



# Evaluation Summaries

## Youth employment network - YEN / SIDA Project

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** Azerbaijan, Brazil, Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Georgia, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Syria, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka

**Mid-Term:** September 2008

**Mode of Evaluation:** independent

**Technical Area:** Youth Employment

**Evaluation Management:** EMP/CEPOL

**Evaluation Team:** Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT), Shropshire, UK

**Project Start:** May 2006

**Project End:** Mar 2010

**Project Code:** INT/06/06/SID

**Donor:** Sweden, US\$2,853,260

**Keywords:** Youth Employment

### Background & Context

#### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

A Mid-term Review of the Sida funded YEN Project covering the period July 06 to December 09 was undertaken by three staff members of the Centre for International Development and Training, University of Wolverhampton between June and September, 2008.

The objectives of this Review were to assess what progress the project has made so far; to identify what has worked well, the scope for

improvement, success factors and lessons learned; to clarify the focus of the remaining project duration; to assist Sida to take a decision on a possible extension of its support to YEN.

Based on a retreat of the YEN Steering Committee, the Secretariat, and core partners held in May 2008 in order to examine internal lessons learnt, a new logical framework for the remainder of the project was drafted. The log frame will represent the key guiding document for the future work of the Secretariat. This review confirmed that key stakeholders believe the comparative advantage of the YEN lies in being a fore-runner of the Paris Declaration; joining three significant multi-national agencies through a common platform. The review found that core partners confer credibility to the network in their relevant areas.

The YEN objective to engage, educate and motivate actors to work together to prioritise youth employment on the political, economic and technical agenda is found to be a relevant one, with Youth Employment as a 'hot topic' on the development agenda.

The YEN is said to recognise the value of youth engagement in tackling youth employment challenges at all levels and be committed to promoting youth participation. However without a formal and active youth representation mechanism YEN cannot claim to be 'walking the talk' of this philosophy. There is an impetus from Core partners to do more knowledge sharing. After years of

advocacy YEN is firmly ‘on the table’, entailing a greater number of best practices available to be shared.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

Regarding NAP development in Lead Countries YEN has played a catalytic role in terms of impact. “Without YEN it would have been ad hoc, it would happen but it would take a long time.” Significantly amongst a number of similar harmonisation initiatives, “YEN is the only one to survive the test of time; it is able, functioning and provides information”.

YEN needs to find creative ways of bringing together partners for joint work, in areas where there is genuine political will. The YEN Secretariat’s role is to look at specific countries and find ways for partners to work together. This coordination role was said to be “very effective at country level but weaker with core partners.”

- A weakness identified is the lack of long-term planning. This naturally reflects the insecurity of funding in place.
- Monitoring and evaluation has room for improvement. The Secretariat needs to develop clear indicators of success for its own work as well as for the assistance provided to governments or other partners.
- Lack of core funding is seen to be a major obstacle/weakness to sustainability for YEN and its Secretariat. The lack of funding from the three core partners has strong implications, making the use of external seed funding to leverage further funds even more critical.
- Donor provision of core funding is not common, and Sida’s provision of core funds to the Secretariat demonstrates that donors see real merit in the concept of YEN.
- The YEN Secretariat has been relatively successful in mobilising further resources following receipt of Sida seed funding.

There were tensions between the previous management of the Secretariat and members of the Steering Committee. These were resolved

with the appointment of a Manager through a competitive recruitment process and unanimous agreement of the selection committee. A shared positive outlook has now emerged across the partnership, with will and momentum to move forward.

Communication channels between core partners and the Secretariat could still be improved. Partners are reportedly slow in sharing information and knowledge resources with the Secretariat.

There are still some slight differences of understanding of the YEN Secretariat mandate by different core partners and external clients.

It is difficult for YEN to prove impact upon employment rates and indirect beneficiaries i.e. young people. The challenge of demonstrating evidence is being addressed by the Secretariat, for example the 3rd Lead Country meeting recognized and began work on this problem at policy and program level.

There has been a renewed commitment of core partners stemming from the Retreat event, which was considered a productive and fruitful exercise – it clarified the political commitment of the core agencies, and the new vision of need to deliver, what the partnership is about.

This review recommends the Secretariat role be continued for a further phase, however further core funding is likely to be necessary to ensure survival of the Secretariat.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

### Main recommendations and follow-up

#### 1. The Log frame needs to be refined

Core Partners and Secretariat revised the 2006 logical framework (version 1) and the review team were asked to concentrate their attentions on the newly developed logical framework (version 2.) Logical framework version 2 is more measurable, clear and workable, but could be refined further through use of the following tools:

- A thorough Risk analysis needs to be undertaken

- An M&E framework would elaborate the practical aspects of M&E indicators
- A Stakeholder needs analysis process would be useful. The Secretariat need to clarify network partners, and articulate services offered and beneficiary commitment/contribution.

