

Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE)



Annual Report 2014



Pristina, February 2015

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List of Abbreviations

S4RE	Skills for Rural Employment
LG	Learning Group
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
VETC	Vocational Education Training Centre
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
SEC	Senior Experts Corps - Swisscontact
MTR	Mid Term Review
USAID	U.S. Agency for international Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
MAFRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
VCH	Value Chain
YPO	Yearly Plan of Operation

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): <i>(Project Objective, Purpose)</i>	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: 01.01.2014 – 31.12.2014
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Budget in phase (CHF)	1,452,306.24	Budget in 2014 (CHF)	457,108
		Spent in 2014 (CHF)	447,277

Implementing organisations:			
Main national partners:	Local and national businesses, MLSW, Municipalities (Department of Youth, Culture and Sport, Department of Economic Development), Public Employment Centres/Offices, Training Providers	Main international partners:	UNDP - Interdev project, CARITAS Switzerland - Minority Integration Regional Development (MIRD)

Project coordinator:	Mr. Luan Hoti	Number project staff:	Expat: 0 National: 4
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2. Executive Summary

Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) project financed by Medicor Foundation, Julius Bear Foundation and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, continued implementation of the second year.

In order to strengthen the accountability and relation between project and field facilitators, S4RE engaged 6 field facilitators (4 seniors and 2 juniors) on one year service contract. The overall aim was that project through the field facilitators' impacts on better awareness creation and greater impact to the youth groups in four municipalities. In addition to the work with Learning Groups, facilitators are required to work closely with other actors of value chains and active businesses in municipalities.

Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) was used for assessment of the market opportunities for each LG which is created.

Relation with public institutions, e.g. municipalities and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, continued to be strengthened not only in formal issues signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) document, but also in concrete joint activities.

Training quality assurance system is improving. The training for hairdressing learning group in Dragash has been monitored by Vocational Training Centre (VTC) experts in hairdressing.

Katharina Walker and Peter Porten of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation conducted the mid-term review of the project from 27 October to 1 November 2012. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the project at midway stage of the project and provide advices for the remaining period. The review team analysed key project documents and carried out interviews with different stakeholders. The review primarily aims at advising the project for steering the remaining period.

The review shows that the project achieves tangible results. By using an opportunity-driven mind-set and approach the project actually identifies and tackles employment and income generation opportunities for unemployed rural youth and groups of formal and informal groups of supply chains. The current pilot intervention is well set to become a model project. The review team therefore suggests extending the project post 2015 and working towards a next phase which would continue the promising intervention strategy including its innovative methodologies but increasingly address the systemic level of the intervention.

A study trip to Africa (Tanzania) of two staff members and attendance at a training in Holland by two other project members influenced better understanding of the concept of the learning groups as well as facilitation of the groups.

S4RE continues to be supported by international advisors. In January a backstopping visit was completed by the International Project Advisor Mr. Stewart Pettigrew to refine implementation approaches and the Yearly Plan of Operation (YPO). A further visit by the International Project Advisors Mr. Peter Porten and Mrs. Katharina Walker from HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation head office was completed.

S4RE has again engaged two interns, one from International Business College in Mitrovica and one from RIINVEST College for a period of 3 months each. The aim of these internships is to provide final year students with practical experience in project work, whilst at the same time increasing the staff resources for the project.

Some of the main achievements of the project during two years of its implementation were as follow:

Outcome 1:

- 75 LGs completed the learning cycle
- 792 youth have undertaken technical, entrepreneurship and life skills training (800 target)
- RMAs were conducted before the training implementation with each LG
- All contracts with resource persons are outcome based – (promotion of mentoring)
- 32% are female (target 50%) and 33% from minorities (target 25%).
- 46% have moved into income generation activities. (2013-2014)
- The training quality assurance was promoted and implemented;
- 58% of 792 youth have entered the agribusiness activities
- 14 LGs supported, through opportunity fund, seven are in agriculture, two in tailoring, two in hairdressing, two in IT one in video design . To date, 13 supported groups are operating;

Outcome 2:

- Project facilitated trainings for 402 employees based on cost sharing agreement; out of which 99 are new;
- Facilitation to a local business engaging SEC – Swisscontact experts;
- The Project facilitated technical assistance to 10 local businesses to improve access to finance, where 5 of them already received grants;
- 15 businesses were facilitated for establishment of a business association in Dragash municipality;
- Local companies were facilitated to improve quality standards of the products, e.g. LLC Meka - Dragash was facilitated to get HACCP certification;
- Business mapping – a web application was developed.

