



Executive summary

Support to the Implementation of the
Skilling Uganda Strategy in the Karamoja
Region (SSU IRE)

Uganda

UGA 160331T

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

The overall objective of the programme is to increase the employability of youth through better quality of instruction and learning in skills development. It focuses on increasing access for youth to quality education and training, increasing sustainability by making sure skills development is addressed in a more coordinated and aligned manner, allowing proper certification of acquired skills, a national accreditation of skills development programmes and an improved integration of skills development activities in existing coordination structures.

The main objective of this end-term review is to provide an in depth analysis of the value of the results achieved and of the whole of the implementation process of the intervention, and to evaluate the performance of the intervention in Karamoja, based on the five DAC criteria.

2 Results and conclusions

2.1 Performance criteria

Relevance: Score - A

The evaluation successfully aligned to the Skilling Uganda Strategy by providing formal and non-formal trainings that have given youth employable skills. It developed the capacities of VTIs, private sector organizations and local partners to deliver these inputs against national frameworks.

The inputs and offerings of the project are reflective of the priorities of youth in Karamoja and of the expressed inputs needed by local partners – especially regarding access to a blend of long- and short-term trainings, as many beneficiaries indicated they prefer quickly accessible capacity development initiatives, as the ability to commit to a longer training course is prohibitive for many.

VTIs have successfully implemented some income generating activities, created good relationships with the private sector and local government, and students are happy with the content they are learning. However, the training curricula must continue evolving, expand to certify soft and workplace readiness skills, and be packaged in a more accessible and logical way across modules and assessments.

Efficiency: Score - C

Enabel's relationship with SDF grantees was positive and their engagement successful; but, they were both overwhelmed by the grant administration process, which took a lot of time away from critical technical tasks. Sharing events with grantees were largely relegated only to their implementation phase, with a notable drop off after grant closure. Yet, growing the ecosystem in the region for skilling and private sector development to thrive requires partners across all levels of the system to continue engaging with one another to drive long-term change.

While VTIs have successfully implemented some of their business plan's income generating activities, there was high staff turnover and lack of continuity in some senior management roles for the second half of the project. This restricts the sustainability and impact of the project's capacity development and knowledge transfer initiatives, and has led to low motivation of staff members in VTIs. The mismanagement and theft of funds in one school,

while eventually identified and rectified, threatened the project's financial accountability and indicates a need to reestablish management structures and financial control mechanisms in the coming program.

Human resource changes at national and regional levels and a lack of full time technical staff in Karamoja for most of the project negatively affected the efficiency of implementation, while also challenging relationships with the donor. Lack of documentation of key structural and outcome target modifications furthered these issues, simply due to lack of procedure-following for addressing alterations in the logical framework. Issues in this area can easily be resolved if procedures are followed and core technical and operational team members are put into place in the region full time to execute the next program.

Effectiveness: Score - B

VTIs and SDF grantees effectively provided formal, non-formal and instant trainings in the region to youth, especially women and increasingly to Karamojong. However, there are no pathways available for youth who want to upskill and transition from the informal to the formal education system to continue learning. Targets were met in terms of total numbers of youth reached – a huge achievement given the operational challenges identified, as well as school closures through most of 2020 due to COVID-19. However, many of those trained benefited from the non-formal skilling track, which was not intended to be so prominent in the program. Discussions between the project team and donor regarding target changes and expansion of non-formal training options versus formal programs were not clearly defined nor documented by either party, leading to challenges meeting outputs for youth formal training.

While VTIs have been given management training, they still lack important governance structures and their operational costs for student and staff welfare and staff wages are very high, leaving little room for expansion and execution of their business plans, especially at St. Daniel Comboni – a private school that does not receive capitation grants from the government to offset administrative expenses. Poor financial management at SDC also led to mismanagement of funds, demonstrating the need for ongoing strict financial control measures to monitor future grant disbursements to VTI partners. These grants are critical to VTI growth and should be continued to support their onward development and capacity-building of staff.

