Enabel

Executive summary

Evaluation report on the Skilled Young Palestine – Improving Resilience and Job opportunities for Youth Project (SYP)

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enabel.be

1 Presentation of the assessment

The 'Skilled Young Palestine - Improving Resilience and Employment Opportunities for Youth' (SYP) project aims to strengthen the resilience of Palestinian youth in vulnerable areas by improving their employability and entrepreneurship skills. **The project, spanning from May 27, 2019, to May 27, 2024**, with a budget of €7.5 million, aims to empower **2,800 young individuals**. It involves **30 partners:** 23 private sector umbrella organisations (PSUOs) across the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip; the Palestinian Employment Fund (PEF); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); and 5 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and academic institutions. The project was executed in collaboration with key strategic partners, including the Ministries of Labour, Finance, and Higher Council for Youth and Sports (HCYS). Additionally, implementing partners comprised PSUOs, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres, and NGOs overseeing the innovation hubs. The ultimate beneficiaries of the programme were young men and women.

The evaluation is conducted at the end of the project implementation aiming at: guiding future strategic and operational decisions with evidence-based recommendations, facilitating a comprehensive learning process by analysing ENABEL's performance and extracting valuable insights, and ensuring accountability to donors, partners, and ENABEL's staff. The end-term evaluation **(ETE) drew its findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations mainly** from a comprehensive desk review, including annual reports, final report and the mid-term evaluation report. Qualitative data was also gathered through interviews with stakeholders and focus group discussions involving young beneficiaries. These data sources were used to verify and triangulate the findings. **The duration of the ETE** had to be adjusted several times because the mission has been conducted during the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza and Ramadan month. Unfortunately, interventions in the Gaza Strip were excluded from the assessment due to these challenging circumstances.

Findings and conclusions

The final evaluation report, **consistent with the Mid-Term Review (MTR),** confirms the project's relevance is highly satisfactory **as it aligns with national and international strategies**, particularly in addressing youth employment needs. It also aligns with Enabel's strategy at the international level, earning a satisfactory evaluation grade. **The SYP closely aligns with key national agendas such as the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 (NPA), the National Employment Strategy 2021-2025, and the Labour Sector Strategy (2021-2023)**. It focuses on improving the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system and nurturing a skilled workforce, reflecting alignment with the TVET Strategy developed in 2010. **The project's design is rooted in the local context and builds upon successful experiences** to enhance skills development and create employment opportunities in Palestine. Its implementation methods are pertinent, adaptable, and tailored to local and national needs, reflecting a focus on economic growth, gender equality, and improving education-to-employment transitions.

In terms of internal coherence, it can be considered highly satisfactory as in MTR. The project has greatly benefited from Belgian financing for Palestinian territories, which has supported several projects aligned with its objectives, notably the YEP project. Internationally, it aligns with initiatives funded by other donors in the Palestinian territories, fostering collaboration and synergy. Within the **Enabel Portfolio, strategic alignment** and substantial funding have played key roles in amplifying the impact of the SYP project, ensuring coverage of key objectives and global challenges while adhering to development priorities and engaging in synergic collaborations. The **coordinated efforts between SYP and YEP** further booster economic empowerment initiatives in Palestine, **leveraging expertise and strategic additions** to achieve sustained positive outcomes. The close relationship highlighted in the end-term evaluation underscores cohesive strategies addressing challenges and enhancing self-

employment initiatives. Initiatives within YEP complement and amplify SYP's impact on skills development and employment opportunities.
Externally, SYP aligns with programmes such as the Dual Studies Program, DWP, PALM project, TTT project, DO TVET initiative, TVET4Future project, and Capacity Building of PSUOs, streamlining efforts to boost employment opportunities and refine vocational training without redundancy in Palestine. Collaborative efforts among international agencies like ILO, UNESCO, and GIZ show a concentrated approach to addressing youth unemployment and skill development challenges in Palestine, avoiding duplications and amplifying efforts.

