



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation
Office

Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Western and Southern Africa (Zimbabwe Component)

Quick Facts

Countries: Zimbabwe

Final Evaluation: October 10 to October 24, 2015

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Administrative Office: ILO Country Office-Harare

Technical Area: Skills and Employability

Evaluation Manager: Dennis Zulu, ILO Abuja

Evaluation Team: Thomas Ranz, George Zimbizi

Project End: December 31, 2015

Project Code: ZIM/10/01/DAN

Donor & Project Budget: Government of Denmark, DKK 85 million (approx. US\$ 16.4 million) for Benin, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe (approx. US\$ 6.881 million for Zimbabwe)

Background & Context

Summary of the project, logic and structure

The “*Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Western and Southern Africa Program*” was launched towards the end of 2009 in response to the final report of the Danish Commission for Africa initiative, aiming at promoting private sector-led growth and employment. This report focuses on the Zimbabwe component of the program. The overall objective of the program is “to strengthen skills development systems that improve employability, promote access to employment opportunities and increase incomes for inclusive and sustainable growth”. This overall objective is pursued through four main immediate objectives.

Immediate Objective 1: Increased capacity of rural community groups to identify local economic opportunities, develop appropriate training programs to access jobs and provide post-training support to community and private small-scale enterprises.

Immediate Objective 2: Enabled public and private training institutions to better deliver demand-oriented services to rural, informal economies.

Immediate Objective 3: Strengthened systems of informal apprenticeship through upgrading the skills of Master Craftspersons and apprentices while facilitating access to new technologies.

Immediate Objective 4: Enhanced capacity of stakeholders and institutions at the national level to apply tools, methodologies and strategies developed under the program for broader outreach.

Present situation of the project

The Program, which was originally a five year initiative, consisting of phase I (2010-2011) and phase II (2012-2014), is funded by the Government of Denmark. The total budget for the Zimbabwe component is US\$ 6.881 million. Program implementation was scheduled to start in January 2010, but work was starting in October 2010 respectively.

Depending on the area of intervention, the program focused on two main strategy components, the TREE method in predominantly rural areas, and the QIA approach in more urban settings:

The ILO’s Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) methodology is applied in a number of rural communities to support local economic development. The component is a community-based technical and vocational skills development program focusing on agriculture and rural development—primarily based on value chain development, skills upgrading and group enterprise community projects for the “out-of-school” youth.

The upgrading and delivery of training through Quality Informal Apprenticeship (QIA) is predominantly applied in the informal economy of urban settings. This strategy builds on the widely practiced traditional apprenticeship system in developing countries, including Zimbabwe, whereby out-of-school youth attach themselves to skilled Master Craftspersons in order to learn a trade via “on-the-

job” practical training and workshop experience in order to obtain technical training to enhance their employability and improve their livelihood.

The following activities were the main parts of the two program components TREE and QIA:

Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE): Apiculture, Aquaculture, Cattle Fattening, Dairy, Horticulture, Cattle fattening, Dairy Production, Pig-gery, Poultry, and Solar Marketing/Green jobs.

Quality Informal Apprenticeship (QIA): Art and Crafts, Catering, Carpentry and Joinery, Clothing, Hair dressing, Home Décor, Motor Vehicle Mechan-ics, Upholstery, Plumbing and Welding.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The overall objective of the final evaluation was:

- to gather an assessment of the project’s performance regarding the foreseen objectives, targets and indicators of achievement, and
- to provide strategic and operational recommen-dations, as well as to highlight lessons learned and approaches to sustain achievements of the project results.

In particular, the evaluation aimed to evaluate the following aspects:

- Achievements of defined objectives and results (objectives and outcomes) within the implemen-tation period;
- Analysis of internal and external factors that in-fluenced implementation of the program;
- Efficiency and effectiveness of management of operations, including staff management;
- Extent of government buy-in, support and par-ticipation in the initiative;
- Strategic fit of the initiative within the context of the Decent Work Country Program;
- Relevance of the initiative within national devel-opment priorities and frameworks;
- Synergies with other relevant programs and ac-tivities;
- Knowledge management and sharing;
- Results-based measurement and impact assess-ment systems.