Importantly, achieving outcomes for program like this in Karamoja is a difficult task, requiring significant time, effort, energy, finances and human resources to drive change. Effectiveness of the intervention must be looked at in context, and reflections on what works in Karamoja, what success looks like in such a challenging environment, and how the project must appropriately and routinely adapt and evolve to meet the needs of this population must be undertaken during any further intervention. Ongoing financing and bursaries for students seeking formal training programs should continue, as these inputs provide the critical resources they need – and would not otherwise have – to continue their education.

Flexibility in project design, target setting and strategies for implementation is critical going forward, as initiatives such as this one must follow a rights-based approach that puts the needs and desires of beneficiaries first when defining effective interventions, as their perspectives and ability to access and benefit from inputs and services must be paramount.

Impact: Score - B

Notable impact can be seen from the project regarding its planned effects, despite challenges implementing activities due to COVID-19 school closures throughout most of 2020. Stakeholders at both the national and local level are extremely positive about the project's initiatives and the engagement they have with Enabel. Most believe the inputs provided by the project were relevant and met the needs of beneficiaries, appreciating the communication, reflection and learning exchanges that occurred.

The SDF Platform helped stakeholders improve their communication and information-sharing, laying the groundwork for a true ecosystem of public and private actors to emerge in the region who are invested in collective actions that improve youth employment through skilling. Through their participation in the project, MCPs have been upskilled to get their own certification and to execute training and assessments of students and trainees using DIT's training modules. There has been increased enrollment at VTIs; students are happy with the content they are learning and are gaining nationally recognized certifications; VTIs are forming important relationships with the private sector; and students are increasingly accessing practical training through Work Based Learning.

There is need to address environmental impact at the VTIs by applying green construction principles to new buildings, training students in green skills and technologies related to their field, and by ensuring significant hardware investments are well managed and maintained. Female students are happy to have access to skills training and find it beneficial, but they do not feel safe and comfortable on site at the VTIs. A decent work agenda can be met in the region if definitions for measurement are tailored to fit the regional context and data from a true labor market information system applied to ensure training programs capacitate youth with the skills they need to work in today's economy.

Realizing long-term change in Karamoja will take time. Impact measures should be designed to reflect this and identify incremental changes that happen in phases over time as Karamoja develops, the private sector grows and income standards within households improve.

Sustainability: Score – B

For the project to be sustainable, significant inputs must continue at the national level to transition the policy framework and achieve the new objectives of the TVET policy. The project's notable success in driving forward the new policy framework with the government is commendable; achieving real implementation of the new framework, however, will take significant time and effort – especially regarding private sector engagement.

There is a need to update VTI and training curricula and better align it to labor market realities – especially in Karamoja, and continue expanding options for recognition of certifiable skills – including giving priority to both formal and non-formal skilling as pathways toward more dignified work. Access to training programming for youth in Karamoja will be continually limited by finances, as despite need and desire, the majority of households cannot afford to send their children to school. Sustaining a growing number of Karamojong in formal training requires more people to enter into and complete the formal education system through at least primary. As this will take time, the sustainability of this investment will need to be measured against more incremental changes in wealth generation.

It is important to cultivate long-term relationships between current grantees and former grantees to ensure continuous sharing and learning and grow the ecosystem of actors improving skilling in the region. These relationships are already established and strong, they only need to be continuously activated.

Local ownership of the initiative and buy-in to the program are strong and growing; they are expected to be sustained. Awareness-raising in communities about the benefits of skilling have been very successful, and these outreaches have been central in growing a basis of support for this initiative in the region. This provides an excellent basis for extending the program going forward. In the short- and medium term, financial sustainability must better reflect the realities of doing business in this part of the world, and provide relevant investments that are slowly transitioned to external financing by local stakeholders.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations focus on ways to refine intervention approaches and areas of focus to achieve maximum impact and sustainability. These recommendations are valuable for the future extension of the project and should be reviewed and prioritised by the Enabel team and local stakeholders to support improved delivery. Recommendations are presented in tabular form for easier review; key stakeholders and priority levels (low, medium and high) for implementation are also provided.

