Kuwait: Enhancing Labor Market Information Systems

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What was the development challenge?

Mismatches in the labor market negatively impacted employment opportunities, and policymakers in Kuwait were unable to make evidence-based decisions to correct these distortions. Information crucial for human resource development, and ultimately for enabling the public to make good decisions on job-seeking choices, was fragmented and scattered across agencies.

The World Bank supported the development of the Labor Market Information System (LMIS) to consolidate labor market information and make it accessible and available.

What approaches did this project use to deliver solutions?

This project focused on ensuring that policymakers and citizens had the information that they needed to make better decisions. During the course of implementation, the World Bank team utilized international experience in labor market information development, while contextualizing the solutions provided to the Government of Kuwait (GoK). The use of local language was extensive; everything was localized to Arabic, leading to better traction and acceptance by the client. All this was coupled with a process of sustained engagement and continuous focus on accomplishing goals, with Bank staff and resources on the ground to assist the client every step of the way.

The World Bank team reached out to stakeholders extensively through a series of focus groups, where it heard firsthand from government officials, members of the private sector, students, and civil society groups about their needs, the challenges they face, and the solutions and ideas they offered. In addition, the World Bank team sought out partnerships, as much-needed labor market information is scattered across many...
agencies. The Bank brought these agencies to one table, explained the challenges, inquired about solutions, and sought buy-in from all. This process of extensive consultation has ensured that LMIS incorporates information needed by multiple stakeholders. Now, accurate statistics can help policy makers formulate effective policy, while projections of future labor market needs can help students make the school-to-work transition.

**What lessons does this project offer for others?**

Localization in terms of language, local presence, and utilizing local resources were direct contributors to success; to ensure positive impact on citizens on the ground, this localization should be a main feature of engagements. Undertaking a rigorous diagnostic to identify problems, and verify what citizens needed, enabled a structured approach to address the needs of the client. Sustained engagement, through almost continuous presence of Bank staff and resources on the ground to assist the client every step of the way, was also crucial. Moreover, since lack of information had engendered some suspicion toward institutions, the World Bank focused on rebuilding trust for improved decision making; it accomplished this by being context sensitive and used its convening power, as well as leveraging Open Data principles.

*Source: Ghalia Al Refaei, Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau.*