The efficiency of the project can be considered satisfactory, consistent with findings from the MTR and SYP Annual Report 2024. Despite some obstacles (amendments to the timeframe, insufficient human resources at Enabel, Lack of capacity of implementing partners, delays in launching the SDF grant program, etc.), outputs were delivered within an extended timeline and without significant budget adjustments. **The SDF allocates funds** to private sector umbrellas and NGOs to provide tailored skills development training aligned with market demands, enhancing participants' access to employment opportunities. **PSUOs successfully delivered comprehensive training courses crucial** to the Palestinian labour market across various fields in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza, however challenges in budget coverage, delayed payments and limited adherence to WBL approach were regarded as challenges. Innovation hubs operated by NGOs and academic institutions facilitated resilience and employability training using tailored manuals, although delays impacted the complementarity between R1 and R2. A specialised team of trainers ensured the efficiency of 21st-century skills training. **Human resource limitations within Enabel affected efficiency**, with staff turnover impacting monitoring and evaluation. Delays in announcing and finalising grants, challenges in financial procedures among private sector umbrellas, and external factors contributed to overall project delays. However, strategic management via the steering committee offered consistent guidance throughout the project's lifecycle.

The project effectiveness has also been satisfactory, successfully achieving six out of seven indicators at the output level. However, it faced challenge in meeting specific indicator: the number of beneficiaries trained falling below targets for Results 1 as planned. Two indicators (% of selected innovation hubs budget co-financed by private sector/other sources and % of SDF budget co-financed by private sector/other sources) became non-contractual and were excluded from this evaluation. At the outcome level, the project's performance was moderately effective in achieving specific indicators, as outlined below

- % of trained youth who became self-employed: Achieved 28% compared to the 4% target.
- Number of WBL graduates conducting more than 30% structured field training: Underachievement: 1,227 WBL graduates compared to the target of 1,600.
- Level of satisfaction of youth with services provided in the TVET track: Achieved 90% compared to the 80% target
- % of trained youth that are employed: Underachievement: actual achievement is 63% compared to the 77% target.

The implementation of the SDF-grants fund proved effective through capacity building efforts and clear grant management procedures, fostering collaboration between strategic and implementing partners and ensuring smooth training outputs. Innovation hubs positively impacted youth engagement and skill development, yet strategies are needed to enhance participation, especially among young women. TVET centres significantly improved employability skills, although challenges like inadequate tools, delays at checkpoints, and limitations in learning environments impacted some participants' training experiences. Delays in the 21st century manual development affected training utilisation in Result 1.
Work-based learning (WBL): Twenty-three PSUOs (4 in East Jerusalem, 12 in the West Bank, and 7 in the Gaza Strip) were contracted to implement work-based learning in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Additionally, the PEF implemented a wage incentive scheme targeting 75 young men and women working in the IT sector in the West Bank. However, the effectiveness of the WBL programme

was somewhat hampered by some private companies' practices and socio-cultural barriers, including poor adherence to the practical training procedures and conditions.
21st Century Training: Master trainers received instruction at the Innovation Hubs using a Training of Trainers (TOT) methodology led by Enabel. The manual was praised by the trainers for its comprehensive, step-by-step coverage of various topics, and effective and continuous support from the master trainers was provided during the implementation phase. Concerns about the insufficient number of days allocated to each youth group to address important topics such as entrepreneurship were raised. **Beneficiaries highly praised the 21st-century skills training**, attributing it to their successful entry into the labour market. They suggested improvements such as tailored specialised training, post-training grants or incentives, and ongoing follow-up and support mechanisms after training completion. Challenges highlighted in FGDs included unequal access to equipment, limited post-training follow-up, and gaps in practical training in private companies. Despite these, the project's effectiveness in skill development and job opportunities for Palestinian youth is evident, with clear avenues for continued improvement and impact.

