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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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Mid-term Review of the EMPOWER Private Sector Project

Final Report

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August 2018**

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy (USAID)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
Empower PS	Empower Private Sector (USAID and Sida funded project)
EYE	Enhancing Youth Employment
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GoK	Government of Kosovo
GIZ	(Deutsche) Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
KIESA	Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IR	Intermediate Result (IR)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MTR	Mid Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PSD	Private Sector Development
PPSE	Promoting Private Sector Employment Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
VET	Vocational Education and Training
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

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Executive Summary

The MTR of Empower PS considers how successful the project has been to date in addressing the pre-conditions for growth of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and the opportunities which have been leveraged by Empower PS to improve their competitiveness and productivity. It also considers how to increase employment and strengthen the enabling environment around enterprise development. A particular emphasis is placed on reviewing all gender aspects of the implementation of Empower PS and to a lesser extent the impact of vocational training provided through grants to training providers. A brief assessment of other cross-cutting issues such as the environment is also provided.

The Empower PS project supports the following outcomes:

Outcome 1: Increasingly competitive and market oriented small- and medium enterprises - in this component one of the strategies has been to choose sectors with high potential for growth and possibly export oriented. The sectors chosen were those identified by the Ministry of Industry and Trade as having the potential for international competitiveness.

Outcome 2: Job-creation – the main target groups are women as well as youth and ethnic minorities.

Relevance

The project was designed to assist SMEs in Kosovo to prepare for EU integration by promoting their competitiveness and market orientation, whilst at the same time providing increased job opportunities for the large numbers of unemployed young people, in particular women. These twin outcomes are to an extent mutually exclusive as gains in productivity (increased competitiveness) require fewer people to be engaged in production. However, in the longer term it is reasonable to expect that a more competitive company will demand more workers in other roles, such as marketing and administration. But, there will be a time lag between the achievement of the two outcomes which is difficult to programme into an intervention with a fixed time span of just five years. For SMEs introducing new products or services the requirement to create a fixed number of new jobs can be a considerable burden and contrary to their commercial sustainability.

The appropriateness of providing grants to medium sized companies is easy to question in hindsight. Most of the companies visited by the review team (with the exception of North Mitrovica) were growing rapidly and had access to finance

through commercial banks. The project was designed to prime new investment in modern technology by offering incentives to businesses to upgrade capital equipment at an earlier time than they might otherwise have decided to do so. In the absence of a counterfactual outcome, it is not possible to ascertain if this was achieved. But the project states that its relatively small grants successfully leveraged private investments into its beneficiary companies amounting to over five times (the target being 3 times) the value of grants provided. These private sector investments have been a combination of reinvested company profits, private capital and commercial bank borrowing.

Effectiveness

From interviews conducted with key stakeholders, the opinions expressed concerning Empower PS were very positive, particularly concerning the commitment and responsiveness of the project team towards the needs of beneficiaries. In some instances the expectation regarding levels of employment creation apparently became a burden for companies; because the investment in new production line technology aimed at increasing efficiency of production often leads to a decrease in the number of employees. In most cases companies have employed people within other departments, such as marketing, in line with increased production output.

Empower is assessed to have been relatively risk adverse in its selection of grant beneficiaries, since most of the companies visited by the review team were able to access commercial bank lending. It might be expected that donor funds would be used to assist companies with excellent and innovative ideas, but which lacked the collateral, etc., to obtain funds to initiate such ventures. However, it can be reasonably stated that promoting innovation was not the primary objective of the project.

The project in general has a high awareness of the enterprise development environment and has continuously been engaged with local partners to strengthen the target sectors. A complimentary approach has been financial support and capacity building to sector-based membership Associations, such as the Kosovo ICT Association, Wood Processing Association and Kosovo Apparel Marketing Association. Financial and logistical support to international trade missions and facilitation of Business to Business (B2B) meetings and seminars has been provided.

Donors such as USAID, Austrian Development Agency, Sida and other donors, have positioned Associations as facilitators of private sector development. From interviews with Associations their main activity to date has been the coordination of some activities for trade missions, which raises a question concerning their capacity and sustainability. Furthermore, from interviews with private sector players, many do not see a sufficient or unique value being derived from these Associations and they doubt the Associations' ability to become self-sustaining in the medium to long term, or they may just support the activities of a limited number of their members.

Empower PS has had little contact with publically funded vocational education and training institutions. Rather, vocational training supported by the project has focused on private institutions. For example, Females in Technology implemented by TDI, Women in Online Work implemented by Cactus and ICT training implemented by Kosovo ICT Association. These courses tend to be one off activities with the goal of empowering young women to enter the job market in that sector. Monitoring of funded courses has been conducted on a quarterly basis by Empower with regard to determining, from the training institution, the number of trainees successfully finding job placement.

Efficiency

Many of the beneficiary companies have progressed from small to medium, or from medium to large, and successful companies can be found in all sectors, with wood, ICT and apparel being the best performing sectors. Wood is perhaps the outstanding sector, and was informally reported to be exporting around €2 million worth of products to Germany annually, some of which are sold on Amazon.

Resulting from its grant awards, Empower PS states that it has achieved a leverage in excess of five times the grant value (the target being three times). Meaning that, if the value of the grant is €20,000 (usually in the form of capital equipment) the beneficiary company will have invested on average more than €120,000 of its own capital into its production capacity, often in the form of increased factory space and/or additional capital equipment.

As part of the MTR the team was requested by Sida to review some 1% of rejected grant applications in order to verify the process that was followed. It was concluded that if Empower PS could have created application criteria which excluded the majority of the 1400 applications received, this would have saved a great deal of staff time. Clearly, it is not easy to establish such criteria and the risk is always present that some excellent applications would then have been excluded on these ‘administrative’ grounds. However, the fact that the project targeted some eight sectors (including ‘other’) meant that almost any manufacturing outlet in Kosovo could submit an application, each of which required processing and appraisal. No external representative was involved at any time in the grant selection process. But it might be expected that an external expert would bring in a different perspective and avoid the risk of appraisal meetings developing a ‘group think’ mentality.

With regard to the environment, some companies supported have a direct and positive impact on the environment. However, the working environment in some companies could have been improved to ensure employees’ use of face masks and earplugs along with the use of ventilation equipment to remove dust and airborne chemicals. Empower PS has collaborated with EBRD’s Small Business Support Unit to assist companies to improve their quality and processing standards.

Impact

The project selected high performing small and medium enterprises for support and the evidence suggests that they have become more competitive in that they have expanded and some are successfully exporting their production. But the issue of attribution remains impossible to determine. The appreciation expressed by owners and managers for their company's exposure achieved through attendance at international trade fairs and B2B events (sponsored by Empower PS along with other donors) suggests that the project has achieved a positive impact on the ability of firms to market their output.

The impact in terms of job creation is perhaps questionable due to the actual level of investment provided by the project, as compared to the estimated cost of creating new jobs in Kosovo. As set out in the section on Effectiveness, it appears that the creation of 5000 jobs is not realistic given the actual job creation costs calculated for the industrial sectors targeted by Empower PS. This issue was also reference in the interviews conducted with grant recipients and other stakeholders.

Empower PS has supported customised training courses through private sector training institutions. The impact of the specific training provided appears to have been significant for participants and has led on to a high number of jobs being secured, although the future sustainability of such courses is less clear.

No gender analysis appears to have been undertaken as a baseline at the start of the project, although Empower PS has noted and considered the low labour market participation of women. Gender analysis is undertaken in the beneficiary companies, but only to the extent of recording the number of women working and the number of women in management. Empower has gender based indicators for women employees and women in management but not for men, so the data is not sex-disaggregated. Data is collected on beneficiary groups for all indicators e.g. business size expansion, but the project does not appear to have statistics on women owned businesses and male owned business. Wherever people are involved it is beneficial to sex-disaggregate information as this provides rich material for gender analysis. For example, on increased sales it might be very interesting to compare companies in the same sector headed by women, with those headed by men.

Conclusions

The project was designed in 2014 when the prospects for growth in the Kosovan economy were significantly less optimistic than they are today. This goes far to explain the design of the project and the positive changes that have occurred, some of which should be attributed to Empower PS along with the work of other donors. It is unlikely that donors such as USAID or Sida will consider providing enterprise grants to medium sized companies in the future due to the fact that these companies are able to access commercial finance and there is a need to ensure a 'level playing field' such that one company does not gain an unfair competitive advantage. However, this

probable change in donor strategy in part serves to demonstrate the success of the original design.

At present, most sector-based membership Associations are little more than ‘bag carriers’ for the donors. This is a very challenging area of work as, of itself, any donor funded intervention can serve to weaken the Association since their members’ focus will be on maximising immediate benefits from the donor, even if it is just a reflected glory. For any strategy to be successful it has to be developed in very close collaboration with each of the Association’s members and must result in the Association having the ability to raise income beyond its membership fees. Only with additional resources is an association likely to be able to offer a menu of benefits that will attract the most successful companies. And, it is those top performing companies which are most likely to ensure that the association effectively pursues a sustainable economic model.

As set out above, Data collection around women and men’s involvement in the project is focused on the number of women and women at management level. However, the project has successfully involved more women in enterprise and employment than is the case elsewhere in the economy. The staffing resources available within the project are too limited for it to realistically address deeper structural issues.

Recommendations

The recommendations below are primarily for Sida to consider with regards to future funding but might also be useful for the donor community at large.

- 1) Donors should move away from the provision of grants to small and medium sized businesses for the purchase of capital equipment. Such grants should only be considered for start-up businesses which are testing some form of genuine innovation. Innovation is, by definition, very high risk and highly unlikely to attract commercial finance. It should also be noted that the EU will be offering grants to micro enterprises in the near future.
- 2) Although Kosovan enterprises have begun to achieve international recognition through their attendance at trade fairs, etc., it is unlikely that small and medium sized companies will be able to continue this trend simply by reinvesting their profits into marketing and sales promotion. Also, as emphasised above, most sectors have no representative Association with the capacity to make market linkages and promote products. Discussions with beneficiaries highlighted the utility of the assistance they had received from Empower through subsidised attendance at trade fairs and sponsorship of B2B events. It is therefore strongly recommended that this type of assistance is continued beyond the life of Empower PS.

- 3) Linked to the above recommendation there is also a strong argument for assisting companies with product certification procedures in preparation for greater EU integration.
- 4) Some form of capacity building assistance to sector based membership associations could also be considered, but with strong caveats regarding the design and implementation of such support. Support to date has seen the establishment of some associations, but with little capacity to work independent of donors.
- 5) There needs to be clear coordination between all the donors focusing on private sector development. There is currently overlap across the sectors and there is no guarantee that this will always be complementary. Such is the case of Empower PS, which supports similar activities to the two Swiss funded projects PPSE and EYE. A project such as Empower could have more impact if it narrowed its activities from eight sectors to a maximum of three so that the entire sector benefits from raised profile and increased marketing opportunities.
- 6) Whilst cooperating with other donors to fund activities is a pragmatic and logical approach, it is unclear what Sida's strategy has been in this instance. Sida has not used the opportunity to leverage the funding such that the any particular value added has been created in terms of Sida's particular development agenda. For example, on the issue of gender Empower PS could have done more and Sida could have provided expertise to assist, as set out below. Staffing at the Swedish Embassy in Kosovo is very limited indeed, and this would have to be increased for a more proactive strategy to be pursued.
- 7) It would have been useful for Sida to have conducted an organisational gender assessment of Empower PS at an earlier stage of the project. The resultant recommendations from a rapid organisational assessment of Empower PS and their key project partners/beneficiaries could have taken the project to the next level regarding gender inclusiveness

1 Introduction

Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008 and is a parliamentary republic. It is a potential candidate for EU membership and has accelerated its EU integration process with the signing of the Stabilization Association Agreement October 2015, which entered into force April 2016. Although Kosovo's economic growth has outperformed its neighbours and been largely inclusive, it has been insufficient to reduce the high rates of unemployment; provide formal jobs, particularly for women and youth; or reverse the trend of emigration. Its economic growth model relies heavily on diaspora remittances to fuel domestic consumption. It has a current population of 1.8 million with an average age of just 26 years.

