

Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE)



Annual Report 2013



Pristina, February 2014

Table of Content

1. BASIC INFORMATION	4
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
4. RESULTS REPORTING PER OUTCOME	6
4.1 OUTCOME 1: LEARNING GROUPS TARGETING YOUNG UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE	6
4.2 OUTCOME 2: PRIVATE SECTOR TRAINING PROGRAMS TO NEW AND EXISTING EMPLOYEES	7
4.3 OUTCOME 3: SUPPLY CHAIN LINKAGES STRENGTHENED	7
4.4 OUTCOME 4: CAPACITY BUILDING OF LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS	8
4.5 TRANSVERSAL THEMES	8
5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT	9
5.1 PROJECT MANAGEMENT ENSURES EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES, ENHANCE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE STAFF AND CAPITALIZATION OF RESULTS.....	9
5.2 EFFICIENCY.....	9
6. LESSONS LEARNT	9
7. WHAT ELSE WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY	10
8. ANNEXES	10
ANNEX 1: MONITORING SHEET FOR S4RE	11
ANNEX 2: FACTS & FIGURES FOR OUTCOME 1	14
ANNEX 3: DEFINING 'EMPLOYMENT' (ECONOMIC ACTIVITY)	15
ANNEX 4: CASE STUDIES	16

List of Abbreviations

CNFA	Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs
EU	The European Union
EULEX	The European Union Rule of Law
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
LG	Learning Group
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTPF	Non-Timber Forest Products
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PUM	Netherlands Senior Experts
S4RE	Skills for Rural Employment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nation International Emergency Children's Fund
VET	Vocational Education Training

Map with Project Intervention Area



1. Basic Information

Country: Kosovo	Name of project
Domain of Cooperation Strategy: Skills and Employment	Skills for Rural Employment - S4RE

Goal	Poverty Reduction in rural Kosovo through targeted training and skills development, leading to increased employability
Outcomes (OC) (Project Objective, Purpose)	OC 1: Learning Groups targeting young unemployed people OC 2: Private sector training programs to new and existing employees OC 3: Supply chain linkages strengthened OC 4: Capacity building of local service providers

Project phase duration: 01.01.2013 – 31.12.2015	Reporting period: 01.01.2013 – 31.12.2013
--	--

Budget in phase (CHF)	1,297,097	Budget in 2013 (CHF) Spent in 2013 (CHF)	427,629 XXXXXX
-----------------------	-----------	---	-------------------

Implementing organisations:			
Main national partners	Municipalities, Department of Youth, Culture and Sport, Department of Economic Development, Public Employment Centres/Offices, Department of Agriculture, Youth Centres, Private Sector, Local Skills Service Providers/Resource Person	Main international partners	UNDP - Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use Management in Dragash Project)

Project coordinator	Mr. Luan Hoti	Number project staff	Expat: 0 National: 4
Expat consultant (days):	52.5		
National consultant (days):	739		

2. Executive Summary

Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) began the implementation phase in January 2013 with funding from Medicor Foundation, Julius Baer Foundation and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation.

Since beginning project itself faced different challenges. For the first time the Learning Group (LG) methodology was introduced in Kosovo. Acceptance by the youth in four municipalities where project is implemented was at very high satisfactory level. The relation with local institution were established within the short period of time and the project was strongly supported. The cooperation with municipalities was formalised through signature of the Memorandum of Understanding. Further, the private sector actors showed great willingness in collaboration with overall aim to facilitate the overall project activities.

Under Outcome 1, training has been using facilities provided by the municipalities free of charge. In the case of Kamenica, the municipality has also supported grants to farmers for the purchase of bee hives under Outcome 3. The private sector is also supporting project activities, by providing expertise for learning groups, linkages for marketing and access to facilities for training programs.

