

Executive Summary

Final Evaluation of

"Establishing National Technology Development and Transfer Systems in selected ESCWA member States"

Development Account Project

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Prepared by
Rani Khoury

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Executive Summary

This report is the result of a final evaluation carried out on the \$496,000 DA project entitled "*Establishing National Technology Development and Transfer Systems in selected ESCWA member States*", which was implemented by the ESCWA Technology Centre (ETC) in the period between July 2015 and December 2017. The overall objective of the project was aimed at *strengthening the capacity of select countries in the ESCWA region to create an enabling policy environment for research and development, and commercialisation of research studies*. The selected member States included Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Oman (in lieu of Yemen because of conflict), in addition to Mauritania which was incorporated into the project during its implementation.

The primary audience for this evaluation are the project team and ESCWA at large, but other development stakeholders may also find the evaluation findings and recommendations useful. The evaluation covered the entire timeframe of the project and all the member States involved. It focused on three main OECD-DAC criteria of *relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability*, and aimed at investigating the extent to which the project achieved its overall objective, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement. A gender lens was employed throughout the project, from the selection of sample interviewees to the analysis of gender disaggregated data. But despite the fact that analysis was done on gender disaggregated data, the evaluator concluded that the overall views of men and women did not differ regarding the questions raised in this evaluation.

The evaluation methodology was comprised of a comprehensive desk review and interviews conducted with the project team and project stakeholders from each of the selected member States. Moreover, the evaluator witnessed some of the project's outputs first hand through attending two project events including a national workshop and the closing regional forum. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to select a total of 18 key stakeholders who were interviewed throughout the project, among whom 9 are women, thereby achieving a gender balance in the sample selection process.

The DA project consisted of a series of interlinked national studies and workshops, including capacity building workshops. It kicked off with establishing partnerships with the national institutions, and through this partnership, customized national studies and workshops were planned and implemented in the member States. The project ended with a closing regional forum, bringing together the various stakeholders of the project to share experiences.

Findings

Relevance

The project was found to be very relevant to the expressed needs of member States covered by the project, with all interviewed stakeholders confirming the strong relevance of this project to their respective countries and organisations. Partner institutions specifically mentioned how the project's outputs are aligned with their government's plans and strategies.

The project was found to also build on ETC's previous work and lies at the core of its mission and objectives. The project can be actually viewed as part of a series of a continuum of projects being implemented by the ETC under one overall framework, a feature that has greatly contributed to the successful implementation of the project.

The design of the project, in addition to the perseverance & commitment of the project team, has enabled a continuous interaction with key stakeholders during implementation. The project maintained a successful engagement with all groups of stakeholders involved in this project, including partner institutions, consultants and wider stakeholders. The implementation of the project was actually found to have been led by national partner institutions, and facilitated by the project team with meaningful and comprehensive technical and logistical support. This approach was praised by all interviewees who appreciated the various support provided.

Although a significant female presence and engagement was found during project implementation, the project was unable to achieve a gender balance, partly due to a lack of gender considerations of partner institutions. Out of 22 project consultants, five were female; and out of the five project focal points, only one was female. While the project team expressed taking gender considerations into account during implementation, the project design did not integrate gender. Certain aspects of gender balance among participants could not be achieved given that the selection of project participants was done in a collaborative manner with partner institutions and was not under the complete control of ESCWA. Among the wider stakeholders (i.e. workshop attendees), the project team always sought gender balance through ensuring a minimum of 50% female invitees.

Effectiveness

The evaluation found that the project's activities & outputs were consistent with the project's goal and expected accomplishments, but one of the indicators of achievement (IoA2: "National Technology Transfer Office established in each of the 5 countries") was found to be too ambitious for the scope of the project. This is mainly due to the fact that the actual establishment of NTTOs in official institutions ultimately depends on factors outside the scope and control of the project, including political and institutional factors.

The project's outputs & activities were found to have been achieved to a large extent, supported by a flexible management approach that employed varying methodologies in implementing the project, depending on the context of each of the member States involved. Based on the findings of the initial national studies, the project team tailored subsequent outputs for each of the member States to ensure effective implementation and maintain relevance. While this approach may have caused some slight implementation delays, it contributed to the achievement of project outputs in a customized manner across the different member States. A main drawback of the project's management was the "Hands-on Centralized Approach" involved in financing activities which translated into a 'very bureaucratic process' for partner institutions in implementing activities.