As well as addressing a significant shortfall in energy production the country needs to do more to promote the development of the private sector through creating a more business friendly environment and equipping young people with relevant skills to make them attractive to employers. Donors can play an important role in building up governance and the rule of law such that Kosovo is able to maximise the benefits of EU integration and to increase industrial productivity whilst ensuring that job creation provides decent and inclusive employment¹. Currently, Kosovo's private sector is dominated by informal micro sized companies which primarily employ family members. Therefore, a cultural change in the private sector needs to be facilitated with much greater emphasis on skills development and productivity gains.

Sweden's Strategy for the Western Balkans 2014-2020 is aligned with the above challenges, and sets out the following results which are relevant to this Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Empower Private Sector (Empower PS) project:

R1 Enhanced capacity among institutions to continue economic integration with the EU.

R2 Competitive small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up a greater share of the economy.

¹ World Bank Report, April 2017

From the perspective of USAID, the expected intermediate result of Empower PS was greater economic growth to be achieved by improving competitiveness and linkages within entire value chains and key sectors that stimulate and drive the economy and produce jobs. In line with Sida they also planned to address gender inequalities and reach out to underserved groups. In addition, the emphasis was on SMEs that had the potential to grow and create jobs, rather than on micro sized enterprises except for those run by minorities, women and youth.

The MTR of Empower PS therefore considers how successful the project has been to date in addressing the pre-conditions for growth of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and the opportunities which have been leveraged by Empower PS to improve their competitiveness and productivity. It also considers how to increase employment and strengthen the enabling environment around enterprise development. A particular emphasis is placed on reviewing all gender aspects of the implementation of Empower PS and to a lesser extent the impact of vocational training provided through grants to training providers. A brief assessment of other cross-cutting issues such as the environment is also provided.

As stated in the ToR (see Annex 1), the assignment was twofold. This report relates to the Mid-term Review (MTR) of the Empower PS project and provides an assessment of the efficiency, relevance, and immediate impact of that project, in order to improve the remaining implementation period. The second part of the assignment was to undertake a contextual gap analysis of enterprise development in Kosovo and this is covered in a separate report.

The team consisted of Sarah Gray, Ulf Färnsveden and Art Shala. The report was quality assured by Johanna Lindström of FCG Sweden, Anja Taarup Nordlund from NCG and Bersant Disha from Recura whose work is independent of the team. They were responsible for reviewing the quality of the evaluation process and the evaluation deliverables to ensure that they comply with the OECD/DAC standards.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Empower PS project is part of USAID's five-year (2014-2018) Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). The rationale for the project, according to the CDCS was that: "greater economic growth can be achieved by improving competitiveness and linkages within entire value chains and key sectors that stimulate and drive the economy and produce jobs". USAID's Strategy for country development has aimed to focus on consolidating previous investments and to implement reforms and address cross cutting goals, particularly gender inequalities and inclusiveness. The emphasis was not on micro or start-up enterprises unless owned by minorities, women or youth and although the initial intention was to select just 3 value chains for support, ultimately no particular sector was targeted and eight value chains benefiting from support.

USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy has three Development Objectives (DOs), including DO2, the economic growth objective and DO3 (see Annex 2). These have two expected outcomes: Increased number of competitive SMEs creating jobs through growing sales and Jobs created through workforce development with inclusiveness. These are to be supported by progress in DO1 (improved Rule of Law & Governance). Three activities (or projects), including Empower PS, were initiated by USAID in support of DO2 and DO3 (the others being support to agriculture and a credit guarantee fund). The development hypothesis for the overall strategy was that macroeconomic stability and an environment that enables business, coupled with a strengthened private sector with greater access to finance, leads to a stronger economy and substantial job creation. No logical framework was prepared for the overall strategy or for the component activities (projects) implemented within the strategy. Annex 2 sets out the Empower PS Results Framework.

The Empower Private Sector (Empower PS) Project

EMPOWER PS is a 5-year project which began in July 2014 and will conclude in 2019. It has two components, these being support to: market-oriented and competitive SMEs and opportunistic job-creation. Its overarching objective is job-creation with a target to leverage (via small grants) at least 5000 new jobs through support to 1000 (subsequently revised to 400) company beneficiaries. Empower PS aims to help firms expand and improve their capacities through investments in equipment, technical assistance and market linkage creation. At the same time, it helps individuals obtain the skills required by expanding firms. The value chains supported by empower have focused on: apparel, wood processing, metal processing, energy-related firms, information technology, and tourism. Furthermore, Empower PS has supported as well the Agriculture and Food Processing value chain in North Kosovo.

In addition to providing for project staffing, Empower PS's resourcing includes a budget for short-term technical assistance, and US \$4.2 million (\$2.2 million provided by Sida) as a Strategic Activities Fund to enable grants and subcontracts to be awarded to: Kosovo firms, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local implementing partners. The USAID budget for EMPOWER amounts to US \$14 million, and in February 2015 Sida agreed to add approximately US \$2.2 million.

EMPOWER's performance indicators set overall targets for the number of beneficiaries assisted, sales growth and jobs created. It provides grants and technical assistance to companies for the following purposes: production expansion, connection to markets, workforce development, productivity & quality, and business environment support (through associations). It has supported the establishment of the Kosovo Apparel Marketing Association, and further development of Kosovo Wood Producers Association and STIKK (Kosovo ICT Association). The project provided grant support to leverage funding obtained by the enterprises from public sources, own, and borrowed funds. The majority of EMPOWER's support takes the following forms: support for firm-level growth: support for competitiveness improvement,

training of individuals (including through a range of on-the-job training, ICT training and internship programmes).

1.2 MID-TERM REVIEW OBJECT AND SCOPE

The objective of this evaluation is to make a mid-term evaluation to assess the effectiveness and potential impact of the implementation of Empower PS. In particular, a key purpose of the assignment is to provide stakeholders with the information necessary to answer the question: Was the project effective and relevant and can it be expected to achieve a long term impact? Within that context, the ToR places particular emphasis on the gender focus and this report also considers in some detail the effectiveness and relevance of human resource development as sponsored by the project.

The objectives are as stated in the ToR:

To provide inputs for Sida/The Embassy of Sweden in Pristina, in the assessment of the efficiency, relevance and the immediate impact of the Empower project in Kosovo in order to improve the remaining years of the implementation period.

The assignment will provide the following inputs:

- The extent to which the project was relevant at time of conceptualisation, and remains relevant and suited to SMEs in the country. The review should evaluate the quality of the project design, including its objectives, results and lessons learned to date.
- A description and an assessment of the results achieved, compared to the expected results stated in the project document. This should include also an indication of any alternative approach (es) that could have been adopted, if any.
- The extent to which EMPOWER is making effective progress in attaining its specific objectives:
 - Increasingly competitive and market-oriented SMEs (Outcome objective);
 - Job creation through workforce development (Outcome objective).
- Lessons learned to date and guidance on how to integrate such lessons into project implementation going forward.
- Assessment of risks and mitigation measures under the project.
- Capture any impacts on environmental / climate change, and social / cultural issues.
- Develop recommendations for the ongoing implementation of the Project and its potential expansion.

- Assess and describe the value-added of the Swedish contribution to the EMPOWER project.

Geographically, the EMPOWER PS covers the whole of Kosovo including Northern part of Serbian Kosovo (where support to agriculture has also been included as USAID's AGRO project does not include this zone). The primary focus of this assignment has been the grant allocations under the Strategic Activities Fund, as this is where Sida's funding was targeted.

The cross cutting issues of gender, inclusiveness and the environment, highly relevant to Sida's international agenda have been covered.

1.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation team applied the agreed DAC evaluation criteria to assess the Empower PS project in the following ways:

Relevance

The Empower PS project includes a range of interventions. The theory-based approach, combining a review of the causal pathway that underlies the project with the assessment of specific activities on the ground provided an assessment of the relevance of each intervention to the achievement of the desired impacts and goal. It is evident that each activity in the framework could be the result of the preceding activity, but it is not always evident that this is necessarily so. Within the context of the project's goals it is useful to consider the relevance of:

- Raising the competitiveness of growth ready sectors
- Enhancing the available workforce
- Ensuring the inclusiveness of private sector jobs created

Efficiency

The efficiency of a project such as Empower PS is directly related to the capacity of the organisation in terms of its quality of management and the calibre of its personnel. An efficient institution can be expected to implement interventions in a timely and effective manner, to obtain the maximum benefits from available resources and to capitalise on potential synergies. The evaluation team assessed the extent to which the capacity of the Empower PS is sufficient to achieve these ends, recognising that such capacity is dependent upon, not only the staff themselves, but also the validity and robustness of the institutional framework of procedures and responsibilities within which staff interact as well as the morale of the organisation overall. The following questions were addressed:

- a) How realistic are the targets that were set and to what extent have they been achieved?

- b) What internal and external reasons lie behind the levels of performance recorded?
- c) At the level of individual interventions, how does the investment of resources compare to the benefits achieved?
- d) Also, a review of the process for appraising applications that have been rejected was undertaken.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness - while a theory of change may link an activity to a specific outcome and eventual impact, the linkage alone may not be sufficient to justify support for that activity if its actual contribution is small or weak. Inevitable resource limitations require that only those activities that are most effective in achieving the desired outcomes and impacts should be continued. The evaluation placed particular emphasis on the identification of those interventions that have been most effective in contributing towards the overall goal. The effectiveness of the project has been assessed using the following criteria:

- a) Are the activities of the project adequate to facilitate substantive change?
- b) To what extent have the opportunities associated with the provision of grants effected investment decisions within beneficiary companies?
- c) Are the reductions in costs and the opportunities for increased profit derived from Empower PS support sufficient to stimulate more than opportunistic participation of beneficiary companies?
- d) To what extent have the development of Associations and support for attendance at trade fairs enhanced productivity and marketing?
- e) In what ways has the monitoring system developed by Empower PS assisted the project to improve its delivery mechanisms?
- f) Have robust M&E systems been developed to ensure efficiency of operation, accountability, and the accurate analysis of collected data?

Impact

The review assessed the extent to which real impact has been achieved through the selected causal pathway, being the Empower PS Results Framework. Political and economic circumstances, are particularly relevant and will undoubtedly affect the achievement of impact. Reduced impact as a result of inaccurate assumptions need not negate the causal pathway underlying the programme if the disruptive circumstances are short-term in nature or can be mitigated in future. Issues of attribution tend to confound the assessment of expected impact particularly prior to the conclusion. Nevertheless, it is possible to assess the contribution of the Empower PS project by reference to the following questions:

- a) Has the project increased the competitiveness of the individual beneficiary companies?
- b) Has the project enabled company owners and managers to market their output more effectively?
- c) Has the human resource/vocational skills development, as assisted by Empower PS, improved competitiveness?
- d) Which interventions of the project over the past four years have been the most successful?
- e) How is the project perceived by counterpart and stakeholder agencies?
- f) Has Empower PS created dependency amongst some categories of stakeholders?

