



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: Reducing poverty through promoting employment of youth and other vulnerable groups in the informal economy of Caucasus and Central Asia

Quick Facts

Countries: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
Final Evaluation: February and March 2006
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Technical Area: Employment Promotion
Project Start: May 2003
Project End: September 2006
Project Code: RER/03/53/UKM
Donor: The United Kingdom (2,100,000 US\$)

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project aims to reduce poverty through supporting employment and income generation activities for youth and other vulnerable groups in the informal economy of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The project established four immediate objectives:

1. *Designing and implementing national employment strategies:* national constituents will have been strengthened and capable of designing and implementing national employment strategies aimed at effective poverty reduction through boosting employment and income opportunities for vulnerable workers in the informal sector.
2. *Designing and implementing local economic development (LED) strategies:* local government, social partners and other local actors will have been strengthened and capable of designing and implementing local economic

development strategies aimed at effective poverty reduction through boosting employment and income opportunities for workers in the informal sector.

3. *Partnership and participatory approaches to design and implement poverty reduction policies:* constituents at both national and local level will have been strengthened in their ability to form partnerships and participatory approaches to design and implement poverty reduction policies through concrete pilot programmes based on innovative ILO approaches and embedded in the local economic development strategies.

4. *Knowledge-sharing of good practice, lessons learnt and findings of studies:* good practices, tools, lessons learnt and findings of studies will be shared and widely disseminated in order to contribute to a conceptually coherent programme on the informal economy across the countries and facilitating interchange between field and HQ in the preparation and implementation of ILO activities targeting the informal economy.

Present situation of project

Kazakhstan:

Many ideas exist regarding the development of an LED-agency, and preparatory work has been done for the creation of a possible LED-agency in Taldykorgan, Kazakhstan. Several background studies have been conducted, a study tour to Serbia has been organised for major stakeholders in local economic development, a working group on social

partnership has been established, and a business incubator has been initiated.

The initiative of the “working group on the development of social partnership in the sphere of professional education” has got a LED-forum/structure with involvement of the different stakeholders, but its objective is mainly related to training.

Another example of an LED-forum on local level is the creation of a business incubator, an initiative of the ILO project office in Almaty, and a vocational school in Almaty, and the signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the department of employment and social programmes, the entrepreneurs’ association, a technical college, a business consulting centre and a local NGO on youth development.

Azerbaijan:

As for the introduction of the Modular employable skills training (MES)-methodology, a workshop has been given in Baku in October 2005. The employment services chose 15 professions, selected depending on the needs in the labour market (regional employment services have information on the vacancies in the regions) and 15 teachers in professional schools and specialists without teaching experience, each representing a profession. The employment services are now setting up three modular training centres (one in Baku and two regional centres), in order to start a modular training programme in the 15 selected professions. The programmes for these trainings are already available (made by modular training centre in Moscow) and have been translated into the Azeri language.

Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation assesses the rationale, design and implementation of the project in three (out of four) countries covered by the project’s activities: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The scope of the evaluation will be mainly divided into two components:

1. Evaluation and assessment of project implementation based on its needs and

rationale in each country and design and formulation of project.

2. Impact assessment as a result of project implementation based on some indicators suggested by the mid-term impact assessment mission.

The purpose of the evaluation is also to assess the most effective strategies and innovative approaches that were being used, as well as to which extend the ILO social partners were involved in the project implementation.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Kazakhstan

Many activities have been successfully initiated at the local level with direct impact on the target group and there have been lots of activities in order to make an operational structure for local economic development (agricultural market studies, labour market research, study of business development services, study tour to Serbia for LED, social partnership workshops...). A lot of these pilot activities are separate initiatives that are not really part of an integrated plan for local economic development

Kyrgyzstan

Just after the work on the national employment policies had been finalized in March 2005, the political situation in Kyrgyzstan changed drastically. In this situation, the capacity building of the local partners has proved to be very important. Even after the political reforms, and although the national employment policies were no longer a priority for the new government, there is still a lot of capacity available amongst initial project partners. During the evaluation visit, it became clear that the technical input of ILO has been highly appreciated in the development of the national policies.