The main highlights of the project achievements in 2013 were as follow;

- 16 Learning Groups completed the learning cycle totalling,
- 193 participants completed trainings
- Out of the total participants, 47% are female (target 50%) and 24% from minorities (target 25%).
- 24% had moved into activities related to their training.
- 8 MOUs were signed with private sector partners (target 5); however training activities were only initiated with 5 of these.
- A total of 114 employees were trained against a target of 300. This included 48 employees in 5 larger businesses and 66 employees (and self-employed) from smaller businesses. 10% of these were new employees to the businesses.
- Training was given to 4 service providers to assist in developing business plans for businesses, and 5 training providers for technical training were engaged.
- 505 producers in 4 value chains were trained in improved production and management practices, including Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), raspberries, honey and dairy. These producers were organised in 31 groups.
- Strong linkages have been formed with buyers in each of these value chains, and in most cases these buyers were actively involved in developing and supporting the training programs and formation of producer groups.
- The project promotes activities through a website and a *Facebook* page, with events and milestones of the project promoted to all stakeholders on a regular basis.
- A project database was created where all project activities are managed and contracts related to project resource persons and service providers are monitored.
- 6 of the 15 resource persons to gain work outside of the project.
- A network event was held in December to bring together all service providers, resource persons, facilitators and staff for a discussion and social event.

4. Results reporting per Outcome

4.1 Outcome 1: Learning Groups targeting young unemployed people

Outcome 1	<i>S4RE will stimulate & support groups of young unemployed to develop locally demanded technical, entrepreneurial and life skills; leading to improved employment and income opportunities</i>
<p>A total of 16 Learning Groups completed the learning cycle in 2013, totalling 193 participants. Annex 2 provides detailed information on these groups and the sectors they are involved with.</p> <p>Of the participants, 47% are female (target 50%) and 24% from minorities (target 25%). S4RE aims for a target of 60% of participants completing training to be either employed or self-employed, and by the end of 2013 24% had moved into activities related to their training. Some groups only completed the training towards the end of the year, and some are involved in seasonal activities which will only commence from spring 2014. It is expected that the percentage gaining employment will increase, and improvements in this target will be included in the next half year report.</p> <p>A tracer study has been implemented for Outcome 1, with all participants completing a pre-tracer questionnaire and graduate questionnaires. The results from this survey have formed the basis for the monitoring tables included as Annex 1 and 2.</p>	
Implications of results and process for next year of operations (steering)	
<p>Learning Groups are a new implementation methodology for Kosovo, and some project 'learning' has also occurred in the first year. This has included improving the process of forming the groups and using rapid market appraisal tools for assessing the feasibility of ideas. A more robust process of mentoring and follow-up activities has also been developed. A diagram of this learning group process is included as Annex 7 to this report.</p> <p>At the start of the project, 11 facilitators were selected and trained across the 4 municipalities to assist with developing and managing the learning groups. Experience now shows that a lower number of facilitators, with permanent - service contract with monthly payment directly by the project, will be a better option. From the start of 2014, 1 facilitator will be engaged in each municipality, with a junior facilitator also employed in Dragash and Kamenica. This change will improve coordination between the project and facilitators, but will not impact on the overall project budget.</p> <p>Of the 4 municipalities, 2 have developed rapidly (Kamenica and Dragash) but in the two others 2 (Novo Brdo and Shtpce) it took off slower. In the case of Novo Brdo, this is largely due to a small and scattered population and limited opportunities. The donor community in Strpce has been active providing financial support to the population. Greater efforts are necessary to convince the youth on the learning group methodology approach. In addition, the issue in Shtpce may have more to do with the learning facilitators (LF) who have not been very active and committed to their role due to the un-satisfaction with the service payment. The overall situation affected project to rethink a slightly different approach to the project implementation. Moving to a directly employed facilitator is especially important for improving implementation in this region.</p> <p>A more formal approach to the development of the curriculum for each learning groups has also been implemented. Colleagues from HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation trained S4RE staff on the process of developing curriculum, and by the end of 2013 seven training programs had been developed using this approach.</p>	

