

FINAL EVALUATION

KSV/014

Health Support Programme in Kosovo

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Kosovo
Long project title	Health Support Programme in Kosovo
Short project title	Health in Kosovo
LuxDev Code	KSV/014
Version of the Report	May 2015

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	2 On a scale of 1 (excellent results, significantly better than expected) to 6 (the project was unsuccessful, or the situation has deteriorated on balance)
Rating using other evaluation criteria	Relevance: 2 Efficiency: 3 Sustainability: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The final evaluation mission of the project KSV/014 “Health Support Programme in Kosovo” was carried out on behalf of LuxDev from 8 to 20 December 2014 by Prof. Luca Brusati (international consultant and head of mission) and Mr. Shar Kurtishi (national consultant). The mission objectives were to analyse (i) the results and the specific objective(s) reached at the time of the evaluation, compared to what had been anticipated in the Project Document and/or the Inception Report, (ii) the results achieved in terms of capacity strengthening, (iii) the project’s management and monitoring, with a particular attention to harmonisation and alignment principles, monitoring of the different project levels and overall functioning of the project, and based on this analysis establish the lessons learned and give recommendations for future projects in the same sector as well as for the inception phase of the project KSV/017 “Health in Kosovo (Phase II)”. The evaluation team analysed project performance in terms of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and paid also attention to the cross-cutting aspects of governance for development, gender equality and environment and climate change.

The approach followed by the evaluation team pursued the triangulation of different sources, so as to secure their cross-validation: (i) a review of available documents, including in particular the report of the midterm evaluation mission performed in November 2011; (ii) interviews with key informants, including representatives of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Luxembourg) and LuxDev, project team members, external consultants, counterparts and beneficiaries; and (iii) the visit of several project sites in Pristina and in Prizren Region. Prior to the mission a briefing meeting was held in Luxembourg. At the end of the mission, the key findings and tentative conclusions were presented and discussed with a group of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Luxembourg) and LuxDev. As envisaged in LuxDev’s Internal Evaluation Policy, throughout the evaluation process the consultants adopted a participatory approach, in particular involving the project team at all stages of the mission, so as to enhance transparency and mutual accountability make this final evaluation part of a continuous improvement process.

The specific objective of project KSV/014 is “to further strengthen the capacity of Ministry of Health to implement the Health Sector Strategy”, so as to contribute to the overall project objective, i.e. “to contribute to the improvement of the health of the population in Kosovo in accordance with Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5 and in accordance with the vision of the Health Sector Strategy”. The project has been designed to pursue four expected results, partially revised during the inception phase to fit with the objectives of the Health Sector Strategy adopted after the Cooperation Agreement was signed. These results are: (i) “Ministry of Health’s organisation, processes and tools to implement the Health Sector Strategy strengthened”; (ii) “selected key actors’ capacity to apply evidence based decision-making and strategic planning improved via further development of Health Information System”; (iii) “clinical protocols and guidelines for treatment/prevention/follow-up in Primary Health Care and Secondary Health Care reviewed/developed and utilised”; (iv) “infrastructure in the Primary Health Care and Secondary Health Care in the Prizren Region improved for the provision of quality services”.

Project KSV/014 was undoubtedly successful in “putting the country in the driving seat”: thanks to a strong emphasis on involving the beneficiary in both project specification and implementation, activities focused on highly relevant expected results, and a true partnership in many cases led to very good outcomes in terms of capacity building and sustainability. The four expected results are very different in scope and complexity, as well as largely independent from each other, and project performance has not been even across them: this makes it difficult to provide an overall assessment for the project as a whole.

Result 1 (“Ministry of Health’s organisation, processes and tools to implement the Health Sector Strategy strengthened”) is in our view the most successful project component. The project team supported very closely the Ministry of Health not only in redefining its internal management structure, but also in redesigning the overall architecture of the healthcare system of Kosovo. Most project achievements have already been enshrined in laws and administrative instructions, so as to ensure their sustainability notwithstanding the vagaries of political processes.

The same judgement cannot be formulated for Result 2 (“Selected key-actors’ capacity to apply evidence-based decision-making and strategic planning improved via further development of the Health Information System”). The project team pursued a result identified as extremely important by the beneficiary, and interesting innovations were introduced, including a participatory approach to the identification of end users’ information need and cost-effective, sustainable technical solutions.

On the other hand, long delays plagued this project component, and as of December 2014 the Health Information System is not operational yet: only if different partners coordinate their actions very effectively the result will be fully met by the new project deadline of 20 September 2015.