Outcome 3:

- A total of 1,479 (target 1,500) suppliers/producers increase professional skills and working conditions;
- More than 80% of the supply chain actors were linked with local/regional buyers;
- Private/public sector collaboration is enhanced, 51 NTFP beneficiaries, 80 dairy producers, 10 beekeepers and 5 fruit producers have been supported with inputs;
- 3 informal women groups (50 beneficiaries from Serbian community) engaged in dairy, raspberry and honey production were supported with training material in cost sharing agreement;
- 5 individual producers are facilitated to prepare the proposals or business plans for application to MAFRD grant scheme, 2 already received grants.

Outcome 4:

- 49 Local training providers have been engaged by the project for the first time as trainers.
- 9 training providers (target 3) after engagements with the project have been engaged in other projects.
- ToT Training for training providers was facilitated
- Two networking events for local training providers were organized.

3. Results per outcomes

3.1 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>
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The results of Outcome 1 in 2014 indicate a great achievement of targets in developing the technical, entrepreneurial and life skills of the youth.

A total of 59 Learning Groups completed the learning cycle in 2014, totalling 596 participants. Annex 2 provides detailed information on these groups and the sectors they are involved with.

Of the participants, 26% are female (target 50%) and 36% 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 2014 in total 60% have moved into activities related to their training (see annex 1&2).

Out of 596 participants, 399 or 67% have chosen agribusiness comparing to 33% in 2013, showing a positive response to agriculture promotion, which is considered as the sector with the highest potential for income generation. 83 youth have entered beekeeping as beginners, 190 youth have established small orchards with raspberry, blackberry and strawberry reaching a total of 8.4 hectares.

The opportunity fund has facilitated the initiatives of the learning groups for establishing a start-up business. Eight learning groups have been supported, creating self-employment opportunities for 43 youth individuals. Ideas supported were in hairdressing, tailoring, IT, poultry, pig farming and photo/video design.

Target	Target	Achievements	%
Trainees	600	596	100%
Learning Groups	60	59	98%
Minority (25% of 600)	150	213	142%
Female (50% of 600)	300	172	57%
Employment (60% of 600)	360	361	100%

The table above indicates the achievement of the targets in 2014. The employment target achievement includes the number of youth who after the training completion have entered the economic activity related to the training. Some groups only completed the training towards the end of the year, and some are involved in seasonal and agriculture activities which will only commence from spring 2015. Thus, S4RE will work closely with these groups and will perform mentoring activities to ensure sustainability of the economic activity and fulfilment of the income criterion.

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

Through learning group methodology the project continued providing technical, entrepreneurial and life skills training programmes to the participants of the learning groups. The learning group process, including the use of RMA to assess the business case for ideas of the learning groups, improved significantly. In 2015, RMA will be used only when necessary, to identify new value chains or business start-up opportunities. Changes made in the learning group process enabled a better flow from learning toward engagement in economic activity.

Outcome based agreements made with training providers in the second half of 2014 include mentoring activities and have influenced in the number of graduates getting a job. Thus for

2015, in order to proceed more systematically the project has developed a concept paper for mentoring to ensure focused mentoring activities.

The project has created a reliable operation system with facilitators by signing outcome-based contracts with them. In 2014, the project had one facilitator in each municipality, with a junior facilitator in Dragash and Kamenica. Two new facilitators engaged in 2014 have improved the project presence and performance in Strpce and Novobrdó. The same approach and staff will be used in 2015.

Due to limited economic opportunities in other industries, the project promoted agriculture activities. Supporting the learning groups with training material was an incentive used to attract youth in agribusiness and change the perception toward the agriculture activities. Focus in agribusiness sector will continue in 2015, being the most promising sector to absorb the youth force and reach the ambitious project targets.

The project continued to build collaborative relationships with municipal authorities. In 2014, MoUs signed with municipalities allowed use of municipal premises as training venues, and an office space has been made available for facilitators in each municipality ensuring better communication with the youth. In addition, the project plans developing life skills training programme jointly with municipal officials and explore the possibility that municipal officials provide the training in 2015.

Training quality assurance system is improving. In 2014 the project signed a MoU with Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) allowing collaboration with Regional Vocational Training Centres (VTC) and Employment Offices. VTC experts monitored the training for hairdressing learning group in Dragash. At the end of the training, VTC in cooperation with the project team performed the competency test and issued certificates containing MLSW stamp. In 2015, the same approach will be used in similar occupation, whereas for agriculture occupations the project will aim to exchange the trainers. The competency test will be performed not by the trainer providing the training; instead a trainer from another municipality will be engaged.

