



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

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Office

## *Partnerships for Youth Employment in the CIS (Phase 2) – Midterm Evaluation*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) and Georgia

**Mid-Term:** 19 April – 9 July 2021

**Evaluation Mode:** Independent

**Administrative Office:** DWT/CO for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Moscow office)

**Technical Office:** Employment Policy Department

**Evaluation Manager:** Irina Sinelina

**Evaluation Consultant:** Svetlana Bronyuk

**Project Code:** RER/17/01/LUK

**Donor(s) & Budget:** LUKOIL, Russian Federation, (USD 6 million)

**Keywords:** employment policies; youth employment; skills development; active labour market policies

### Background & Context

#### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project “Partnerships for Youth Employment in the CIS II,” Phase 2 (the Project), is a 60-month, US\$6 million second phase initiative, funded by the LUKOIL company and implemented

by the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Project aims to improve the effectiveness of policies and programmes promoting decent jobs for young people in the CIS countries through interventions at the regional, national and sub-national levels, as follows:

- The regional (CIS) component constitutes the project’s backbone to address youth employment issues common to the CIS countries and enhance the existing mechanisms for regional cooperation on youth employment.
- The national component targets Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan to strengthen the implementation of country-specific youth employment policies and programmes.
- The sub-national component focusses on youth employment actions in three regions of the Russian Federation (Republic of Komi, Astrakhan Region and Kaliningrad Region) to foster a framework for cooperation and partnership among local institutions, the social partners and other stakeholders at the sub-national level.

Phase 2 continues to target the three countries that benefitted from technical support during Phase 1, Russian Federation, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan

*and expanded to include Uzbekistan and three regions in the Russian Federation.*

### **Present Situation of the Project**

*The project builds on the successful outcome and lessons learned of a previous collaboration between the ILO and the Russian oil company LUKOIL during the 2013-2017. The main objective of this project is to improve the effectiveness of policies and programmes to support the creation of decent jobs for young people within the overall comprehensive employment policy framework in the CIS countries. The overall strategy of the project relies on three sets of interventions: at sub-regional level involving nine CIS countries (objective 1, also potentially involving the BRICS countries and the relevant UN agencies) supporting research and voluntary policy reviews for evidence based youth employment policies; secondly focusing on country-level interventions in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan (objective 2) and thirdly addressing the sub-national level needs in the three regions of the Russian Federation (Republic of Komi, Astrakhan Region and Kaliningrad Region) (objective 3). The project implementation strategy relies on strengthening the capacity of policy-makers and practitioners to design, implement, evaluate and update evidence-based and gender sensitive policies, programmes and approaches for youth employment, and on delivering and disseminating results through existing partnerships and strategic alliances.*

*The project is working under the supervision of the ILO Decent Work Team and Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia based in Moscow (DWT-Moscow). The Senior Employment Specialist of the DWT-Moscow is appointed as focal point for the project. The project is staffed with an international Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) who is responsible for the overall implementation of the project, one Technical Officer who supports all the project activities, one Research Officer and two assistants based in Moscow.*

### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

*The evaluation covers the duration of the Project since its start on 1st January 2018 until 18th June 2021 and its full geographical coverage at both Sub-Regional (DWT/CO for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Moscow office) and Country level. All countries were assessed as part of the desk review, with three countries – Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Russian Federation - selected for in-depth analysis and virtual meetings with the Social Partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries due to highest volume of the activities held in these countries. The evaluation was conducted in the time period from 19 April to 20 June 2021, with the draft of the final evaluation report submitted to the ILO on 5 July 2021. The goal of the Mid-term Evaluation is to review the project performance and enhance learning within the ILO and among stakeholders.*

*The Mid-Term Evaluation will serve the following clients' groups: ILO management, technical specialists at the HQ and in the field, Project staff, tripartite constituents in the target countries, the Donor, direct beneficiaries, including policy makers and practitioners, ultimate beneficiaries, including young men and women.*