In addition, the evaluation specifically assesses the two mainstreaming issues of gender and the environment.

1. Gender is a key consideration. A central dimension of the assignment is the focus on gender equality, since in no other European country are there so few women entering the labour market as in Kosovo. Women comprise 82.2% of people inactive in the labour market². Women care for children, the sick, or the elderly (39.4%); are in education or training (15.8%); or do not believe that work is available (14.6%).³ 99.9% of the businesses that women own are micro-enterprises comprised of 1-9 employees; Women have difficulty accessing credit and loans because they often lack collateral, credit histories, and connections⁴. Thus, men hold about 92% of collateral properties in Kosovo⁵. Only 3% of commercial bank loans go to women⁶. Women also have the highest percentage of rejected loans. Religious extremism influences the formal economy with funds, as well as traditions that encourage women's roles within the household and with children, rather than in the labour market.
2. Environmental considerations relate primarily to the potential positive or negative impacts of expanded production resulting from the allocation of grants to individual companies, as well as the steps taken by those companies to ensure safe and decent working conditions for their staff.

2 Inactive People (in this case women) include those not working and not registered as unemployed.

3 World Bank, Labour Market Survey 2012.

4 Persons in North Mitrovica also do not have access to loans due to debates over property rights and instability (interviews).

5 UNDP, 2012.

6 UNDP, 2012.

2 Methodology

2.1 OVERALL APPROACH

The MTR of Empower PS adopted the widely recognised and tested OECD/DAC quality standards for development evaluations and was planned and implemented in a transparent and participatory manner respecting stakeholders' views while ensuring the independence of the evaluation consultants.

The overall methodological approach was as follows:

In the absence of a logical framework the approach was primarily pragmatic but included reference to the brief results framework illustrated in Annex 2. The results framework comprises five intermediate results, each of which are considered to contribute towards the overall programme goal of increased investment and private sector employment. This was supplemented by reference to the detailed work-plans and monitoring reports prepared by the project. The process involves an assessment of the strength of these 'causal linkages' that contribute to the programme's overall goal. The investigation of each causal linkage is a process that is both conceptual and observational. Conceptually, the linkage can be analysed in the abstract (considering such issues as: is the intended impact the logical result of the intervention? In what other ways could the observed results have been achieved? What other factors might impact the achievement of the results? Given the potential number of factors that might contribute to the result, how important overall would the intervention actually be?). Observations can include both data collected from secondary sources (including quantitative data, interviews and case studies), as well as primary data derived from interviews with key stakeholders (beneficiary companies representatives, training institutions, other counterparts in government, etc.).

Recognised research methods in social science will be applied throughout the contextual analysis and evaluation, such as standard data collection tools and data analysis strategies. Standard ethical research criteria will be applied, (honesty, objectivity, informed consent, respect for anonymity/confidentiality, non-discrimination), combined with the do-no-harm guidelines.

The team will also analyse if and to what degree Empower PS applies several of Sida's development cooperation perspectives. The following three being the most relevant:

- Gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming: to what degree Empower PS has been successful in applying a gender sensitive and mainstreaming approach to ensure women's economic empowerment.
- Human rights based approach: consists of participation/empowerment, transparency, accountability and none-discrimination.
- Climate change and Environment perspective: to what extent the project has impacted on the environment and climate change

The review was a combination of different methods (triangulation) desk reviews, field visits, in depth structured interviews, focus groups discussions or other individual and group approaches. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources.

2.2 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Data collection and analysis for the MTR of Empower PS consisted of the following:

- Desk study: Document studies with a review of a significant number of documents, (as identified in the ToR and others provided by Empower PS and partners and other organisations or from other sources such as the internet).
- Observation: The team will use their considerable experience in private sector development, training and gender issues to assess the possible impact of the project.
- Individual and group interviews: mostly face-to-face were conducted by the review team. Questionnaires permitting semi-structured interviews were drafted for each category of stakeholder. These categories were agreed with primary stakeholders in Pristina as part of the inception phase.

The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions and room for follow-up in accordance with the answers provided. Interview guides were developed before the interviews in order to facilitate overview, comparison and quality assurance. At the end of the implementation phase a debriefing conference was held with The Swedish Embassy. This was immediately followed by the reporting phase which consisted of synthesising all findings and observations and preparing the draft and final report. Preliminary conclusions and recommendations were discussed both at debriefings after field work and in the debriefing conference.

2.3 LIMITATIONS

The assignment had two parts, so the time available for study and reporting on this MTR was limited resulting in a focus on the grant delivery process and outcomes

which was directly funded by Sida. A second report has been prepared which sets out the findings of the gap analysis which forms the other part of this assignment.

Due to restrictions on the circulation of project documents, not all information regarding the project was available to this review team, in particular the team did not have sight of budgets or financial and audit reports. It is understood that the contactor (Cardno US) has a framework of contracts with USAID. Budgeting, financial reporting and auditing is consolidated for all these projects, such that individual reports per project are not readily available. As a result of this, the review team were not able to assess the utilisation of resources under this assignment.

3 Findings

3.1 RELEVANCE

This section reviews the extent to which the project was relevant at the time of conceptualisation, and remains relevant and suited to SMEs in Kosovo. It also considers the quality of the project design including its objectives and results and any alternative approaches that could have been adopted.

The project was designed to assist SMEs in Kosovo to prepare for EU integration by promoting their competitiveness and market orientation, whilst at the same time providing increased job opportunities for the large number of unemployed young people, in particular women. These twin outcomes are to an extent mutually exclusive as gains in productivity (increased competitiveness) require fewer people to be engaged in production. However, in the longer term it is reasonable to expect that a more competitive company will demand more workers in other roles, such as marketing and administration. But, there will be a time lag between the achievement of the two outcomes which is difficult to programme into an intervention with a fixed time span of just five years.

At the design stage, it was foreseen that the project would assess the SME sector in Kosovo and select around three value chains to focus upon. In the early stages of the project this focus was expanded to more value chains and ultimately the Empower PS has assisted SMEs in the sectors of: Wood processing, Apparel, ICT, Energy, metal, tourism and some other individual enterprises assessed to have good potential for export production and job creation. A narrower focus on fewer sectors would have ensured more resources into those particular value chains and could have provided for increased strengthening of local partners, such as sector Associations. But with other donors also funding SME development it may have been difficult to avoid duplication and the absorptive capacity of individual sectors would have been more limited in 2014/15. One drawback of opening the project to so many sectors was the number of applications received (over 1400), each of which had to be reviewed by project personnel and responded to, as required.

Donor support to manufacturing value chains is provided by three other projects as well as by EBRD and so some extent the World Bank. The EuropeAid funded: Increasing Competitiveness and Export Promotion has targeted a number of manufacturing sectors some of which overlap with Empower PS. It aims to provide firm level technical support to about 30 SMEs in close collaboration with the Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency and local consultants, to foster company competitiveness in marketing and business strategy. Another is the Swiss Promoting

Private Sector Employment Project (PPSE), budget US \$5.9 million. This project adopts an M4P (markets for poor) approach. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project are the unemployed and underemployed with a specific focus on women and youth. The project is focusing on food processing and tourism. Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) is the third project funded by Swiss Development Cooperation, focusing on development of companies' internal capacities through technical assistance, equipment purchase grants and infrastructure development for manufacturers and service providers in Kosovo. There are other small-scale interventions, such as GIZ's work on clustering SMEs and institutions working in the area of renewable energy. Empower PS has provided support to manufacturing SMEs and informal coordination with these projects occurs but some duplication could be possible.

The appropriateness of providing grants to medium sized companies is easy to question in hindsight. Most of the companies visited by the review (with the exception of North Mitrovica) were growing rapidly and had access to finance through commercial banks. The project was designed to prime new investment in modern technology by offering incentives to businesses to upgrade capital equipment at an earlier time than they might otherwise have decided to do so. In the absence of a counterfactual outcome, it is not possible to ascertain if this was achieved. But the project states that its relatively small grants successfully leveraged private investments into its beneficiary companies amounting to over five times (the target being 3 times) the value of grants provided. These private sector investments have been a combination of reinvested company profits, private capital and commercial bank borrowing.

While Empower PS focused on export led growth and employment growth, there was also the need to bring more women into the labour force. An alternative strategy could have been to include the fledgling care industry within its ambit, although clearly not aimed at export led growth. Without access to care services for young children and the elderly, many women are unable to consider going out to work. Government funded services are in very short supply and privately run provision is just beginning to emerge. An increased focus on service sector industries, or smaller scale companies would have increased opportunities for women's employment, but this presents another conundrum since such companies are less likely to be export orientated, with the exception of ICT.

Selection for Beneficiary Companies

Empower PS has selected 91 small and medium enterprises from 1400 grant applications. These SMEs come from all parts of Kosovo and both rural and urban locations. Pristina has 21 selected companies out of the 91 (23,1%) and if we include Fushe Kosovo which is connected very closely with Pristina, another 4 companies received support making a totally of 25 (27,5 %). That seems reasonable since Pristina is the commercial and business centre of Kosovo and has 26,7% of its population.

In contrast the north of Kosovo has received proportionally more support in terms of the number of grants, especially Leposavic that has just 0.8% of the population and hosts 8 (8,8%) of the beneficiary companies. North Mitrovica hosts 19 (20.8%) companies, with just 4,3% of the population. But these companies tended to be small rather than medium sized. Empower PS has its only regional office in Mitrovica, and it is also the only part of the programme supporting agricultural projects; as Empower Agro is not working there. The areas less prioritised are Prizren and Gjakova, with just three and two companies supported, respectively.

About 15 of the of 91 beneficiary companies are women headed (16,5%) and most of them are in apparel, cakes/pastry and ICT, but there is also one in furniture, a call-centre, recycling and animal feed. An average grant for male owned companies is higher than for female owned companies. There are no trends indicating that this has changed over time, but in just 3.5 years this is unsurprising.

Many of the companies have progressed from small to medium, or from medium to large, and successful companies can be found in all sectors, but wood, ICT and apparel have been the best performing sectors. The sales increase vs. investments is highest in the ICT sector which represents both females and males, thereafter it is the male dominated sectors of wood, metal and energy that are the best performers, and finally, women dominated sectors of apparel and tourism. This suggests that the project accurately identified companies with a good potential for growth, in line with its objective.

Gender Planning

The participation rate for women in the workforce is very low, with 79% recorded⁷ as inactive, and female unemployment is recorded at over 36%. The project's planning shows that the intention to integrate women, youth, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities into the workforce was clear. The focus on youth and women is greater than for other cross-cutting issues. But working conditions, such as maternity leave, breastfeeding at work, sexual harassment, women's career development planning etc., were not issues of concern at any of the companies visited.

The needs and priorities of women headed companies or women in employment have not been discussed in the project reports and are not mentioned in the agreement between USAID and Sida. There is a head count of women employed, women in management and women trainees. But that is the only aspect of gender applied, but they have done that rigorously. The focus is on the women in general and the

⁷ Kosovo Statistics Labour Market Study 2017

statistics are not sex disaggregated for a deeper analysis of women's possibilities for career advancement, or if women and men feel appreciated and well considered in the work place, and whether salaries for 'men's' and 'women's' work are equal. There do not appear to be any affirmative measures towards women owned companies, as there are just 15 women headed companies out of the 91. Though, when it comes to employment there has been a stronger focus to include women employees. There are figures for the number of new employments for women and women in management, but not for men, they are just part of the total new jobs.

