Evaluation Summaries

Increasing Employability of Young Women and Men in CIS through Establishment of Sub-regional Training Network project (2009-2010)

Quick Facts

Countries: Subregion of Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Final Evaluation: March 2010

Mode of Evaluation: independent

Technical Area: Employment

Evaluation Management: SRO/Moscow

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Project Start: January 2009

Project End: March 2010

Project Code: A28005402601

Donor: RBSA funds

Keywords: Employment; Skills training; Gender equality

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project is aimed at promoting employability and gender equality in the countries of the sub-region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Taking into account the Decent Work priorities in the employment field of the target countries, the project aimed to achieve a set of diversified tasks on enhancing access to entrepreneurial and skills training opportunities with a strong focus on young people and by applying gender mainstreaming approach. Considering natural limitations of available resources within the project and nature of tasks, the project used a strategy of consolidating on past successes of ILO in bringing employability instruments closer to the final beneficiaries, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in making a qualitative step forward in ILO outreach and type of capacity building and training support offered, taking into account demands of the new digital era.

The main idea of the project was to create a new type of tools for training and knowledge sharing for the target groups – ILO certified trainers and methodologists, companies and organizations specialized in employment and business development activities, women entrepreneurship development, ILO tripartite constituents.

According to the idea, two virtual resources were created. One is Virtual Platform which enables authorized users from different countries of the sub-region to get ILO materials and programs, publish and discuss their own materials, communicate to each other. To present the Platform and discuss its perspectives the face-to-face workshop was carried out in Turin, on 11-15 of May, 2009. About 35 people took part in the workshop. The web-site of the Platform is http://subregional-mosca.itcilo.org. All the information is provided in Russian as a common language of communication; part of the materials is also available in English.

Another virtual resource is E-learning Campus which enables ILO certified trainers after finishing "How to be a tutor" course, to have

an opportunity to create their own courses for distance learning or use a blended approach. The web-site of the Platform is http://skillsCampus.itcilo.org/en.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to ensure accountability and support evidence-based decision making in order to better target the next steps.

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the immediate outcomes of the project and its effectiveness, identify problems encountered during implementation and means undertaken by the project to overcome these problems, describe the lessons learned and develop recommendations for follow up and similar interventions in the future.

The evaluation serves the following internal and external clients:

- ILO tripartite constituents and project implementing partners in countries of the sub-region;
- Ultimate beneficiaries, including current and prospective users of the Virtual Resource platform and E-campus, members of the training network;
- The Donor;
- ILO management and technical specialists at the ILO SRO/Moscow and the Headquarters;
- Project staff.

Methodology of evaluation

To achieve the goals, the methodology of research included the review of all relevant project documents, planning briefing with the ILO representatives and project team in Moscow, individual and group interviews with all the multipliers, some tutors, partners who were involved in the project (by Skype and a personal meetings during a field mission to Armenia) and observation of Start Your Business (SYB) TOT event conducted by the team of tutors who just finished the course "How to be a tutor" (Module D4), Yerevan, 24th of February 2010.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The most important findings of the evaluation are as follows:

- The ILO program tutors consider the offered distance training approach as effective and of great potential to enhance capacity to develop and implement training policies and programs in the country. It is proved by positive feedback of tutors concerning the first results of distance and modular training implementation, clients' desire to use offered methods, as well as high rates of Internet development in the target countries. But today we can only talk about potential of these instruments to make a considerable contribution to education system development in the target region.

- The virtual resources allow the constituents to increase their capacity to develop and implement training policies and programs with the opportunity to broaden geographical and quantitative outreach, to boost international exchange of experiences and modular programs, finally to raise quality of short- and long-term distance training programs that already exist.

- Despite the advantages of the systems (E-campus & Platform), their use will ultimately depend on the "clients" – government ministries, employers and trade unions, and how well they understand the effectiveness of such distance learning programs and also the criteria of their effectiveness. The majority of experts say that it will be the relevant ministries, employers and trade unions who will ultimately determine the scale of these systems development and implementation.

- One of the important outcomes is the fact that tutors, who completed "How to be a tutor" course, tend to implement the Platform and Campus instruments in several different ways. For example, teachers of institutes of vocational and higher education stress that they started to use elements of distance and modular education in their own training courses. It

means that the spectrum of applied tools and instruments depends on resources and potential of the existing educational system – from using it as a Platform for exchanging files or as some sort of library for creation of own training courses based on the ILO Platform and Campus.

- All the interviewed participants stress on the high quality of education. They successfully used the received knowledge to solve technical problems. But many note that the outcome could be bigger if there was an opportunity to keep communicating with the developers of the Platform even after the end of the project. Besides, some tutors couldn't cope with the instruments of the Platform.

- The main problems that affected failing to finish the training course were:
  - Impossibility to get constant access to the Internet
  - Difficulties in understanding the principles of Campus work and the technical ways to fulfill the task (while many showed lack of desire to ask for help on the forum Platform because they were afraid to be considered "stupid" or not to get an answer for their request)
  - Absence of feedback from multiplier and difficulties in receiving an answer on the website
  - Technical problems (the site didn't load well, users failed to register themselves, etc.)

- The tutors who managed to finish their education say that they have developed their computer skills, it has become many times easier for them to surf the Internet, and that they have started to use the Campus and Platform in order to achieve the following goals:
  - To offer new educational instrument (some tutors have already formed groups for distance training with up to 50 participants)
  - To introduce topics on distance education in their trainings

  - To find a new communication tool in their relations with the participants (some kind of social net)
  - To use this resource as a library, file-sharing system, etc.