### **Methodology of evaluation**

*The evaluation applied a mixed-method approach, with the main focus being on the qualitative techniques, including quantitative data obtained through the review of the project documents and reports, monitoring matrices and survey feedback results of the participants of the workshops. The primary data was collected directly from the stakeholders through individual and group interviews conducted via virtual mode. Project reports and documents, including evaluation reports, from the first phase of the project as well as key policy papers and country strategic plans and research reports were analyzed as secondary data sources.*

### **Main Findings & Conclusions**

*The COVID-19 crisis burst out after 27 months of the Project's implementation. The Project has well adapted to the crisis and provided timely support to the policy makers by a) Conducting rapid assessment of the labour market in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; b) Raising capacity of the policy makers and social partners on addressing the employment crisis and the COVID-19 challenges through series of the sub-regional webinars which allowed countries to gain timely advice and support from the ILO's experts and share concerns with their country peers; c) Institutional assessment and capacity building recommendations of the Uzbekistan Public Work Program for enhancing an effective employment response to the Covid 19 job-crisis; d) Support and monitoring ROSTRUD response to the COVID19 job crisis in Russian Federation.*

**Relevance and strategic fit:** *strategic relevance of the project has been rated as high by all key stakeholders and constituents from all countries who confirmed great extent of the facilitated social dialogue across strategic directions of the project. The project is well-aligned with countries' national and regional priorities, strategies and plans, the ILO and other international development assistance programmes as well as the SDG target 4, 5, 8, 17. The Project's focus is relevant to the UN global initiative "Decent work for youth" by addressing challenges for young men and women in transition from school to work and gender disparities in the CIS region. The Project's showed high responsiveness to the COVID-19 implications at the labour market and formulation of the relevant response measures in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Armenia based on Rapid Assessments of the situation at the labour market.*

**Validity of Design:** *Project design, results framework and indicators are valid and responsive to the emerging concerns. However, some modifications for the indicators/targets would be beneficial to better capture project progress, especially at the outcome level, gender*

*equality and non-discrimination. Given gained knowledge and expertise of the Project on youth employment and gender equality in the CIS it would be beneficial to introduce forth component specifically targeted gender-related focused at the results level. Introducing baseline data would be crucial to track the Project's progress.*

**Effectiveness:** *At present, the project shows quite good progress in mainstreaming youth employment into national development and employment strategies thanks to effective project management arrangements, ILO technical capacities and unique expertise to support tripartite and PES networks. The timely advice on tackling the COVID-19 pandemic implication on the labour markets and virtual capacity building activities has allowed the constituents in the Project's countries to undertake prompt measures and keep strategic focus on promoting youth employment beyond the health crisis.*

*The project shows meaningful results in advancing gender equality and human rights by assisting the participant countries in formulating informed policies aligned with the national development goals, SDGs, human centered and youth targeted approach, such as Future of Work and Decent Works for Youth. At the same time, the project has undertaken consistent and intensive efforts to strengthen PES nation and region wide to deliver client-oriented services for young men and women in line with international labour standards. The Project takes the unique position in contributing to the achievement of the SGD #8, 5 and 17.*

**Efficiency of resource use:** *project human (staff and expert) resources have been allocated and used strategically to achieve the expected results. The project shows some slight delay on piloting of ALMPs but the remaining time is sufficient for the implementation and validation of results. Cooperation with Rostrud leveraged project's resources and resulted in the rich content of the capacity building programme run at the federal level and sustained at the global level through the*

publication of the manual for PES in Russian and English languages.

**Project's sustainability:** The project has been successful in securing national ownership of the project results. Participatory and needs-based approach adopted by the project allows the results of the project to be sustained after its end. To enhance the sustainability of the project and strengthen the uptake of the project outcomes by the national stakeholders, sufficient time should be allowed to complete all planned activities, to reflect upon its results and secure proper handover of key achievements of the project. The Project should intensify efforts in supporting countries in achieving their national SDGs aligned with global SDG #5 Gender Equality and #8 Decent work and Economic growth especially by contributing to reduced share of NEET.

#### **Lessons learnt:**

1. Public Works Fund in Uzbekistan proved to be effective measure to offer employment during the COVID-19 crisis which could be considered by other development actors;

2. As the COVID-19 pandemic showed, digital public employment services allow rolling out needs-based social support at the emerging crisis situations;

3. Change of attitude happens and development results occur if employment challenges are fully addressed. The Project has strengthened efforts on tackling informality issues in the region which resulted in high political will in Azerbaijan to tackle informality and set the benchmark for other countries in transition to formal and dignified employment for young men and women.

