



Evaluation Summary



International
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Applying the G20 Training Strategy: Partnership of the ILO and the Russian Federation – Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries:	<i>Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Jordan and Vietnam</i>
Final Evaluation:	<i>October 2015</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office:	<i>SKILLS, Geneva</i>
Technical Office:	<i>SKILLS, Geneva; DWT/CO for Eastern Europe and Central Asia</i>
Evaluation Manager:	<i>Paul Comyn</i>
Evaluator:	<i>Tony Powers</i>
Project Code:	<i>GLO/12/50/RUS GLO/14/54/RUS RER/12/50/RUS</i>
Donor(s) & Budget:	<i>Russian Federation (US\$ 8,000,000)</i>
Keywords:	<i>Training, skills development, government, social partners</i>

Background & Context

The “Applying the G20 Training Strategy” project was the first technical cooperation project between the Russian Federation and the ILO. The project operated in five countries – Armenia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam and Jordan. By applying the policy and program “building blocks” set out in the G20 Training Strategy, the project aimed to improve the delivery of employer demand-led training in the formal technical and vocational education and training systems

(TVET). As part of the project, ILO’s Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification (STED) methodology was applied in some countries. In addition, the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO developed and tested new development tools. The total budget allocated to the project was \$US 8 million to be expended over three years to the end of November 2015.

The project document set out a three-level hierarchy of objectives:

- *Overall objective:* “to develop the capabilities of each country to improve their training delivery systems, extend better training to those who need it most, and thereby contribute to each country’s competitiveness and economic growth.”
- *Development objective:* “to strengthen skills development systems so as to improve employability, promote access to employment opportunities and increase incomes of women and men for inclusive and sustainable growth.”
- *Immediate objectives:* “(1) Improved capacity of TVET institutions and management in the selected target countries to deliver quality training; (2) Training programs in the target countries anticipate and meet skills needed for trade and economic diversification; (3) New TVET development tools and methodologies are created and tested in the selected target countries by the ILO in cooperation with international technical experts with participation of Russian experts and institutions.”

The final evaluation was conducted from 1 September to 2 October 2015. Its purpose was to indicate to the ILO and its partners the extent to which the project had achieved its aims and objectives and to determine the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of project outcomes. The evaluation covered all five project locations over the full three-

year period of its operation. Evaluation clients were the ILO, the donor (the Russian Ministry of Finance), the implementing agent (SKOLKOVO), project staff, tripartite constituents and project beneficiaries.

A lead international consultant (Tony Powers) coordinated the overall conduct of the evaluation, interviewed stakeholders in Russia, Jordan and Tajikistan, and wrote the Evaluation Report. National Evaluation Consultants, appointed by the ILO, conducted interviews in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Vietnam. The evaluation methodology included a document review, initial telephone interviews to gather information and to plan the subsequent stages, development of an evaluation instrument, submission of an inception report, conduct of the field visits, analysis and report writing.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Implementation

For a number of reasons, the initial implementation of the project was slow. As a result, many project activities were concentrated into the final year of project. This left little time to observe and evaluate the results of these activities.

At the country level, the project generated a wide range of activities. Significant examples include:

Jordan – the development of occupational standards for two sectors (Pharmaceuticals and Food Processing); the development of competency-based curricula based on these standards; specialized training to assist existing pharmaceutical companies to diversify their operations into “bio-similar” manufacture and to enhance their marketing capacity; and capacity building in human resource management for the food processing enterprises to support their growth and diversification.

Tajikistan – the conduct of a national Enterprise Skills Survey (ESS) and training needs analyses of three strategic sectors. The ESS filled a gap both in the availability of current TVET-related data and in the capacity of national institutions to collect these data. The training needs analyses found some significant weaknesses in national TVET system arrangements that have now been incorporated into a new National Development Strategy as priorities.

Kyrgyzstan - the peak government body responsible for TVET opened itself to external functional analysis, allowing the project to facilitate a review of TVET institutional arrangements, management and planning processes, legislative and regulatory barriers

and inconsistencies, and training program delivery and support mechanisms.

