



Evaluation Summary



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Independent Mid-term Evaluation

Decent Jobs for youth and improved food security through the development of Sustainable Rural Enterprises (YAPASA)

Quick Facts

Countries: Zambia

Mid-Term Evaluation: Sept. – Dec. 2016

Evaluation Mode: Independent

Administrative Office: CO-Lusaka

Technical Office: EMP/ENTERPRISESF

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Project Code: ZAM/13/04/SID

Donor(s) & Budget: SIDA, US\$ 6,988,695

Keywords: value chains, soya bean, aquaculture, food security, youth employment

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

YAPASA aims at addressing youth unemployment and food insecurity in rural communities, by attaining sustainable livelihoods for young women and men in rural areas. YAPASA focuses on the promotion of sustainable

micro, small and medium-scale enterprises. Two strategic subsectors chosen are soybean and aquaculture, using the Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) approach, tackling key systemic constraints in both value chains. YAPASA plays a facilitating approach, supporting existing actors to act and invest in these value chains. The project operates in Northwest and Central parts of Zambia. The project is jointly implemented by a team of ILO and FAO, led by the Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO. A broadly composed project steering committee guides implementation; direct backstopping is provided by various technical departments of ILO and FAO.

Present Situation of the Project

After a one year inception phase – October 2013 – September 2014, the project embarked on a three year implementation phase, ending August 2017. The inception phase enabled the team to undertake market and value chain analysis, confirming the selected value chains, and to develop the M4P approach. Key question was, how does the M4P approach apply in a so-called thin-market context in Zambia.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

1. To independently assess the performance and progress to date of the project;

2. To provide strategic and operational recommendations as well as highlight lessons.

The evaluation covers all aspects of the project, its adherence to M4P approach, and has a qualitative nature. The main clients are government of Sweden and Government of Zambia. Secondly, FAO and ILO as implementing UN agencies.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation is carried out by a desk review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (with VC producers; young male and female farmers). The desk study is used to fine-tune questions for the open interviews; these interviews are meant to understand the changes (intended and unintended) and the underlying processes of change in-depth. The range of persons and organisations interviewed were representative for the diversity in both Value Chains and the project implementation setting. The evaluation was concluded with a debrief session with key staff of ILO and FAO, and the project steering committee to validate the findings and cover remaining information gaps. Major limitations were the widely scattered sites and limited time for interviews. The evaluation limited itself to young farmers; the project had been too short to make any significant progress on employment creation.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The YAPASA project was highly relevant, in line with national Government of Zambia policies and the mandate of several directly engaged ministries. The attraction of private sector partners to work with the youth in these 2 value chains, will enable YAPASA to accelerate job creation and involvement of youth in economic activities. YAPASA was well aligned with SIDA development strategies and several SIDA funded projects; with the ILO focus on rural economic development and with the FAO focus on reduction of rural poverty.

Though YAPASA did not reach the set targets within the planned timeline, the current engagement of private sector companies will enable it to surpass the objectives upon project completion. The collaboration between ILO and FAO and the private companies has generated valuable experiences in implementing the M4P approach – distinctly different from the conventional, direct implementation approach - on the ground, potentially useful for upscaling.

The YAPASA project team did not have a clear understanding of market dynamics during the inception phase. But at the start of the implementation phase the gaps between ‘old’ logframe and real market situation became clear. The project flexibly adapted its interventions and retained its objectives. The time spent in understanding the M4P approach and its implications for designing the right interventions are a necessary investment by project staff.

That necessary ‘M4P-learning’ time was not sufficiently anticipated; hence the performance indicators in terms of number of farmers reached were not achieved. In the first implementation year YAPASA only worked with partners that showed interest and was not able to reach out to more prospective partners. That applied especially to the finance front. Given the troubled macro-economic situation of Zambia, it was very hard to get the financial institutions on board. Alternatives have been developed, involving private companies to provide credit for financing inputs and own project investment to demonstrate the business model. The opportunities for accessing government funding were not well known, also due to shortage of project staff.

The resulting delay will be made up in the remainder of the project because of the greater private sector engagement, ready to invest more actively in the selected value chains, thus reducing the need for project resources. So the answer to the key question about the ‘thin-market’ context in Zambia is positive, as many more private sector

companies are active in these value chains and are ready to collaborate and contribute to achieve the set objectives of YAPASA.

The gender dimension thus far is restricted to the participation of men and women in project activities. A fair number of women make up the total beneficiary pool. Thus far no information is available on actual benefits in terms of incomes gained.

The aquaculture achievements can all be claimed by the YAPASA project, as hardly any other actor is on the ground in the project locations. This is different for the soy bean sector, where many private sector actors and development projects are active. YAPASA has not yet used the attribution analysis according the DCED standard to assess its contributions to these achievements. The use of DCED standard in systematically measuring progress and document these, has remained restricted thus far.

Broadly speaking, the YAPASA interventions are replicable in other projects and sectors in Zambia. Unintended benefits, such as cultivation of other cash crops by targeted farmers, adoption of environmentally friendly production practices and copying by other farmers, testify of the sustainability and scalability of the selected value chains and the M4P approach.

The project made conscious use of the available resources to achieve the best results. But initially project activities were hindered by lack of sufficient staff, frequent change of staff (CTA in particular), and transport scarcity. The steering committee (SC) provided useful update to SIDA, which generated useful feedback for the project. The SC lacked representatives of the private sector. There is a lack of coordination between project office and ILO and FAO country offices and HQ. The YAPASA staff was trained on M4P and DCED standard, but it lacked sufficient expert guidance to properly practice these new concepts on the ground.

Trust building between VC actors – out-growers relationships - was a key aspect partners and YAPASA focused on. Companies did not treat farmers as mere suppliers, but they also provided them with essential inputs and technical knowledge, and assured market access. The YAPASA team maintained excellent relations with private sector companies. The project paid active attention to the environmental sustainability dimension.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

The project needs to pay attention to the following aspects in the remaining phase of the project and a possible future extension.

1. Improved line of formal communication with the country offices and headquarters.
2. Improvement in documentation for better tracking of changes
3. Improve the application of DCED standard, especially for attribution of impact
4. Develop and disseminate communication materials to wider development community
5. Improving the logframe to reflect the reality on the ground
6. Ensuring adequate year-round income for the beneficiaries by supporting them in additionally available opportunities
7. Exploring possibility of future joint program with other UN agencies by both ILO and FAO. It might be difficult to involve more than two agencies in one project, but ILO and FAO can explore this possibility separately.
8. Seeking possibility of multi-donor funded project for future larger project funding