



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: Promotion of Decent Work through Training and Innovation (UNIVERSITAS)

Quick Facts

Countries: Inter-regional
Mid-term Evaluation: October and November 2006
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Technical Area: Decent Work
Evaluation Management: EVAL
Evaluation Team: Mr. Michel Del Buono, Mr. Marco Marchese, external evaluators
Project Start: June 2001
Project End: December 2008
Project Code: INT/01/75/ITA
Donor: Italy (5,000,000 US\$)
Keywords: Training and Innovation

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The UNIVERSITAS Programme officially started in June 2000, when the Italian government and the ILO signed a collaboration agreement that established an Italian trust fund. The conceptual origins of UNIVERSITAS, however, trace back to the mid-1990s world summits on social development and the ILO Decent Work Agenda. At the 1995 Copenhagen Social Summit, world leaders had committed themselves to poverty reduction, employment creation and social integration. Five years later, at the Geneva special session of the UN General Assembly (i.e. Copenhagen +5), leaders reaffirmed these pledges and further emphasized the importance of extending social protection and making education more

inclusive, as well as of gender equality and local empowerment. As regards local empowerment, the training of development workers and policy-makers, as well as the identification and dissemination of best practice at the local level, became priorities. The idea of a programme of activities supporting the several mandates of the ILO with respect to decent work, human development, social dialogue and inclusion was created. This led to the emergence of a development programme called “Promotion of Decent Work for Training and Innovation”, known more simply as UNIVERSITAS, the Latin name for defining the role of the universities, which is to share knowledge among others.

The programme is located in the Cooperation Development Cooperation Department (CODEV) of the ILO, a non-technical unit whose main responsibility is relations with UN agencies, donor relations and partnership development.

The aim of the Programme are capacity-building of local policy-makers and future leaders or workers dealing with social and economic development on the topics of the Decent Work Agenda by drawing, *inter alia*, on an international network of universities and training institutions able to update and complete curricula, offering training as required by the market; research and innovation in the areas of poverty reduction, social inclusion, and decent work at the local level; knowledge-sharing in human and local development through, among other things, the identification and diffusion of social

innovations; and promotion of social dialogue as a key tool to foster social and economic development at the national and local levels.

The immediate objectives/activities through which the development goals were to be achieved were initially outlined as follows: creation of a university network that will represent the point of reference for the training- and research-related activities of the programme; establishment of a scientific committee comprising representatives of the UN agencies and of the universities associated with the Programme; organization of periodic seminars under the aegis of the scientific committee; technical support to national working groups that were to be set up in the countries of intervention.

Present situation of project

Support from the different ILO sectors was essential to UNIVERSITAS to guarantee its acceptance within the institution. This process of intersectoral work received a boost through UNIVERSITAS and the impetus for such work seems to have survived the quasi-demise of the Programme in 2004-5.

A controversial feature of this Programme is that it is embedded into CODEV, a unit of the ILO whose main responsibility it is to manage relationships with donors. The placement of the Programme in CODEV ensured a certain degree of independence, enabling the programme to respond to donor priorities more easily and to develop new partnerships with networks of universities.

Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation was to cover the activities of the first phase of the programme from July 2001 through June 2006. The evaluation should provide useful information about the results and performance of the programme in respect to the objectives initially established by the parties: e.g. strengthening partnerships with the UN system aimed at promoting decent work and poverty reduction; increased expertise on social and economic development at the local level through the involvement of universities etc; the efficiency of the tools produced with the above objectives in mind;

