



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) Regional Africa (Phase III) Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa

Final Evaluation

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: GENDER, Women's Enterprise Development

Evaluation Management: Pretoria Office

Evaluation Team: Mei Zegers

Project Start: 1 January 2009

Project End: 31 October 2012

Project Code: RAF/08/057/NAD and GLO/08/12/NAD

Donor: Norad US\$2,906,000

Keywords: Women's Enterprise Development

Background & Context

Supporting women's entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised as an important strategy to address poverty.¹ The project "Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality-Southern Africa" (WEDGE) was launched as part of the effort to bolster this strategy using a two pronged approach. Women entrepreneurs face disproportionately higher barriers as a result of legal and policy frameworks that impede the achievement of an optimal level of their enterprise performance.² Women also face

challenges to access training; particularly training that is appropriate to their specific needs. The WEDGE project was thus conceived to address such issues on the policy and regulatory environment and also to improve access to high quality appropriate training through sustainable mechanisms.

The WEDGE project was launched on 1.2.2010 with a projected end date on 31.10.2012. The project is currently in the second half of a ten month no-cost extension period that was approved in April 2012.

The project has three principal objectives:

- 1) An improved enabling environment for women entrepreneurship.
- 2) Improved capacity of business development service providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs.
- 3) Women entrepreneurs' income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness are improved.

The WEDGE project has three central indicators of achievement:

- 1) At least 1,200 jobs created across the four Project countries.
- 2) Businesses reached through WEDGE-SA adhere to minimum wage requirements.
- 3) A more conducive environment for women entrepreneurs recognized amongst stakeholders in the Project countries.

¹ World Bank (2011) (See Annex 7 for full details on references)

² World Bank (2011)

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The independent final evaluation serves two main purposes, i.e., to provide:

- An independent assessment of the progress of the project in achieving its stated objectives across the project countries; assess the strategies and implementation modalities chosen; partnership arrangements, constraints and opportunities.
- Recommendations for similar future projects.

The evaluator attended to the guidelines provided by and consistent with ILO evaluation principles and applied a high standard of evaluation principles including adhering to confidentiality and other ethical considerations throughout. Gender and cultural sensitivity were integrated in the evaluation approach.

Methodology of evaluation

To ensure a thorough evaluation the evaluator used a combination of methods so that a well-rounded evaluation could be carried out:

- Document review
- Interviews in person or via Skype with relevant ILO and other international officials.
- Individual interviews and/or focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders.
- Field visits where possible and individual interviews.
- Stakeholder meetings

A detailed review of all inputs was conducted

Main Findings & Conclusions

Based on the overall purpose and specific objectives of the evaluation five principal Evaluation Questions were formulated and responses are included in the Executive Summary.

Relevance – Design

The project strategy, objectives and assumptions is generally appropriate for achieving the planned result and corresponds well to the national and international development frameworks. The design focused on developing support for women entrepreneurs to create decent employment, and achieve women's economic empowerment and gender equality as a means to reduce poverty. The

overriding aim of the project design is to build the capacity of local partners in such a way that the ILO's approaches and tools in women's entrepreneurship are embedded and continuous in government and other systems.

Effectiveness, Implementation

The evaluation concludes that the project will substantially achieve its ultimate outcomes on improving the enabling environment for women entrepreneurship, capacity of business service providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs, and framework for comprehensive use of ILO tools for women entrepreneurship development. The project no-cost extension is expected to be useful to consolidate achievements and work towards multiplier effects and sustainability.

The extent and quality of actions with women entrepreneurs was good. The evaluation participant's level of enthusiasm for the direct actions on Month of the Women Entrepreneur (MOWE) and training courses were noteworthy. The project means of measuring impact on entrepreneurs may underestimate the actual impact of the project on individual entrepreneur's income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness.

Within this context it should be mentioned that not only entrepreneur trainees, but also business development service providers, civil servants, association members, workers and employers representatives benefitted. Their capacities were strengthened and, as almost all such evaluation participants reported having a business activity as principal or side source of income, they also benefitted from applying what was learned through the project to their business.

Project fit with NORAD Private Sector Development Strategies

The project fit very well with the NORAD private sector strategies as it helped to alleviate the structural, socio-cultural and personal impediments towards women's business growth. The NORAD strategies document recognises the role of the private sector in development and states, "The main objective is to promote economic growth and profitable production in developing countries."

