

Evaluation Summary

Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People (DJEP): Tackling the Challenge Together Midterm Evaluation

Quick Facts

Country	<i>Egypt</i>
Mid-Term Evaluation	<i>Oct 2015</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office:	<i>ILO CO (Cairo)</i>
Technical Office:	<i>ENTERPRISE</i>
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Project Code:	<i>EGY/11/02/CAN</i>
Donor (s) & Budget:	<i>DFATD Canada (CDN\$ 10 Million)</i>

Keywords

Decent work creation, unemployment, capacity building, employability, entrepreneurship, apprenticeship, young men and women, people with disability, social economy, gender, value chain development and business development services. tourism, agribusiness, manufacturing.

Background & Context

The objective of the project is to “increase decent employment opportunities for young men and women, especially vulnerable groups” by putting the Government of Egypt (GoE), actors at the regional and local level, civil society partners, the private sector and young people in a better position to create and access decent work opportunities”. The intervention logic of the project is based on capacity building of GoE), Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM), and other key stakeholders for the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for youth employment; building partnerships for empowerment and improved implementation capacity at the regional and local levels; promoting youth employment by matching supply and demand – all within the broader social economy, gender equality, green economy and community-based approaches.

Anticipated intermediate outcomes of the project include: (i) **Intermediate outcome 1** - “Improved performance of GoE, MoMM and other NAP stakeholders in the implementation of the NAP for Youth Employment and the designing and implementation of youth employment related programmes and policies including addressing women’s employment challenges”; (ii) **Intermediate outcome 2** - “Improved performance of regional and local stakeholders and partners (public, private and civil) in delivering relevant services linked to youth employment in the three selected Governorates including addressing women’s employment challenges”; and (iii) **Intermediate outcome 3** - “Improved performance of the labour market in the three selected Governorates.

Present Situation of the Project

DJEP is a five (5) year initiative that is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development (DFATD) of Canada, with a total budget of CDN\$ 10 million and with an expected additional in-kind contribution from the GoE’s Social Fund amounting to an equivalent of US\$ 5.3 million. The “Grant Arrangement Agreement” was signed on 24th March 2011 between GoE, DFATD and the ILO. The project was scheduled to run from 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2016 and has so far been under implementation for the last 4 years and 5 months.

Purpose, Scope and Clients of the Evaluation

The evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with the ILO Evaluation Policy adopted by the Governing Body in November 2005; and provisions of the project “grant arrangement agreement” between the ILO and DFATD as contained in the Project Document. The main purpose of the evaluation are: (i) to give an independent assessment of progress to date; (ii) to provide strategic and operational recommendations as well as highlight successful interventions for scaling-up, and lessons to improve performance and delivery of project results.

The main clients of the evaluation comprise the ILO/DJEP management team; the ILO/DWT (CO Cairo); relevant ILO/HQ Departments including the EVAL Unit; ROAF; DFATD; and key national partners.

METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION

The evaluation approach was participatory approach involving interviews of a wide range of selected key stakeholders and also taking into account the need for adequate gender representation. The methodology applied both quantitative and qualitative analysis with the research instruments comprising: (i) Desk review of a wide range of relevant documents; (ii) “One-on-one” and/or focused group discussions with relevant staff in the ILO (Cairo Office); key national stakeholders in Cairo; and a wide of regional stakeholders in Minya, Port Said and Red Sea including intermediate and ultimate beneficiaries. (iii) Independent observations by the Mission Team; and (iv) Responses by project staff during the de-briefing session held at the end of field visits.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Relevance and Strategic Fit: The Mission Team firmly concludes that the objective, planned activities and outputs, as well as the anticipated outcomes of the project are not only significantly relevant, but also strategically in line with the socio-economic development needs and aspirations of virtually all stakeholders - especially young men and women. However, the potential for its relevance to contribute to broad-based stakeholder “buy-in”, ownership, support and participation was being undermined by a number of factors that are external and internal to the project. Key among the external factors include the socio-political instability and insecurity situations which characterized the country particularly during the 2011-2013 period following the first and second revolution; the weak institutional capacity of key national partners and local organizations; high turnover of key relevant government staff including frequent reshuffle of Cabinet Ministers –especially in the case of the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, and also in the case of governors; weak coordination and poor cooperation culture among key national institutions. An important internal factor was lack of effective strategies relating to knowledge management, information sharing and dissemination; as well as communication on the part of the project.

Validity of Design: The Mission Team also concludes that the design of the project was fairly coherent and logical based on a number criteria including: (i) relevance and adequacy of foundational information base upon

which the project was conceptualized and designed; (ii) efficacy of the multi-dimensional development model adopted and applied; (iii) appropriateness and adequacy of intervention-mix and plausibility of causal linkage with overall project objective, outputs and outcomes; (iv) strategy for mainstreaming of gender equity and social safeguards for vulnerable groups; (v) clarity of definition of performance indicators; (vi) sustainability strategy; and (vii) systems for risk analysis and assessment. However, coherence and logic of project design was found to have been relatively weak from the point of view of a number of factors: (i) extent of stakeholder consultations – which from field-level observations seems to have been inadequate; (ii) planned timeline – which was inadequate considering the complexity of the project – especially in terms of its multidimensional nature involving a wide range of interventions; the large number and diversity of stakeholders; and the geographical coverage, and the long term nature of impact for some of the interventions; (iii) the inordinately large number of indicators of achievement and target indicators to be monitored; (iv) inadequate staffing and/or provision for key relevant expertise right at the design stage e.g. in the area of agribusiness, knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation; and (v) lack of clear knowledge management and exit strategies right from the start.