the relevance of the Programme with respect to the ILO Decent Work Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (e.g. the 8th goal: developing a global partnership for development); the validity of design as it informs the second phase of the programme, lessons learned and the different training needs emerging during the first stage; and effects of the programme beyond the expected results and its sustainability.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation included a desk review of the relevant programme documents as well as field missions to visit partners participating in major activities of the Programme (i.e. York University, Canada; Atlanta, USA; San Salvador, El Salvador; La Havana, Cuba) and interviews at Geneva's headquarters with ILO staff who participated in the activities of the Programme. In some cases, interviews were conducted by telephone and email. The evaluators also took a brief trip to Rome to ascertain the donor's intent and expectations, as well as to review the financial history of the programme.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The efficiency of the programme is difficult to analyse, in part because the financial reporting system is not very supportive of this task, and in part because the use of the partnership approach, whereby the programme may finance only a small part of some task, makes it difficult to claim credit for the benefits. Some components, such as the Cuba programme, the International University Programme centred at York, and the GLU must be considered cases of efficient use of programme resources. By the same token, the fact that only some amounts of programme resources can be traced to highly efficient uses begs the question of how efficient the programme was overall. In the absence of accounts showing funds used by each activity, any judgment should be considered highly speculative and subjective.

The sustainability of interventions depends crucially on choice of institutions with which to partner. The parts of the programme that have managed to establish themselves

sustainably are linked to solid institutions. But in some other programme activities, the very concept of sustainability to be applied to them is tentative.

The Consultative Committee, made-up of high officials from the donor and the ILO was meant to meet infrequently, perhaps yearly. The Italy-ILO Task Force was a more technical body and was expected to meet twice yearly. It did meet formally several times, as it was supposed to give more operational guidance to the programme, being made-up of lower- ranking, more technical officials of both parties. The paucity of formal meetings is due to the fact that Italy frequently uses less formal channels to supervise many of the interventions it funds. In fact, the programme was closely and diligently monitored from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the first two years through frequent visits to the ILO.

It appears that an additional payment of € 1 million has been authorized, but not effected yet. It should be noted that, if this final payment were effected, Italy would have gone a long way towards meeting its commitment in terms of funds, disregarding the fact that it did not use the trust fund that was established in 2000. The ILO should make every effort to convey to the Italian authorities that they need to live-up to their commitment to the ILO, and finish disbursing the funds initially committed. Italy and ILO should then entertain a dialog on their joint priorities and how these should help define programme objectives and activities during the next 18-24 months.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

Normally, one recommends that a programme keep doing what went well. To some extent this will be the case here. UNIVERSITAS, through some final resource transfers, should complete several successful programmes that are reaching sustainability (e.g. the International University Programme, the UNIVERSITAS-Cuba Programme, and GLU). It should also put additional resources where these will enable participants who have performed well but are not sustainable, to gain long-term benefits (e.g. El Salvador). This

could be termed its exit strategy from these activities.

On this matter, perhaps the ILO senior management should consider whether the conditions that led to the location of the Programme in CODEV still prevail. The evaluation mission doubts they do. Other departments could be possible hosts: the Institute for Labour Studies, Integration, Skills, or the New York Office of the ILO. Furthermore, at the height of its activities in 2002-2003, the Programme benefited from the workings of the ILO task force which advised the programme manager but stopped working at the end of 2003. The evaluators suggest to re-establish this group, or to consider alternatives.

The Programme could also look for new things to do within its broad objectives, though the general recommendation of the evaluation team would be to reduce the dispersion of activities by concentrating somewhat on larger and longer-term ones. Within these new activities, Italy and the ILO need to discuss their joint priorities. Some ideas have been mentioned by the programme manager and may also have been discussed in preliminary manner with Italy. These discussions should be widened to include at least internal ILO stakeholders, and completed. Further, an agenda for the programme should be agreed on as soon as possible for the rest of the programme's planned life. An ex-post joint evaluation should be budgeted for and scheduled to coincide with the end of the Programme.

In addition to completing ongoing activities and planning for new activities, sport, which is both new and ongoing, should be considered in the future of the programme. Sport has become an important component since its introduction into the work-plan of 2002-2003. If sport is becoming ever more the vehicle of choice to reach youth by dint of the importance attached to it by governments including Italy's, the UN, and others, then perhaps ILO should also support this work. *Ceci dit*, as a mature, professional institution with an important role, the ILO can only offer its support in areas of its competence and mandate.