Project No. 1-4a

Region: Americas
Country: Bolivia

Project:
Training workers and promoting microenterprises in support of the strategy to eradicate coca growing in the tropics of Cochabamba, Bolivia

Project Description:
Context: The project, financed by the UNODC and implemented by the ILO, supports the Bolivian Strategy to Fight Narcotics Trafficking and the Coca Growing-based Economy. The project supports alternative development efforts by improving work opportunities for young people in the tropics of Cochabamba, training workers in various occupations to respond to market and development demand in the region. More than 17,000 young people (women and men) between 15 and 34 years of age are being trained in productive activities outside the coca economy. Through specialized institutions, around 800 courses are given, lasting from 40 to 600 hours, with an average of 25 people enrolled in each. In addition, the option of pursuing a career as an entrepreneur is promoted among these young people.

The project provides technical assistance and financial guidance to support own-account work and the organization of micro-enterprises involving youth in productive activities and services. It facilitates the incorporation of those trained into medium-sized and large local and regional enterprises, and arranges for agreements to be reached between municipal governments and micro-enterprises for the contracting of services.

Main strategic features: Promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), setting up new businesses, and consolidating existing ones. SMEs generate more than 80% of jobs in the region and in the country as a whole. Training is divided according to the needs and capacities of the young people (who are at high risk of joining the coca economy and do have paying jobs) to create their own work or enter the labour market. Sustainability is assured by including training programmes for work and enterprise culture in school curricula and by working closely with municipalities in the framework of local economic development. Gender equality provides men and women equal opportunities to participate in training and microenterprise promotion. Training in environmental conservation and in the rational use of natural resources safeguards the productive character of the region and its potential for production and tourism.

Main results: Workers’ training. Up to now, the project has met its goals, training 17,518 youth (45.6% of whom are female) in 773 courses in various technical areas: handicrafts, carpentry, electrical installations, construction, agriculture and animal raising, food production, food processing, plumbing and others. Forty training modules have been developed for different activities, with content and teaching aids validated by the ILO. A local network of trainers works in various technical areas and in entrepreneurship skills; they act as a basis for further development of activities initiated by the project.

Strategic and operational links: The signature of 157 agreements with various institutions, projects, municipal producers’ associations and others permits:
- extension of the financial, geographic and population base covered,
- coordination of action in the framework of the Government of Bolivia’s Strategy for Alternative Development
- participation, with other institutions, in the development of activities by sector, such as tourism and handicrafts
- application cross-cutting policies for gender and ethnic equality on a coordinated basis
winning of important contracts for production and services by firms supported by the project
job placement for youth trained by the project.

On the basis of these agreements, 39 computer labs have been installed in educational institutions, with a total of 270 computers, and 4 workshops have been set up for training in carpentry, auto-mechanics and electronics.

Monitoring and evaluation: Design and application of a computerized monitoring and evaluation system provides a view at any moment of the progress made in activities. Impact assessment is developed using a baseline. In 2003, an impact study was done on a sample of 400 youth trained by the project. The results showed:

- Employment among the target group had increased by 16.1%, with the rate of productive employment increasing from 29.50% to 34.25%.
- 1,141 youth trained by the project gained productive employment as a direct result of the project.
- The percentage involved in agriculture and animal- raising went down by 18% while those in technical fields increased from 14% to 29%.
- Reduction from 62% to 17% in the proportion of workers who were unskilled.
- Increase of 46% among semi-skilled and skilled workers.
- Increase of 31.67% in monthly average earnings (from Bs 461 to 607).
- Permanent work increased by 161%.

Support for micro-enterprises. Because these firms are the most important source of jobs, emphasis was placed on the setting up of new firms and enhanced competitiveness of existing ones. Support is provided to generating and maintaining employment that can be taken up by youth trained by the project.

By March 2005, the project had promoted 143 micro-enterprises employing 1300 workers (38% of whom are women) in the fields of wood and furniture, various services, and handicrafts. Investments of US$ 160,000 were made by the micro-enterprises, which had won contracts for over US$ 300,000.

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