Other Cross Cutting Issues

The project has supported a number of companies which aim to have a positive environmental impact such as paper bag production and recycling of waste plastic into new plastic sheeting. Also, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The section considers the extent to which the project is making effective progress in attaining its specific outcome objectives of: increasingly competitive and market oriented SMEs and job creation through workforce development.

Increasingly competitive and market oriented SMEs

Many of the companies have progressed from small to medium, or from medium to large, and successful companies can be found in all sectors, but wood, ICT and apparel have been the best performing sectors. Kosovo has had positive and sustained economic growth rates⁸ of 4,6% in 2015, 4,8% 2016, 3.6% 2017 and 3.2% for the first quarter of 2018. The companies visited by the review team had full order books and seemed optimistic about their continued growth, although not all had met the 'new jobs created' targets that had been agreed with Empower PS. However, they still have time to increase their employee numbers and many believed that this would be possible. The investment made appeared planned and rational and the offer of a grant from Empower PS may merely have enabled some companies to make the investment earlier. There was no evidence of opportunistic decision making (due to the opportunity to obtain a grant) leading to poor investment decisions, and it is clear that

⁸ Kosovo Agency of Statistics homepage.

the Empower personnel took some trouble to ensure that this would not be the case. For some companies, it was the additional support that they received to visit international trade fairs and B2B events that was more effective for their business development than the grants for purchasing capital equipment. They are satisfied with the support they have received from Empower to date and hope to receive continued market linkages through participation in such events.

Most of the companies met by the review team were sufficiently credible to receive loan finance from local commercial banks, which may suggest that Empower PS was rather too risk adverse in its grant allocation decisions. It might be expected that a donor funded project would be less risk adverse than a commercial bank.

Monitoring of all companies in receipt of grant allocations is conducted quarterly for three years after release of the grant. A very detailed list of indicators for each beneficiary company was collected and the data recorded in the Performance Based Management System. Some of the detail prescribed in this system was apparently required by USAID rather than being of direct use for the management of the project. The time required to complete this data collection was clearly a burden to some of the companies interviewed.

Activities aiming at fostering competitiveness from a cluster perspective could mainly be attributed to the support of sector specific associations, such as for wood, apparel and ICT. Another dimension of fostering competitiveness is the support of events and sponsoring activities where companies from several sectors get together to develop market linkages within the value chain.

Examples of such activities are support to women in ICT, Green Festival (eco-friendly businesses) and the Albanian Diaspora Economic Forum. By using these gatherings companies have had the possibility to meet and discuss with similar product/service providers and with potential buyers for the local or international markets. Funding participation of beneficiary companies at regional and international trade fairs, etc.

The aim of all these events has been to foster partnerships within value chains and development of market linkages between Kosovan manufacturers and Kosovan diaspora. From the visits conducted to the beneficiaries of Empower PS, they have highly appreciated these activities and have confirmed that they have served as ice breakers for the Kosovan companies to either expand their partnerships at local/regional level, as well as establishing long-term partnerships with large buyers in Western Europe countries, especially Germany and Switzerland. Another benefit has been the pull activities that the project has developed, such as the Kosovo Wood Association website, which provides a list of companies operating in the wood processing and furniture industry where details of their product range, capacity and contacts are presented. This provides initial information for potential customers and could in future be extended to market members' products and perhaps earn commission for the Association.

Empower PS does not facilitate access to finance for its beneficiary companies and it is not known whether any of these companies benefited from guarantees with the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund (also Sida and USAID supported). As mentioned above, the medium sized companies visited already had access to finance through local commercial banks. Empower provided some limited short term TA in some sectors for specific outcomes. Beyond the grant allocations the major support referenced by companies was the market linkages and networking opportunities provided. Some companies were aware that they had not always been invited to all B2B events and regretted this as well as stating that they would appreciate more informal networking opportunities, for example to assist in problem solving in relation to government agencies and taxation etc.

Job creation through workforce development

From interviews conducted with key stakeholders, the opinions expressed concerning Empower PS were very positive, particularly concerning the commitment and responsiveness of the project team towards the needs of beneficiaries. A shared remark by training institutions and grant beneficiaries is the focus that Empower PS has had on translating the financial support provided into the creation of new jobs. Although in some cases this has been a burden for organisations; because the investment in new production line technology aims at increasing efficiency of production leading to a decrease in the number of employees. But in most cases companies have employed people within other departments, such as marketing, in line with increased production output. Comments made also emphasised the rigour with which the project team assessed successful applications prior to making a funding commitment and for some company owners the subsequent involvement of the project team in the monitoring of their activities was motivational as they felt supported and encouraged. Other companies, perhaps with more confident management personnel, found that the level of monitoring and the number of visits became too time consuming. This was evident in some of the visits made by the review team.

In general, the Technical Assistance (TA) provided by Empower PS is considered to be successful. The project has not had a strong focus on TA but some short term experts have been employed to address very specialised issues. To some extent the project linked their grant beneficiary companies with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD's) Advice for Small Businesses, which offers subsidised consultancy services, particularly to women owned businesses.

The project established a target of 5000 jobs to be created as a result of the US \$4.2 million allocated to the provision of grants. For the purpose of calculating the cost of each job created the project has added the value of grants to the total private funds leveraged by the grant. Using this methodology Empower PS data shows that a job created in tourism corresponded to a grant cost of US \$7,551; for energy \$2,266; wood \$1,917; metal \$1,909; apparel \$1,356 and ICT \$371. In the focus groups and

interviews conducted by the review team, one general concern expressed by many company representatives is the method used by Empower PS to quantify the ratio of grant amount to the target number of jobs to be created. They understood that there was a rule of thumb used to quantify this ratio which amounts to an average of around €1000 grant finance for one additional job. This makes the average cost of a new job, including the additional leveraged investment, around US \$6,000. However, this calculation seems to be unrealistic considering the experience of other donors and the estimates of the investment needed for one job creation. From discussions with the European Commission it is understood that a total investment of €15,000 is needed on average to create one job within the same industries that Empower PS has been targeting. Furthermore, a 2016 report by The Rochester Institute of Technology in Kosovo estimated that one job created in the ICT sector requires an average investment of €50,300 and in Food Processing or Agriculture €14,200.

The company 'IQ-to-Link' received an Empower PS grant of \$34,182 towards the purchase of headsets and servers required for the establishment of a call centre. This grant was provided in the third quarter of 2015 and to date the monitoring records of Empower PS state that 593 trainees have been trained and 516 jobs have been created within call centres. The actual investment made by IQ-to-Link amounted to in excess of €1 million and this is too high to have been leveraged by the comparatively small grant of \$34,182, such that the number of jobs created by the grant needs to be apportioned more realistically. A similar example exists with a training grant implemented by Training and Development Institute. Empower PS's data shows 78 females having been trained, whereas the beneficiary interviewed for this study stated that 20 had been supported by Empower PS with the remaining 58 trainees having been supported by another donor.

Nevertheless, according to the training institutions, trainees and grant beneficiaries interviewed by this study, Empower PS has had much impact on their business and their career development.

Training need analysis and mapping market size per occupation/profession have not been activities conducted by the project. However, for the industries supported by Empower PS, there are several reports issued by other donor funded projects such as: Youth Employment and Skills and Capacity Development for the Education Sector (GIZ)⁹, Enhancing Youth Employment¹⁰ (Helvetas), Aligning Education with labour

9 <http://www.cdbe.info/?download=3864>

market needs¹¹ (EU and Austrian Development Cooperation) and UNDP¹². In the case of Females in Technology, a project developed by the Training and Development Institute, a training need analysis was conducted relating to the skills and knowledge demanded by the ICT sector: their training curriculum was then aligned to these identified labour market needs.

Empower PS has had less contact with vocational education and training institutions managed by either municipalities or The Agency for Vocational Education Training and Adult Education or Vocational Training Centres operated by Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, etc. Rather vocational training supported by the project has focused on private institutions. For example, Females in Technology implemented by TDI, Women in Online Work implemented by Cactus and ICT training implemented by Kosovo ICT Association. These courses tend to be one off activities with the goal of empowering young women to enter the job market in that sector. With regard to sustainability, the activities focus on creating job placements for the candidates with little or no follow-up activity supported by Empower PS. Monitoring of these courses has been conducted on a quarterly basis by Empower with regard to determining, from the training institution, the number of trainees successfully finding job placements.

3.3 EFFICIENCY

This section provides an assessment of the results achieved, compared to expected results stated in the project document. It includes also indication of alternative approaches that could have been adopted and a review of cross-cutting issues.

10 <http://www.helvetas-ks.org/eye/portfolio-items/ict-skills-gap-analysis/>; <http://www.helvetas-ks.org/eye/portfolio-items/market-assessment-for-the-construction-sector/>; <http://www.helvetas-ks.org/eye/portfolio-items/skills-assessment-for-wood-processing-sector-in-kosovo/>; <http://www.helvetas-ks.org/eye/portfolio-items/market-assessment-for-the-vet-skills-market-system/>

11 [http://www.alledkosovo.com/publications/download/1-Analiza-koncepte-metodologji/Profili-i-sektorit-Inxhinieri-Mekanike-\(Shqip\).pdf](http://www.alledkosovo.com/publications/download/1-Analiza-koncepte-metodologji/Profili-i-sektorit-Inxhinieri-Mekanike-(Shqip).pdf); [http://www.alledkosovo.com/publications/download/1-Analiza-koncepte-metodologji/Profili-i-sektorit-Bujqesi-\(Shqip\).pdf](http://www.alledkosovo.com/publications/download/1-Analiza-koncepte-metodologji/Profili-i-sektorit-Bujqesi-(Shqip).pdf); <http://www.alledkosovo.com/publications/download/1-Analiza-koncepte-metodologji/Profili-i-sektorit-Perpunimi-i-ushqimit.pdf>; <http://www.alledkosovo.com/publications/download/1-Analiza-koncepte-metodologji/Profili-i-sektorit-Inxhinieria-mekanike.pdf>; <http://www.alledkosovo.com/publications/download/1-Analiza-koncepte-metodologji/Profili-i-sektorit-Bujqesi.pdf>

¹² <http://www.ks.undp.org/content/dam/kosovo/docs/alm2/Skills%20Needs%20Assessment%202016.pdf>

A limiting factor in responding to this section is that the review team did not have access to the Empower PS budget or its expenditure reports. However, since the Swedish contribution amounts to less than 20% of the total budget and it is used in a transparent manner on grant allocations to beneficiary companies, this is not considered to be a material issue. Empower does maintain detailed monitoring reports on the utilisation of grants and of the impact of those grants in terms of increased sales, increased exports and increased employment for each recipient company. To the knowledge of this review team, no cost benefit analysis has been undertaken but the amount of private investment leveraged by each grant allocation is closely monitored and on average currently exceeds by five times the value of grants delivered.