The situation is different concerning Result 3 (“Clinical protocols and guidelines for treatment/prevention/follow-up in Primary Health Care and Secondary Health Care reviewed/developed and utilised”): since the drive by the beneficiary to implement protocols and guidelines in clinical practice waned over time, the project focus shifted to capacity building, and in this respect project activities proved successful, both in strengthening the Continuous Professional Development programme in family medicine and in providing “on the job” training opportunities abroad to doctors and nurses. A valuable good practice is the decision to run focus groups among trainees following their return, to understand not only learning, but also the actual organisational impact of the skills that trainees were able to learn.

Result 4 (“Infrastructure in the Primary Health Care and Secondary Health Care in Prizren Region improved for the provision of quality services”) can be included instead among the successful components of project KSV/014, and was actually largely achieved already by November 2011, when the midterm evaluation mission took place. The local counterparts made the most of the support provided by the project, and managed to commit additional resources to contribute to its sustainability.

The evaluation team assessed the overall relevance of Project KSV/014 at 2 (“above average results, performance in certain areas better than expected”). The project was identified and formulated through several missions conducted between November 2007 and June 2008; project documents were further updated during the inception phase, from April to November 2009. The resulting project is undoubtedly very relevant *vis-à-vis* the priority needs of the health sector of Kosovo, especially with reference to Result 1: the adoption of a new legal framework, together with the establishment of specialised institutions such as the Health Financing Agency, the Professional Medical Chambers and the Kosovo Hospitals University Clinical Service, will undoubtedly reinforce the focus of the Ministry of Health on health sector stewardship through policy formulation and oversight.

The project could be considered effective in achieving its intended specific objective, thus deserving a score of 2 in terms of overall effectiveness. Thanks to a very close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the inputs by the project team have been incorporated in four new bills approved in due course by the Cabinet, the relevant Parliamentary Committees and eventually the Parliament of Kosovo. A large number of supporting bylaws and administrative instructions has been finalised or at least discussed with relevant officials, offering valuable “on the job training” on how to redesign the functioning patterns of a modern health sector.

The picture with efficiency is more nuanced. When the final evaluation mission was performed, the project could be considered relatively efficient in achieving its specific objective, thus deserving 3 as a score (“expected results but there is scope for improvement”). More specifically, Results 1 and 4 were achieved effectively and with high levels of sustainability, using an amount of resources fully adequate for the purpose; Result 3 was achieved with satisfactory effectiveness and good sustainability, using a reasonable amount of resources, even considering that the efforts spent for clinical protocols and guidelines brought limited benefit; Result 2 could not be fully evaluated, but its effectiveness and sustainability were limited, notwithstanding the significant amount of resources committed.

Sustainability is also difficult to assess with a single score. Project results can be considered relatively sustainable, with a mix of significant achievements and areas of possible concern, thus deserving 3 as a score. The inputs provided with reference to Result 1 were enshrined in legislation and political support remains strong, thus securing maximum sustainability. Result 4 is also an area where the project exceeded expectations: new hires and training investments focused on making the new units fully operational, and local officials are earmarking funds to secure the functioning of newly purchased equipment. Result 2 instead is a matter of concern. In December 2014, the Health Information System was not operational yet, and the additional staff the Health Information System Department should deploy had not been hired; future running costs are also an aspect that will need attention. With reference to Result 3, all staff trained abroad undertook a commitment to work at least one year in their home institution upon their return, the new training curricula for family doctors were approved and the skills of local trainers were strengthened; the matter of concern here is the fact that family doctors’ capacity is only one of many preconditions required for the effective functioning of Primary Health Care.

An important point for reflection when discussing the lessons learnt from project KSV/014 is the degree of flexibility to be maintained when implementing a project, and in particular a large-scale project spanning many years such as this one. It is natural that the priorities that emerged in 2007 and 2008 and were enshrined in the final project document in late 2009 might no longer be appropriate in 2014. On the other hand, implementation cannot be left entirely to the vagaries and ambiguities of the political process, lest it is condemned to pursue a moving target and accept a low level of efficiency in resource utilisation. The Logical Framework Matrix is a suitable tool to match accountability with flexibility and transparency, in the interest of all stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries and implementing agencies: what is suggested is a transparent procedure through which motivated requests for changes in the Logical Framework Matrix are officially put forward, discussed and eventually decided upon.