4.2 Outcome 2: Private sector training programs to new and existing employees

Outcome 2	<i>S4RE will collaborate with existing businesses (including self-employed) to develop targeted training programmes that aim to improve productivity, employment, and employment conditions</i>
<p>Outcome 2 achieved moderate results in 2013. 8 MOUs were signed with private sector partners (target 5); however training activities were only initiated with 5 of these. A total of 114 employees were trained in different training skills (e.g. training for improvement of overall quality standards (HACCP), training of improvement of waiters skills, sustainable harvest of non timber forest products) against a target of 300. This included 48 employees in 5 larger businesses and 66 employees (and self-employed) from smaller businesses. 10% of these were new employees to the businesses. This number was achieved with the companies Meka in Dragash, Malesia in Kamenica and Natyra in Novobordo.</p> <p>Training was given to 4 service providers to assist in developing business plans for businesses, and 5 training providers for technical training were engaged.</p> <p>The majority of the training occurred in the latter part of the year, so no data is yet available on increased income or employment for the trained businesses.</p>	
Implications of results and process for next year of operations	
<p>Based on lessons learnt in implementation of Outcome 2, a revised strategy to reach the targets in 2014 has been developed. The activities under Outcomes 2 and 3 need to be done in synergy and complementary in order to encourage more businesses to engage with the project. To achieve this, the same staff member will be responsible for both Outcomes.</p> <p>There were also requests from businesses to receive a higher level of expert training than S4RE could deliver, so volunteer experts will be sourced from international NGOs such as Swisscontact, CNFA and PUM.</p> <p>To access smaller businesses and deliver training specific to their needs, facilitators engaged on annual contracts will help identify target groups in each area. A strategy of accessing input suppliers of small businesses is also included in the 2014 activity plans.</p>	

4.3 Outcome 3: Supply chain linkages strengthened

Outcome 3	<i>Supply chain integration through skills development of small enterprises in the two focus areas with national and regional companies will improve self-employment opportunities.</i>
<p>A total of 505 producers in 4 value chains were trained in improved production and management practices, including Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), raspberries, honey and dairy. These producers were organised in 31 groups.</p> <p>Strong linkages have been formed with buyers in each of these value chains, and in most cases these buyers were actively involved in developing and supporting the training programs and formation of producer groups. In the case of the dairy program in Dragash, the buyer, milk collection centre, local resource person and farmers were all involved in identifying the training needs, and developing the training program. Milk collection and overall quality of the production has since increased, and more farmers are being encouraged to join the program.</p> <p>An example of supporting access to finance was achieved in Kamenica. One group of bee keepers successfully approached the Municipality of Kamenica to receive co-financing for new bee hives. The support of S4RE was important in preparing a clear cost benefit analysis.</p>	

sis for the co-financing, and the technical training being provided also improved the chances of success from the perspective of the municipality. A further intervention in this area was to produce 'queens' for these hives locally, rather than importing them from Serbia.

As these value chains are highly seasonal it is not possible to gather data during the winter months. Monitoring will be conducted during spring and summer of 2014 to assess the results and impacts, and will be presented in later reports.

Training programs are now developed in a more systemic way, using a small group of experts facilitated by project staff. Training packages were also used to encourage investments, where the project used small funds to purchase inputs, but only where farmers and buyers also supported such investments.

Implications of results and process for next year of operations (steering)

Planning for 2014 aims to build on the results achieved with these agricultural value chains. More producers are approaching the project based on the informal spread of information amongst local communities. Such opportunities will only be included in Outcome 3 if they meet our requirements of linking to existing buyers and having a good market opportunity.

The project document sees 2 non-agriculture value chains included in 2014. This will require some further analysis of opportunities, and S4RE plans to engage external service providers to analyse the opportunities in each municipality. The textile, handicraft, IT and services value chains have been identified in the project document as suitable sectors, but this will be further analysed in the first quarter of 2014

4.4 Outcome 4: Capacity building of local service providers

Outcome 4	<i>S4RE will support locally available service providers to offer skills and training services that are more strongly based on practical training and private-sector linked activities, and are complementary to the formal VET system</i>
------------------	--

The project promotes activities through a website and a *Facebook* page, with events and milestones of the project promoted to all stakeholders on a regular basis.

The website and *Facebook* links are:

<http://www.helvetas-ks.org/s4re/>



A project database of service providers was created where all project activities are managed and contracts related to project resource persons and service providers are monitored. This has proven to be a very useful tool, in tracking project activities and targets. The contact details and area of specialty of the resource persons and service providers engaged by the project are available on the project webpage. This has helped 6 of the 15 resource persons to gain work outside of the project. The project aims to engage local service providers, to ensure locally affordable services for the citizens. Some of the service providers, actors of the private sector, were engaged for the first time as trainers. The experience with S4RE made them confident to offer the same services to others. This is the case with the jewellery resource person. She was engaged to train a group of female youth, S4RE beneficiaries. Soon after she completed her assignment with S4RE, she was engaged by UNICEF.