Methodology of evaluation

After concentrating on interviews with ILO key staff and project stakeholders in Harare during the first days of the field mission, a total of five days was exclusively used for visiting different types of project activities on district level. The main challenge for the evaluation team was to carry out enough sampling to satisfactorily triangulate findings of sufficient primary sources (interviews and focus groups). At the request of the evaluators, the visits on district level were intensified.

The evaluation methodology comprised the follow-ing research instruments:

- Review of relevant key;
- Interviews with key national and international ILO staff in Harare and via Skype in Pretoria and Geneva;
- Interviews with member representatives of steering committees on national (NSC) and dis-trict levels (DIC);
- Focus group discussions with beneficiaries of TREE and QIA projects in the field,
- Discussions with further involved resource per-sons (e.g. considering micro-finance).

Main Findings & Conclusions

Although the formulated indicators of the program’s logical framework matrix (logframe) can be called SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound), they are nevertheless merely pro-cess indicators that do not allow any conclusions considering the quality of executed activities, or even the changes resulting hereof.

Without any doubt all pre-defined program achievements in terms of trained youth, craftsper-sons etc. have been far more than only fulfilled:

- While 6,400 beneficiaries were targeted, the tar-get was surpassed by 40%, implying that the skills program reached out to more youths and Master Craftspersons than had been originally planned.
- The program targeted 3,780 young people to have been gainfully employed by the end of the program. This target was surpassed and reached 279%.
- A total of 3,400 youths were earmarked for training by the end of the project, and a total of 5,457 had been trained by June 2015, represent-ing a 161% target achievement.
- A total of 5,457 men and women participated in the TREE skills training program against a pro-gram target of 3,650, which represents a 150% target achievement.
- 1,450 youths were earmarked to have informal apprenticeship contracts and this target was again surpassed by 84%.

Overall, the program has managed to make 10,292 beneficiaries wage-employed or gainfully self-employed.

Looking on the more qualitative aspects, some strengths, but weaknesses as well can be observed:

- As a fully Government-owned program - in con-trast to the sister program in West-Africa - the

level of identification and ownership in Zimbabwe was very high.

- VTC trainers (being civil servants) could also be used for informal youth training in the context of QIA activities.
- Starter kits with technical equipment to groups of generally five successful QIA graduates have been provided in order to facilitate self-employed group activities for young professionals. However, discussions with QIA graduates of different professions always showed that no joint working came up.
- Micro-finance is an essential element for employment and income generating programs. However, within the skills program, the micro-finance component was noted to be very weak as it was not clearly separated from training components and it was not properly synchronized with the training activities and thus did not work due to various reasons:
 - The program provided the capital stock for revolving funds of two micro-credit institutions (350,000 and 100,000 US\$). Without a clear distinction loans have been considered as grants (project money from the donor), although preceding information was clear and unambiguous. Nevertheless, especially Master Craftpersons (MCs) expected grants for offering training to the QIA trainees and for “loss of material and training time”.
 - The applied micro-finance model was group-based and used joint liability instead of individual collaterals. In contrast, the MCs had so far always been working as individuals only, but never in groups. Therefore, the inappropriate method significantly complicated the disbursement and repayment process due to lack of group cohesion.
 - At least one of the micro-finance institutions (Women Development Savings and Credit Union, WDSCU) misused provided funds. The second micro-finance provider Micro King withdrew from further collaboration and paid back the capital.

Conclusions

General aspects on national level:

1. The project was very relevant in the context of high unemployment rates amongst the youth in the country and had the full support of government, labour organisations, employers, development partners, civil society, local leaders and the youth themselves.
2. The project is government-owned and driven. It used national structures, such as the NSC, TWG, PIC, DIC and WIC. This is the key for its long-

term sustainability.

3. The project created linkages between the informal sector and the formal sector by training youth through both, formal and informal, institutions, and giving them qualifications and certificates that could facilitate their entry into the formal sector (e.g. grade four certificates).
4. Focus on rural areas (TREE methodology) is very commendable as it aims at creating employment in remote parts of the country, using locally available resources, curbing rural-urban migration and empowering the youth within their respective communities.
5. Micro-credit is a key component in income-generating programs. However, in this project this element was noted to be very weak, as it was not properly synchronized with the training activities and did not work due to various reasons:
 - 6. The program accessed available technical expertise from various government departments and VTCs. However, it was noted that some of the expertise available was not sufficiently adequate and/or technically sound for some of the program components (e.g. bee-keeping value chain).
 - 7. Monitoring was to a very large extent provided by government structures (these monitoring structures will continue after the end of the project). However, the monitoring mainly focused on quantitative information and laid a limited focus on quality, sustainability and impact.
 - 8. Considering monitoring, the Mid Term Evaluation recommended the establishment of an M&E post. This was temporarily done, but the person only was in position for one year, leading to late capture of certain indicators of progress and delays in taking remedial action where the program progress was not going according to plan.
 - 9. Expenditures on administrative level and transaction costs of the project vis-à-vis project implementation costs appear to be high.