#### **Good Practices:**

1. Leveraging resources with Rostrud resulted in rich quality trainings undertaken at the federal

level and development of the manual to be used at the global level;

2. Conducting gender-focused research undertaken in 2017 and 2019 to measure the progress of the countries in terms of advancing gender equality.

#### **Recommendations**

1. To ensure that the MTE results are shared and discussed with the stakeholders. The ILO Project Team, with support from the ILO National Coordinators should ensure that the results of the mid-term evaluation are shared and discussed with the national stakeholders and partners in all countries;

2. To conduct thorough internal review and assessment of the workplans and budgets to develop future implementation strategy of the Project including formulation of gender-focused results. The ILO Project Team, with support from the ILO National Coordinators should carefully review current status of implementation of the activities which are delayed, paying attention to the implementation of the pilots in the regions of the Russian Federation to enhance impact, consolidate best practices and lessons learnt and increased visibility of the project results;

3. To enhance project visibility and external public communication to promote project results and donor's visibility at national and global levels. The ILO Project Team, with support from the ILO National Coordinators should revise and update Communication Plan, on both sub-regional and national levels. In addition to using traditional mass media sources, project website, promotional tools developed with the support of the project, the ILO social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) should be used to promote the

results of the project and to raise awareness on the ongoing reforms. Additional indicator can be introduced to capture the progress on communication activities (for ex., the number of visits, views; the number of communication products developed and shared- targets to be set by the Project team);

4.To develop a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the Project. The ILO Project Team should develop gender mainstreaming strategy, taking into account The ILO Strategic Plan for 2018-21 and ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-21. The participatory methodology could be sourced from the Manual for Gender Audit Facilitators (2nd Edition, 2012 Geneva, ILO) to drive the participatory process involving project's stakeholders. The expertise of ILO Gender, Equality and Diversity branch (GED) would be beneficial and introduce at least one gender-relevant topic in each Project's events and/or activity. Capacity building activities for Project staff and its constituents on integrating a gender-sensitive approach in policy development, programming and implementation including Gender Sensitive Budgeting are highly recommended;

5.To improve project design, data collection, reporting and monitoring performance. The ILO Project Team should update project M&E tools and progress reporting templates. In particular, consider the following measures: a) developing specific indicators on vulnerable groups of youth into the Project Design in coordination with social partners; b) developing additional complementary indicators to capture progress on immediate objectives levels; c) introduce gender disaggregated data to project progress reports; d) adding sections on project progress on gender mainstreaming, inclusion and support to achieving the SDGs in project progress reports; e) develop monitoring performance plans to collect the data to capture 1) actual

number of project's beneficiaries disaggregated by sex, representation of tripartite institution, country and 2) frequency of the participation of each person in various project's activities;

6.To continue active promotion and dissemination of the knowledge products and tools developed by the project. The ILO Project Team should include representatives of the sub-regional intergovernmental organizations working on the Eurasian Economic Union and CIS levels (such as Inter-Parliamentary Assembly CIS, CIS Executive Committee, Eurasian Economic Commission) as well as expert organizations like Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Russian Academy of Science (RAS) and state universities (MSU, HSE, etc.) in the list of the project stakeholders directly benefitting from the Project knowledge products and capacity development activities;

7.To reduce inequalities by supporting CIS countries in building capacity to collect statistics on youth employment and unemployment including share of NEET. The ILO Project Team, with support of ILOSTAT should organize capacity development activities aimed at enhancing knowledge and skills of the national statistical bodies on collection and applying ILO's methodologies on collecting Youth unemployment rate (15-24) and NEET. This recommendation is particular important for Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan;

8.To organize final sub-regional high visibility event with participation of the stakeholders from all countries. The ILO Project Team, with support from the ILO National Coordinators should organize final level event to discuss the results of project implementation, present good practices and lessons learnt on a global level and develop recommendations to inform future initiatives.