- It is important to say that the Platform's audience outreach could have been bigger if special place was allocated for sections and information oriented at other partners and constituents – for example, employers, trade unions. It could be a description of advantages of modular programs; a list of tutors who work in the country according to the ILO training programs; a sub-section for communication among the constituents and experience exchange; training programs that could be helpful for constituents' organizations, and other information.

- According to research findings, the selection of partners for the implementation of the project was effective. In particular way it concerned the multipliers, partners for the Gender component of the project, as well as partners for web-site construction. Tutors' team selection was less effective, because many of the tutors proved to be unprepared to go through this educational program.

- One of the main factors that affect the sustainability of the project outcomes is that the resource Platform and E-learning Campus became the essential education tools for many tutors who improve their capacity in delivering of training programs for young men and women. Even if the ILO would not support further development of these virtual resources, they have a potential to be self-sustaining systems by the users' activity. Some of the sustainable project results that have been already achieved are in using the Platform and E-learning Campus as a library, file-sharing system, the system for opinion sharing and as a tool for own distance course creation.

- The main outcome of the Gender component of the project was in providing access to reliable and accurate data that depicts the situation in the country. For

example, in Armenia it was the first time when some kind of gender research was conducted. Before this problem had been never discussed at the state level. One of the participants of the round-table conference who represented a government agency pointed out that it was "an unprecedented measure" in the fight against gender inequality in the Republic. With all the necessary information available, the program participants have received an opportunity to get into contact with governmental structures and NGOs, as well as with the public, serving as a distributor of media messages about the problem.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

1. **Maintain the network and update materials**

The main recommendation is that the project should keep on working because it is important for the development of employment-generating knowledge and skills in the target countries. At the current stage it is necessary to do best in order to solidify the results and expand project activities. It is important to maintain connections with all the tutors who have already completed education and with the potential participants who are interested in using the virtual resources. Specifically, it is recommended:

To provide additional technical support:
- To offer timely feedback to Website users, to answer all their questions.
- To provide technical stability of website functioning: to post detailed instructions, to make a section of frequent questions, to develop virtual instruments for increase of their usability. The list of some recommendations concerning the Platform web-site is attached in Annex 2, and for the E-learning Campus - in Annex 3.

To provide informational support:
- To offer more information to the tutors about the broad spectrum of possibilities in using the virtual resources, to stimulate discussions on this topic and exchange of experiences. It would be very useful to provide information, studies about successful experiences of Western countries in realization of distance and modular training programs.
- To post and update information, to work out new programs, to initiate and support work of forums and blogs.
- To define and post information on the website about the conditions of getting access to the Platform and Campus materials – in particular who can get it and what sort of materials, so that participants could know that.
- To stimulate participants to share recommendations and wishes concerning the Platform and E-learning Campus.

To provide additional content:
- To pay special attention to the system of distance training quality evaluation. It is also desirable to make a special sub-section where materials on this topic would be placed.
- To translate or post programs that have already been translated into the languages of the countries where tutors work. It is necessary to note that in some countries, for example in Azerbaijan, information of that kind is already prepared.

To conduct face-to-face seminars:
- To establish continuity and sustain the future of the virtual resource platform regular meetings of active participants should be organized. The Turin Centre could provide

neutral resourceful grounds for the next meeting to be organized in a timely and constructive manner in the first half of 2010.

2. Adapt the contents to the needs of the constituents

The second important recommendation is to adapt the virtual resources to the needs of the clients of distance training programs – trade unions, employers, governmental representatives, employment services, etc. After the adaptation, it is important to organize a special campaign or program for the Platform and E-learning Campus promotion for the constituents.

3. Promote visibility and expand outreach

The third important recommendation is to make the two virtual resources more popular and visited. For this purpose it is necessary:

- To increase usability of the website for it to be used not only by ILO tutors but also by new users. It can be provided by posting information about current projects that are realized in the countries and conditions for participation in them.
- To replace the domain names of the virtual resources by more simple ones or to use ilo.org/ in all the materials.
- To integrate the metric systems to aggregate statistical data about the number of visitors, popularity of pages, duration of visits and other information.
- To use virtual resources to conduct other projects and programs in the countries of the sub-region – as a feedback, source of information, etc.
- To develop advertising and social promo campaigns of distance training programs. Such campaigns can be conducted in the following ways: correspondent ad materials and plans are placed on the Virtual Platform and every participant can

take and use them and raise effectiveness of the process by providing information about his or her own program. The easiest way is to post Internet-banners of different size and a standard text of advertisements for print and outdoor media with additional contact information.

Important lessons learned

The main positive lessons

The main positive lesson of the project is that both virtual resources (the Platform and Campus) prove to be in high demand among their users (trainers, tutors and facilitators). The virtual platforms are extremely important and useful for the trainers, who are using the ILO programs in their work, and for the partners from the ministries and agencies, who are interested in the promotion of modular training in their countries. In spite of the fact, that not all of the trainers could acquire the skills to become tutors, those who managed to master the program demonstrate keen interest and motivation to use these virtual resources in the future. These distance learning instruments can become an easily-accessible and effective system of education, recommended for implementation at the level of country development programs.

The main negative lessons

The Resource Platform and E-learning Campus couldn't be managed by the users only. They need to be managed regularly, by the person or persons who are responsible for renewing the content, fixing bugs, solving problems and providing prompt feedback. According to the project experience, it's necessary to provide users with complex technical support and efficient feedback for an effective education. Another lesson is that using of the Web-resources (Platform and Campus) requires an appropriate level of computer skills and availability of Internet

access. In accordance with these criteria, not totally all ILO trainers may become tutors, so more rigorous selection might be required.