Aspects on district level:

10. In general, district stakeholders delivered on their promises and supported the project through providing land, technical expertise and working shelters for the project youth.
11. Districts made strong efforts to utilize their available technical expertise (e.g. VTCs, line ministries). Their technical experts provided services to the project and in most cases worked extra hours without being paid more.
12. Monitoring of the project by the DICs significantly varied by district, depending on the motivational and commitment levels of particular DICs.

13. Technical planning of the projects was done at district level. In some cases however, the planning did not fully take into account all the stages of the value chain (e.g. production, transformation, and marketing).
14. The Common Facility Centres were found to be an innovative way for ensuring that beneficiaries access high-value equipment at concessionary costs to improve the quality of their products.

Implementation / beneficiary level / TREE and QIA:

15. The selection of income-generating activities in the TREE program was based on an assessment of locally available resources, local expertise and existing market opportunities, thereby making interventions suited for the local context.
16. After taking into account that some youth had limited access to land, the project innovatively engaged youth without access to land in processing, value addition and marketing of agricultural products, thereby creating linkages between the producers and marketers.
17. The level of commitment by the beneficiaries of the project was found to be generally high. For example most QIA trainees managed to complete their training and received formal certificates.
18. Master Craftspersons (MC) expected grants for offering training to the QIA trainees for “loss of material and training time”. And, the applied micro-finance model was group-based. In contrast, the MCs had, so far, always been working as individuals. Thus, the inappropriate method significantly complicated the disbursement and repayment process due to lack of group cohesion.
19. In principle, the distribution of the start-up kits to groups was a good idea, but lack of cohesion amongst the groups and migration often left the tool kits in the hands of a few members only.
20. Insights from Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) with beneficiaries showed that the training had very different outcomes for different individuals, depending on particular business capacity and commitments.
21. FDGs revealed that project beneficiaries had not gone through gender training and had limited awareness to gender equality issues and related rights. Gender-related conflicts are likely to result from success of the project, as women get economically empowered. Some women pulled out of the attachment with Master Craftspersons due to an unfriendly patriarchal environment.

Recommendations

1. Given the successes of the project, the justification for scaling-up is clear. However, scaling-up should only be considered in the context of sufficient human and financial resources.
2. To ensure that there is a common understanding of the project model and design across all levels, a clear communication strategy is needed, where all stakeholders at all levels receive accurate information about the project. Where changes in program design occur, such changes must be communicated to the stakeholders as soon as possible and justifications provided for such changes.
3. Planning for different interventions of a future project should be holistic, and take into consideration all components of the value chain. Where technical expertise is lacking amongst government departments, such expertise should be sourced at an early stage from outside, instead of proceeding with deficient know-how. New projects could leverage expertise from other agencies too, such as from FAO.
4. As the program is coming to an end, there is need to consolidate at least some outstanding issues, which are critical before closure (e.g. gardening project without drilled borehole in Gokwe).
5. If the program is scaled-up, there is need to integrate the micro-finance component in a structured, professional and sustainable manner to ensure financial support for the program beneficiaries following the provided trainings.
6. There is an essential need to establish an independent working unit with a strong mandate for periodic impact monitoring, in order to take corrective measures for consolidation and/or rebalancing of upcoming challenges and deviations from the plan.
7. Targeting for new projects should be informed by lessons learned and research studies, done on viability of income generating projects (e.g. Economic Sub-sector analysis, ILO, September 2015).
8. Gender mainstreaming in the program needs to be strengthened to ensure that the program will not have unintended results such as (i) Gender Based Violence emanating from the empowerment of women, (ii) women being asked to pull out of project activities by their husbands, or (iii) because they have no one to take care of their babies, and (iv) women turning up late for training because they carry the burden of household chores.