



Evaluation Summary



International
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Support to the preparatory activities of the ILO to launch the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth

Quick Facts

Countries:	<i>Global</i>
Final Evaluation:	<i>Oct 2020</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office:	<i>Department Management and Coordination Unit - EMPLOYMENT</i>
Technical Office:	EMPLOYMENT
Evaluation Manager:	<i>Miquel Bono (EMPLAB)</i>
Evaluation Consultant:	<i>Juan-David Gonzales, Luc Franche, Sophie Pénicaud (Universalia Management Group Limited)</i>
Project Code:	<i>GLO/16/17/ESP</i>
Donor(s) & Budget:	<i>EUR 2.000.000</i>
Keywords:	<i>youth employment, partnerships, decent work.</i>

Background & Context

Youth employment has been a strong priority at the multilateral level for two decades, as illustrated in the importance given to that topic by the UN system, most notably by the ILO. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted during the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, has significantly underlined the urgency of achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, with great respect for gender equality and labour rights. Decent work for young people is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda and a key priority for the ILO.

Purpose, Objectives, Users, and Scope of the Evaluation

In 2017, the Government of Spain through the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy supported the ILO project “Support to the preparatory activities of the ILO to launch the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth” (GLO/16/17/ESP) (“the Project”). Its **immediate objective** was to support the tasks of the ILO in the launch and deployment of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The four outputs of the project are:

- 1) The strategic multi-stakeholder **alliance** is established.
- 2) Concrete **actions** are initiated at the national level based on the identification of the thematic priorities of the Global Initiative.
- 3) The Decent Jobs for Youth **Knowledge Facility** is launched as well as the respective coordination processes with different agencies and actors.
- 4) The **resource** mobilization and sustainability strategies are developed.

This EUR 2,000,000 project started its implementation in 2017. The Project was expected to end in December 2019 but obtained a no-cost extension until December 2020 due to the rescheduling of activities seeking high-level engagement by ILO and the Ministry and the subsequent implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on planned activities. The Project is under the responsibility of the ILO Employment Policy Department (EMPLOYMENT) and its Director. Other ILO staff with direct management responsibilities on the Project include the Chief of the Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch (EMPLAB), who directly supervises the work of the Coordinator of the Initiative. The Coordinator is supported by a

Secretariat team (“the Secretariat”), comprised by technical staff, who have been recently integrated into the Youth Employment Accelerator (YOUTH) Group.

The main purpose of this evaluation was accountability and learning. In terms of accountability, the evaluation is of particular interest to the unique donor financing the project, the Government of Spain through the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy, and also to the EMPLOYMENT Department, in particular EMPLAB. In terms of learning, this evaluation intends to help identify what has worked well, less well and why, and derive success factors and lessons learned. The knowledge generated by the Evaluation will also feed in the design of future implementation models and contribute to documenting management and delivery approaches supporting the sustainability of DJY.

The main users of the evaluation report include the Government of Spain through the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy, the EMPLOYMENT Department of the ILO, ILO staff with direct management responsibilities and the ILO Secretariat team for the Initiative. Secondary users include ILO and UN technical staff involved in thematic work and other partners of the Initiative among the UN system, NGOs, foundations, governments and private sector, as well as social partners.

The evaluation’s scope focused on the Project strategy, activities and results. The temporal and geographic scope focused on all activities financed by the Government of Spain in the context of the Project GLO/16/17/ESP and implemented between November 2017 and March 2020. Ongoing or planned activities were not the subject of this evaluation but may have been included in the scope. While the evaluation indirectly assessed several aspects of the Initiative that were interlined with the Project, its scope is limited to the evaluation the Project that supported the launch of the Initiative.

Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation adopted utilization-focussed, participatory, gender equality, and mixed-methods approaches. The evaluation was conducted in three phases:

1) Inception: The evaluation team drafted an inception report based on a preliminary document review and virtual consultations with project staff. The inception report was validated by project staff and the evaluation manager.

2) Data collection: The evaluation team conducted virtual semi-structured interviews, reviewed available documentation, and conducted a validation workshop with project staff. The evaluation team conducted a series of virtual consultations. In total, the team consulted 43 respondents.

3) Data analysis and reporting: The evaluation triangulated information from Semi-structured interviews and document review. The evaluation team produced the Evaluation Report based on feedback received on the first and second drafts of the report from project staff and the evaluation manager.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance

The Project and the Initiative aspire to respond to the needs of the youth, including young women and young persons with disabilities, in terms of job creation, employability, and helping youth to overcome specific disadvantages at global, regional and country levels.