Due to the lengthy assessment process undertaken prior to each grant allocation, and the very detailed list of monitoring indicators compiled quarterly, a great deal of staff time is spent on these specific tasks. No detailed monitoring of the staff time devoted to these tasks was provided to the team. The levels of competence possessed by individual staff members cannot be assessed in a short review of this nature. Several companies interviewed referred to the lack of sector expertise within the project team, such that the Empower PS staff were unable to support the beneficiary companies with specialist insights into the value chains in which they were working. However, these comments did not come from all companies so it is possible that some specialist expertise was available in-house, in addition to the small number of short term technical assistants employed by the project. At a more general level the project appeared to be run very efficiently and all issues raised by the review team were responded to in a timely and diligent manner.

From its grant awards, Empower PS states that it has achieved a leverage in excess of five times the grant value (the target being three times). Meaning that if the value of the grant is €20,000 (usually in the form of capital equipment) the beneficiary company will have invested on average more than €120,000 into its production capacity, often in the form of increased factory space and/or additional capital equipment.

Given that many of the companies supported, with the exception of those in North Mitrovica, were small to medium sized and had access to commercial bank finance, the review team do not consider that there is a case for increasing the amount of grant provided to individual companies, although the value of grants was relatively small. The level of leverage achieved also reinforces the view that the grants were sufficient. It should be stated that significantly larger grants are reportedly provided under some EU-funded schemes, but the justification for such awards is not known.

Referring to Empower reports, as a direct impact of the grant provision and training offered to its beneficiaries by March 2018; a total of 2973 (1135 women, 38%) jobs have been created. The majority of jobs have been created in ICT amounting at 964 (455 women), followed by the Wood Industry at 786 jobs (193 women), Apparel 433

jobs (264 women), Other (Food Processing, agriculture, manufacturing etc.) 373 Jobs (151 women), Energy 295 jobs (64 women), Metal 83 jobs (8 women) and lastly Tourism 39 jobs (0 women). Furthermore, youth gained 1081 of these jobs (or 36.3%) and minorities 293 of the jobs (or 9.8%). An additional 4175 jobs were reportedly created in supply chain companies related to the above beneficiary companies. Empower PS's management stated that, due to the lead time required to employ additional staff after new investments are completed, it expects that its overall target of 5000 direct jobs will have been achieved by the conclusion of the project.

Rejected Grant Applicants reviewed

The team was requested by Sida to review some 1% of rejected grant applications in order to verify the process that was followed. The selection criteria for the 15 out of over 1400 rejected applications was as follows:

- 1) A cross section of the three rounds of application
- 2) Across all geographical locations of Kosovo and some rural applicants
- 3) From all the major cities of Kosovo: Pristina, Prizren, Gjiljan, Peja, Mitrovica, Ferizaj
- 4) An equal number of male and female headed companies (8 female and 7 male headed companies)
- 5) Larger grant requests were prioritised
- 6) From all sectors within the EMPOWER project: Apparel, Energy, Food processing ICT, Metal, Tourism, Wood and other

Having selected the applications, the reviewer then audited the process used to consider each application to assess the consistency of treatment and the record keeping that had been maintained. The steps that were followed by Empower PS to appraise applications for grant funding are as follows:

The application is allocated to one sector and sent to the sector lead for initial review.

- 1) Appraisal meetings are composed of the Chief of Party, deputy Chief of Party and two other senior staff members, making a permanent team of four (3 men and 1 women), although if one person was absent they were substituted by another senior staff member. Other staff members are present at each meeting such that around 7 or 8 persons are involved in each decision.
- 2) The sector lead for each grant application presents the application to the meeting and a discussion between all present is then conducted leading to a vote by the four permanent members. In all applications reviewed the vote was unanimous as the preliminary discussion was intended to iron out any contentious issues.
- 3) If the result of the vote was to reject the application, a letter (or email) was sent to the applicant explaining the reasons why their application was unsuccessful.

- 4) Where the vote was ‘maybe’ these potentially successful applications were then taken to the next level of appraisal which would normally involve an initial company visit. If this was positive, further detailed investigations would be conducted prior to making a final decision.

With 1400 applications clearly the vast majority of applications were rejected.

Assessment Outcome: The assessment found that the decisions taken were logical and followed a clear and transparent procedure. Considering the very large number of grant applications received it is inevitable that many good projects were eventually rejected. There is no reason to believe that any of the rejected applications were better than the ones visited by the review team. One of the major issues was the low ratio of expected job creation compared with the value of the grant requested, or they were considered to be unrealistic. In some cases, the applicant had not provided all necessary information.

Of the 15 applications reviewed the grants requested ranged from €10,868 to €75,000. Applications of less than €35,000 (five applications) were all from female headed companies. The number of new jobs expected to be created ranged from 2 to 100 per application. Women headed companies tended to indicate more job creation but it is not possible to assess whether this was realistic.

Conclusion: If Empower PS could have created application criteria which would have excluded the majority of applications this might have saved a great deal of staff time. Clearly, it is not easy to establish such criteria and the risk is always present that some excellent applications would then have been excluded on these ‘administrative’ grounds. The fact that the project targeted some eight sectors (including ‘other’) meant that almost any manufacturing outlet in Kosovo could submit an application.

No external representative was involved at any time in the selection process. But again, with so many applications to review it would be very difficult to involve an external person in such a time consuming process. However, it might be expected that an external expert would bring in a different perspective and avoid the risk of meetings developing a ‘group think’ mentality which given the unanimity of voting outcomes on the applications reviewed, cannot be discounted. In addition, there is always the danger of some form of favouritism, either actual or perceived, and a donor funded project must strive to avoid any doubt in this regard.

3.4 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

This section considers the issues of gender which has particular relevance to Sida’s development mandate as well as environment. It reviews the positive or negative effects of the project on gender equality and considers whether gender mainstreaming

could have been improved in planning, implementation or follow up or interventions. It also briefly assesses the added value of Sweden's contribution.

Gender Equality

No gender analysis appears to have been undertaken as a baseline at the start of the project, although Empower PS has noted and considered the low labour market participation of women. Also, no gender analysis is undertaken in the beneficiary companies, other than recording the number of women working and number of women in management. In some of the companies, especially apparel and food processing of cakes and baklava, it would be good also to monitor the number of men and their distribution between the different departments this would give an idea to what extent stereotypical roles are being maintained and whether the project has contributed to changing gender norms.

Regarding the wood sector, 193 women are reported to have gained employment, some in manufacturing of furniture and others in administration. In the apparel sector, a lot of men hold management level jobs and women tend to work on the factory floor as seamstresses. But, according to Empower PS this is now changing with women entering top management positions, to some extent influenced by returning diaspora who have a new culture from abroad.

Empower has gender based indicators for women employees and women in management but not for men, so the data is not sex-disaggregated, for example, if 38% of all employees are women the statistics should also state that 62% are men. Data is collected on beneficiary groups for all indicators e.g. business size expansion, but the project does not appear to have statistics on women owned businesses and male owned business. Wherever people are involved it is beneficial to sex-disaggregate information as this provides rich material for gender analysis. For example, on increased sales it might be very interesting to compare companies in the same sector headed by women, with those headed by men. Also, when analysing sub-groups, for example minorities and youth, data needs to be sex-disaggregated to confirm whether the project is supporting young women and men, as well as males and females from different minority groups.



Kosovan women employed in the wood industry (Empower PS Photo Bank)

The project does challenge gender norms to the extent that women have been employed at a higher rate within the project than in the national economy. And it monitors women's employment and women in management for each of its beneficiary companies and in this way the participation of women has been highlighted. Within beneficiary companies some women have accessed male dominated sectors and at management level women have gained some positions, but more could be done such as promoting the importance of women entering the labour market in Kosovo at business festivals or sponsoring seminars on power and empowerment in society.

Women generally have less access to collateral due to customary laws regarding property inheritance, such that when starting a business, they face challenges in obtaining bank loans. This issue is addressed under the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund which is supported by Sida under a separate funding agreement. One sector that could have been promoted under Empower PS is privatised care services for pre-school aged children and the elderly. Expanded access to such care provision would better enable women to compete freely for employment or to start their own businesses. At present the responsibility for care of dependant relatives continues to fall unequally upon women.

Environment

Some companies supported have a direct and positive impact on the environment. The evaluators had the opportunity to meet with a company recycling plastic waste for export as rolled plastic sheeting to Italy. However, the working environment could have been improved to ensure employees use of face masks and earplugs.

Empower PS supported the Green Festival in Pristina, where the Green Forum brought together private companies, ministry representatives, and civil society organisations to discuss priority issues related to policy, legal, and regulatory issues concerning the environment and those businesses engaged in clean energy and energy efficiency. Empower PS also allocated a grant to Al-Tech, the first meat recycling company in Kosovo. Meat waste is a significant environmental contaminant, with many butchers operating with little compliance with basic environmental standards. Al-Tech will operate a meat waste collection centre thereby acting in an environmentally responsible way. Investment in renewable energy, such as the manufacturing of solar panels, has been supported and the project also promotes energy efficiency in its beneficiary companies through the introduction of energy saving technology.

During company visits the review team noted that not all companies were employing adequate health and safety measures, such as use of ear defenders and effective ventilation systems to extract dust and airborne chemicals from the workplace environment.

The project also conducts environmental compliance assessments for all grant-funded interventions. This consists of monitoring visits to inspect the implementation of environmental measures and includes:

- Visual observation and photographs to record physical impact, air emissions, water use, waste management, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), fire safety measures, ventilation, wastewater collection and discharge, hazardous materials storage, and;
- Interviews with the owners or managers of companies, related to the progress made on obtaining environmental permits and plans for mitigation measures, if required.

Staff then prepare and file an Environmental Monitoring Report on each monitoring visit.

Other cross-cutting issues

Empower PS monitors youth employment, employment for minority groups and employment in North Kosovo, without disaggregation between women and men. Other cross cutting issues like corporate social responsibility, climate change, good governance, disaster management, etc., are not foreseen under this project.

Value added from Swedish contribution

The most substantial value added from Sweden's contribution is that the funding of approximately US \$2.2 million went directly into Empower's Strategic Activities Fund and therefore enabled the project to support more companies. This feeds directly into one of the major goals of Sida's regional strategy: "Competitive small and medium-sized enterprises make up a greater share of the economy". Beyond this Sida and the Embassy have been involved in 6 monthly review meetings regarding the project's progress but there is little evidence that Sida has successfully leveraged the project's outcome or catalysed any re-orientate the project's activities in line with Sida's particular development agenda.

There is a possibility that more could have been done, for example:

- Stronger promotion of an equal opportunities environment in the participating companies;
- Connection of Swedish businesses with Kosovar business through participation in trade fairs in Sweden and B2B events
- An increased emphasis on improving the working conditions SMEs for all employees;
- Sweden currently supports the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, and it would be excellent to create identical sex-disaggregated statistical information for Empower supported SMEs as now exists on the European level when it comes to women headed and men headed businesses.

3.5 IMPACT

The review assessed the extent to which real impact has been achieved through the selected causal pathway, being the Empower PS Results Framework.

The results framework supporting Empower PS places increased employment as the single apex objective, leading then to greater economic growth. This presents the project with the conundrum of reconciling increased productivity through the increased use of modern labour saving technology with the need to create new jobs for the unemployed. Therefore, the linkage between the objective of increasing jobs and enhancing regional trade is not always direct or consistent. In addition, the project targets export led growth while seeking to encourage more women to join the labour force. With the exception of ICT, women tend to work in service industries which are not export orientated and therefore are not targeted by the project.