Armenia – successful piloting of SKOLKOVO’s Skills Foresight Tool in two sectors as well as other project activities implemented to improve program monitoring and evaluation; to support vocational guidance provision; and to enhance State Employment Service effectiveness.

Vietnam - STED tourism sector development activities targeted capacity building for tourism businesses, TVET institutions and local government authorities. This included training of staff in tourism businesses in specific vocational skills, communication skills, skills as a World Heritage Guides (in collaboration with UNESCO) and the Russian language; training of staff of TVET Institutions received as World Heritage Guide trainers and upgrading of specific vocational skills; training of local authority staff in career guidance, tourism planning and data collection and analysis.

Relevance, strategic fit and coherence

The project adhered to the principles set out in the G20 Training Strategy and was designed in a way that encouraged flexibility in the piecing together of its “building blocks” in each target country. The building block approach allowed participating countries to shape the project in a way that advanced their particular TVET development priorities and employment goals. The Project Document cites numerous examples of the project’s fit with national development objectives and stakeholders consulted in the field visits confirmed this. Tripartite constituents were engaged in all target countries and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the project and with their involvement in design and implementation.

Effectiveness

In terms of Immediate Objective 1, which related to improved capacity of TVET institutions to deliver quality training, project activities have led to improvements reflecting a number of the elements of the G20 Training Strategy. Examples include:

Jordan – In the Pharmaceuticals industry, filling an identified skills training gap while, at the same time, creating a new TVET pathway for school leavers to be employed in high quality, well paid jobs. In the Food Processing sector, the project has introduced occupational standards, new curricula and accreditation for training delivered in the workplace.

Tajikistan – Building the capacity of the Agency of Labour to collect labour market information promises to improve TVET relevance in the future. Funding to

conduct future surveys has now been built into the Government's three-year budget. Similarly, the training needs analyses conducted for three key sectors, has provided additional insights into weaknesses in the TVET system that need to be addressed.

Kyrgyzstan – The functional analysis of the Agency for Vocational Education promises to achieve significant improvements in overall TVET system reform.

Armenia – TVET quality improvement and associated labour market policy and program enhancements were the focus of activities in Armenia. The SKOLKOVO TVET Simulation tool was also piloted in Armenia and this has generated considerable enthusiasm among TVET managers about its potential to improve institutional management and performance.

Vietnam – Activities designed to develop the tourism sector in Vietnam through the use of STED also addressed the needs of national TVET institutions both to better engage with local employers to determine their needs and to deliver quality training to their employees in line with these needs.

Immediate Objective 2, which related to training programs anticipating and meeting skills for trade and economic diversifications. STED was implemented in Jordan and Vietnam and has added value in a number of ways. In Jordan, it has started a process of industry engagement that is valued by the stakeholders who see it as having helped to identify long-standing barriers to growth and to develop effective training solutions. In Vietnam, it supported economic and employment growth in the tourism sector in two provinces through an array of training courses and through the development of local support resources. In both locations the process of improving connections between TVET systems with employers produced good outcomes and provided a model for broader application.

Immediate Objective 3 required the developing and testing of two new TVET development tools by SKOLKOVO. The TVET Simulation Tool was developed to train specialists involved in the management of TVET institutions and services. Representatives from all the participating CIS countries and from Vietnam were involved in a workshop to validate and refine the tool in March 2014. Armenia and Vietnam tested its use and reported a high level of interest in it as an innovative and highly relevant training tool.

The second tool, the Skills Foresight Tool, represented an attempt to bridge two areas of labour market research and planning – skills anticipation and technology foresight. In 2014, the tool was tested in Armenia and Vietnam. In Armenia, SKOLKOVO worked in close cooperation with the Armenian Union of Employers and focused on three sectors, IT, food processing and precision engineering sectors. In Vietnam, the metal processing sector was the focus. According to SKOLKOVO the results of the process include the creation of “maps of the future” for the two sectors and the identification of 20 skills in demand and “jobs of the future” – information that can be used for educational program development.

Factors influencing results

The condensed implementation timeframe – This resulted in a concentration of project activities in its last twelve to eighteen months. Many activities were only completed in the last two months. This rush of activity is not conducive to good outcomes-based management.

