



Executive summary

Mid-term Review

Skilled Young Palestine (SYP) – Improving
Resilience and Job opportunities for Youth

Palestine

PZA1804411

Samira ABU AISHA, ADE
Samer SAIED, ADE

This review is realised as part of the cooperation between Palestine and Belgium.
This report has been drawn up by independent external experts.
The opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Enabel, the Belgian Development Cooperation or the authorities of the countries concerned.

Intervention summary

“Skilled Young Palestine – Improving Resilience and Job opportunities for Youth” (SYP) is a 4-year project (January 2020-December 2023) with the following overall objective: "To increase the resilience of Palestinian youth in vulnerable areas in Palestine". Its specific objective is "to improve the transition of youth to employment and self-employment through improved skills and competencies”.

The 7,5-million-euro project focuses on supporting the Palestine in gaining economic autonomy and building up resilience among Palestinian youth. This will be done through the provision of technical skills training on the one hand and entrepreneurship key competencies, life skills and digital skills training on the other hand.

The following two complementary results are sought:

- R1: Increased labour market opportunities for youth by supporting technical skills development demanded by the labour market
- R2: Young people have gained 21st-century skills for work and life

Evaluation team

- Samira ABU AISHA, National Senior Consultant, Youth Economic Empowerment, Team Leader
- Samer SAEID, National Senior Consultant, Youth Economic Empowerment.

Summary

SYP aims at supporting Palestine in gaining economic autonomy and building up resilience among Palestinian youth. This has been done through the provision of technical skills training on the one hand and entrepreneurship key competencies, life skills and digital skills training on the other hand. It puts particular emphasis on reaching out to vulnerable women and youth. Over its 4-year implementation period, this 7,5-million-euro intervention aims at benefitting 2,800 youth through contracting 23 Private Sector Umbrella Organisation (PSUO) partners over the West Bank (WB) including East Jerusalem (EJ) and Gaza Strip (GS) in Palestine. However, project beneficiaries include all stakeholders of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) competencies (TVET institutions, PSUOs, Ministry of Labour (MoL), technical trainers, curriculum experts, Civil Society Organisation (CSO) partners, master-trainers, and private companies) as well as government bodies who support the TVET sector.

This Mid-Term Review (MTR) seeks to assess and present the extent to which SYP results (output, outcomes) are in the process of being reached or are likely to be reached. It analyses a generic evaluation field pertaining to performance on the basis of the OECD DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability) in addition to transversal themes and horizontal aspects. It also tackles issues related to a set of specific questions linked to the Skills Development Fund (SDF) and the innovation hubs.

The SYP project has achieved strong results in a complex and challenging context. It has achieved these results within the context of a protracted crisis, an ongoing military occupation, complex governance challenges, conflict in Gaza, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Enabel in Palestine is operationally very effective and efficient. Its operations, especially in providing economic empowerment services, are adaptive, flexible and reliable. The key role played by Enabel in Palestine, its solid capacity, expertise and deep in-country experience have positioned it as a leading development agency meeting the needs of vulnerable youth

and women. The SYP is on track to contribute to improving resilience and job opportunities for the targeted vulnerable youth groups in the WB including EJ and GS.

The relevance of the SYP project can be globally considered as highly satisfactory. A very relevant project for Palestine which addresses key national priorities and responds to prioritized national needs. The project emerged from national priorities based on barriers identified through the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 (NPA), the project is relevant as regards to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Enabel strategy and the partners' strategies. The SYP intervention is designed based on a Meta-analysis of the Labour Market for the target communities. The SYP designed the intervention based on the needs and gaps of the innovation hubs through conducting a Mapping Study to get an overview of the eco-system of innovation hubs in Palestine.

There is a high degree of coherence between SYP and other Enabel interventions. The design is appropriately informed by analysis and is built on the lessons of an evaluation of its previous projects and robust analysis of the labour market. The SYP project develops an integrated and coherent approach with other interventions implemented by Enabel and other international organizations including GIZ, UNESCO, European Training Foundation (ETF), Bantani Education, and Kruit.