The strategy document pays particular attention to women's role as entrepreneurs, their potential

contributions to poverty reduction and the impediments that they face. The WEDGE project has addressed the key strategies on enterprise development cited in the NORAD strategy document including provision of technical support to address issues such as private sector policy development and enterprise development training.

Efficiency

The project has generally been very cost-effective and cost efficient including through the ability to leverage substantial additional funds. In all four countries stakeholders noted that the project resources were very limited as compared to the expected outputs and outcomes.

The most pronounced cost-effective results were at the level of the BDS and associations and other civil society groups. The project system of certifying trainers and strengthening institutional capacities to implement WED actions is recognised as useful for the multiplication of the trainings and effective MOWE actions.

Ownership and sustainability

The likelihood of sustainability of project actions is one of the project successes. The project has developed several systems to help ensure sustainability of the project actions and is increasing focus on improving these systems before the end of the project. These include a demanding but appropriate trainer accreditation system that is well appreciated by stakeholders. Most project components appear likely to be sustained after the project to at least some degree.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

- 1) Future projects could include strategies to identify and support more GOWE in rural areas. The benefits of increasing investment and employment opportunities in rural areas through GOWE would likely outweigh the costs.
- 2) There is a need more strongly brand the WED tools using good quality promotional materials. The materials can be more grounded with the WED ILO logo and linked to the accredited trainers with the logo of their agencies.
- 3) Develop role of men in WED more concretely in future projects. Action plans and training materials can focus more on how men can help women entrepreneurs address their specific gender related challenges. Also, adapt AMG to address more specific men's issues as well as how men, can play an important role in gender responsible management.
- 4) Future WED related projects need to develop more appropriate methodologies for KAP assessments. Trainers and entrepreneur trainees can be assessed before and after attending their own training on knowledge and attitudes.
- 5) All of the stakeholders need to be more aware from project inception of the M&E process and its importance to inform current and future similar projects.
- 6) Implement additional projects in the region with an increased focus on sector-specific business development support. Increased sector-specific approaches can provide very interesting opportunities for continuing WEDGE activities effectively in the region. Specific areas of interest include support for training of GOWEs in green economy enterprises and further strengthening of the tourism industry.
- 7) Future projects need to include additional capacity building and support to promote effectiveness and likelihood of sustainability through:
 - i) Adaptation of tools to difference levels of entrepreneurs and in accordance with specific needs (informal economy, different education levels, and people with disabilities) and or training of trainers on how to adapt materials during workshops.
 - ii) Training and guidelines on consulting skills using information from WED tools among BDS providers.
 - iii) Greater involvement of Employer's Organisations including for participation in FAMOS checks and

advocating on national WED assessments.³

- iv) Finding solutions to mediate competition issues between private and public sector trainers.
- v) Finding solutions for objective monitoring of accreditation beyond project end, i.e., in addition to voluntary reporting systems on designated WED e-space.
- vi) Developing systems for training additional trainers and cadre in the project countries.
- vii) Ensuring that accreditation systems for future cadre are acceptable⁴ and as high a quality as compared to cadre trained through the WEDGE-SA project.

- 8) In case of future projects with a global component, ensure that roles and responsibilities of the global technical specialists are integrated into project logical framework and indicators are included.

Recommendation for current WEDGE SA project: Identify continuing champions from all stakeholder groups as the project draws near closing.

Important lessons learned

The project learned a great many lessons on all levels but some key lessons learned do deserve special mention:

1. Sufficient support is needed for BDS and other partners through guidelines and/or other support to conduct publicity for tool roll out.
2. There is a need to take the level of initial awareness and basic education of the entrepreneur participant taken into account when planning training.

³ The project did try to involve employers extensively but take up was low.

⁴ Existing cadres request equal rigour for accreditation of future cadres.

3. The choice of structure for housing WED has a major influence on project success, greater than might be expected. It is not always possible to predict the ideal structure or to easily solve any eventual challenges. Internal conflict and competition between individuals and agencies/departments can severely affect implementation. A great deal of advocacy, follow up and diplomacy can be needed to mediate situations.
4. Knowledge, attitudes and practices assessments need to be designed in such a way that they use a combination of different approaches for baseline and end-line. Methodologies need to be fine-tuned to measure change accurately under each of the categories.