The evaluation team found that the four objectives of the Project, which are the same four objectives of the Initiative, are relevant. First, the relevance and importance of establishing a multi-stakeholder alliance to tackle youth employment issues were acknowledged by all consulted stakeholders, especially considering that youth employment had become an increasingly popular topic among development actors in recent years, even indicating “it was a crowded space”. Second, the relevance of the objective “Concrete actions are initiated at the country level based on the identified thematic priorities of the Global Initiative” is confirmed by the urgent youth employment needs mentioned above. More specifically, the Initiative’s eight thematic priorities, and by extension the Project’s priorities, stem from global trends on youth employment. Third, the objective to establish a Knowledge Facility hosted and managed by the ILO on behalf of the Initiative is a logical decision based on the comparative advantage of the organization. Finally, the objective to mobilize resources and ensure the sustainability of the Initiative is relevant considering the fact that there was

increasing competition between actors to mobilize resources for youth employment actions.

The Project and the Initiative derive from a UN system-wide level effort to achieve SDG 8 and are also aligned to the ILOs' latest Programme & Budget documents, as well as to International Labour Standards, thus confirming the relevance of the ILO's role as the host of the Initiative's Secretariat. The evaluation team also found that the project paid special attention to young women and young persons with disabilities.

The evaluation team found that the Project was relevant to the priorities of the Government of Spain. Addressing decent jobs for youth is a key priority for the Government of Spain who saw the opportunity, by supporting the Decent Jobs for Youth Initiative, to establish a mutually beneficial partnership with the ILO and the broader UN System.

Validity of Design

The Project design guaranteed that the financial contributions of the Spanish Government would serve to operationalize the Decent Jobs for Youth Strategy and that all activities would directly contribute to the broader output and outcome level objectives specified in the PRODOC. The immediate objective of the Project is to support the ILO in the launch and deployment of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. To achieve this objective, the Project was designed around four outputs that mirror the four strategic pillars of the DJY: Alliance, Action, Knowledge and Resources. The correspondence of the Project's outputs to the strategic pillars of the DJY strategy ensures there is a strong logical link between the Project's contributions and the operationalization of the Initiative.

The evaluators note, however, that the logic model of the Project is not fully aligned to the harmonized results-based management concepts established by the UNEG. The indicators provided for output-level results are deemed adequate as they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Targets were embedded in the indicators' formulation, and sources of verification were quite broad. Finally, the Project's logic model does not refer to the SDGs.

Coherence

The Project has supported the Initiative in putting in place two mechanisms for increased coherence among actors around the issue of youth employment. First, the Project allowed the Initiative to organize and contribute to annual conferences as well as other thematic and regional events, to share the ILO and the Initiative's knowledge and to bring together a wide range of stakeholders working or having stakes on youth employment. These annual conferences played a key role in creating relationships with stakeholders from different fields related to youth employment.

Second, with support from the Spanish Project, the Initiative established another coordination mechanism for increased coherence: the thematic plans led by specific focal points from different UN entities. By breaking down the most important issues related to youth employment areas around thematic plans, and by having promoted the participation of other UN agencies in defining the thematic priorities, the Initiative established a functioning mechanism for bringing partners to work collaboratively on youth employment issues. Consulted stakeholders notably reported that the regular meetings held between the partners working around the thematic plans were a good mechanism for ensuring coherence between the DJY and other initiatives.

Effectiveness

The Project was highly successful in putting in place the foundations of a multi-stakeholder alliance in which many partners have committed to work jointly in addressing youth employment issues. As of December 2019, partner organizations in the multi-stakeholder alliance include 24 UN entities, 17 organizations from civil societies, 9 governments, 9 organizations from the private sector, 6 regional organizations, 4 organizations from the academia and 4 foundations. Via the Initiative's platform (the website), 51 organizations have made a total of 59 commitments.

With the aim of consolidating the alliance, the DJY team organized two annual conferences that were deemed successful. Many consulted partners from different types of organizations reported that they had benefited from the alliance, and, in particular, from the events organized by and with the participation of the Initiative. For example, through their participations in events, partners were able to increase their outreach in terms of communicating their work and knowledge on youth employment. Consulted partners also mentioned

that they better understood the work of other relevant actors on youth employment.

The objective to establish a governance structure for the Initiative has not been achieved. However, an ad hoc governance structure has been established which allows for lean, flexible and operational decision-making processes. The capacities of the ad hoc governance structure to achieve increased visibility at global level, to mobilize resources, and to secure sustainable buy-in from its partners, are however limited.

The DJY team has achieved the objectives set in the PRODOC in terms of establishing country-level actions for the Initiative. For example, the Project has reached its target to identify five prototype countries for the implementation of country level activities. Thanks to the commitments of donors, country-level actions have been initiated in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Nigeria.