A refresher log frame training course to equip the whole team with relevant skills/ supported facilitation to refine the logical framework would be beneficial.

## **2. Evidence of impact on end beneficiaries should be addressed at higher logical framework levels**

YEN is a network and hence outcomes should be measured at the level of partners and members. As the Secretariat is working indirectly for end beneficiaries (youth), impact upon this group is likely to only be measured at the higher levels of the logical framework. Whilst the Outputs are deliverables, the project objective (purpose/ outcome) should describe the change of behaviour or development conditions resulting from the uptake of the Outputs by beneficiaries.

With improved monitoring and evaluation more useful and meaningful indicators can be used to demonstrate the achievements at the higher levels of the project. The Secretariat has acknowledged the need to develop clear indicators of success for its own work as well as for the assistance provided to governments or other partners.

## **3. A revised Lead Country mechanism needs to be developed**

This should include clear selection criteria for Lead countries, process of commitment, rights and responsibilities of membership etc. Member States should be encouraged to provide additional financial resources to strengthen and expand the work of the YEN at the national, regional and international levels through this mechanism. It is understood that this topic is already under discussion within the Secretariat and being addressed under the revised logical framework.

## **4. Formal youth representation must be reinstated**

An active mechanism of youth representation/consultation should be reinstated “to represent the concerns of young people on the functioning and strategic priorities of the YEN whilst supporting youth participation in the development, implementation and review of youth employment policies at the country level”<sup>3</sup> It must be established at what level and through what medium, this should operate (SC, regional, national) and then steps must be taken to implement the mechanism.

The review team propose a blend of face to face representation to offer a constituency-led steer on YEN decision making; this should be combined with web-based new media approaches to empower youth and youth support groups to exchange information and access YEN resources.

## **5. Communication and marketing channels can be improved**

Although strides have been made to improve exchange of information amongst the YEN Secretariat and the three core agencies, these should be consolidated and deepened. The current web pages do not do YEN justice, however it is understood that the website issue is being addressed under the revised logical framework.

## **6. Issues of staffing can be examined**

YEN staff should be on secure contracts to ensure the sustainable continuation of the Secretariat’s work. Secondment should be looked at from the core agencies and Lead Countries to the YEN Secretariat. This would also be beneficial to the partnership so that there can be deeper understanding and progression when secondees return to their home agencies.

## **7. Positive relationships with Core partners must be carefully nurtured**

Communication and coordination will be key to all-important good relationships in this new phase of the project to sustain the optimism

and new enthusiasm. Core partners will need to seek to demonstrate “buy in”, by looking for ways in which they can resource/support YEN/Secretariat at all levels to fulfil the mandate. This commitment will ensure the sustainability of YEN. It is understood that YEN is considering the invitation of a new partner such as UNDP.

#### **8. Sustainability of YENWA should be addressed**

The hosting agreement for YENWA with UNOWA and UK funding are set to expire in 2009. Resource mobilisation is needed here, particularly as YEN presence ‘on the ground’ in West Africa is seen as a key success of YEN by many stakeholders. The current budget has meant that operations in West Africa have taken place on a small scale.

#### **9. Newfound optimism should be capitalised on**

This review recommends that YEN Secretariat should be extended, the recent retreat was a productive and a fruitful exercise – it clarified the political commitment of the core agencies, and the new vision of what the partnership is about. There is a genuine feeling of optimism and a good spirit in the entire network for moving ahead. One respondent stated that “the ‘glass is more half full than half empty’”. The new Manager is said to be reflecting the ‘new values’, and bringing core partners together with “new enthusiasm and new clarity”.

Respondents unilaterally noted that the new climate and signals from the key partners indicate that now would be a wrong time to call a halt to the project. Partners who six months or one year ago would not have supported continuation of the project appear now to be fully on board.

#### **10. Work of the Secretariat should be extended in a new phase**

Given the identified need for donor harmonisation facing youth employment issues, the current positive spirit of partnership and needs of YEN for coordination and facilitation, this review recommends the Secretariat role be

continued for a future phase. Stakeholders generally advocated that YEN Secretariat needs another five years mandate and funding with set goals to reach in five years. This review notes that there is a clearer sense of direction for phase 2 within the Secretariat. The use of Sida seed funding to leverage further funds has been critical; although there has been some degree of success in mobilising funds; further core funding is likely to be necessary to ensure survival of the Secretariat.