Evaluation Summary

International Labour Office

Evaluation Unit

Improving decent work opportunities for youth through knowledge and action (Work4Youth) Midterm Evaluation

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

ILO provides support in the area of youth employment through the Youth Employment Programme (YEP), and the W4Y project in turn operates under the umbrella of the YEP. The YEP was established in 2005 to address the global development goal and national challenges of providing young people with decent work opportunities. Through an integrated approach, it provides a wide array of services, including research, promotional activities, policy advice and technical assistance to support ILO constituents (governments, employers and worker organizations).

The W4Y project specifically uses the tool of SWTS for knowledge generation and research on the characteristics of the transition from school to work in different countries, hence different economic and social contexts, in order to better understand these processes and be able to design better and more effective youth employment policies.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The main objectives of the evaluation are the following:

a. Assess implementation progress of the W4Y project against its work-plan and towards its medium- and long-term

b. Identify success factors and good practice that have influenced the project's achievements;

c. Review project logic, results framework and targets set for the end of the project, as well as assumptions and risk analysis

d. Determine the constraints faced by the project;

e. Based on the results of a, b, c and d, indicate advisable programmatic changes and reorientation of project management practices.

This evaluation covers the period between the start of Work4Youth operations in May 2011 to October 2013.

The clients of the evaluation are:

a. The MasterCard Foundation
b. The ILO, and in particular the Work4Youth project management team, ILO offices in target countries and other field and headquarter officials
c. Constituents and implementing partners (National Statistics Offices) in target countries.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation is based on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and evidence of impact through contributions of ILO support in a selection of countries. The traditional DAC criteria have been defined as reconfigured by the evaluator to be slightly more operational.

The evaluation has been participatory. Consultations with the four countries selected for this evaluation, national stakeholders from governments, trade unions and employers' organizations NGOs/CSOs and other organizations working in youth employment, the donor The MasterCard Foundation and ILO staff at headquarters and in the field, were carried out through interviews, meetings, participation in workshops and electronic communication (84 persons were interviewed and an electronic survey has been implemented).

A detailed desk review was carried out, which covered all major W4Y project documents including ILO strategy and governance documents since 2006, as well as any major research and publications produced by W4Y found available.

The core part of the methodology consists of gathering evidence and triangulating information found from different sources to answer a series of evaluation questions.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The W4Y project is thematically relevant regarding the striking level of importance governments give to the youth employment problem all over the world. The project has a high level of relevance, strategically and institutionally for ILO, since it helps to implement important recommendations made to ILO back in 2009 by the

Independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy to improve member States' capacities to develop policies and programmes focused on youth employment.

The W4Y project has so far proved to be capable of achieving satisfactory levels of effectiveness. It managed to achieve the required country context adaptation and provide technical assistance to NSOs to a satisfactory level.

Considering previously existing weaknesses in the (time) planning of the project, the time efficiency of the project is still satisfactory, bearing in mind the considerable delays generated at the beginning of the project.

Future sustainability of today's achievements (progress in policy dialogue through a well-informed and participatory debate on youth employment) can be increased through action taken already from today. The institutionalization (in ILO and in countries) of youth employment policy activities is crucial for future sustainability.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

Regarding project design and the definition of objectives and goals:

• This evaluation suggests reformulating the general expected project outcome as "getting the youth employment policy dialogue started" or "ensuring that SWTS findings will be used in already existing youth employment policy dialogue processes" (if any).

Regarding required time and financial resources for quality insurance of W4Y delivery:

• ILO should be discussing possible scenarios for a required extension of the project (in order to ensure the quality of delivery and hence higher effectiveness and increased potential for future sustainability) and how additional costs could be covered (e.g. reallocation of available funds through the redefinition of minor outputs; additional funding from The MasterCard Foundation or ILO; additional funding from other potential partners).

Regarding the presentation of SWTS results and the participation of stakeholders in national workshops and youth employment policy discussions:

- Use a slightly different language to encourage "a greater judgement of values" in the national reports. For example for a SWTS report user without deep academic background the meanings and implications of findings like "x% of youth is in stage first stage of transition" or "y% of youth uses informal channels of labour market intermediation" are not obvious.
- Provide more constructive (and not only generic) hints for policy recommendation
- Involve ministries of education in the national workshops, SWTS results discussion and youth employment policy dialogue
- In order to increase the acceptance of the national reports, consider the possibility of providing a more extensive background on current national economy dynamics
- In order to increase national capacities for the assessment of SWTS findings beyond what is included in reports prepared by W4Y, there is a future need for training, which could and should be provided by or through ILO.

Regarding required adjustments for SWTS round two:
- In order to avoid these bottlenecks in round two, a staggered agenda of SWTS implementation could be used. This will require a planning of the SWTS implementation periods with the NSO during the final quarter of each year (since public sector action plans are defined at this time of the year together with the budget for the next year).
- There seems to be a general policy interest in the lack or mismatch of skills.
- In order to best respond to this interest, consider the possibility of including in all national SWTS reports some (general) findings from enterprise surveys.
- Before implementing the second round of SWTS, collect specific suggestions from NSOs on how to best adjust the questionnaire section, which addresses the employment history (the one which presented problems in round one).
- If the project wanted to measure in the future its impact on youth employment (through its effect on policy design and the scope and performance of policy implementation), a monitoring of the policy dialogue and the policy implementation would be required. This evaluation is aware that it is not

responsibility of the W4Y project that the policy design will take place.

Regarding options to take full advantage (findings) from the SWTS data sources for research:
- ILO and The MasterCard Foundation are aware that the W4Y staff cannot take full advantage of the wealth of the SWTS data sources and are working on national reports with descriptive statistics rather than with econometric research models.

Important lessons learned
- Getting a multinational research project started in 28 countries, using a almost fully centralized management approach, requires an enormous amount of time
- Many more than the 28 countries have to be contacted in order to find 28 feasible partners
- Partners (National Statistical Office, NSOs) have their own annual schedule and can not quickly engage in new projects
- The implementation period of Phase 1 surveys (14 months) was longer then expected
- An academic way of SWTS results presentation is not self-explaining to the (results presentation workshop) audience
- Workshop participants expect more than general conclusions
- Standardized national reports structures were required
- Survey partners from private sector are weak in computing indicators and prepare tables for an academic report
- MasterCard Foundation reporting and accounts system is much more sophisticated compared to other donors but helps a project to be fully documented and always aware of progress, resource availability and preliminary results
- The work with 28 partners in simultaneous processes causes bottlenecks for delivery (national reports).