The efficiency of the SYP project can be considered as satisfactory. The intervention is managed in an economic and rational manner. The efficiency of the project was also the result of well-managed day-to-day activities and of using a participative approach. Enabel has a strong financial and procurement system to ensure proper utilization of the project's financial resources. The prudent approach to engage project funds was translated into good value for money and the use of adaptive management allowed for the identification and implementation of activities that were very responsive to the needs of stakeholders and the vulnerable youth, and the need to achieve the expected results. The execution modalities encourage an efficient use of resources available to the intervention and foster the partnership between the TVET centers and PSUOs in terms of service provision and resources allocation. Some delays have been encountered in the implementation of the Grant Agreements owing to delay in signature, and external factors (Covid-19, May War on GS in 2021, shortage of raw materials in the local markets). All of the agreements have been extended in the course of 2022 (no-cost extension). The change in duration will have no or limited effect on achieving the objectives. The TVET training is designed based on the CTA which is very efficient and gives the trainees the lead to practice and to develop their knowledge and skills at the same time.

The MTR considers effectiveness to be satisfactory. the SYP has achieved good overall performance in terms of output indicators and the contribution towards the achievement of outcome indicators. The primary data shows that 27% of the TVET trained youth are employed and 15% of the trained youth became self-employed after participating in the TVET training programs in the three locations. The PSUOs achieved good progress on implementing 50 TVET trainings in the WB, EJ and GS. The TVET trainees have acquired the vocations they wanted and are demanded in the market which will increase their chance of getting jobs.

The assessment conducted for this MTR identified three critical success factors that explain this effectiveness: (i) good project design, responding to national needs and benefitting from a good engagement and participation of stakeholders in the implementation phase; (ii) sustainment of the capacities of the PSUOs, TVET centers and civil society organizations (CSOs) partners through development of many TVET curriculum and the 21st-century skills training manual; and (iii) a good ownership by the strategic partner MoL as a chair of the SC, providing strategic guidance to the project implementation, and a good flexibility by the SYP project management in allocating project resources and implementing activities to be able to respond to the stakeholders' needs.

At this stage, **impact appears satisfactory**. There are some indications of impact considering the achievements of the outputs. The SYP project creates an enabling environment facilitating the transition of youth to employment and self-employment through improved technical skills and 21st-century skills. Also, the SYP project has contributed to the development of new TVET curriculum and the 21st-century skills manual which have long term implications. It has contributed to the creation of new TVET training programs of some VTCs and the expansion of existing ones.

Project achievements are already institutionalized within the government entities so sustainability appears satisfactory. There are no obvious risks to the sustainability of project achievements over the long-term. Most achievements are already well institutionalized; they should be sustained over the medium and long-term. In addition, the good participation of stakeholders throughout the implementation of the project led to a good ownership of results achieved by the project; which will also contribute to the long-term sustainability of these achievements.

In terms of gender equity, results are marked by good progress towards targeting women: 32% of the end beneficiaries in the TVET trainings in the WB including EJ and GS are women. The majority 60% of the total targeted trainees in the 21st-century skills training implemented by the innovation hubs in the WB including EJ are women while GS has not started the 21st-century skills training yet. However, most of the women trainees faced challenges during the WBL training where the private companies have gender stereotyping and discrimination against the female trainees particularly in Gaza strip. Most of the female trainees suffered from lack of respect from the owners and the workers in these companies. This requires more efforts from Enabel and the PSUOs to improve the attitudes of the private sector regarding women participation in the labour market. UNESCO conducted a specific campaign on gender stereotyping in TVET.

Regarding inclusion, the partners targeted a limited number of People with Disabilities (PwDs) (1.2%) of the total targeted youth in the TVET training. The partners have to work more on media and awareness campaigns to raise the targeted number of the PwDs in the TVET track.