The evaluation report categorises the sustainability of the project as moderately satisfactory. **Challenges persist in maintaining financial and human continuity efforts within PA institutions, the non-governmental sector, and the private sector**. These entities have acknowledged the constraints they face in sustaining training programmes at the same level of quality. Promising areas for continuity include the ongoing use of training manuals by ministries such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, as well as adoption by the private sector and NGOs. Furthermore, sustainability relies **on beneficiaries utilising the knowledge and skills they have acquired in their current or future work endeavours**. It is anticipated that the **21st Century manual will continue to be utilised within innovative hubs** facilitated by trained instructors. However, ensuring sufficient funding is imperative for maintaining the quality of training programmes. Collaboration between private sector organisations and the MoL in sharing information is crucial for developing young people's work skills and facilitating their market entry initiatives after the project's completion.

The impact assessment of the project indicates a fairly satisfactory outcome, as it has contributed to supplying the Palestinian labour market with skilled and trained workers despite unstable security and economic conditions, marking a notable improvement. Structural factors should also be addressed. These include boosting investments in the Palestinian market to enhance job opportunities across various sectors, as well as enhancing the work environment by tackling external factors influencing the labour market and its foundational elements, including the Israeli occupation. Such factors include Israeli occupation practices that impede imports and exports, restrict labour movement, and control the prices of raw materials, among others. **The project utilised two main indicators to measure impact**. First, the Proportion of Youth Unemployed (NEET) Indicator marked a decrease from 35% in 2020 to 29% in 2022 with total (4273 beneficiaries[1]). While this reflects improved youth engagement in education, employment, or training, it should be attributed to collective impacts from various initiatives. Second, the Trainee Satisfaction Indicator indicates high levels of satisfaction, surpassing the ambitious target of 90%, reflecting the quality and significance of the training provided.

The project's performance in addressing transversal themes is mixed. The performance around **Gender integration, Environment and Climate Change, Communication and visibility is deemed satisfactory**, while regarding **Disability Inclusion it fell short of expectations**, with the percentage of participants with disability below 1%, as outlined in the MTR. The cross-cutting themes were effectively integrated into project interventions, both during the grant application process and the implementation of training programmes. However, despite these efforts, **societal barriers persist, hindering women's participation across R1**, which did not exceed 35% and remained in line with the project's target. On the other hand, in 21st-century skills training, female participation surpassed that of young males, indicating greater societal acceptance of such programmes among girls. An unintended effect of **women's engagement in** TVET was the change in mindset within the private

[1] Enabel monitoring tracer version 24 May 2024

sector regarding the importance of women's engagement and the benefits they would gain from hiring qualified women. In contrast, as outlined in the MTR participation among **persons with Disabilities (PWDs) remained minimal**, largely due to significant obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, limited societal awareness and a shortage of trained vocational trainers equipped to cater to PWDs.

Regarding the **communication and visibility of the project**, data collected from implementing partners confirmed that they used the Enabel logo during the training. For instance, during field visits to the Innovative Hubs, the evaluation expert observed banners that included the name of the project and its logo, as well as in the 21st Century Skills training manual. Respondents did not express any concerns about displaying the Enabel logo, even during times of conflict, as Enabel is regarded as a donor that respects Palestinian priorities and rights. **Communication officer was hired** by the project and conducted communication field visits and workshops to grantees in West Bank and Gaza to deliver trainings under both results on communication, logos guidelines and procedures, and the use of social media, coordinate the documentation of training, and develop success stories. Videos and success stories were also developed to promote the project among Palestinian stakeholders.

