therefore for the Small Enterprise Support Unit –SESU (later called TANMIA for small enterprise development). This was not surprising given the pioneering nature of the project and the small labour market from which local staff of this kind could be recruited.
- Communicating clearly to the trainee-trainers the full requirements of the training course and the full extent of post accreditation responsibilities.
- Fully involving the stakeholders on the advisory committee.

There are some possible imbalances in the way the project has evolved:

- Enterprise awareness is more than marketing SIYB to potential clients.
- There were insufficient strategies for reaching clients with lower standards of education though it built a positive image with mainstream clients.
- There was only slow progress in developing better financing for SMEs.

However these latter are still works in progress and overall the project has achieved what was feasible and to a high standard. The key individuals: the Chief Technical Advisor, SDC General Manager, ILO Enterprise Specialist and the TANMIA staff should be commended for pioneer work in an important socio-economic arena.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

- The current business plan needs expansion as part of a 2-5 year sustainability strategy: adding risk analysis, reviewing costing, assessing

competition, further refinement of target markets, further product development, and designing appropriate governance and HRD systems.

- The project's key strength is the team of SIYB trained trainers. The main management task is to maintain and grow that strength. The Social Development Centre needs to plan appropriate development of the TANMIA as a commercially driven entity and ensure sound staffing and management.

Important lessons learned

- Some of the women entrepreneurs interviewed in Qatar took up business with the permission of their husbands and relied on male members of their family (of birth or marriage) for technical know-how, business space, and finance. In the Arab context, some examination of family enterprises rather than the SIYB assumption that enterprises are only ever the work of individuals would be useful both for the appearance and the substance of the programme especially in Arab countries.
- This project had particular success in finding culturally specific ways to "brand" the SIYB methodologies, especially with regard to marginalized or disadvantaged groups in society.
- The question of finance for SMEs should be addressed as a sub-project. Some greater inventory of the need and present resources (including family financing) that are available in Qatar, and ILO social finance tools and models (e.g. setting up intermediary agencies that the bank can fund but which handle the loans administration

themselves; or developing local forms of microfinance etc.) and those of other agencies should be studied in consultation with the Qatar Bank and other stakeholders.

- An enterprise product with a title such as "Family Enterprises in the Arab States" could package much existing ILO knowledge in a way that is consistent with local cultural norms and not giving the appearance of an imposition of Western individualism. The same approach could assist in encouraging and informing unproductive male members of families to play a role within economic activity which is family or kinship based. The SDC supported by the Qatar Foundation with its mandate and record of supporting families could be a useful counterpart in developing such a product.
- Evaluations often occur at the end of a project or project phase when the project manager is already preoccupied with finalizing the project activities and outputs, organizing final meetings, handing over to local staff, and preparing his or her home leave or final departure. It is also not always easy to identify the key documents the evaluator needs. ILO should consider providing to regional evaluation focal points a checklist to help project managers prepare documentation for an evaluation, especially where translation is needed.