



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Labour-based public works project in Liberia – Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Country: Liberia

End-Term Evaluation: 10th March-31st March 2014

Mode of Evaluation: Independent/External

ILO Office: ILO Country Office – Abuja (Nigeria)

ILO Technical Backstopping Office: EIIP (ROAF)

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Project End Date: 31st December 2014

Project Code: M.250.09.131.136

TC Symbol: LIR/09/01/LIR

Donor & Project Budget: AfDB (US\$ 4,732,702)

Keywords: labour intensive employment, economic and social development

Background & Context

The **goal of the overall project** is “to contribute to the improvement of productive livelihoods and service delivery”. The **specific objective of the overall project** is “to rehabilitate socio-economic infrastructure and improve local capacities” for their long term private sector-based maintenance.

The **intervention logic and strategy** entailed promotion of community-labour-based infrastructural development and maintenance through capacity development by way of training, provision of requisite light construction equipment on a “hire-purchase” basis to small-scale local contractors, and knowledge transfer with a view to enhancing mobility, business growth, income and employment generation and food security. Anticipated impact of these interventions included increased incomes; poverty

reduction; improved health, security, social cohesion, peace and stability.

Towards achieving the project objective, the overall initiative, including the ILO component on capacity building, has three (3) components: (i) *Component 1: Rehabilitation of Socio-Economic Infrastructure* – which is further divided into two sub components, namely: (a) Rehabilitation of the Fishtown-Harper Road; and (b) Rehabilitation of social infrastructure comprising ten (10) schools and health facilities within the counties of River Gee and Maryland-with the Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE) being the lead the implementation agency of this component; (ii) *Component 2: Capacity Development for Infrastructure Maintenance* with ILO (working in collaboration with MPW, small scale local private contractors and community-based road rehabilitation and maintenance groups) being the lead implementation agency; and (iii) *Component 3: Project Management* – which is primarily handled by MPW through its Labour-Based Public Works Project Unit.

While the ILO is only partly responsible for implementation of component 2 –specifically by way of advisory role in some of its aspects e. g. under the sub-component on the “*Demonstration Works for Labour-Based Methods*”, the overall scope of its work as per the Aide Memoire of May 2013 is to (i) To train thirty (30) engineers and technicians of MPW; (ii) To train thirty (30) small scale local contractors; (iii) To establish and train sixty (60) community maintenance groups; (iv) To

provide ten (10) sets of labour-based equipment to MPW for private contractors; (v) To provide four (4) sets¹ of labour-based equipment for ILO training; (vi) To organize two (2) study tours for MPW staff; (vii) To organize two (2) study tours for representatives from small scale local contractors; (viii) To organize two (2) study tours for community maintenance groups; and (ix) To support MPW in undertaking demonstration works on labour-based technologies.

Approach and Methodology of Evaluation

The evaluation approach was participatory while the methodology comprised (i) literature review key relevant documents; (ii) field interviews key stakeholders-which in total covered a total of thirty-five (35) respondents from a cross section of stakeholders; (iii) independent field level observations by the Mission; and (iv) a stakeholders' de-briefing workshop which was conducted at the end of the field mission on 21st March 2014. The main challenges encountered by the Mission were (i) the limited time for field work (1 week), the long distance and poor roads to the project areas making it impossible to physically visit the project sites within the time available for field work, and the coincidence of the Evaluation Mission with the AfDB-Supervision Mission which put a lot of pressure on targeted key respondents of MPW. Notwithstanding all these, the Mission was able to gather adequate information to inform the overall evaluation.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the project has performed quite well in delivering planned outputs. Out of the nine (9) planned outputs under component 2, the project has managed to surpass the target of two (2)-i.e. establishment of and capacity building of community road maintenance groups by 3%, and study tours for MPW staff by 100%; fully achieve five (5)-i.e. development of the maintenance operational manual, training of small-scale local contractors, procurement of labour-based equipment for private contractors and delivering them to MPW, organization and facilitation of study tours for representatives of

¹ Specifically 4 Compactors

small-scale local contractors and also community roads maintenance groups.

While recognizing that the project still has another ten (10) months to go, the mission observed that two (2) of the planned outputs are yet to be fully achieved-i.e. training of MPW engineers and/or technicians and demonstration works on labour-based methods whose achievements at the time of the Mission were 80% and 60% of planned targets, respectively.

Relevance and Strategic Fit

Based on primary and secondary sources of data and information, the Mission found the objective, purpose, activities and outputs of the overall project, as well as those of ILO/MPW component 2 to have been fundamentally relevant not just to the socio-economic livelihood needs of the main target beneficiaries-namely; MPW, small-scale local private contractors and community groups, but also the development aspirations of the ILO, the African Development Bank-as the financing agency, and other relevant UN and non-UN development agencies.

Validity of Project Design

The Mission found project design to have been generally logical and coherent based on a number of parameters including: (i) *Adequacy and relevance of foundational information base* upon which the project was conceptualized and designed; (ii) *Extent of stakeholder consultations*-which most respondents indicated were involved in; (iii) *Efficacy of the development model adopted and applied*-namely the labour-based or employment-intensive approach- which has indeed proven to be quite appropriate; (iv) *adequacy of intervention-mix and causality of outputs/outcomes with objective*-which among other things, entailed *mobilization and sensitization of local stakeholders including community groups; development of training manual; training and study tours and provision of construction equipment to small-scale local private contractors on a hire-purchase basis (non-subsidized); (v) Gender equity and mainstreaming strategy*-albeit the result that fewer women than men have benefited from the

project because of the male-dominated nature of road construction and maintenance activities; and (vi) *Realism of project time line*-which according to some key respondents was reasonably adequate from the point of view of full delivery of planned outputs, but not necessarily from the point of view of resulting in significant and widespread impact.