Project Progress and Effectiveness: The project performed lower than initially anticipated primarily due to a number of challenges that emerged during the early part of its cycle. These challenges were mainly associated with the socio-political and insecurity situations – particularly in the first three years including: (i) the high turnover of Cabinet Ministers, senior administrative of technical staff in key government institutions; (ii) the weak human capacity and the limited physical facilities at the governorate level; (iii) disruptions caused by several political elections that occurred during project implementation phase; (iv) changes in policy environment – primarily the change from NAP for Youth Employment by MoMM to the new NAP for Training for Employment that it launched in January 2015; and (v) bureaucratic challenges associated with requirements for advance notification to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of any planned activities of all donor-supported projects and programmes as well as planned meetings with senior level officials at the governorate level; among others. Despite these unforeseen challenges, and due to its strong relevance to the socio-economic development aspirations of many stakeholders and the associated buy-in, the project has made some notable achievements which have the potential for positive impact on youth employment beyond its life cycle. This is particularly with regard to: (i) institutional strengthening of MoMM and other government partner institutions; (ii) supporting

the establishment of local MSME business initiatives; (iii) entrepreneurship training and development.

Effectiveness of Management Arrangements: The organizational and management arrangement of the project was fairly effective in delivering to project objectives and anticipated outcomes – particularly because of four (4) main factors: (i) having an in-country CTA in Cairo which allowed for quick and easy reach by other project staff for first-level technical backstopping services; (ii) proximity and accessibility of the ILO/DWT CO (Cairo) which provided quick and easy reach of the DWT for second-level technical backstopping services; (iii) having quick and easy reach to the Director ILO CO (Cairo) which provided quick and easy reach to administrative backstopping services; (iv) , having project and government focal point persons at the governorate level which provided an effective interface between the project and stakeholders at regional and local levels.

Effectiveness and Efficiency of Resource Use: In this regard, the view of the Mission Team as well as those of some key observers is that the 5-year timeline for project implementation was inadequate not just in consideration of the exogenous factors and complexity of the project as discussed earlier; but also in consideration of the long term nature of results and impact for some of the interventions such as policy advocacy and reforms, and mindset or culture change especially with respect to youth's attitude in relation to public sector versus private sector employment and/or self-employment. With regard to human resources, the Mission Team observed that the project staff were well qualified for the positions they respectively hold, committed to project work, and also exhibited tremendous team work spirit. The project has so far utilized and/or committed about US\$ 7,918, 322.10 or about (79.2%) thereby remaining with US\$ 2,081,677.90 or about (20.8%) of the budget. While it was not possible to full “value for money audit” as such, the overall view of the Mission Team is that financial resources were being utilized in fairly prudent and economical manner. With the expenditure for the period 2011-2014 amounting to US\$ 1,193,202 or about 21.5% of total cumulative expenditure having been used for staff costs; US\$ 1,064, 355 or 19.0% of total cumulative expenditure having been used for operational costs; and US\$ 3,346,606 or about 59.7% of total cumulative expenditure having been used for direct support to beneficiaries, the Mission is of the opinion that the allocation was fairly well distributed and effective.

Impact Orientation and Sustainability: The project was founded on fairly strong sustainability elements. These included but not limited to the relevance of interventions to virtually all stakeholders; the participatory approach that was consistently embraced and applied by the

project team during implementation; collaboration and cooperation with national institutions; capacity building and skills development of stakeholders at national, regional and local levels; building of networks and partnership with national and regional stakeholders. While the project had not undertaken impact tracer studies or surveys which would have enabled the Mission Team to make an informed judgement on the socio-economic impacts associated with project activities this far, there were clear indications that the project's strategy and activities are steering towards positive impact in terms of *employment generation* – where in collaboration with the PES offices, the project managed to create decent jobs for more than 2,000 young men and women (ii) *Capacity building* through training – where 21,7000 graduates from 21 ETCPs in Egypt and 9,700 graduates from 40 PVTD of MoTI have benefited from training using ILO entrepreneurship education programmes; (ii) *Matching of labour supply and demand*– where the project has rolled out seven (7) job search club trainings for 134 young men and women, providing 82 employment internships opportunities in Minya and Port Said during the summer of 2014; six (6) Youth Units have successfully been established in six (6) PES offices and training of PES staff successfully completed; and decent employment of more than 2,000 young men and women created as mentioned above with an additional 602 young people currently undergoing going selection processes.