The evaluation found that the project was able to save funds that were used and multiplied through the project's partnership with ISESCO in implementing parts of the project in Mauritania. The project team was able to expand the geographical scope of the project through utilising saved funds and partnering with ISESCO.

The project was found to have achieved its expected accomplishments and partially achieved its associated indicators of achievement. The evaluation found that the project led to enhanced capacities to identify and address innovation and technology transfer gap policies, thereby achieving its first expected accomplishment and associated indicator (IoA1) of having developed a national innovation system roadmaps each of the countries. Moreover, the project led to enhanced capacities to guide the policy environment for research and development, and the commercialisation of results, thereby achieving the second expected accomplishment. However, the project only partially achieved the second indicator of achievement (IoA2) of establishing NTTOs in each of the selected member States. This is because member states involved in the project progressed in different speeds towards the actual establishment of NTTOs. While the project's achieved outputs had suggested a well thought of operational framework of an NTTO for each of the member States, some countries moved quickly to adopt the model while some other countries were slower. One national partner institution was found to have fully established the NTTO; another is on the verge of establishment; two others are in the process of being established while NTTO services were integrated in the relevant unit of the last national partner institution. As mentioned before, the actual establishment of an NTTO depends on factors (political, institutional..etc) that are outside the control of the project.

The evaluation has found unintended positive impacts stemming from this project, including an increased level of coordination in the STI sector in the respective countries. Coordination in the project's selected member states had been a challenge before the project, as cited by almost all stakeholders. The creation of national and even regional networks has contributed to better coordination between STI stakeholders in each country.

The project was not able to achieve a gender balance in terms of equal participation (50%-50%) and no gender considerations were included into the design of the project. However, the project team aimed at incorporating gender considerations during implementation, resulting in a genuine and active female engagement throughout the project. Such an active engagement of women during project implementation had a direct positive gender effect, and partly compensated for the absence of gender considerations in the project design.

Sustainability

The project was found to have a very high degree of ownership by national partner institutions, thereby increasing the likelihood that the project's results will be sustained after the completion of the project. The project's focus on developing strong partnering with *national* institutions has had a tremendous impact on the sustainability of the project. Despite the challenge of partnering with national institutions across the different member States, the project opted to choose the more difficult path in order to sustain project results.

A number of other sustainability outcomes were found during the evaluation of this project. The project's alignment with market needs and current trends have proved fruitful, as a number of international organisations are channelling support for STI development in the region, and the project has created the appropriate structures to make use of such opportunities. Another important sustainability outcome is the extensive knowledge products that have been developed and produced for each of the selected member States. These reports, which have been well disseminated in each member state, will remain to be an important national reference for researchers and decision makers related to the STI field. Yet another sustainability outcome is related to the project's work to review and propose amendments to pertinent legislation in the STI field. The evaluation found that the Egyptian parliament recently endorsed 2 main related laws after the project's completion, indicating the sustainability of the project's outputs.

Nevertheless, the proposed NTTO systems and operational frameworks have been institutionalised to various degrees among different member states. As mentioned earlier, not all involved member states have fully established or adopted the NTTO framework proposed by the project. For Lebanon, the project was found to have fully institutionalised the NTTO at the CNRS, along with a designated "NTTO Coordinator". In Egypt, the additional NTTO services proposed by the project have been adopted by the ASRT, which already has a unit functioning as an NTTO. The Research Council in Oman has also successfully adopted the NTTO framework, but is currently in the process of institutionalising it. In Morocco & Tunis, the NTTOs have not yet been institutionalised but national partners have committed to move forward with this respect in the near future.

Recommendations

- Given the large amount of countries in conflict in the region, the project team and ESCWA should develop an approach to also include these countries in future projects.
- The project team and ESCWA should tailor the project design to the different capacities of the countries involved in future projects.
- Given the cross cutting nature of the NTTOs, the project team and ESCWA should use the NTTOs as a partner for future projects in different thematic areas.
- The project team and ESCWA should continue working with national government partners in future projects as it contributes to institutionalising the results.
- The project team and ESCWA should consider employing the "Hands off, decentralised" budget management approach in projects with many activities and outputs.
- The project team and ESCWA should integrate gender considerations into the design of future projects to ensure gender balance.