



Zambia project: More and better jobs created for sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth and women and Zimbabwe project: Employment and decent work mainstreamed into national development plans and programmes

QUICK FACTS

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The cluster evaluation focused on two projects funded through the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) in Zambia and Zimbabwe and implemented in partnerships between the ILO country Offices of Lusaka and Harare, the Governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe and social partners (labour and employers) as follows:

- Employment and decent work mainstreamed into national development plans and programmes;
- More and better jobs created for sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth and women

The Zimbabwe project focused on supporting informal enterprises with better working conditions, workspaces, and improved sustainability of enterprises. Both projects supported the enhancement of regulatory and policy framework for International Labour Standards (ILS).

While the projects were not based on a common theory for change, the evaluation team, based on the review of projects’ design documents, reports and activities developed the following common theory of change:

“If labour and employment promotion legislation and policy framework are reviewed and aligned to ILS, supported by capacity of actors (government, social partners and their members) to implement, monitor and inspect them and improved availability and access of youth, women and men to relevant skills development and improved employment opportunities **then** there will be increased formalisation, decent work employment and entrepreneurship.”

Present situation of the project

Both projects are closed

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The main purpose of the assignment was to undertake a clustered evaluation of the two projects in Zambia and Zimbabwe guided by the following specific objectives:

- Assess the extent to which the projects have achieved the stated objectives and expected results, while identifying the supporting factors and constraints that have led to them;
- Identify unexpected positive and negative results of the projects;
- Assess the extent to which the projects outcomes will be sustainable;

- Establish the relevance of the projects design and implementation strategy in relation to the ILO, UN and the national development frameworks;
- Identify lessons learned and potential good practices, especially regarding models of interventions that can be applied further; and
- Provide recommendations to project stakeholders to promote sustainability and support further development of the project outcomes

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation adopted a theory-based evaluation approach. This was premised on using the ToC to ascertain validity of design and contribution of the projects to observe results. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in data collection. Quantitative information, which was collected from secondary data (extracted from project documents) assisted the evaluation in ascertaining achievement of indicators.

Secondary data review was an important component to 1) understand the projects' design; 2) determine progress in implementation and challenges experienced; 3) results achieved by the projects; and 4) lessons learned by implementers. Documents reviewed included the project design documents, their monitoring reports, activity reports, workplans, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plans etc. Primary data was collected through qualitative methods which included: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

KIIs were conducted with purposively selected individuals with knowledge of the projects and selected from the cross section of stakeholders in the two countries. KIIs also included those of ILO in the Decent Work Country Team (DWT) in Pretoria and the ILO Regional Office for Africa (ILO ROAF). FGDs were conducted with youth (in Zambia) and informal business owners (in Zimbabwe). The number was kept to a maximum of 8 participants to allow for adequate social distancing. Separate discussions were held with males and females. These meetings were conducted in person in the projects' implementation sites with selected number of participants. The discussions explored the alignment of the project to beneficiary needs; the quality timelines and adequacy of support; the ability to fully integrate women and youth and those with disabilities in the activities (employment road projects, enhancing employability – Zambia; marketplaces in Zimbabwe); and sustainability of the benefits. It also explored additional support required by



project participants to ensure the benefits of the projects are fully realised including the role that local stakeholder can play in the absence of the projects. FGDs were conducted in Bulawayo city in Zimbabwe and Mazabuka district in Zambia.

Data was collected by the evaluation team members (Team leader – Zimbabwe and the Zambia national consultant – Zambia). The findings were validated through a process of review of the evaluation report by ILO and its key project stakeholders, with their comments being used to finalise the findings and recommendations.

The data collected in each district was systematically analysed, triangulated and synthesised by the evaluation team. The Data Collection Plan, Annex 2, provided an analysis framework for gathering and synthesising data against the key evaluation questions. All primary data was anonymised to ensure confidentiality. Access to this data will remain with the evaluation team. Upon completion of the evaluation all data will be handed over to ILO as part of the consultant’s contractual obligation.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The RBSA projects were strongly aligned to the needs of the two countries. The projects were also relevant in supporting the priority work agenda of ILO within the country. Despite the positive alignment of the project objectives to needs of beneficiaries there were some challenges with formalisation with beneficiaries in Zimbabwe having mixed feelings with formalization mainly due to increased costs of formalisation (rentals. tax consultants, registrations etc) and reduced competitiveness in a distorted monetary environment.

The two RBSA funded (herein RBSA projects) projects were aligned to ILO Programme and Budget (ILO P&B) outcomes for 2018-2019 and 2020-2021. These included outcomes related to enterprise development, skilling for transition in the labour market, international labour standards, strong tripartite constituents and influential social dialogue, youth employment, formalisation of the informal economy, and promoting safe work (especially through adaptations made by the projects to address safety and health during the peak of COVID-19).