Policy Dialogue	Priority Level	Responsible
1A: In coordination with the MoES, support the creation and/or further development of national sector skills councils under the new TVET policy. Focus on sectors currently supported by Enabel – tourism, construction and agriculture. These inputs should carry on from the work done at a national level under the current programme and extend support to roll out the new policy.	Medium	Project Steering Committee (National - KLA)
1B: Drive the creation and/or development and recognition by district local governments of regional sector skills councils in Karamoja under the new TVET policy. Focus on sectors currently supported by Enabel – tourism, construction and agriculture. Operationalising the policy's objectives in Karamoja must be a strategic priority on its own, apart from other national actions.	High	Project Steering Committee (Regional - KJA)
Skills Development Fund	Priority Level	Responsible
2: Hire a grants management team to facilitate and administer the overall SDF and its grantees. A grant administrator or fund manager should be engaged to oversee grant management so the technical team can focus on critical tasks. As the list of grantees grows, human resources will be required to oversee the grant making and management process, reporting and funds management.	High	Enabel
3A: Support and facilitate sector platform meetings and other networking events for TVET stakeholders in the public and private sector in Karamoja to promote partnerships, learning and sharing. Continue developing the private and public sector ecosystem around skilling and youth employment in the region. Promote platforms to allow for greater learning, sharing and networking – all of	Medium	Enabel

which are critical to growing the local economy in a remote region like Karamoja with a nascent private sector and low public demand.		
3B: Back training programmes that provide income-earning opportunities or employment within local value chains in Karamoja. Look to the sectors of focus for partner VTIs – construction and agriculture. Look for opportunities for benefitting from circular, local economies within the region’s growing sectors to expand employment options. Upcycling and service delivery along local value chains can generate jobs and keep work close to home.	High	Enabel, Donor
4A: Develop various funding pathways for grantees following their initial grant, including via longer-term financing from the SDF. Ideally, ensure grantees have a chance to grow into follow on funding if their initiative works.	Medium	Enabel, Donor
4B: Plan for long-term engagement to achieve impact and sustainability in Karamoja. Achieving outcomes in this content requires a greater investment of time and resources than most places.	Medium	Enabel, Donor
5: Conduct an economic labour market impact assessment in Karamoja and use findings to improve training program content and available courses. Training modules must be continuously refined to meet the current sector need; this must be a priority for the TVET and sector skilling councils and should be based on an economic labour market impact assessment.	High	Enabel, Donor
6: Provide additional funding for bursaries, especially for women in low income households. Bursaries must be continuously provided for youth, especially women, to access any form of skilling or training program. Enrolling more students in VTIs requires additional funding to provide support and bursaries due to the low- income levels in local households.	Medium	Enabel, Donor
Vocational Training Institutes	Priority Level	Responsible
7A: Provide ongoing capacity development for VTI trainers and explore options for retaining them in place following training to facilitate knowledge transfer. Ongoing capacity development must be provided to new staff and knowledge management and transfer procedures put in place; explore options for keeping trained staff in place for a guaranteed period of time after training.	Medium	Enabel
7B: Expand and formalise relationships between VTIs and the private sector both within and outside of Karamoja. VTIs must increasingly expand and formalize their relationships with the private sector, who also must be supported to engage in a more structured way with trainee students.	High	Enabel