As for the activities in the “Know About Business” programme, we can say that a very important issue here is how to make sure that the introduction of these entrepreneurial skills will be implemented in schools, training institutes or other relevant partners (as federation of employers) when the project

finishes. In Kyrgyzstan, the close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the technical vocational schools has led to the introduction of the KAB-training package as a part of the standard curriculum of the vocational education in 40 vocational schools. This kind of integration is very important to make sure activities initiated under this project will still continue after this project.

Azerbaijan

The project is a good illustration of shared responsibilities of the different partners (ministry of labour for selection of region and payment of the labourers, ILO for the provision of the technical assistance, the community for the provision of the labour force), it has a direct impact on employment of the target group, it uses local materials in order to make cheaper maintenance possible, and builds skills of the local target group.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

Kazakhstan

At present, the government has paused the further development of an LED-agency because of lack of funds, while the private sector is actively taking certain initiatives. Thus it will be important to combine the efforts of the different parties to prevent a dispersion of initiatives without a structured concept of LED. The strength of LED should be the combined effort of all partners on training, labour market research, consultancy, micro-credit possibilities, regional development etc. The regional government should play a coordinating role in this activity.

Kyrgyzstan

For the n order to make the employment programmes to be accepted by the different partners, involvement of the representative organisations is necessary (this is of course not the responsibility of ILO alone).

All stakeholders are convinced of the importance of the MES system, but there are still a lot of questions to be answered such as financial implications, the need of training materials and equipment, the qualification

system, and how to comply with the standards of the Ministry of Education. More people need to be trained in the methodology and help is needed in the development of concrete modules.

Possibilities for the development of a LED-agency that focuses on more than training and education should be assessed. Cooperation with other agencies working in the field of employment creation and business development can be an added advantage. For example: GTZ is also working on “entrepreneurial training” and with a project that will shortly start in order to assist the vocational education system.

Azerbaijan

Additional teachers need to be trained, other programmes need to be adopted, equipment has to be purchased, training centres to be made operational. Follow-up is necessary here to further implement these activities.

Azerbaijan provides a good example of successful project design and implementation, but the project also had the intention to connect Tubu and Goshakand and improve their market access by linking them to the main road. Follow-up here is essential to fulfil these two objectives and to make the initiative successful initiative. It is paramount that the local community has access to the regional markets.

Important lessons learned

Concrete pilot activities are sometimes being implemented with little integration between the different activities. Better coordination is needed in the future.

A lot of the concrete participatory approaches was organised towards the end of the project. That makes it difficult to assess the concrete impact of these activities. Within the timeframe of the project there is no follow-up possible in terms of job creation, job satisfaction, self-esteem, business start ups etc.

Many activities have been initiated in the different project countries, and a follow-up is necessary since these activities are still ongoing at the end of the project. In general we can say that all the activities towards the

national employment programmes have been finished and have their results in a concrete document/policy/programme. But as for the concrete pilot activities, the work is not finished.

Coordination of activities of different international organisations in one country: many organisations are operational in one country and in many cases they are operating in the same field: partners as Ministry of Labour ask for coordination in that field but also efficient and effective use of resources (both human and financial) requires cooperation.

The follow-up of activities, even after the project is finished, is important for the mid- and long term impact measurement possible. In this project skills of teachers were improved through the “modular employable skills”-methodology or through trainings in entrepreneurial capacities. But once these teachers or experts are trained, they have to start trainings themselves. Only then can the ILO really reach its objectives: to train unemployed vulnerable groups and to give them the capacity to get employment or start up their own business. In the timeframe of the project, the follow-up of the activities of these trainers is not always possible (or not always done) but crucial to follow-up.