Complexity and diversity of activities - The range of activities implemented through the project was very broad and technically complex. The breadth of project activity may have reduced its ability to delve deeper into some outcome areas.

Geographic spread - The technical diversity and complexity of the project was further complicated by its geographic spread.

Efficiency of resource use

From an efficiency perspective, a speedier implementation of the project in its early stages would have allowed a much better focus on maximizing outcomes rather than rushing to complete activities.

The SKOLKOVO tools were well received, but, given the lack of any long-term vision in the project documents for the application of these tools, it is impossible to say if the project's investment in their creation represents value for money, either in absolute terms or compared with the project's other investments.

The split in project management arrangements was not conducive to managing the project as a cohesive whole, but as separate sub-projects. Having a central person in place to manage the project as a whole may have enhanced this synergy.

Impact and sustainability of results

At a national level, there were a number of developments that seem likely to provide an enduring legacy for the project:

Jordan – new training programs developed and introduced to fill important gaps in national TVET capacity;

Tajikistan – enhanced capacity to undertake labour market research and a commitment to funding this for the next three years from the national budget; elevation of TVET system deficiencies identified through training needs analyses to the National Development Strategy;

Kyrgyzstan – a high level of institutional ownership of the AVE functional analysis and a commitment to act on its results.;

Armenia – a broad range of institutional capacity building activities promises to improve overall outcomes in the future; the employer association has embraced the Skills Foresight tool and has entered into discussions to apply it in additional sectors to influence the TVET system.

Vietnam - the success of the engagement process demonstrated through the project has advanced discussions on the development of a National Tourism Industry Skills Council.

Conclusions

Project activities were crammed into the last twelve to eighteen months of the project and this negatively affected overall project performance.

While some project activities can be criticised as being insufficiently linked to measurable outcomes and offering only a minor contribution to systemic reform, there are a number of examples of important results which at least offer potential to have an enduring impact.

The range of activities delivered in support of the project's objectives was very broad – so broad, in fact, that the project may have spread itself too thinly in some respects. Deeper interventions in fewer developmental areas may have generated more significant and sustainable changes in some locations.

STED brought industry practitioners and TVET institutions and regulators together in a structured training development process. Strict adherence to the model – indeed any such model – may be of secondary importance. It might be beneficial to conduct an in-depth analysis and review of STED to determine if there is any scope to streamline its application in some way.

The SKOLKOVO tools were developed and were well received in the countries.

Recommendations

1. There is now an urgent need to consider exit arrangements for the project.
2. In any future work with the target countries, at least three months should be devoted to detailed project design *before* project commencement. Ideally, this should include and staffing and technical support strategy that ensures the project can move forward from its first day of operation.
3. Future projects involving the development and testing of new tools and methods should link to the broader project objectives in a measurable way.
4. Should the Russian Federation seek to support ILO projects of this type in the future, the expertise and broader involvement of the Russian Ministry of Labour should be sought.
5. The STED model should be reviewed to assess the potential for streamlining its delivery in certain circumstances – maybe offering a “STED Light” option where time and resources make a comprehensive application of the model difficult. It is, however, important that the STED process of improving engagement of TVET system stakeholders with industry is not diminished.
6. Future TVET development work in these countries should more fully examine opportunities to address gender equality, especially in terms of increasing female labour market participation.
7. As part of the project design process, an “evaluability assessment” should be undertaken to ensure that all project activities are designed in a way that can demonstrate their effectiveness in achieving desired project outcomes. In particular, attention needs to be given to indicators – as Guidance Note 11 from the ILO's Evaluation Unit outlines, this requires: “*The selection of SMART indicators that are quantitative or qualitative and include comparison points of levels, quality and grade.*”
8. The “building block” approach advocated in the G20 Training Strategy provides an excellent starting point for assessing TVET development needs and for constructing a more effective training system. To build on this, the ILO might consider the development of diagnostic tools and processes to assist countries to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their current TVET systems, to consider the applicability of different international models, and to develop short, medium and long-term plans for reform.