Conclusion: The overall conclusion is that project activities are progressing well and there are good prospects for sustainability and impact through multiplier effects. However, its full potential for impact and sustainability is unfortunately being undermined by a number of factors that are both internal and external to the project. Internal challenges include: (i) lack of adequate and stakeholder sensitization and awareness of project activities; (ii) lack of clear and coherent strategies for knowledge management, information sharing and dissemination strategy and also communication; (iii) lack of strong market access-oriented interventions to support the ill-equipped MSMEs. Challenges external to the project include but not limited to: (i) occasional political instability and insecurity situations; (ii) the high turnover of key government staff including Cabinet Ministers, Governors and other key government staff; (iii) the continued weak capacity of key national, regional and local partners including the limited physical facilities at the governorate level; (iv) poor cooperation and collaboration culture and/or lack of sufficient political will among key implementing GoE partners; (v) disruptions caused by the frequent and sometimes far reaching policy changes including the recent unprecedented replacement of the NAPYE with the NPTE.

Emerging Lessons Learned: Some of the good practices that can be applied in the next phase and/or in similar projects in future include: (i) *Relevance and strategic fit of project interventions; synergy with other relevant initiatives; networking and partnership building* play a key role towards promoting stakeholder “buy-in”, ownership and support; (ii) *The multidimensional and integrated approach* which was adopted and applied by the project is both effective in delivering on decent jobs creation and also replicable, but requires adequate strategic thinking and forward planning due to its high demands in terms of the need for in-depth mapping of potential strategic partners at all levels; identification for an effective framework for coordination and collaboration between, and among multiple stakeholders; identification of the required range of project staff expertise to cater for the various needs of different sectors; and ultimately the need for adequate timeline for project preparation and design; (iii) *Flexibility in implementation* as was adopted by the ILO CO (Cairo) and the project team is critically important – especially in fluid socio-political and economic situations as was the case for Egypt especially before 2014, as it allows for quick and strategic responses by seizing opportunities whenever they occur thereby allowing not just the continuation of project implementation, but also saving of time and financial resources; (iv) *Easy access to administrative and technical backstopping* which was provided by the Office of the Director/DWT in ILO Cairo; and the full time in-country presence of the CTA was very useful to project implementation. Some of the things that should have been different or should be avoided in future include: (i) *Project design and planning*- owing to its complexity especially in terms of the multiplicity of interventions, the number of target achievements, the range of stakeholders involved, the wide geographical scope and the fluid socio-economic and political environment that characterized the country, more time and strategic thinking should have been accorded to the design and planning of the project so as to lay the foundation for a clear, effective and efficient implementation framework particularly in light of the weak capacity of national partner institutions; (ii) *Realism in scoping of indicators of achievement and targets* - project design should have avoided being too ambitious - especially in terms of monitorable indicators of achievement and achievement targets; (iii) *Choice of project target indicators of achievement* - the project should have avoided committing itself to target indicators that it neither had control over, nor ability to ascertain attribution to project activities; (iv) *Market access*- building the capacity of MSMEs with respect to market access should have been a strong element of project design so as to complement other forms of capacity building as well as financing interventions; (v) *Communication strategy* - being at the heart of good project management, an effective and efficient a well-thought communication strategy should

have been in place right from the early stages of project implementation; (vi) *Project staffing*- being a complex project, its design should have also provided the positions of both a Communication Officer and a M&E Officer – to support the rest of the project team members in respective functions; (vii) *Exit strategy* - an exit strategy should have been in place to provide the project management team with a clear and strategic direction towards final exit and ultimate hand-over of project activities to local and national partners; (viii) *monitoring and reporting systems* – being such a complex project, and automated and integrated M&E system (e.g. a web-based system) should have been in place; and (iv) *Impact tracer surveys or studies* should have been conducted regularly (at least bi-annually).

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Revamp knowledge management, information sharing and dissemination strategies* to boost stakeholder “buy-in”, ownership and support of project activities for longer term sustainability;
2. *Prioritize interventions* – by not putting too much emphasis on specific implementation of NAPYE or the NAPTE policy framework, but instead by focusing on activities that have potential to enhance GoE’s ability to formulate and execute employment policies and programmes and in labour market analysis, and also focusing on “high impact”; “quicker results”, and “sustainable” interventions that have potential for up-scaling in the remaining period;
3. *Strengthen and streamline monitoring and reporting functions*
4. *Prepare and operationalize a comprehensive project information management and communication strategy* to boost its capacity in these areas;
5. *Develop project exit strategy for the project;*
6. *Recruit an M&E Officer, a Communication Officer* (possibly to be cost-shared with relevant projects) and a Knowledge Management Expert (preferably on a short term basis);
7. *Extend project timeline by two (2) years* beginning 1st April 2016 - 1st April 2018 to allow for consolidation of gains so far made which seems to have picked up quite well from 2014;
8. *Recruit additional staff for the extended phase* - (i) An Agribusiness Officer - to fill-up the current skills gap of the project team and in light of increasing stakeholder interests in agribusiness- related support interventions in the old governorates (Minya & Port Said) and in the proposed additional governorates (Aswan & Luxor)– where the officer should cater for all governorates; (ii) one additional Focal Point staff - to operate from the Aswan governorate but catering for Luxor governorate as well; and (iii) one Driver – to support the additional Aswan-based focal point staff.