A network event was held in December to bring together all service providers, resource persons, facilitators and staff for a discussion and social event. Two such events are planned for 2014, and will be held in the regions where project activities are.

4.5 Transversal themes

- **Gender:** Throughout the project implementation, S4RE seeks to encourage female participation equally in all project activities. The monitoring data shows that almost 50% of project beneficiaries in learning groups are female. There are few constraints preventing

the mainstreaming of gender equity and advancing women's position such as traditional roles and perceptions of women. Women in rural areas where the project operates are willing to participate in the trainings and gain employability skills. However, the women's idea for entering into business is not very much supported financially by the parents, specifically for the young girls whose marriage is expected in the near future. Thus, although encouraged female learning groups' beneficiaries are less benefiting through opportunity fund. S4RE will strive to be equally beneficial to the women and men. Gender disaggregated data can be found in the monitoring sheet. (see annex 1)

Further, the project has used a non-discriminatory approach in selection of learning facilitators and local service providers, providing equal opportunity to all.

- ***Governance with a focus on social inclusion:***

S4RE project activities promote the social inclusion of minorities. 25% of the project beneficiaries are minorities. Out of 193 youth trained through learning groups, 46 beneficiaries are ethnic minorities. In addition, one minority learning group has been supported in starting-up a business through opportunity fund.

Further, the project has promoted inter-ethnic activities. A learning group in Kamenice, patisserie, consisting of three different ethnic groups has successfully completed the training. The participants were in daily interaction with each other, thus having an opportunity to socially integrate. Although the language remains a barrier.

5. Project Management

5.1 Project management ensures efficient implementation of activities, enhance capacity development of the staff and capitalization of results

No study trips or trainings abroad were conducted in 2013 by project staff. However, training was provided by visiting experts on Learning Groups (February and April), Rapid Market Appraisal (November) and gender inclusion (December).

Project received support from different International Advisors. In total were organized 9 mission during the whole year.

5.2 Efficiency

S4RE project has achieved great results in reaching the targets. Most project activities were implemented as per planned budget. Under outcome 1 the targeted number of youth undertaking the training was reached with fewer funds than budgeted. However, in order to engage more youth in income generating activities, the employment target, the budgeted funds were moderate and are assessed as minimum for next year.

The overall budget spend this year was at 89%.

6. Lessons Learnt

- Good planning: In order to ensure proper and duly implementation of the project activities, S4RE project did a detailed plan of operation at the beginning of the year. The plan was reviewed periodically and adjusted accordingly.
- Skilled staff: S4RE introduced new methodology in Kosovo. The Learning Group Methodology was new for the local staff as well. Therefore, the international consultancy to transfer the knowledge was critical to ensure local staff are competent and equipped sufficiently to introduce the methodology in the field.
- Demand driven trainings: The project has provided skills training based on the needs of the youth. The youth assessed their needs matching them with the market demand. In order to ensure feasible skill building programmes are provided, S4RE will introduce

the RMA as the essential method for need and market assessment. S4RE is committed to provide demand-based training.

- Cooperation with local actors: The project has proven to be more successful in Kamenica. The youth and private sector in this municipality was more active. This due to the availability of the resource persons and their willingness to transfer their knowledge to the youth.
- Donor coordination: Increased coordination is needed with the donor community. The negative side of the donor community active in the municipalities where the project operates is provision of benefits without co-financing. Thus, the project has found very little synergy in activities.
- Team Development: S4RE comprises of a team of four. The team spirit among the staff was crucial for success. Each and everyone viewed one another as interdependent, thus complementing the team.

7. What else we would like to say

Skills for Rural Employment mainly targets unemployed youth of age 16-31. The Learning Group (LG) methodology was proven to be successful considering the active participation of youth in the training program. The LG approach enables community mobilization and involves more actors in tackling the unemployment issue such as: private actors, municipal authorities etc. The experience with learning group shows that small funds have made the change. S4RE recommends to increase the opportunity fund. In the second year the number of youth trained triples, while the opportunity fund remains same as on the first year. Greater opportunity fund will contribute to a greater project impact.

