

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Framework of the Final Evaluation Mission

This Report covers the final evaluation of LuxDev NAM/347, Support to Vocational Education and Training (SUVET). It has been prepared by an external Final Evaluation Consultant, Dr. Richard Noonan, recruited for the purpose. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the mission is given in APPENDIX A.

The findings presented are based on a briefing at LuxDev Headquarters in Luxembourg on June 6, 2011, a field mission in Namibia over the period June 8 – 29, and a debriefing in Luxembourg on August 29. Most of the field mission was spent at the Namibian Training Agency (NTA) Village in Windhoek, but a three-day visit was made to the Zambezi Vocational Training Centre (ZVTC) in Katima Mulilo in the northeastern region of Caprivi. The Consultant was assisted by the management and staff of the NTA and of the LuxDev (LD) team, including the national and international Technical Assistants (TAs) and the national support team. In addition the Mission was also joined by the LD Geographical Advisor and the Sectoral Expert for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (6 full working days each). A start-up meeting was held at NTA on June 8, and a wrap-up meeting was held June 24. The CEO attended neither meeting.

Persons met and interviewed are listed in APPENDIX B, and the documents reviewed are listed in APPENDIX G.

NAM/347 mobilised in October 2008 with the recruitment of the Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) Technical Advisor (TA) and the transfer of certain activities from previous support projects to the Namibian VET system (NAM/339). The CTA joined the project in November 2008.

1.2. Specific Objectives and Results achieved

Objectives of the Final Evaluation Mission. The main objective of the mission was to undertake a final evaluation of the NAM/347 project. The main objectives of the final evaluation are summarised in Table 1. Further details are given in the Terms of Reference (see APPENDIX A).

No.	Objective
1	Analyse the results and the specific objectives reached at the time of the Final Evaluation Mission, compared with what had been anticipated in the Inception Report and revised project plans;
2	Analyse the results achieved in terms of capacity development;
3	Analyse the project's management and monitoring, with particular attention to: (a) Harmonisation and alignment; and (b) Monitoring of the different levels (means, tasks, results, specific objectives);
4	Analyse the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, taking cross-cutting aspects of poverty reduction, good governance, gender, and environment;
5	Analyse issues concerning, <i>inter alia</i> , integration and systematisation of skills within the NTA, the degree of "non-reportable" capacity building that has occurred and that strengthens the VET system in Namibia, political and technical acceptance of NTA and related organisations, financing modalities, and the integration of NAM/347 within the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP).
6	Establish lessons learned and make recommendations with regard to: (a) Issues to be followed up on in order to ensure sustainability; and (b) Appropriate networks and strategic alliances post-project.

Specific Objective and Results Achieved by the Project. The specific objective of NAM/347 was to strengthen the management and delivery capacity of the Namibian VET system.

Expected Result 1: NTA is fully established and fully operational. There is political support for NTA, but labour market linkages and employer interest are still weak in most skill areas. The National Training Fund is established and operational on a small scale. Updating of equipment and modification of facilities for competence-based education and training (CBET) is in progress. The new CBET system is now generally understood and accepted by the beneficiaries.

Expected Result 2: The transformation of the public vocational training centres (VTCs) to semi-autonomous, efficient, and effective institutions is planned, implemented, and supported by all stakeholders.

The VTCs at Rundu (ZVTC) and Katima (ZVTC) are now almost fully transformed “semi-autonomous” centres, and business plans have been prepared there. Development of management systems and management capacity is in process, although with significant lag. Instructor recruitment is now based on certification if certified personnel can be found, but the accreditation and certification process is slow. The efficiency and effectiveness of the VTCs at system level cannot yet be assessed due to the absence of a functioning VETMIS, including internal institutional statistics (enrolments by trade, by gender, etc.) and external follow-up data (eg., institution-based tracer studies).