During 2013-2014, the project has developed total 11 job analysis cards using the DACUM technique.

3.2 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>Implementation strategy for Outcome 2 was slightly changed in 2014. S4RE identified and collaborated with large businesses (>5 employees) and small businesses (<5 employees). Using the cost sharing agreements, the project achieved more satisfied results compare with a year before. 10 (target 8) large and small businesses agreed to formalize the collaboration through signing a MoU.</p> <p>A total of 288 employees against a target of 350 (82%) were trained in developing capacities. Trainings mainly took place in the areas of information and communication skills, wood processing skills, processing of NTFP, business management, fund raising, and upholstery.</p> <p>Of the employees trained, 147 (target 150) employees are from large businesses, where 29 employees are new against a target of 38. Small businesses are well developed and they comprise the biggest share of the local economy in targeted municipality. For this reason, the project focused in targeting small businesses. SMEs participated in various skills development trainings, 141 (target 200) employees received training, and 40 of these were new employees against a target of 50.</p> <p>The share of minorities in trainings still far behind the target, 17 (target 88) employees re-</p>	

ceived training in various topics. There are several cases where the businesses are managed by women, in addition the women interested to join the S4RE program is increased. 111 (target 175) women employees were willing to follow training mainly in processing of NTFP, upholstery and confectionery. (annex 1&3)

Target	Target	Achievements	%
Employees trained	350	288	82%
New employees (25% of 350)	88	85	97%
Existing employees (75% of 350)	263	203	77%
Participants of minorities (25% of 350)	88	17	19%
Female employees (50% of 350)	175	111	63%

The project had several cases where small business grouped together with common interest for capacity development. 8 groups from 6 to 10 employees were formed for training in business management, fund raising, and business plan development (see annex 3).

10 businesses were supported to have easy access to financial sources (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development/MAFRD, EU and local sources). For each of them, the project facilitated training in developing business plan and project proposal and 5 of them were supported from donors. In addition, 5 grants were awarded to small businesses for marketing and each of them receive around 2,000 euro for improving of market promotion.

Large businesses were supported to use technical expertise through SEC - Swisscontact. The dairy business Malësia LLC from Kamenica was facilitated to use a dairy expert from Switzerland. 14 days mission was organized from a consultant, 5 new products have been developed and now are available in domestic market.

Through facilitation of S4RE, a formal business association represented from 15 local businesses from different field of operation has been formed in Dragash. The overall aim of the association is to lobby in municipality and others, to improve the infrastructure, business environment conditions, to have easy access to training skills and financial sources.

S4RE and municipality of Kamenica, join the efforts to support local businesses to increase the productivity and job opportunities. DPZ Tradita, a company managed by a women and dealing with confectionery, was supported by municipality with business premise and small amount of contribution, S4RE cost share the training for 10 women, after that 6 of them had chance to get employed.

Implications of results and process for next year of operations

Based on results and lessons learnt, the implementation strategy will remain the same with small changes and adjustments. To achieve results, two project officers will take the responsibilities for two municipalities each. Facilitators will continue to play crucial roles in identifying promising businesses and coordinating the activities at the municipality level. As the informal sector is widely spread in the rural areas, the project will work with 5 informal business in each municipality. S4RE will continue to identify and provide the opportunity to different businesses in facilitating easier access to volunteer experts a service provided by Swisscontact (Senior Expert Corps).

The Project will continue to facilitate local businesses in Sterpce, Kamenica and Novobrdó to form a business association.

Due to lack of the results achieved in 2013, the Project considers that the overall target at the end of the phase is difficult to be achieved. The project staff will do the utmost to reach the overall target as the implementation strategy and approach used in 2014 show good results.

3.3 Outcome 3: Supply chain linkages strengthened

Outcome 3

Supply chain integration through skills development of small enterprises in the two focus areas with national and regional companies will improve self-employment opportunities.

The overall targets in outcome 3 are almost reached. Outcome 3 preformed very well during this year. In view of sustainability, the project will introduce minor changes. The collaboration and linkages between supply chain with local and regional businesses is highly improved. Businesses in and out of targeted municipality were actively involved in developing the training programs based on the needs of the demand side. Training package was developed in collaboration with businesses, with aim to encourage the investment for interested producers.