8. Annexes

Annex 1: Monitoring Sheet for S4RE.

Annex 2: Facts & Figures for Outcome 1

Annex 3: Definition of economic activity

Annex 4: Case Studies

Annex 1: Monitoring Sheet for S4RE

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Skills For Rural Employment (S4RE) - Monitoring Sheet											
LogFrame Indicator	Indicator	2013			2014			2015			Total 2013-2015 Total
		Target 2013	Half Year	Annual Total	Target 2014	Half Year	Annual Total	Target 2015	Half Year	Annual Total	
1.1	# of learning groups created	10	19	16	30			40			
1.1	# of facilitators created	8	10	7	0			0			
1.2	# of young unemployed trained	200	59	193	600			800			
1.2	% of female young unemployed trained	50	56%	47%	50			50			
1.2	% of minority young unemployed	25	36%	24%	25			25			
1.3	% of young unemployed moving into self-employment or employment after training	60	7%	24%	60			60			
1.3	# of MoUs signed with MFI partner	1	0	0	1			1			

2.1	# of MoUs signed with private sector businesses	5	6	8	8			7			
2.2	# of large business' employees (new and existing) trained	100	0	48	150			150			
2.2	# of SME employees (new and existing) trained	200	0	66	200			200			
2.2	% of new employees trained	25%	-	10%	25%			25%			
2.3	# of contracts signed with training providers for employees	5	0	5	0			0			
2.3	# of contracts signed with training providers for business planning	5	1	4	0			0			
3.1	# of VC identified and MoUs signed	6	4	4	0			0			
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - NTFP Wild harvest	200	122	100	400			500			
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - NTFP Cultivated	50	0	10	100			100			

3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Berries & Fruits	100	105	108	100			100			
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Dairy & Live-stock	100	142	180	200			200			
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Honey	50	95	107	100			100			
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Textile & handicraft	0	0	0	50			50			
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Services (IT/Financial)	0	0	0	50			50			
3.2	# of supplier groups with improved skills	30	29	31	60			60			
4.1	# of training providers strengthened	4	2	15	3			3			
4.1	% of training providers engaged in projects other than S4RE	50%	20%	40%	50%			50%			

Annex 2: Facts & Figures for Outcome 1

Monitoring Information for Outcome 1															
Updated January 2014															
Municipality	Profession	Learning Groups		Group Training Cycle		Group Business Plans		Ethnicity (Groups)			Gender		Employment ¹ (Individuals)		
		Number	Participants	Ongoing	Complete	Ongoing	Complete	Alb.	Serb.	Other	M	F	Full Time	Part Time	Self
Kamenica	Patisserie	2	28		28	1		8	18	2	1	27	4		
	Flower Production	2	22		22	1	2	13	9		8	14			3
	Jewellery	1	13		13	1		13				13			7
	Bee Keeping	1	11		11		1	11			9	2			6
	Chicken Farming	1	10		10	1	1	10			10				5
	Waiters	1	12		12			12			12		3		
Novo Brdo	IT	1	15		15	1	1	15			15				8
Shtpce	Flower Production	1	6		6	1	1		6		4	2			3
	Cake decoration (cancelled)	1	7		0										
Dragash	Raspberry	1	16		16	1	1	16			16				7
	Hairdressing	3	32		32	3	1	21		11		32			0
	Central Heating	1	16		16	1		16			16				0
	Electrical Installation	1	12		12	1		12			12				1
Total			200		193			147	33	13	102	91	7	0	40

¹ See annex 3 for definition of employment

Annex 3: Defining 'Employment' (Economic activity)

Formal definitions of employment used by groups such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) are not of much use in the context of S4RE, as they tend to be comparative measures (i.e. month to month changes) rather than looking at absolute values. In addition, these formal measures do not adequately capture small scale entrepreneurs or informal self-employment data.

For this reason, S4RE proposes to use the term 'economic activity' as opposed to employment to measure outcomes.