Project Progress and Effectiveness

Overall, the project has performed quite well in terms of planned output as indicated below:

Development of Maintenance Operations or Management Manual- which had been fully delivered (printed) by October 2009.

Training of MPW Engineers & Technicians- where the project targeted training a total of thirty (30) MPW engineers and/or technicians. While acknowledging that the project has still another 10 months to go, the mission observed that the project had so far achieved 80% of the target having trained 24 out of the planned 30 beneficiaries-primarily comprising MPW engineers and/or technicians.

Training of Small-Scale Local Contractors - where the project targeted training a total of 30 small-scale local contractors-which by the time of the Mission had been fully (100%) achieved.

Establishment and training of Community Roads Maintenance Groups - whereby the project had established sixty-two (62) compared to the target of sixty (60) groups.

Organization and Facilitation of Study Tours - whereby the facilitated: (i) *Four (4) study tours-thereby surpassing planned project target of two (2) by an impressive 100%*; (ii) *Two study tours for (2) representatives of small-scale local contractors-thereby attaining 100% achievement of planned project target*; and (iii) *Two (2) study tours for representatives of community roads maintenance groups-thereby attaining 100% achievement of planned project target*.

Demonstration Works for Labour-Based Methods: While this is implemented by MPW and not directly by the ILO-whose role is only technical assistance in the form of advisory

support, the plan was to carry out demonstration works on labour-based methods on a total stretch covering 66 KMs. While activities to this effect are on-going, the project has only been able to demonstrate over a stretch of about 39.6 KMs or about 60% of target. The commencement of gravelling works is currently outstanding partly due to the delay of MPW in responding to the package of re-gravelling that was sent to them by the ILO team way back in December 2013. The project team is however confident that they will be able to deliver fully on this output by October 2014.

Procurement of Labour-based Equipment: In this regard, the equipment that were supposed to be procured by the ILO and handed over to MPW for on-ward distribution to small scale local contractors on a "hire-purchase" basis comprised 10 sets of equipment with each set consisting of one (1) tractor, two (2) trailers and one (1) roller. Of the total sets of equipment planned for procurement, four (4) were to be used for demonstration/training purposes while the rest six (6) were to be distributed to private contractors. *While the ILO project team had attained 100% achievement on this output the biggest problem is that MPW is yet to distribute all the equipment to private contractors and the demonstration project sites as originally planned in the project design.*

Overall Conclusion

The overall conclusion of the evaluation mission is that the project is on course and is likely to achieve and even surpass its targets, and even more importantly result in the anticipated outcomes and impact.

Emerging Lessons Learned

Based on literature review, field interviews and observations by the Evaluation Mission, a number of lessons seem to emerge:

- (i) That the ***labour-based development model*** for constructing and maintaining roads has the following key positive attributes: (a) It has a high degree of efficacy and is undoubtedly a viable development approach-especially from the point of view of cost effectiveness, income and employment generation, overall poverty

reduction and overall economic growth; (b) It is win-win approach –from the point of view of cost-savings on the part of the Government, employment and income generation on the part contractors and local communities; (c) It has great potential to deliver results quickly; and (d) It has for potential significant multiplier effects-which according to the ILO-EIA study (July 2011) is in the order of 1:3.2;

- (ii) That **relevance of project interventions** to the socio-economic development aspirations of stakeholders (in this case Government, local contractors and local communities) play a vital role towards eliciting broad-based support and quick “buy-in” of project objectives. Local communities are willing and able to mobilize local resources as long as they see the value of project activities to their livelihood needs.
- (iii) That **stakeholder consultation and involvement** during project design and implementation play critical role in fostering ownership of interventions and enhances the possibility for sustainability beyond the project cycle;
- (iv) That **experiential learning** (in this case through study tours and site demonstrations) is an effective way of fast-tracking stakeholders’ knowledge acquisition, attitude change and capacity building in general.

Main Recommendations

The following is a summary of key recommendations for enhanced project performance during the remaining implementation period:

- (i) **Release labour-based equipment**-the MPW should release, without further delay, the labour-based equipment to eligible local contractors on “hire-purchase” basis as originally envisaged during project design;
- (ii) **Intensify capacity building**-the project should intensify training -especially for local contractors and community groups given the huge demand and the need enhance

effectiveness and sustainability of project activities;

- (iii) **Enhance institutionalization of project activities**-the project team, in collaboration with MPW, should engage the Government with a view of finding ways and means of effective mainstreaming and integration of project objectives and activities , not just in relevant national and sector-specific policies and strategies, but also in their budget plans for purposes of fostering political and financial support towards ensuring longer term sustainability of project activities;
- (iv) **Reduce training-contract award time-gap**-the project team, in collaboration with MPW, should find ways and means of reducing the time-gap between training and award of contracts to eligible local contractors for more effective use of acquired knowledge;
- (v) **Expedite payment to contractors**-the project team, in collaboration with other stakeholders, particularly MPW should find ways and means of reducing the time-gap between contractor’s job completion date and actual payment of services rendered;
- (vi) **Initiate the process of project extension and up-scaling**-the project team, in collaboration with MPW, should initiate the process of project extension to a second and expanded phase, in light of the apparent huge infrastructural development needs, demand for project activities and the emerging benefits associated with the project. Such an exercise should take into account various implications regarding required additional resources (e.g. County-level engineers, transport facilities and financial resources), and perhaps the need to establish “labour-based resource centre” to offer training and demonstration on labour-based roads rehabilitation and maintenance technology, among other things, and also for purposes of long term sustainability of project activities.