Empower does however have an affirmative focus on assisting underemployed and disadvantaged populations. This includes improving earning opportunities for women and promoting women into senior business management roles. The impact so far is that 38% of the newly employed people are women, which is a high score considering

their low labour market participation in Kosovo. Around 16% of SMEs supported are women headed, which is also a higher percentage as compared to the Kosovo SME promotion programme which estimated 13% of all SMEs are women led.

The project selected high performing small and medium enterprises for support and the evidence suggests that they have become more competitive in that they are expanded and some are successfully exporting their production. But the issue of attribution remains impossible to determine. The appreciation expressed by owners and managers for the company exposure provided through attendance at international trade fairs and B2B events (sponsored by Empower PS along with other donors) suggests that the project has achieved a positive impact on the ability of firms to market their output. This impact will not only be felt by individual companies but should impact on the reputation of Kosovo at large, as being a country to 'go to' for the supply of manufactured goods, as well as, a tourist destination.

The impact in terms of job creation (5000 being the target) is perhaps questionable due to the actual level of investment provided by the project, as compared to the estimated costs of creating new jobs in Kosovo. As set out in the section on Effectiveness, it appears that the creation of 5000 jobs is not realistic given the actual costs calculated for the industrial sectors targeted by Empower PS. This issue was also reference in the interviews conducted with grant recipients and other stakeholders.

Empower PS has supported customised training courses through private sector training institutions. While the impact of the specific training provided appears to have been significant for participants and has led on to a high number of jobs being secured, the future sustainability of those courses is less clear.

Given the relatively small size of grants provided against the size of the recipient companies it is unlikely that any dependence will have been created with regard to future capital investments. However, the sector associations (with the possible exception of STIKK) appear to be highly donor dependant at the current time, and as reference above, the private sector training institutions may not be able to finance their training provision in the absence of donor support. The level of exposure for Kosovan companies to international trade fairs and B2B events is also not assured in the absence of donor support, especially given the current lack of sector associations with genuine capacity and resources to support their members.

4 Conclusions

The conclusions below are set out below to correspond to the evaluation criteria applied in the findings section.

Relevance:

The project was designed in 2014 when the prospects for growth in the Kosovan economy were significantly less optimistic than they are today. This goes far to explain the design of the project and the positive changes that have occurred, some of which should be attributed to Empower PS along with the work of other donors. It is unlikely that donors such as USAID or Sida will consider providing enterprise grants to medium sized companies in the future due to the fact that they are able to access commercial finance and the need to ensure a 'level playing field' such that one company does not gain an unfair competitive advantage. However, this probable change in donor strategy in part serves to demonstrate the success of the original design.

Effectiveness:

Empower is assessed to have been relatively risk adverse in its selection of grant beneficiaries, since most of the companies visited by the review team were able to access commercial bank lending. This lack of risk taking may have been the result of the very high (and arguably unrealistic) level of new job creation (5,000) which was a key target for the project. It might be expected that donor funds would be used to assist companies with excellent and innovative ideas, but which lacked the collateral, etc. to obtain funds to initiate such ventures.

More could be done if the work to develop fledgling sector-based membership associations is to bear fruit in the longer term. At present, most are little more than 'bag carriers' for the donors. This is a very challenging area of work as, of itself, any donor funded intervention can serve to weaken the association since their members' focus will be on maximising immediate benefits from the donor, even if it is just a reflected glory. For any strategy to be successful it has to be developed in very close collaboration with each of the Association's members and must result in the Association having the ability to raise income beyond its membership fees. Only with additional resources is an association likely to be able to offer a menu of benefits that will attract the most successful companies. And, it is those top performing companies which are most likely to ensure that the Association effectively pursues a sustainable economic model.

A wide range of monitoring indicators were established some being required by USAID rather than by the project. The time required each quarter to collect all the information from each beneficiary company was clearly considerable and some companies found the level of detail demanded to be a burden. However, as set out under gender in this report, the data collected on this issue was too limited to enable the issue of gender to be analysed in more depth.

Efficiency:

As set out above, data collection around women and men's involvement in the project is limited to head counts for women in general and for women in management positions and does not delve deeper into power structures, etc. However, as far as head counting is concerned the project has successfully involved more women in enterprise and employment than is the case elsewhere in the economy. The resources available within the project are currently too limited for it to realistically address deeper structural issues.

With more resources Empower PS could have promoted fair and equal employment within the companies that it supported. There is a need to encourage companies to ensure fair conditions for men and women by developing policies for gender equality, equal opportunities and against all forms of harassment in the workplace.

5 Recommendations

The recommendations below are primarily for Sida to consider with regards to future funding but might also be useful for the donor community at large.

1. Donors should move away from the provision of grants to small and medium sized businesses for the purchase of capital equipment. Such grants should only be considered for start-up businesses which are testing some form of genuine innovation. Innovation is, by definition, very high risk and highly unlikely to attract commercial finance. It should also be noted that the EU will be offering grants to micro enterprises in the near future.
2. Although Kosovan enterprises have begun to achieve international recognition through their attendance at trade fairs, etc., it is unlikely that small to medium sized companies will be able to continue this trend, or to it to a higher level simply by reinvesting their profits into marketing and sales promotion. Also, as emphasised above, most sectors have no representative Association with the capacity to make market linkages and promote products. Discussions with beneficiaries highlighted the utility of the assistance they had received from Empower through subsidised attendance at trade fairs and sponsorship of B2B events. It is therefore strongly recommended that this type of assistance is continued beyond the life of Empower PS.
3. Linked to the above recommendation there is also a strong argument for assisting companies with product certification procedures in preparation for greater EU integration.
4. Some form of capacity building assistance to sector based membership associations could also be considered, but with strong caveats regarding the design and implementation of such support. Support to date has seen the establishment of some associations, but having little capacity to work independent of donors.
5. The absence of external representation on the decision making panel, whilst expedient given the very large number of applications received, does not seem to be best practice given the need to demonstrate total integrity in the allocation of resources. For future projects of this nature there is a need to provide a document which sets out precisely how the system works, what the criteria are and how the final decision will be made.

6. There needs to be clear coordination between all the donors focusing on private sector development. There is currently overlap across the sectors and there is no guarantee that this will always be complementary to one another. Such is the case of Empower PS, which supports similar activities to the two Swiss funded project PPSE and EYE. A project such as Empower could have more impact if it narrowed its activities from eight sectors to a maximum of three so that entire sector benefits from raised profile and marketing opportunities.
7. Whilst cooperating with other donors to fund activities is a pragmatic and logical approach, it is unclear what Sida's strategy has been in this instance. Sida has not used the opportunity to leverage the funding such that the any particular value added has been created in terms of Sida's particular development agenda. For example, on the issue of gender Empower PS could have done more and Sida could have provided expertise to assist, as set out below. Staffing at the Swedish Embassy in Kosovo is very limited indeed, this would have to be increased for a more proactive strategy to be pursued.
8. It would have been useful for the project to make an organisational gender assessment during its inception phase. This could have ensured that a policy framework and systems were in place and that resources were available to realise the framework. Empower PS required more resources to communicate gender mainstreaming issues internally as well as to project beneficiaries. Empower also needed to have a driver for gender mainstreaming such as a specialist at management level.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

Date: 2018-03-05

Mid-term Review of the EMPOWER Private Sector (EPS) Project in Kosovo

1. Background

Kosovo is the poorest country in the region, with high levels of poverty, unemployment, a weak productive sector and a huge negative trade balance of 45% of GDP. There are positive signs though, such as legislative reforms and macroeconomic progress, a steady growth rate of 3-5%, but still the private sector is very small and in general uncompetitive. The vast majority of companies are small family business, with limited growth plans. The private sector has to grow significantly to be able to create more job opportunities, tax revenues and a solid base for the economy. And this will have to take place in a European context where most of the competition is at a more advanced stage. The project is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the SMEs in Kosovo and thus stimulates large scale job creation. The support is relevant in relation to the current result strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, 2014-2020. One of the results is about Enhanced economic integration with the EU and the development of market economy; and with the following sector objective:

Competitive small- and medium-sized enterprises make up a greater share of the economy. The EPS project is directly addressing the competitiveness of small- and medium-sized enterprises in Kosovo, inclusive job creation as well as local capacity building for continued work within this field. The strong focus on job creation is believed to have led to not only a number of new and decent jobs, but also with the positive effects generally connected to that, such as increased income and living standards, health and education. There is a special effort to support women's employment.

The project is managed by USAID in Kosovo. The Swedish contribution amounts up to 20% of the total budget, and USAID is the lead donor. Consequently, Sweden has assessed the reporting framework and adapt to the same. The dialogue during implementation has taken place regularly with USAID, and jointly with the contractor (CARDNO).

Sida entered into an agreement with USAID in 2015. The agreement is standard USAID project agreement. USAID has through a procurement entered into a contract with CARDNO, a private consulting company. CARDNO will carry out the

Empower project as stated in the statement of work. The agreement partner (USAID) does not ensure Sida requirements for audit, in agreements with their parties. The project implementation period ends in July, 2019.

According to the agreement between Sida and USAID article 10, Sida decided to conduct a mid-term review (MTR) of the support.

The Swedish Embassy in Pristina now wishes to engage a consultant (“the Consultant”) to conduct an external mid-term review of the Project (the ‘Assignment’).

2. Objectives of the consulting services

This assignment consists of two parts:

Part A: Contextual analyses- Identifying important unmet needs and possible priority areas for Swedish support to Micro Small and Medium size of Enterprises (MSME) sector and to economic development in Kosovo. Suggest several alternative opportunities and for each suggestion. What could be achieved? The study should identify possible gaps in current international support to Kosovo in the area of economic development with a focus on MSME support. It shall seek to identify and assess priority areas for Swedish support in this field for the remaining strategy period and beyond.

The Consultant’s assignment for the part A will be to:

- Briefly describe and analyse the present status and major problems regarding MSME development.
- Identify and briefly describe on-going development efforts by central and local governments.
- Identify and briefly describe donor support and future plans regarding MSMEs.
- Identify the value chains that have a big potential for MSME growth.
- Identify important unmet needs and possible priority areas for Swedish support to MSMEs and to economic development.
- Suggest several alternative possibilities for support and for each suggestion assess and describe the value-added of a Swedish contribution. What could be achieved?
- Identify potential partners (donors and local organizations/ Government Institutions/agencies) that Sweden can cooperate with in the planning and implementation of the suggested projects.

Part B- Mid-Term Review (MTR) to provide inputs for Sida’s/Embassy of Sweden in Pristina assessment of the efficiency, relevance, and immediate impact of the EPS

project in Kosovo in order to improve the remaining years of the implementation period.

The assignment will provide the following inputs:

- The extent to which the project was relevant at time of conceptualisation, and remains relevant and suited to SMEs in the country. The review should evaluate the quality of the project design, including its objectives, results and lessons learned to date.
- A description and an assessment of the results achieved, compared to the expected results stated in the project document. This should include also indication of any alternative approach(es) that could have been adopted, if any.
- The extent to which the Project is making effective progress in attaining its specific objectives of:
 - o Increasingly competitive and market-oriented SMEs (Outcome objective);
 - o Strengthened capacity of local partners to support further growth of SMEs (Output objective);
 - o Job creation through workforce development (Outcome objective).
- Lessons learned to date and guidance on how to integrate such lessons into project implementation going forward.
- Assessment of risks and mitigation measures under the project.
- The review should also capture impact on environmental and climate change, social, and cultural.
- Recommendations for the ongoing implementation of the Project and its potential expansion.
- Assess and describe the value-added of a Swedish contribution within the EPS project.