There were collaborations between the RBSA projects and other ILO projects in-country. Such collaborations were stronger in Zambia than Zimbabwe.



Several collaborations in Zambia included work with Zambia Federation of Employers (ZFE), collaborative support for the Action Plan for Empowerment and Employment under the Ministry of Youth among others. In Zimbabwe there were collaborations with UN Joint Programme on Safe Markets for Green on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and enterPRIZE programme on co-designing of the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training. The RBSA projects also forged partnerships with other ILO Departments and Offices including Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACTEMP) and International Labour Standards Department (NORMES).

Private and Public Partnerships were the hallmark for delivering models for employment generation and promoting decent work. The partnerships took on innovative models that have been taken up by various actors in both countries.

While the objectives of the projects were ambitious and unachievable with the resources and time available, they were designed as catalysts, through either laying the foundation for interventions that could be implemented in the DWCPs of the countries or could be taken up by others. This aligned well with the purpose of the RBSA projects.

Validity of design

The projects theories of change (TOC) were clear and properly documented but poorly communicated to the partners and general stakeholders. In Zimbabwe, the theory of change was further developed as the project progressed with elaborated causal pathways and models for the delivery of the formalisation of enterprises component. The ToCs were however kept and only understood by the ILO project team. Interviews with stakeholders revealed lack of understanding as reflected by stakeholders' ignorance of the ToC and the full scale of interventions, in some cases.

While the causal linkages and pathway to change were clear, some assumptions did not hold. Challenges with shifting priorities among tripartite partners undermined progress on initiatives planned by the Zimbabwe project including operationalising the Tripartite Negotiation Forum (TNF) and progressing on ratification of Employment Policy Convention No. 122 Convention, in line with SADC International Labour Standards (ILS) policy, and C189 - Domestic Workers Convention. Another assumption was that informal



business owners would be incentivised to transition to formal enterprises by new business opportunities that came with this transition. However, the increased costs of doing business (payment of taxes, employment of tax consultants, and increases in rentals) and the complications of running a formal business in a complex monetary and hyper inflationary environment were pushing these enterprises back into informality.

The projects had clearly defined outcomes and outputs with potential to effect positive impact to the labour market. However, for the most part the outcome targets were too ambitious for the scale of funding and project periods. This was made worse by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The RBSA projects were generally poor in defining monitoring and evaluation for the projects which led to poor implementation of monitoring systems. Furthermore, beyond sex disaggregated numbers and gender sensitive M&E plans for NELP in Zambia, there was very limited attention to gender in project implementation. Disability was recognised as important in both projects however, actions were very limited to do so primarily due to a limited clarity on what approaches would be effective to do so.

Lastly, the RBSA projects lacked written exit and sustainability strategies. There were assumed exit strategies and strategies for sustainability that were not documented, nor shared with the wide project stakeholders. It was clear that the project ran on an assumption of how gains from the project would be sustained beyond the project life span. For ILO staff it was clear that successful interventions would be naturally taken up by the implementing or benefiting institutions or through implementation of the DWCP. Though the assumption could hold in some cases, there was need to have properly spelt out strategies for exit and sustainability. Further, the strategies needed to be communicated and implemented as the project came to an end.

The RBSA projects design lacked clarity on how the catalytic nature of the RBSA fund would be realised especially answering the questions: what initiatives these projects will build on; how interventions/initiatives started under the RBSA projects will be supported post the RBSA project; and how will the broader ILO interventions in the country collaborate with the RBSA to increase depth and support continuity.

Progress and Effectiveness



Considerable achievement was made at output level as demonstrated by the number of interventions that were satisfactorily completed (above 80% in both countries). These achievements were particularly commendable given the challenges in implementation imposed by restrictions on movement and gatherings to contain COVID-19. The results at outcome level were limited as expected given the projects' timeframe and financial resources. Nonetheless there have been some notable achievements in both countries. In Zambia, the project supported the development of the National Productivity Policy, National Employment and Labour Market Policy (NELMP), its implementation plan and Monitoring and Evaluation framework. The RBSA project also supported the Ministry of Higher Education in the development and launch of the work-based learning framework with elements of the Employment Intensive and Investment Programme (EIIP) promoted by the project. One training syllabus in cobblestone paving has been mainstreamed and was being offered to students and small-scale contractors in the construction sector. The Zambia RBSA project also supported the revision of the Industrial and Labour Relations act, the repealing and replacing of the 1965 apprenticeship act, and the dissemination of the New Employment Code Act. 3 of 2019 to workers and employers.