Expected Result 3: Sustainable essential systems and capacity development measures are implemented. There have been no systematic course evaluations, but instructors are positive. The reconstructed and refurbished workshops are open, light, and flexible, and instructors insist on safety, protective clothing, etc. The National Occupational Safety Association (NOSA) has conducted audits in some VTCs. The Tourism & Hospitality Industry Skills Committee (ISC) and the Mining & Quarrying; Construction; Gas, Electricity & Water Supply; and Sanitation ISC “own” the curriculum process, but the other ISCs are not so advanced yet. The financial management information system (FINMIS) is largely functional, but the vocational education and training information system (VETMIS) is not yet functional, and no TVET system reports, such as enrolment at public VTCs, can yet be provided.

1.3. Conclusions, Lessons learned, and Recommendations

1.3.1. Conclusions

The evaluation was conducted at a time of uneasiness and uncertainty among the NTA management and staff. The Final Evaluation Mission began at 09:00 on Wednesday, June 8; at 16:00 on Friday, June 10, the General Manager for Operations (formerly Acting CEO) was dismissed with immediate effect. The CEO had taken office less than twelve months earlier, and permanent staffing could then begin. Many of the permanent staff interviewed had been in their positions less than six months and knew little about NAM/347. The CTA had departed some six months earlier, and TA had left without a proper hand-over. The LD Liaison & Finance Officer had begun working only part-time, and there was no virtual library of key documents, so required information was not always accessible. The prevailing perceptions and understandings at the time of the Mission are necessarily reflected in the Final Evaluation.

NAM/347 faced major problems from the beginning. It was developed within the context of a very ambitious political goal – Vision 2030. It was a very ambitious project to be conducted over a relatively short period of time – initially intended to be just over two years.

Risk was seen in the staffing of the training institutions, but the biggest and most consequential risk was not foreseen, namely the considerable delay in appointment of the CEO to NTA and the knock-on effects that inevitably had on the appointment of mid-level management.

In the absence of a CEO, NAM/347 re-allocated and financed an Acting CEO *ad interim*. That enabled the establishment of organisation and operations of the NTA. However under the circumstances, only temporary contract staff could be employed.

NAM/347 placed high priority on capacity building and competence development through coaching. Because of the delays in the appointment of the CEO, however, employment of mid-level management was also limited to temporary contract employees. The consultants placed high value on their role as coaches or mentors, but in some cases there was no one to coach or mentor! In many cases, consultants found themselves obliged to serve as “gap fillers”, rather than as advisors. Not only did this violate principles of good development, but it also led to inefficient use of the consultant resources.

The transformation of the Vocational Training Centres is still at an early stage, but two of the centres are quite close to becoming fully transformed into “semi-autonomous” flexible, efficient, labour market oriented TVET system.

Although the project has faced serious problems, it is likely that the positive changes that NAM/347 has supported are sustainable as long as the NTA is perceived as serving both public and private sector labour demand, through not only public institutions but also private sector training organisations and corporate in-house training.

It is too early to assess the impact of the project in terms of higher enrolment rates and increased efficiency and effectiveness, but it is likely that by perhaps 2015 hard evidence will show a significant impact.

1.3.2. Lessons learned

Capacity Development Risk. It was exemplary that the PRODOC placed capacity development at the heart of the project. A large part of this capacity development was envisaged to occur through coaching the counterparts. Ultimately, however, it was not possible to achieve this end.

The great delay in the appointment of a CEO, and as a consequence the appointment of permanent mid-level management at NTA, was not foreseen at the time of project preparation. It was however flagged in the inception report. In the presence of a clear risk for the sustained absence of a CEO, NAM/347 engaged a Transitional TA to NTA (TTANTA) to serve *de facto* as Acting CEO *ad interim*. In the event, the CEO was appointed in June 2010 and began serving in July 2010.

1.3.3. Recommendations

Readiness Assessment. NAM347 was challenged to accomplish much in a short period of time. Apparently the risk for considerable delay in appointing top management of NTA was not envisaged, and there no risk-mitigating measures were built into the project. This was a new organisation, created to play a new role in social and economic development. There was a big difference between the organisation on paper and what was on the ground. The absence of a CEO and permanent mid-level management weakened the efficiency of the TA. As the former Chairman of NTA Board noted, “NTA was not ready for NAM/347; there should have been a ‘support readiness assessment’”.