3. Scope of services

The proposed methodology should be a combination of a desk review, field visits, in-depth structured interviews, report writing and, if required, a presentation to the donors.

During the Assignment the Consultant shall undertake the following tasks:

- Undertake necessary preparation and desk research, including:
 - o Examine key strategic and operational documentation guiding Sida/USAID activities under the Project;

- Examine relevant data, documentation and reports relating to the implementation of the Project;
- Undertake interviews with implementing team based in Pristina.
- Prepare and present for Sida/USAID approval the details methodology, approach and the workplan for Assignment implementation.
- Undertake a review mission(s) in the country, including the following:
 - Meet jointly with donors as well as with the local Project consultant team;
 - Visit a sample of enterprises, chosen by Sida/USAID the project engaged under the Project to assess impact of the individual interventions on entrepreneurs;
 - Meet with other relevant stakeholders (list to be provided by Sida/USAID)
 - Prepare a summary of meetings report.
- Prepare the Assignment Report, including:
 - Draft Report, including preliminary results including lessons learned and recommendations, for Sida/USAID review; The report should include an executive summary and contain necessary textual and graphic information in common electronic formats;
 - Revise the draft as necessary based on Sida/USAID feedback;
 - Prepare and submit the final Report.

4. Time schedule and deliverables

It is expected that a time and work plan is presented in the tender and further detailed in the inception report. The evaluation shall be carried out between March to Mid May 2018 (from contracting to delivery of final report). The expected starting date of the contract is 26 March 2018. The final draft report shall be presented to the Embassy no later than 15th May 2018.

The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the evaluator in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the inception phase.

- Inception report by 6 April 2018;
- Draft Report by 2 May 2018;
- Final draft report and presentation by 15 May 2018;
- Final report at the latest after one week after submission of Embassy's and USAID comments.

The inception report will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by the Embassy in consultation with USAID before the evaluation proceeds to implementation.

The final report shall be written in English and be professionally proof read. The final report should have clear structure and follow the report format in the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report Template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C). The methodology used shall be described and explained, and all limitations shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. Findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions. Recommendations should be specific, directed to relevant stakeholders and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term. The report should be no more than 15 pages excluding annexes. The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation.

The evaluator shall, upon approval of the final report, insert the report into the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report for decentralised evaluations and submit it to Citrus (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication data base. The order is placed by sending the approved report to sida@citrus.com, always with a copy to the Sida Programme Officer as well as Sida's evaluation unit (evaluation@sida.se). Write "Sida decentralised evaluations" in the email subject field and include the name of the consulting company as well as the full evaluation title in the email. For invoicing purposes, the evaluator needs to include the invoice reference "ZZ610601S," type of allocation "sakanslag" and type of order "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas."

5. Evaluation Team Qualification

The evaluation team should combine the following competencies:

- Education in the relevant field.
- Knowledge and experience of market social-economic development in developing countries, with particular emphasis on sustainable livelihoods and gender equality.
- Experience (through previous assignments) in evaluations of similar programmes.
- Experience (through previous assignments) in development of the MSME's.
- Experience and knowledge in the area of gender equality mainstreaming and women's economic empowerment.
- Good local knowledge.
- Knowledge of Kosovo official languages is advantage.

The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

6. Resources

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is 700 000 SEK. The Program Officer/contact person at the Swedish Embassy is Fatos Mulla, Programme Officer for Market Development. Relevant Sida documentation will be provided by Fatos Mulla, Programme Officer for Market Development.
fatos.mulla@gov.se.

Contact details to intended users and relevant stakeholders will be provided by the Embassy.

The consultant will be required to arrange the logistics during the assignment. The team may make reasonable requests to USAID for information, briefings and contact details for national stakeholder.

7. Annexes

Annex A: List of key documentation

- Empower private sector concept paper;
- Project Fact sheet 2017

Annex B: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation object (i.e. intervention, strategy, policy etc.)	
Title of the evaluation object	EMPOWER Private Sector (EPS)
ID no. in PLANIt	55020298
Dox no./Archive case no.	UM 2015/17443
Activity period (if applicable)	2015- 2019
Agreed budget (if applicable)	20 000 000 SEK
Main sector	Market Development
Name and type of implementing organisation	NGO or Civil society; consultancy firms etc
Aid type	Project type
Swedish strategy	
Information on the evaluation assignment	
Commissioning unit/Swedish Embassy	Embassy of Sweden Pristina
Contact person at unit/Swedish Embassy	Fatos Mulla
Timing of evaluation (mid-term review, end-of-programme, ex-post or other)	Mid-term review
ID no. in PLANIt (if other than above).	

Annex 2 Empower Results Framework

Performance Measurement Indicators Reference Table

A. Targeted Indicators

Disaggregation codes: Sector / Value Chain (V), Priority group: women, youth, ethnicity, other (G), Region/Municipality (R), Firm size (S), Export market (X).

Target cumulative increases are broadly rounded.

(#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref / AIR	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use	Target (cuml 5yr)
Activity Outcome 1: Increased number of competitive SMEs creating jobs through growing sales in focus sectors				
(1) Number of Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output	Custom	As beneficiaries are engaged in project activities	Indicates extent of project outreach / country coverage in general and success in expanding impact.	400 entities
(2) Attributed aggregate sales of Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Outcome	F / 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	In quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates overall success in addressing competitiveness constraints to opportunities.	\$150MM

#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref / AIR	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use	Target (cuml 5yr)
(3) Attributed aggregate sales increase of Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Outcome	F / 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	In quarterly beneficiary entity surveys and then calculated by M&E based on baseline	Indicates overall success in addressing competitiveness constraints to opportunities.	\$100MM increase
(4) Attributed aggregate exports increase of Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S, X</i> Type: Outcome	F / 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	From dedicated export promotion activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Subcategory of aggregate sales. Indicates success in connecting buyers to foreign markets and improving export competitiveness. Also records new export markets.	\$50MM increase
(5) Business size expansion – number of Primary Beneficiary Entities transitioning to a larger size category <i>Disaggregate: V, R, X</i> Type: Outcome	Custom / 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	In quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success in identifying and realizing market-driven growth opportunities and adapting management to entity size growth. At macro level indicates better-balanced economy.	25 entities
(6) Number of new geographic markets entered by Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S, X</i> Type: Outcome	Custom / 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	From dedicated export promotion activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success in identifying and competitively finding new buyers and entering new markets.	50 new market entries
(7) Number of new products sold by Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S, X</i> Type: Outcome	Custom / 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	From dedicated export promotion activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success in identifying and competitively finding new buyers and entering new markets.	50 new products

#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref / AIR	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use	Target (cuml 5yr)
(8) Number of Primary Beneficiary Entities that have adopted new technologies <i>Disaggregate V, G, R, S</i> Type: Output	F / 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	Recorded at completion of dedicated activities and in annual entity surveys	Indicates increased competitiveness, capacity for entity size growth, and ability to find and take advantage of opportunities.	80 entities
Activity Outcome 2: Jobs created through workforce development and opportunities in any sector, with inclusiveness				
(9) Total new jobs at Primary Beneficiaries (PBs) Disaggregate: V, G, R, S Type: Outcome	F, CDCS / 2.1, 2.2	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Principal indicator for AO2; also ultimate aim of AO1.	5,000 new jobs
All Activity Objectives				
(10) Leverage Type: Output	Custom	Continuous at activity level	Indicates success in eliciting cost-sharing contributions from beneficiaries, and attraction of funding into EMPOWER-sponsored activities from other development assistance projects and financial institutions	3.0 x (total cash funding / EMP funding)

B. Additional Tracked / Non-targeted Indicators

#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use
All Activity Objectives			
(1.1) Number of Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates extent of project outreach / country coverage in general and success in expanding impact.
(1.1.1) Number of Microenterprise Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates extent of project outreach / country coverage in general and success in expanding impact.
(1.1.2) Number of Start-up Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates extent of project outreach / country coverage in general and success in expanding impact.
(1.2) Number of Domestic Supplier Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates extent of project outreach / country coverage in general and success in expanding impact.
(10.1) CI Finance <i>Disaggregate: V</i>	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity	Indicates success in eliciting cost-sharing contributions from collaborating institutions (donors and local government).

#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use
Type: Output		surveys	
(10.2) Aggregate private institutional finance <i>Disaggregate: V</i> Type: Output	F, Custom	Recorded at completion of specific intervention and through quarterly business surveys	Indicates success of activities supporting competitiveness and business expansion, and of promoting access to finance.
(10.3) Value of Foreign Direct Investment <i>Disaggregate: V</i> Type: Outcome	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success of activities supporting competitiveness and business expansion, and of promoting access to finance
(10.4) Value of private investment <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success of activities supporting competitiveness and business expansion, and of promoting access to finance
(11) Total impact – Sales at Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output	Custom	In quarterly beneficiary entity surveys and then calculated by M&E based on multipliers	Indicates overall success in addressing competitiveness constraints to opportunities.
(12) Total impact – Sales increase at Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output	Custom	In quarterly beneficiary entity surveys and then calculated by M&E based on multipliers	Indicates overall success in addressing competitiveness constraints to opportunities.
(13) Total impact – New jobs at	Custom	In quarterly beneficiary entity surveys and then calculated by	Indicates success across all project interventions.

#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use
Beneficiary Companies <i>Disaggregate: V, R, S</i> Type: Output		M&E based on multipliers	
AIR 1.1: Quality of SME products enhanced			
(14) Number of product quality certifications obtained by Primary Beneficiary Entities <i>Disaggregate: V, G, R, S, X</i> Type: Output	F	Recorded at completion of dedicated activities	Indicates that competitiveness obstacles to business opportunities are addressed.
AIR 2.1: Workforce skills enhanced			
(15) Number of workers with certified job skills / qualifications <i>Disaggregate: V, G, R, S</i> Type: Output	F	Recorded at completion of dedicated activities and in annual entity surveys	Indicates support to entities to address skills needs for opportunities, and preparation of individuals for market-driven employment opportunities.
(16) Person-hours of workforce and management skills training <i>Disaggregate: V, G, R, S</i> Type: Output	F	Recorded at completion of dedicated activities and in annual entity surveys	Indicates support to entities to address skills needs for opportunities, and preparation of individuals for market-driven employment opportunities.
AIR 2.2: Workforce inclusiveness advanced			

#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use
(9.1) Jobs – Women (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Outcome	F	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting employment of women, and of customized training activities. <i>Note: Jobs are not additive across indicators 9.1-9.5 – they overlap.</i>
(9.2) Jobs – Youth (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Outcome	F	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting employment of youth, and of customized training activities. <i>Note: Jobs are not additive across indicators 9.1-9.5 – they overlap.</i>
(9.3) Jobs – Minorities (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Outcome	F	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting employment of minorities, and of customized training activities. <i>Note: Jobs are not additive across indicators 9.1-9.5 – they overlap.</i>
(9.4) Jobs - North Kosovo (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Outcome	F	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting employment in North Kosovo, and of customized training activities. <i>Note: Jobs are not additive across indicators 9.1-9.5 – they overlap.</i>
(9.5) Women in Management (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Outcome	Custom	From all activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting employment in North Kosovo, and of customized training activities. <i>Note: Jobs are not additive across indicators 9.1-9.5 – they overlap.</i>
(17) Trainees (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i>	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training activities. <i>Note: Trainees are not additive across indicators 17.1-17.4 – they overlap.</i>