Economic activity is any activity that provides an economic return to the beneficiary. This can be salaried employment, self-employment, production, services or trading.

Outcome 1 has a target of achieving 60% employment for members of the learning group. We therefore define this as 60% of the group members undertaking economic activity related to the training within a period of 3 months of the completion of the training. This will be measured in the graduate questionnaires completed by all members of the Learning Groups.

Attributing a value to this economic activity is equally difficult. If we set the target at a monthly value, this does not recognize the highly seasonal nature of some activities – or the longer lead time to receiving income.

If the value of employment is set too high, it does not recognise that even a small increase in monthly income for unemployed youth is a significant improvement. The largely informal and small scale nature of economic activity also presents a challenge in accessing information.

We therefore propose to use 'return on investment' criteria to describe our results at the group level.

Learning Groups receive 'investment' from the project for training and other inputs, averaging around €1,000 per group. We propose to measure the total economic activity of the groups' members compared to the direct investment by the project as an indicator of improved employability of the members.

It is proposed to set this at 150% - namely for an investment of €1,000 we would expect to see a return of €1,500 in salary, sales, trading etc. from the group's members.

Where beneficiaries do gain employment for a salary, we will only measure this if it meets the criteria of at least the minimum wage for Kosovo (€170 per month full time equivalent) and that it equates to greater than 50% of a full time position (20 hours per week).

Annex 4: Case Studies

Case Study: Learning Group in Kamenica – Chicken farming a way forward

Background

Kamenica is a multi-ethnic municipality in the north east of Kosovo. With a population of 36,000 people and an estimated 5,000 young unemployed men and women, it is an important region for S4RE. A series of meetings were held in the area in March resulting in an awareness workshop with local youth. A group of ten young males assessed a number of opportunities and decided to pursue egg production as a group activity.

The competition for eggs in this area is not strong, and no chicken farms are operating close to Kamenica. Their decision was based on this assessment of the local market, as well as the limitation on land area they had access to for cultivation, but at the same time a high level of available labor within the group. An intensive system such as egg production suited their requirements.



Intervention by S4RE

Following several meetings with the youth, having seen their motivation and strong belief in their idea, in April the project decided to provide the training to the group. Trainer Ilir Zenelaj, a poultry expert from outside of the region, provided the youth with technical and professional support. The technical training consisted of seven sessions. Following this, the group was trained to prepare a business plan which they submitted to S4RE for financial support. The total investment for this initiative was €17,980 including the land where the production would take place. After assessing the business plan, S4RE contributed €5,400 for the purchase of 960 layers (chickens) and 600 cages. The group decided to call the business 'Golden Egg'.

Results of the collaboration

Initially 10 members of the group were going to be engaged in the project with 2000 chickens. However, the cost was too high for the participants, so only 5 youth are engaged with a lower number of chickens. As the business aims to increase the number of chickens producing eggs, it is expected that the group of young entrepreneurs shall grow at a pace of 10% annually, employing more



members.

Of the 5 currently engaged, one manages the business, 2 are responsible for production and 2 for marketing and sales. Production capacity is 850-900 per day.

The market currently has little competition in the local area, providing ideal conditions for establishing the business. It is expected that the annual turnover for the first year of operation to be €8,080.

Case Study: Skills development enhances business effectiveness

Background

The establishment of the dairy processor “Malësia” in Kamenica in 2013 is focusing on providing healthy dairy products such as cheese and yogurt. Making sure these products are competitive in the domestic market requires staff that can manage the manufacturing process. However, Malësia found it difficult to find the right expert employees in the region, limiting their ability to capture market opportunities.

Intervention by S4RE

Despite the fact that Malësia had started with the collection of raw milk, it was lacking key employees who would effectively manage the production process. S4RE and Malësia decided to join efforts to hire two skilled technologists and a laboratory technician. S4RE facilitated the selection process, as well interviewed applicants. Interviewees attended a ten days proactive training which was provided by a well-known professional and experienced local technologist Mr. Begzad Maliqi. The first five days of training were designed to teach the trainees the entire production process, and the remaining five days they were each given the responsibility to manage crucial processes such as receiving raw materials, fermentation, packaging and storage.