Serve the CEO. In the absence of an officially appointed CEO, LD showed admirable flexibility in financing a temporary Acting CEO. However, when the LD Regional Office was closed and the CTA departed, no temporary CTA was assigned because the former Acting CEO, who became General Manager for Operations, was supposed to do the bridging function. Upon his sudden unforeseen departure, a void remained. It is recommended that in future, LD assure that there is central representation present at all times, even if only in the form of one of the regular consultants appointed as temporary CTA to whom all consultants report and who has direct and regular contact with LD headquarters.

Once the new CEO began, consultants continued to report to the General Manager for Operations (*ie.*, the former Acting CEO), not to the CEO. Although that was in accordance with a decision by the new CEO, it led to some amount of tension, confusion, and divided loyalties among the staff. Approximately one year after the CEO began and only three months before the (extended) completion of NAM/347, the General Manager for Operations was dismissed on short notice.

In retrospect, it would have been better if the CTA had been able to turn over the project to the new CEO, or at least to elicit her greater involvement, offering whatever support was needed to develop her understanding of the project, to develop her own path, and then to follow that path – in essence a mid-term review with the usual possibilities for re-design and re-allocation. The greater involvement of the new CEO was essential, not least because NAM/347 was almost the only external support for the establishment of this new organisation.

Introduction of New Concepts. When significant “game-changing” new concepts, such as CBET, are introduced into a system, the project should take into account preparatory stages so that people are well informed about that is coming, why, and what consequences it will have for them. It should be implemented gradually, perhaps over a period of years for full-scale implementation. At each VTC, the preparation process should be initiated together with local employers based on local labour market demand, involving skills used in local industry.

Information System. It is essential and urgent that VTEMIS become operational and institution-level and system-level reports can be output in a timely manner. As a minimum, the reports should generate enrolments, dropout rates, mean completion times, and certification rates, by skill area and level. Teacher data should indicate certification levels. All statistics should be broken down by gender. Until such data are available in standardised format at both institutional level and at system level, information-based discussion of efficiency and effectiveness of programs, skill levels, or institutions is not possible.

Tracer Studies and Local Labour Market Surveys. Tracer studies are essential for the assessment of external efficiency. Every VTC should conduct tracer studies as a regular part of their follow-up routines for planning and management of the institutions and the review and possible revision of course programs and curricula. If the proper procedures are used, it is generally possible to trace nearly all graduates. If sample survey methods are used, it is vital that sample bias be avoided.

Similarly, every VTC should conduct local labour market surveys, where the concept of “local labour market” is related to the kinds and levels of training the institution provides or could provide.¹

National TVET Plan. Once national skill priorities are determined, a National TVET Plan should be developed, but plan should not extend for longer period than five years and should leave open the possibility of new skill needs as markets change. As indicated in ETSIP Sub-Programme 3 Strategic Plan, new assessments of national skill priorities should be conducted regularly, say every five years. Then the National TVET Plan should be revised.

Induction of Instructional Staff. It is essential that all present and new instructional and other professional personnel at the VTCs have an opportunity to learn about and discuss new concepts like CBET, recognition of prior learning (RPL). An induction program should be provided to all new professional staff. The program should include not only essential concepts but also should emphasise labour market orientation.

Balanced Score Cards. Balanced score cards are useful in a well-established relatively stable organisation, where organisation, processes, and products are relatively clear and well-defined. They are less useful in a new and changing organisation, especially one in which many things are changing all at once. After the transformation is complete, then the balanced score card might be more useful, especially as used within each institution and agreed by the concerned parties.

Certification Documentation. Delays in the preparation of documentation on certification, for both instructors and trainees, not only hinders performance and slows down measured outcomes, but also generates frustration and reduces motivation. Trainees have complained that certificates have been months in coming, which hinders them from getting jobs for which they have been trained, tested, and certified – everything except the official paper! NTA should make every effort to determine the causes of the delays and assure that trainees receive their certificates with minimum delay.

¹ Under NAM/339 a comprehensive study of vocational education and training in Namibia was conducted, including forward and reverse tracer studies and a labour market survey (Reeves, 2008). Although such large and comprehensive national studies are useful for system design and planning, the recommendation here is that each VTC regularly conduct much smaller and simpler studies regularly as a support for its own internal planning and management.