The thematic plans drafted jointly with partners serve as reference for all actors to establish country-level actions related to youth employment. However, the mobilization of human resources for creating partnerships and mobilizing partners and resources remain a challenge for the implementation of further country-level actions. Many consulted partners mentioned that they lacked resources (human and financial) to fully operationalize the plans and implement actions recommended in the thematic plans.

The Project was instrumental in the collection and dissemination of knowledge on youth employment, in particular through events and through the design, launch and use of the Knowledge Facility, which have been accomplished with support from the Spanish-funded projects. In 2019, the Knowledge Facility included more than 400 resources contributed by over 35 knowledge partners. Between November 2017 and June 2020, more than 80,000 individuals had visited the DJY website. Many consulted partners from different types of organizations reported that they saw the DJY's Knowledge Facility as their first reference point for knowledge on youth employment issues.

The Initiative succeeded in mobilizing additional resources for country-level actions and for the functioning of the DJY. The Initiative and its partners mobilized resources for DJY Secretariat operations as well as for country-level actions from nine donors, including bilateral organisation, foundations, and governments. However, while the DJY Secretariat has

developed tools and mechanisms to support its resource mobilization efforts, a document detailing the Resource Mobilization and Sustainability Strategy of the DJY is still not drafted as of December 2019. Consulted stakeholders pointed to two main limitations to the mobilizing resources for the Initiative. First, the absence of a governance body is an impediment to mobilizing resources. A governing body could create additional financial commitments from the members of the governing body to extend the outreach of the partnerships which could potentially increase the amount of resources mobilized. Second, the absence of clear targets for the Initiative as a whole was also seen as an obstacle to mobilize resources from bilateral organizations.

Effectiveness of Management Arrangements

The Project directly contributed to the establishment of DJY's Secretariat hosted in the EMPLAB Branch of the EMPLOYMENT Department of the ILO. The Project successfully leveraged ILO's managerial, technical and political support to the DJY at headquarters. For example, more than five departments within the ILO have mobilized their human resources to contribute to the Initiative, and the ILO Director General provided high-level political support to the Project's effort to launch the Initiative. However, many ILO stakeholders consulted indicated that while most ILO departments and units know about the DJY, their level of buy-in and involvement remains uneven.

Efficiency

Allocated funds were used in accordance with planned budget, despite a one year no-cost extension granted by the donor. The latest financial statement produced by the ILO in December 2019 showed that the Project had used 71% of its total budget, indicating it had, on average, implemented 24% of its budget annually over the last three years. It is important to note that this figure does not take into account the activities that staff has continued to implement in 2020. Based on past implementation rate, it is thus reasonable to believe that the one year no-cost extension should be sufficient to complete the Project. The financial statements for 2019 also indicate that the expenses related to the project generally coincided with the amounts that were budgeted in the PRODOC for different items.

The financial resources allocated by the Ministry were allocated to the most successful outputs related to the

operationalization of the Initiative. In addition, resources spent for country-level actions had a small although non-negligible catalytic effect that allowed mobilization of additional funding from new donors.

Sustainability

The sustainability of results achieved by the Spanish-funded Project depends largely on the sustainability of the Initiative. In that regard, the evaluators noted that the recognition gained by the Initiative, as well as the degree of ownership across consulted partners, were key factors of sustainability. With 73 partners and 59 commitments globally, country level initiatives launched in multiple countries and with the deployment of an online Knowledge Facility, the Initiative was able to secure the involvement of a critical mass of stakeholders that are essential to maintain the DJY active. However, despite the mobilization of partners around the Initiative, the absence of a finalized document detailing the sustainability and resource mobilization strategy leaves the question of the financial sustainability of the DJY unanswered.

Overall, the Initiative is now recognized as an alliance with great potential in which partners exchange with relevant actors on youth employment issues, and the platform is seen as an important repository of knowledge for youth employment. In these two areas, alliances and knowledge, the DJY is seen as a step in the right direction toward getting partners to work together in improving youth employment outcomes. However, the limited institutional incentives for partners to commit time and funds to scale-up the Initiative could limit the sustainability of the Initiative. The governance structure of the Initiative could play a great role in ensuring the sustainability of the initiative.

Recommendations

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1) With the objective of establishing a governance structure for the Initiative to ensure its financial sustainability, the ILO should conclude the consultation process that was initiated last year on the governance structure of the Initiative, broadening the scope of actors involved.

- 2) The DJY Secretariat should better define incentives for implementing youth employment initiatives under the umbrella of the DJY; these incentives should be well communicated across the ILO's departments and offices as well as within other UN agencies, DJY partners and youth employment stakeholders.*
- 3) The DJY Secretariat should develop a theory of change explaining and illustrating the mechanisms by which the alliance is seeking to achieve youth employment outcomes.*
- 4) To ensure the scaling up of the initiative, the ILO should consider increasing human resources available for the tasks associated with the DJY Secretariat*