Enabel has given **high attention to environment protection** through the project's operations and activities through using virtual server, hybrid ways of working, SharePoint and digital filing systems; for now, they are operating 95% paperless. Enabel enhanced the partners' capacities of green economics and how to consider good environmental practices in their interventions.

While Enabel accountability mechanisms exist and are functional, there are **some indications that voices are not sufficiently heard in relation to intervention implementation**. The vast majority of the trainees were unaware and did not have easy and fair access to Enabel complaint and feedback mechanisms.

The Steering Committee (SC) participated in the design of the SYP at the strategic level where it is headed by the MoL. Enabel designed **a solid monitoring and evaluation system** to track the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes through using well-defined performance indicators. The results framework identified during the design phase of this project presents a detailed set of expected results. The review of the objective and outcomes indicates a good logical "chain of results"

All the parties are aware of the importance of SDF for TVET development but the actual application is the key for success. The SDF is still a concept and roadmap for the PSUOs to start from and there is a lot of work to be done before assessing the SDF performance. The consensus on the governance, management and the financial resources are still under argument. Also, the private businesses are key to moving forward towards the application of the SDF. Their heavy involvement is a high priority in addition to their representative institutions including the chambers of commerce and the federation of industries. The end beneficiaries of the SDF are actors in the private sector. It will lead to the development of TVET in light of global changes and technological advancements; and represent the main pillar for boosting the national economy.

The SYP project supports the establishment and development of seven innovation hubs in partnership with five CSOs and UNESCO in the WB and GS which are still under renovation and development. The design and functions of the hubs reflect a high level of efficiency and effectiveness in creating new businesses and employment opportunities for the vulnerable youth. There have been delays in renovating the innovation hubs mainly due to unavailability of some reconstruction material in GS, non-compliance by the facilities owners with the terms of the contracts with the CSO partners, some owners of the facilities do not agree to make changes to the facilities, and long procurement procedures by Enabel. Accordingly, the 21st-century skills training (including learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, and career and life skills) has been implemented in alternative training places in the WB. However, in GS, the 21st-century skills training will not start until the renovation of the hubs are completed.

Recommendations:

Strategic recommendations:

- The SDF is a complicated and a challengeable mechanism especially with the fragmentation of the TVET system and the delayed functioning of the new TVET Commission. Therefore, it is recommended that Enabel plans longer support to the SDF within the new Portfolio to be systemized and to ensure its sustainability.
- Build on the achievements of the SYP project and continue supporting the PSUOs as leading and strategic partners and investing in their technical capacities to play a more dynamic role to develop the TVET sector in Palestine, concentrating on strengthening the partnership between the demand and supply sides (PPP).
- Invest in the public TVET centers more than the NGO TVET centers since the public centers have the infrastructure and the know-how expertise to ensure the sustainability of the TVET services especially for the vulnerable youth after ending the SYP project as they provide free services.
- In order to ensure higher quality of TVET system outputs in Palestine that match the needs of the labor market and to increase the employment rates of the graduates, it is highly recommended to build on the efforts of Enabel in the SYP project related to the development and systemization of the WBL approach.
- Enabel should support a strategic priority of economic empowerment/resilience of women and youth focusing on gender transformative approach by which women can fulfil their right to economic resources and power to make decisions that benefit themselves, their families and their communities. This approach thus outlines three conditions necessary for genuine and sustainable economic empowerment for women and youth:

increased capabilities (building agency), decision-making power (challenging power relations), and an enabling environment (challenging gender-harmful structures).

Capacity building for the partners:

- The PSUOs should conduct more training hours to cover additional topics within the 21st-century skills that are also essential for their employment and business development skills such as self-employment, small business development, and entrepreneurship. Also, CSOs should target the TVET trainees in the resilience training implemented by the innovation hubs.
- Enabel should consider the risk related to the implementation of the work-based learning (WBL) approach where most of the trainees especially the women trainees in GS faced challenges during the WBL phase through conducting media campaigns and awareness sessions for the private companies about the importance of the WBL approach for youth and women.
- Enabel should conduct more capacity building training for the PSUOs in the project cycle management including proposal design based on the complex task approach (CTA) and WBL approaches, logical framework, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan and tools, result-based reports, and financial and procurement management. These trainings should be at the commencement of the project to ensure that the partners have proper understanding of Enabel reporting and financial procedures and requirements.
- Enabel should communicate the toll-free number and email for complaints with the end beneficiaries and should be listed on posters and the publications of the project especially the training manuals and brochures. Enabel should send messages to all beneficiaries to inform them about the hotline and complaints mechanisms to ensure fair and easy access to the complaints system.