In Zimbabwe, the project supported incorporation of a section on decent work in the National Development Strategy (NDS) (2021-2025) through enhancing capacity of tripartite constituents to prepare position papers that informed the NDS1 (2021-2025). The RBSA project also initiated the development of a formalisation strategy for the country and implementation of a concept for supporting transition of informal enterprises to formality. The latter has been adopted by the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) into its strategic plan with initiatives already underway at the time of the evaluation to expand the concept in the city. This result has been the flagship of the Zimbabwe RBSA project and represents promising practice for facilitation formalisation of informal enterprises and promoting improved working conditions and decent work in the informal sector.

There was some high degree of promoting gender equality in the projects. However, less attention was given to the disability and other vulnerable groups' inclusion in the project.

While COVID-19 slowed down interventions this had no material effect on the quality of interventions. However, in Zimbabwe specific challenges related to



rapid change in the political, economic, and social context from design and during implementation undermined progress on initiatives that tripartite partners had initially committed to. This included progress on operationalising the TNF, steps in ratifying conventions C122 and C189. This change included a shift to prioritising salaries and working conditions by labour, arrest of labour representatives and the general mistrust between government and social partners.

The strong partnerships established by ILO COs in implementing the two RBSA projects enabled success. The PPPs established for the EIIP and formalisation of informal enterprises in Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively have demonstrated the effect that these could have at scale in improving employability of youth and promoting formalisation.

Efficiency

The projects utilized the allocated resources that included human resources, funds, time, and expertise efficiently. Resources, especially funds allocated to project activities, had guidelines on expenditure which were followed strictly during implementation, and this allowed allocated funds only to be utilized on project activities. Modifications to projects implementation modalities and activities ensured continued implementation during COVID-19 induced restrictions on movement and this helped the projects meet majority of its targets.

In Zimbabwe support of ILO Headquarters was sought in the construction of the SME space/industrial park which enhanced efficiency as the ILO CO had no prior experience with such construction work.

Fund disbursements were consistently timely and adequate and followed the funds disbursement mechanisms agreed upon with implementing partners in the Implementation Agreement (IA). However, there were some notable delays at the beginning during the setting up and adoption of fund disbursement mechanisms. In Zimbabwe specifically, there were delays in reaching agreement on the annual workplan with the tripartite partners. This delayed implementation by more than 6 months.

The assessment found evidence of a good management which facilitated the implementation of interventions by managing partnerships and implementation agreements. However, the project lacked governance



arrangement to provide oversight to management. No evidence of an advisory committee or a steering committee was found on the ground which meant that the projects neglected to establish a body that could have provide direction and oversight to the project management teams.

The projects received adequate support from ILO offices in Decent Work Team in Pretoria and from Headquarters.

In line with poor design of the monitoring framework, there was limited monitoring system – with data collected on ad hoc basis.

Impact orientation and sustainability

Sustainability of the RBSA projects results lie in the ability of their initiatives and results to be scaled up. For Zimbabwe, incorporation of the various initiatives of the project in NDS1 (2021-2025) provides a sound mechanism for government and social partners to continue. Second the uptake of the formalisation concept by the BCC and government demonstrates the scalability potential of the concept. The labour market diagnostic study, gap analysis for C122 and the systems and procedures for operationalisation the TNF provide sufficient impetus for tripartite partners.

In Zambia, some immediate impacts were noticed in the job market that included the permanent employment of 25 young women and men who were part of the 35 interns that participated in the internship programme. The adoption and institutionalisation of the strategic compliance inspection in the labour market and the incorporation of the Employment Intensive Technologies into the syllabus for National Council for Construction (NCC) are some of the immediate wins of the project that might give required impact in the long term.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1: Future projects focused on formalisation should provide incubation periods for this process that shields these enterprises from the initial high costs of formalisation

Recommendation 2: RBSA projects should be accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation plan in the project proposal which should be reviewed during inception in line with any new realities.



	<p>Recommendation 3: RBSA project design documents should ensure ILO COs provide clarity in the project design how initiatives will be sustained or scaled up including linkages with the country portfolio.</p> <p>Recommendation 4: Assistance rendered to the youths should be comprehensive and should include all interrelated interventions that could fully support the achievement of the intended objective under consideration.</p>
<p>Main lessons learned and good practices</p>	<p>Lesson 1: The need for adaptative and responsive project design is important. The advent of COVID-19 called for a quick project adaptation. The RBSA project in Zimbabwe was able to introduce quickly new ways of working and training informal traders including on WhatsApp. Leveraging the country portfolio also enhanced the ability of the RBSA project to deliver OSH to informal traders to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.</p> <p>Lesson 2: Public Private Partnerships have a possibility for a cost effective and sustainable way for facilitating formalisation of informal enterprises and introducing high-cost interventions that provide job rich ventures.</p>