8A: Formalise communication structures, working groups, and formal meeting structures among stakeholders to help them better execute key tasks. More structured communication and engagement between stakeholders working with the VTIs will help them plan and execute their tasks better; consider working groups and formal meeting structures to achieve this.	Medium	Enabel
8B: Support flexible learning pathways to help youth access formal and non-formal skilling. A more aligned training system between the formal and non-formal skilling pathways will allow for flexible learning and alternative models to accessing more rigorous certification options.	High	Enabel, Donor
9: Help VTIs focus on one dominant sector for their training programming to develop into true centres of excellence. Defining a Centre of Excellence in this context must be further explored and refined, especially regarding elements in the framework related to standardization, sustainability, broad and narrow areas of focus, and public versus private training models. Consider having VTIs focus on one group of courses, in one sector, to really develop excellence in their training programming and become a Centre of Excellence in a particular field.	High	Enabel, Donor
Cross-Cutting	Priority Level	Responsible
10: Look for opportunities in the tourism, construction and agriculture sectors to integrate green growth and green-related employment opportunities more formally into future programming.	Medium	Enabel, Donor
11: Conduct a Gender Analysis and create specific action plans for each VTI to improve gender responsive inputs in the next phase. Findings should be used to steer the project's actions in accordance with gender specific outcomes, including results from a social protection lens.	High	Enabel, Donor
12: Creating a decent work definition and framework for Karamoja can help stakeholders define what dignified and fulfilling work looks like in their context. Strategies for achieving decent work conditions for youth in Karamoja must address their specific realities and needs, depending on their location and local employment opportunities.	Medium	Enabel, Donor

4 Lessons learned

Investing in Skilling

The SSU programme has only been in the region for 5 years, but it has achieved demonstrable impact. Although school closures and lockdowns due to COVID-19 might have slowed this progress, it has still been successful. However, there is more work to be done to achieve long-term change, notably regarding the mind-set changes needed in communities and the public and private sector towards TVET and skilling. For the region to develop successful skilling programming and a thriving private sector, and for more significant impact to be realised, ongoing, intensive financial and structural resource investments are needed to both develop skilling institutions as well as support more local students to attend. This includes investment in human resources and capacity, with the purpose of empowering the people of Karamoja.

Learning and Sharing

An ecosystem of stakeholders exists in the region and it is important that key players are given the platform they need to influence change. SDF grantees, past and present, should have regular learning and sharing meetings where they can reflect on their experiences and how they can work together to develop a network that is effective and beneficial for all stakeholders. Additionally, Skills Development Platforms need to meet more than once a year; regular meetings will ensure there is accountability, no duplication of activities and sustainability. Also, it is important to utilise digital means of coordination in an effort to continue communication when physical meetings are not possible.

Private Sector Development

The private sector is key in skilling because it knows what kind of skills are needed for the workforce to be effective and successful. It took up to three years for the VTIs in the region to understand the relevance of the private sector to their work, and it is important that their relationship is nurtured and cultivated for both parties to continue working together.

Institution Development

Institutional development and capacity-building are challenging tasks. In a project with many other initiatives, they can be complex and difficult to implement and monitor. VTIs have a positive attitude towards upskilling and capacity development. There should be avenues in place for knowledge transfer to happen, especially in a region that has a high turnover rate of instructors. Knowledge transfer is important to sustainability and longevity of the programme.

Curriculum and Certification

The skilling curriculum is still outdated across most technical areas, and much of what is taught is not relevant to today's labour market. The project needs to continue working with DIT, UBTEB and other certification bodies to promote and support upgrading of the curriculum. The private sector should be included in this process even more than they are today. The process of certification of skills for short term trainings needs to be standardised to include lessons learned at the VTIs.

Infrastructure

A focus on improving budgetary practices and procedures (through additional trainings and a procedures manual) could be effective in embedding approaches to better-quality infrastructure construction and maintenance over the long term in the region. The relative

diversity of approaches to managing infrastructure development and maintenance, including the processes for procurement orders, technical staff, reporting and logs, management of external service providers, identifying internal solutions to challenges, etc., that was seen in each of the VTIs indicates that identifying these best practices could be useful for the project and serve to improve the coordination and management of infrastructure improvement and maintenance. For instant training beneficiaries, a plan must be put on place for how they can maintain their equipment over the long run.