2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Future programme designs should place greater emphasis on gender integration, particularly for women in the TVET sector, by creating safe working environments in male-dominated sectors. Overcoming societal barriers that hinder women's enrolment can be achieved through advocacy campaigns to raise community and private sector awareness about women's rights in training and employment across all sectors. Enhance the rights and inclusion of vulnerable individuals, including persons with disabilities (PWDs), in project interventions. Recruit gender equality and inclusion expert to be part of the project staff	**Conclusions:** CO6 and CO13 **Targeted actors:** Strategic (Enabel, MoL, MoE) and operation partners (NGOs and PSUOs) **Priority: Medium-** and long term **Type:** Strategic and operational **Criteria:** Efficiency, transversal themes (gender, inclusion and environment)
Recommendation 2 Establish a follow-up mechanism by creating a sector working group comprising representatives from the government, private sector, and NGOs involved in training and employment. This group will enhance and continually adjust collaborative efforts among all training and labour stakeholders in addressing youth empowerment, skills development and entrepreneurship in Palestine. Additionally, strengthen ongoing partnerships between international and local agencies to effectively tackle youth unemployment and address skills mismatches by ensuring sufficient funding to cover any gaps.	**Conclusions:** CO5-C11 **Targeted actors**: Enabel, national actors (relevant ministries, NGOs and PSUOs) and international agencies **Priority:** Medium- and long term **Type:** Operational **Criteria:** coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability
Recommendation 3 Develop a simplified grants management manual in Arabic that aligns with the English version of Enabel grants manual. The translated Arabic version should be customised to include the items that Enabel deems important to share with implementing partners (grantees).	**Conclusions:** CO5 and CO8 **Targeted actors:** Enabel and SDF national partners (PSUOs and NGOs, MOL, MoE, National TVET commission) **Priority:** Medium-term **Type:** Operation **Criterion:** Efficiency
Recommendation 4 Enhance work-based learning policies and procedures by raising private sector awareness about adhering to work-based learning conditions and procedures. Incentives should be provided to companies that comply with these standards.	**Conclusions:** CO6 and CO10 **Targeted actors:** Enabel, strategic and implementing partners (PSUOs) **Priority:** Medium- and long-term **Type:** Operational and strategic **Criteria:** Efficiency and sustainability
Recommendation 5	**Conclusions:** CO6

Enhance the internal monitoring and evaluation system of the Enabel project by allocating more effort to field follow-up through the recruitment of a field officer. Additionally, build the capacity of the project's implementing partners in monitoring and evaluation.	**Targeted actors:** Enabel and implementing partners **Priority:** Short term and medium-term **Type:** Operational **Criterion:** Efficiency
Recommendation 6	
Integrate 21st-century skills into vocational training centres to enhance trainees' capabilities and boost their employability prospects. Additionally, provide small grants for entrepreneurship to expand the likelihood of trainees successfully establishing their own businesses.	**Conclusions:** CO5, CO8 and CO10 **Targeted actors:** Implementing partners **Priority:** Medium-term **Type:** Operational **Criteria:** Effectiveness, sustainability

3 Lessons learned

SDF grants modality and approach: One of the practices implemented by the project is the selection of the implementing agency for the Operating of the SDF grants. After internal consultations among Enabel management and with the steering committee, the project decided to implement the grants directly through Enabel. This approach proved largely successful, as evidenced by the implementation of these grants without adjusting the budgets, only requiring a timeframe extension. Enabel and its partners learned from this direct grant implementation approach the need to further simplify procedures and enhance capacity building to support private sector organisations, many of which were first-time grant managers from a donor.

Activating the Work-Based Learning Methodology: The project implemented the work-based learning methodology, which provided trainees with a significant opportunity to develop their practical skills. However, during this practice, it was found that a considerable number of private sector institutions do not adhere to the working conditions, mistreating trainees or assigning tasks outside of their areas of expertise. Due to weak follow-up and supervision from some institutions that hold grants, employers were not required to change their policies regarding work-based learning. One of the lessons learned from this practice is the necessity of having an agreement that includes binding procedures and conditions for both the employer and the trainee, engaging representatives from the Ministry of Labour as witnesses to encourage compliance with the terms of the agreement. Monitoring and follow-up during practical training would also increase the effectiveness of the work-based learning program, solving issues before they escalate.

Flexibility Approach in Implementing the 21st Century Skills Program: The coverage of 21st Century Skills was expanded to include five innovation hubs and a well-prepared manual was developed and utilised, outlining the training stages and the topics for each stage. Under the flexibility approach, each institution was allowed to assess the needs of its trainees and provide what it deemed appropriate. However, the end-term evaluation revealed that while the flexibility approach is beneficial, it needs to be carefully planned to ensure the adequate development of the skills required by the job market. Moreover, financial incentives to cover the trainee's transportation and daily expenses should be introduced and the number of trainees should be reduced to deepen the benefits and increase effectiveness.