#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use
Type: Output			
(17.1) Trainees – Women (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training activities. <i>Note: Trainees are not additive across indicators 17.1-17.4 – they overlap.</i>
(17.2) Trainees – Youth (18-24) (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training activities. <i>Note: Trainees are not additive across indicators 17.1-17.4 – they overlap.</i>
(17.3) Trainees – Minorities (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training activities. <i>Note: Trainees are not additive across indicators 17.1-17.4 – they overlap.</i>
(17.4) Trainees – North Kosovo (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training activities. <i>Note: Trainees are not additive across indicators 17.1-17.4 – they overlap.</i>
(18) Interns / Apprentices (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training and internship activities. <i>Note: Interns are not additive across indicators 18.1-18.4 – they overlap.</i>
(18.1) Interns – Women (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training and internship activities. <i>Note: Interns are not additive across indicators 18.1-18.4 – they overlap.</i>

(#) Indicator, Definition, Disaggregation	Ref	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Use
(18.2) Interns – Youth (18-24) (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training and internship activities. <i>Note: Interns are not additive across indicators 18.1-18.4 – they overlap.</i>
(18.3) Interns – Minorities (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training and internship activities. <i>Note: Interns are not additive across indicators 18.1-18.4 – they overlap.</i>
(18.4) Interns – North Kosovo (PBs) <i>Disaggregate: V, R</i> Type: Output	Custom	From all workforce development activities and in quarterly beneficiary entity surveys	Indicates success across project interventions in supporting training and internship activities. <i>Note: Interns are not additive across indicators 18.1-18.4 – they overlap.</i>

Annex 3 Fieldwork undertaken

Beneficiary Companies Visited

Company Name	Person Met	Nature of support requested	Grant amount requested	Grant amount approved
Izolimi Plast	Production Manager	Expanding and diversifying recycled foil-based insulation and agro products	€80,000	€30,000
Cactus	Driton Hapciu	IT software testers training and certification	€42,600	€15,000
Jaha Solar	Trim Ternava Sales Manager and Saranda Bytyqi, Production Manager	Solar Panel Quality Certification	€20,000	€20,000
IQ to Link	Aferdita Gashi	Equipment for New Call Centre	€463,680	€30,520
Albed	Miftar Veseli	Production Expansion in furniture production	€50,000	€35,000
Binni	Bedri Fazliu	Equipment to increase production volume and product quality	€31,100	€31,100
Shehu	Kreshnik Shehu	Expansion of production and new import substitution products for door panels and wood drying line	€54,000	€40,000
Dijamanti	Nijazi Kastrati	New wood processing factory - Expansion of production	€72,675	€40,000
Rroni Fer	Labinot Kameri	Expansion of wire drawing production line	€75,000	€40,000
Creative	Rina Nixha	Tailoring of uniforms	€39,325	€15,844
Milos i Marta	Bojan Antonijevic	Cake and biscuit making	n/a	\$ 16,016
Enrad	Tahir Tahiri CEO and Skender Sulimani, Director of Production	Participation in Zagreb “Energetika” Fair 22-25 April 2015	€4,100	€3,500
Palma	Ekrem Shahini	New furniture factory – kitchens and bedrooms	€65,000	€50,000
Sela Impex	Serten Musliu (Partner), Ertan	New equipment for sofa upholstery quality improvement	€75,000	€50,000

	Musliu (Partner) Arian Berisha (administrative Manager)			
Rolleo	Lirie Ilazi Managing Director Fisnik Ilazi Sales Manager	Investment in Packaging cakes production line	€115,000	€40,000
Jasin	Taulant Koshi, Head of Administration	Production expansion and quality Improvement for inox steel products	€60,355	€34,000
Puntex	Shpend Beqiri, Urhan Silik and Ramadan Grazhda. All three are partners	Expansion of production in textile	€15,800	€10,000
Koshi	Shkamb Koshi Owner and Agron Koshi, Production Manager	Production expansion in carbon fibre automotive parts	€52,000	€30,000

Attendance at FDGs

Company Name	Invited	Activity Title	Sector	Municipality	Original Grant Amount Euro	Status
AGRO-CENTER	Zlatko Sekulic	Apple operation post-harvest expansion	Food processing	Leposavic	43,600	Completed
MONTER-B	Sretko Barac	Metal gutters production line	Metal	Leposavic	19,000	Completed
Peppermint International	Stojan Milojevic	Essential Oils Production	Other	Leposavic	70,000	Completed
Evro-Katic	Slobodan Milunovic	Wood Biomass Pellet Production Expansion	Energy	Leposavic	60,000	Completed
Dekor In	Bojan Kostovic	Production and Productivity Expansion of Wooden Furniture	Wood	Leposavic	10,000	Completed
AgroArt	Marko Milicević	Expanding raspberry production and introduction of post harvest processing/storage capacities	Apparel	Leposavic	30,000	Active
Fiber Glass	Fidan Gashi	Expand production capacities of fiberglass mesh for building insulation	Energy	Mitrovica	32,000	Active
Doni	Liridon Beqiri	Furniture production and efficiency improvement	Wood	Mitrovica	19,000	Completed
Berto	Bashkim Krasniqi	Increased capacity in producing wooden furniture	Wood	Mitrovica	45,000	Completed
Hirano Mushroom	Valdrin Lluka	Shiitake Mushrooms Production Start-up	Other	Mitrovica	74,600	Completed
Konditoria	Kriton Begolli	Pastries Production Expansion	Other	Mitrovica	10,000	Active
CENTER FOR WOMEN DEVELOPMENT	Dijana Hasani	Training and Certification of Childcare Providers	Other	Mitrovica North	15,420	Completed
Kosovo Center Business Support	Nazmi Pllana	Capacity expansion of vegetable and raspberry producers on the North Kosovo	Other	Mitrovica North	91,120	Completed
VGN Net	Zoran Golubovic	TV Cable Technologies Quality Improvement	ICT	Mitrovica North	24,000	Completed
KCBS	Nazmi Pllana	Expanding of agriculture value chain in North Kosova	Other	Mitrovica North	10,000	Completed
Gemix	Avni Podrimaj	Production Expansion of Powder Products	Other	Peja	25,000	Active
Outdoor Kosova	Mentor Bojku	Winter Tourism Product Development	Tourism	Peja	11,200	Active
AUK - TDI	Enis Vehapi	Females in IT Job Training, Internship and Employment	ICT	Prishtina	15,000	Completed
MikroBiz	Naim Berisha	On-the-job Training of 10 Young Programmers	ICT	Prishtina	9,400	Completed
ADAPTIVIT	Mentor Sahiti	On-the-Job Software Engineering Training	ICT	Prishtina	26,820	Completed
KOSOVA TEX	Ilirian Avdiu	Training for 20 marginalized women	Apparel	Prishtina	15,600	Completed

YLLKA BRADA	Yllka Brada	Start-up casual men's suits design and production	Apparel	Prishtina	4,815	Completed
STIKK	Vjollca Cavolli	Training and employment of youth in ICT	ICT	Prishtina	35,150	Completed
Association of Wood Processors in Kosovo	Arjeta Pozhegu	Furniture producers sales agency (PSA Germany)	Wood	Prishtina	25,000	Completed
Kosovo Apparel Marketing Agency	Nora Zhilivoda	Support for operational costs for KAMA for the first year	Apparel	Prishtina	15,071	Completed
Green Steam	Valon Fetahu	Mobile cleaning Service Equipment	Energy	Prishtina	15,000	Completed
Open Data Kosovo	Georges labreche	Female Youth Technology Internships	ICT	Prishtina	5,770	Completed
Trosha	Arben Avdiu	Production Expansion of Central Kitchen	Other	Prishtina	25,000	Active
Baruti GmbH	Drenusha Shala	Call Center Expansion	ICT	Prishtina	41,140	Completed
Mobileria Prishtina	Rizah Hasani	New Wood Furniture Production Line	Wood	Prishtina	20,400	Completed
Lia Stublla	Hyrije Stublla	Expansion of women's clothing production	Apparel	Prishtina	4,430	Active
KAMA	Nora Zhilivoda	KAMA Year 1 Scale-up	Apparel	Prishtina	10,000	Completed
Formon	Rron Cena	ISO 9001:2015 Certification and Implementation	ICT	Prishtina	9,000	Active
Bonevet	Leke Zherka	Support the establishment of BONEVET, training centre in Pristina	ICT	Prishtina	49,768	Active
Evrotarget	Arton Bajrami	Expansion - service outsourcing	ICT	Prishtina	40,920	Completed
IPKO Foundation	Abetare Gojani	Girls in ICT and Dokutech	ICT	Prishtine	14,500	Active

Annex 4: Documents consulted

Author/Organisation	Title	Date of Publication
Sida	Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation in Western Balkans 2014 - 2020	2014
USAID	PROJECT APPRAISAL DOCUMENT Evaluation Report	September 2017
Empower Private Sector Project	Empower Annual report 2015	17/05/2016
Empower Private Sector Project	Empower Annual report 2016	29/01/2017
Empower Private Sector Project	Empower Annual report 2017	15/02/2018
Empower Private Sector Project	Empower Quarterly report #15	30/04/2018
Empower Private Sector Project	Performance measurement indicators reference table	05/2018
USAID	Project Appraisal Document Evaluation Report indicator's reference table	2017
Kosovo Agency for Statistics	Labour Market Study	2017
UN WOMEN	Guidance Note to Country Offices for Programmatic Interventions: Recognizing, Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Care Work	2018
USAID/Kosovo Women's Network	Budgeting for Gender Equality in Trade and Industry	2016
Kosovo Women's Network	Who Cares?- Demand, Supply and Options for Expanding Childcare availability in Kosovo	2016
World Bank	Why should we care about care? The role of Childcare and elderly care in Kosovo	2015
World Bank	Promoting Women's Access to Economic Opportunities	2015
World Bank	Maternity leave and Women's Labour market status in Kosovo	2015
World Bank	Kosovo: Gender gaps in Education Health and Economic Opportunities	2012
World Bank	What works for women: Assessment of interventions for economic empowerment in Kosovo	2015

World Bank/Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Promoting women's access to economic opportunities in the Western Balkans	2016
Riinvest	Women's Entrepreneurship: An analysis of Doing Business in Kosovo	2017
EMPOWER	Performance note # 7 Performance Based Management System	05/2018



Mid-term Review of the EMPOWER Private Sector Project

This Mid-term Review was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Pristina to assess the efficiency, relevance, and immediate impact of the Empower Private Sector Project (Empower PS) in order to improve the remaining years of the implementation period.

Empower PS is managed by USAID in Kosovo. The Swedish contribution amounts up to 20% of the total budget, and USAID is the lead donor. The support is relevant in relation to the current result strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, 2014–2020.

The review considers how successful the Empower Private Sector (Empower PS) project in Kosovo has been to date in addressing the pre-conditions for growth of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and the opportunities which have been leveraged by Empower PS to improve their competitiveness and productivity. It also considers how to increase employment and strengthen the enabling environment around enterprise development. A particular emphasis is placed on reviewing all gender aspects of the implementation of Empower PS and to a lesser extent the impact of vocational training provided through grants to training providers. A brief assessment of other cross-cutting issues such as the environment is also provided.

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