TVET training:

- Enabel and the partners should raise the trainees' awareness of decent work and Occupational Health and Safety Standards (OHSS) in GS, WB and EJ in the TVET training.
- The PSUOs should conduct more training hours to cover additional topics within the 21st-century skills that are also very essential for their employment and business development skills such as self-employment, small business development, and entrepreneurship. Also, CSOs should target the TVET trainees in the resilience track through the innovation hubs.
- The PSUOs should increase the budget for the tool kits to provide more devices and equipment that enable the youth to be self-employed.

WBL training:

- Enabel and the PSUOs should conduct more media campaigns and awareness sessions for the private sector companies to raise their awareness regarding the importance of the CTA and WBL approaches in the skills enhancement of the youth and to rehabilitate them to secure job opportunities due to the CTA and WBL training. Also, the PSUOs should conduct orientation workshops for private companies on the importance of their social responsibility to train and empower women and youth to find job opportunities in the future.
- The PSUOs should involve the private companies in the proposal design of the project to ensure their understanding, commitment and ownership of the project. Also, the partners should identify the most proactive private companies during the preparation phase of the project and to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) or commitment

letters with these companies. Also, the partners should identify the needs of the private companies and the number of trainees that a company can absorb during the WBL phase.

- The Enabel team should conduct more monitoring field visits to the WBL trainings in the private companies to be sure that the trainees receive the training in an appropriate way and to mitigate any challenges facing them in cooperation with the partners and the private companies.

SDF:

- The hand-over of the SDF should be gradual and step-by-step until ensuring that the board members are elected and active, management staff are recruited and effective, the SDF is running and accumulated experiences and the capacities of the team are leveraged and maintained.
- The SDF should have its own law, regulations, and financial and managerial system, and it should be flexible and efficient in procedures and avoid the bureaucratic procedures of the government in payments, administration, etc. in order to succeed.

The innovation hubs:

- Classify the youth groups as “employment” and “resilience”, where the employment category corresponds to university students who lack employment opportunities after graduation, and the resilience category focuses on school drop-outs or those who did not complete or did not have the opportunity to enrol in higher education and need TVET skills and employment opportunities. This will help further in clearly segregating the youth into homogenous groups while delivering the training since they have identical socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.
- The CSO partners should conduct more training hours on the digital skills since the training hours allocated was not enough for some of the youth groups especially the university students in light of the great need of such skills. Also, the number of the training hours should be flexible and identified by the master trainers based on the youth needs assessment and not based on the budget or hours allocated.

Several lessons learned are presented below:

- The involvement of the PSUOs should relate to management and strategic levels from the start of the project intervention to ensure high commitment and ownership of the board of directors.
- The involvement of the private sector is critical to the development of the TVET system, but needs more extended dialogue at the country level with interested groups and various stakeholders.

As the duration of the signed Grant Agreements is too short, Enabel and the partners should consider the preparation stage of the project within the work plan of the project to ensure sufficient time for preparing the project appropriately and to implement the activities effectively. The SYP suffers from understaffing, so the grants monitoring and management is too heavy in terms of time and cost as Enabel staff have to monitor a huge number of grants in the WB, EJ and GS. Enabel should decrease the number of grant agreements with the PSUOs through selecting the partners that have solid experience of project management. Also, Enabel considers quarterly reports and final reports by the partners to ensure their compliance with the work plan and to track the progress of the outputs and outcomes achievement effectively.