Results of the collaboration

The moderate investment of €700 was equally divided between S4RE and Malësia. It resulted with recruitment of two technologists and a laboratory technician. The three trainees became familiar with the production process and with the challenges they may face in the future and ways to tackle such challenges. With the support of S4RE, Malësia managed to build an appropriate set of competencies and skills of their key employees. As a result, Malësia has started with the production of dairy products such as white cheese, yogurt and peppers with cream. These products now are available in supermarkets and small stores in Kamenica and Gjiilan.



Case Study: Dragash farmers embrace raspberry cultivation

Background

Dragash is a multi-ethnic municipality located in southern Kosovo with a population of 33,584. With few economic opportunities or urban centres, unemployment is high, resulting in considerable migration from the area. However, it is rich in natural resources, with mountainous areas, large forests and fertile agriculture land. Farmers of Dragash region are well known for dairy production, including many types of delicious cheeses. Collection of raspberries and other non-timber forest products is also common, and Dragash is home to the company Hit Flores, a large processor of these products.



Intervention by S4RE

In response to the untapped market opportunities for raspberries, on the 1st of October S4RE joined forces with Hit Flores to increase the area of raspberry cultivation, S4RE held two workshops and selected 20 farmers for support. Farmers were selected based on criteria such as age, willingness to contribute to cost sharing and location. These farmers were offered both financial assistance and training to cultivate raspberries. The selected farmers, who will receive further support from experienced trainers provided by S4RE and Hit Flores, have established raspberry orchards in a surface of 0.1 hectares of each. All sides contributed to the total cost, with S4RE contributing €5,900 (26% of the total cost) and farmers (36%) to purchase the irrigation and the support system, and Hit Flores with 38% of the total cost in order to supply each farmer with 850 saplings. Hit Flores will also continue to provide technical support in growing and harvesting the products.

Results of the collaboration

From this investment, each farmer is expected to create annual income of at least €3,000 selling the raspberries to Hit Flores.

In addition to the 20 farmers, the project will also benefit an estimated 74 female and 70 male relatives of the direct beneficiaries, through increased family income and additional employment for harvest. As a result of this cooperation, other farmers have expressed interest in also cultivating products for supply to Hit Flores and other processors, and further groups of farmers will be supported in 2014.



Case Study: Livestock and Dairy – A longstanding tradition rekindled

Background

Dairy farming is part of a long and proud agricultural tradition in Kosovo. Good growing conditions and substantial pasture area of around 178.000 hectares throughout Kosovo offers a great opportunity for people in rural areas to work in the dairy sector. With the migration of people from rural areas to urban centres, the number of livestock has decreased drastically. This has led to an increase in imported milk and cheese products and the loss of expertise in many areas for improving production practices.

Recent changes in Kosovo have begun to reverse this trend. The association of dairy processors has successfully lobbied for more support from the Kosovo government, as well as changes to tax law which makes it simpler to deal with small farmers. S4RE's initiative to organize dairy trainings in Dragash, Shterpce, Novo Brdo and Kamenica aims to help farmers to capitalize on these renewed market opportunities for local milk.



Intervention by S4RE



Despite reduced production, the system for collecting milk from farmers and transporting it to processors exists in the target regions. These local businesses were keen to work with S4RE to increase the quality and quantity of milk being supplied to them.

Meetings were organized with all actors in the value chain to identify farmers and training topics to be supported by S4RE.

S4RE engaged experts and trained 180 farmers, of which 12% were women and 39% minorities.

Trainings were held in 13 groups of around 15 farmers. Training topics ranged from production and animal health to hygiene and milk standards. During the training sessions, farmers were given the opportunity to exercise practical and theoretical work. The trainings have improved the professional and technical capacities of the farmers in the field.

Results of the collaboration

In light of the number of beneficiaries, interest shown in this field and initial promising outcome, the S4RE expects considerable results from this commitment. 20 per cent of the beneficiaries have been supported by different donors for inputs, milking equipment and farm machinery. 30 per cent of the beneficiaries have increased the number of livestock and have increased the number of workers in their farms. Furthermore, milk collection centres have reported the quality and quantity of milk has increased considerably, in particular coming into the winter season, traditionally a period of low milk production.