Thematic Evaluation of FCDO Kenya's Jobs Creation Programmes

Evaluation Digest

December 2024

Evaluation Design

Triple Line conducted the thematic evaluation, commissioned by the British High Commission in Nairobi, between May and November 2024.

The evaluation focused on job creation across four economic development programmes in Kenya: Kenya Catalytic Jobs Fund (KCJF), Manufacturing Africa (MA), Sustainable Urban Economic Development (SUED) and TradeMark Africa (TMA)'s Regional Economic Development for Investment and Trade.

The evaluation assessed relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and value for money. It took a theory and case-study based approach involving review of 68 documents and 52 stakeholder interviews.

Relevance

All the programmes were found to be highly relevant for the Kenyan economy and designed explicitly to respond to the needs of particular contexts, geographies and sectors. They encompassed marginalised areas (KCJF), geographies and sectors with manufacturing growth potential (MA), intermediary cities in harder to reach geographies (SUED) and trade hubs facing logistical barriers (TMA). They considered inclusion at design and implementation, addressing gender inequality and poverty through its direct job creation interventions and wider investments. Budget cuts weakened the focus on gender and social inclusion for MA although 'do no harm' compliance processes were maintained.

Efficiency

Allocation of grants to businesses is the shortest pathway to creating jobs. Lack of robust jobs data make it impossible to assess whether the longer term approach, via enabling infrastructure, is more efficient in the long run. Technical assistance increases overall efficiency by unblocking barriers to investment which leads to job creation. Approaches to risk management highlight potential synergies between pathways: enabling environment (e.g., policy) interventions can reduce risk for direct business support interventions.

Effectiveness

All programmes have created both direct and – the majority - indirect jobs although varied and methodologically weak measurement approaches reduces the reliability, completeness and usefulness of jobs data. All programmes are effectively aligned with their target beneficiaries although this varies with contextual challenges and opportunities and only SUED reports jobs figures disaggregated by age, gender and disability. Job quality varied significantly, and job quality indicators were largely not measured. However, overall the evaluation has confirmed that the portfolio level theory of change is valid and a good model for achieving job outcomes. There is evidence for the change pathways - of the portfolio building an enabling environment for economic growth through policy reforms (SUED, MA, TMA) and trade infrastructure development (TMA), growing the investment ecosystem by supporting urbanisation within county municipalities (SUED) and facilitating access to technical assistance and capital for private sector actors (KCJF, MA, SUED), leading to enterprise growth and increased trade and revenues including cross border (KCJF, MA, SUED, TMA).

Coherence

The portfolio-level theory of change outlines a coherent pathway for job creation, highlighting the value of the four programmes working together to promote systemic economic growth and sustainable jobs. Each programme demonstrates independent contributions to job creation while also offering potential synergies to amplify impacts. These are however largely unrealised.

Relative value for money

Inconsistencies in jobs measurement make meaningful comparison across job creation pathways very difficult. Additionally, job quality and equity, an important value for money consideration, are rarely measured. Evidence for the effectiveness of the job pathway focusing on the enabling environment is weaker but the wider value of other impacts of such programmes are also highly relevant and would provide a more holistic view of effectiveness (and value for money). The synergies between the different pathways and their outcomes mutually reinforce delivery of jobs impacts so value for money can be maximised by leveraging complement-arities rather than by comparing individual modalities.

Lessons

Portfolio design

1. Theory of change analysis can help to identify and highlight synergies between pathways and could be made a more explicit part of the design approach.
2. 'Value' has many dimensions and needs to be defined if it is to be measured meaningfully.
3. Value can be maximised overall by taking a holistic view

Programme design

4. Programme budget cuts can lead to programmes focusing on shorter-term and more direct pathways to impact.
5. GESI considerations in design are effective when they are based on consultation and followed through into implementation approaches.

Programme Implementation

6. Effective stakeholder engagement and accompaniment / capacity building can enable replication and sustainability and build longer term impact but needs to be built into delivery plans.
7. Stakeholder capacity assessment usefully informs choice of partners and can thereby help to manage programme risk.

Monitoring and evaluation

8. Cuts to MEL budgets ultimately hamper delivery by limiting the availability of data about programme outcomes which could inform decision making.
9. Programmes can only be compared if they have employed a common measurement framework on job creation.
10. Any framework for job measurement needs to be tailored to the specific context and ensure that the definition of quality is appropriate.
11. Programmes require guidance and capacity to adopt and implement suitable measurement frameworks.
12. Commitment to inclusion in design and implementation is undermined if data is not disaggregated.

Recommendations for FCDO decision-makers and programme managers.

1. **Strengthen complementarity between FCDO programmes with job creation outcomes by taking a holistic, integrated portfolio approach.** This is critical for maximising impact. Establish and develop a portfolio-level ToC; leverage synergies across programmes; embed iterative mechanisms to review design so that programmes remain responsive to contextual shifts and maintain alignment with job creation goals.
2. **Develop a holistic impact measurement framework for economic development programming – it is not all about immediate job creation.** Foundational impacts create the conditions for job creation in the long term. Incorporate non-job impacts into programme results frameworks; for longer-term enabling type pathways to job creation, focus reporting on what can be measured robustly.
3. **Strengthen measurement by adopting and applying the FCDO Jobs Measurement Framework consistently across economic development programming. across the portfolio.** A consistent, standardised approach is critical for accountability, comparability and evidence-based decision making. Institutionalise the JMF across the whole portfolio; apply the JMF consistently across programmes, even beyond Kenya; ensure the approaches incorporate job quality measures; mandate the collection and reporting of disaggregated data.
4. **Provide practical support to programmes to enable them to undertake effective jobs measurement.** Programmes need this in order to do it well. Provide support, guidance, advice and training from FCDO staff; create a centralised repository of methodological papers, examples of best practice and tools; undertake spot checks to assess robustness; and share learning between programmes.
5. **Ensure that MEL budgets are adequate to implement a robust approach to jobs measurement.** Cuts to MEL budgets have been detrimental to FCDO's ability to know and understand programme achievements. Develop guidance and minimum thresholds for MEL budgets; protect MEL funding.
6. **Enhance portfolio-level learning to improve portfolio effectiveness.** Cross-portfolio learning will enable FCDO and implementers to identify best practices, address inefficiencies and refine programme strategies, enhancing understanding and enabling replication. Conduct regular cross-programme analysis; undertake periodic reviews and refine the portfolio level theory of change; facilitate peer learning across programmes.