A total of 974 (target 1000) suppliers/producers in 6 value chains received training in skills development. The Project worked with 4 agriculture value chain (wild & cultivated NTFP, berries & fruits, dairy & livestock, honey) and 2 non agriculture value chain (textile & hand-crafts and services) which were identified during market assessment done early in the year.

More than 80% of the suppliers are linked or have been facilitated to create linkages with local buyers, the rest, are producing and selling their products/services directly in the open market.

From the annual target, 59% of them are female (target 50%). Minority groups were highly motivated to participate in training programme, where from 250 as target, 310 showed high interest to join the S4RE. From the overall participants, 270 of them are new farmers dealing with different value chains. These number of suppliers were organised in 62 (target 60) informal and formal groups, and jointly with local businesses they identify their needs (see annex1&4).

Target	Target	Achievements	%
Suppliers/farmers	1000	974	97%
Groups (formal/informal)	60	62	103%
Minority (25% of 1000)	250	310	124%
Female (50% of 1000)	500	293	59%
New (25% of 1000)	250	270	108%

Rural areas of the targeted municipality look very promising for cultivating NTFP. Jointly with local companies, 51 beneficiaries were supported with planting of 0.05 ha each with cultivation of black marshmallow, this number represent the 51% of the overall target.

The Project enhanced the collaboration with public and private sector with aim to fulfil the expectation of the producers which has to do with investment. Due to that, a group of 21 beneficiaries from Kamenica dealing with NTFP have been supported with purchasing of drying facilities at the value of 3,700 euro.

80 project beneficiaries dealing with dairy/livestock were facilitated to get easy access to the grants (supply with milking machine) provided from municipality of Kamenica. Municipality of Novobrd supported 20 project beneficiaries with purchasing of equipments for agriculture (bees sector, dairy/livestock and fruit sector).

Three informal women groups from Serbian community with 50 beneficiaries (dairy, raspberry production and honey production) were supported with training material in cost sharing agreement. Irrigation for more than 4 ha is sufficiently improved, domestic cheese production in rural area is in better quality and honey quantity is increased.

A further intervention was to support individual farmers to prepare project proposal and business plans for MAFRD grants. Preparation of 5 business plans were co financed and 2 of them already received support.

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

The project will continue working in 4 agriculture value chains, while the non-agriculture value chains will be assessed based on the employment condition and income generation for each specific area.

Implementation strategy will not change, but more efforts will be given to increase the collaboration with local businesses and private sector with aim to implement training packages and investment.

3.4 Outcome 4: Capacity building of local service providers

Outcome 4

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

The project promotes activities through a website and a Facebook pages. Events, milestones, and publications are updated on a regular basis.

A project database is updated 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 3 of the resource persons to gain work outside of the project (see annex 1).

The project aims to engage local service providers, to ensure locally affordable services for the citizens. The project has engaged for the first time as trainers 34 resource persons.

Two networking events were held in 2014 bringing together all service providers, resource persons, facilitators and staff for a discussion and social event.

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

Due to the difficulties having the difference between resource persons and service providers, was decided that on 2015 all service providers who gives the services directly or indirectly to the project and project beneficiaries to be named as "training providers".

3.5 Transversal themes

- **Gender:** The project throughout all components has pursued an inclusive approach to foster gender equality, targeting 50% female. The average female participation at project level is 30%. The project will continue implementing gender-specific training programmes in order to ensure equal opportunity for all. In 2014, the project organized training for five learning groups of female youth and married woman in hairdressing and tailoring. Apart from hairdressing and tailoring, women in target municipalities don't have the confidence to explore self- and employment opportunities for other occupations. The participation of female in agriculture learning groups was low. However, in 2014 the self-initiative of female groups was at satisfactory level. Three groups have started small businesses, supported through opportunity fund in comparison to 2013 when such initiative was not evidenced.

In addition, the project has supported two existing businesses owned by women to develop their business through marketing support and training in Outcome 2. Outcome 3 facilitated three informal groups of women farmers in raspberry cultivation, dairy and bee-keeping. These three groups have increased their product and service quality with the support in training and some equipment. Facilitation and training on business plan and proposal writing has enabled the grant award from the Ministry of Agriculture for two women beekeepers.

S4RE will ensure that female increasingly participate in learning groups active in economically promising sectors such as agribusiness investing in processing possibilities. Furthermore, mixed learning groups (in terms of gender) will be further promoted. Gender disaggregated data can be found in the monitoring sheet (see annex 1).

- **Governance with a focus on social inclusion:** S4RE project activities promote the social inclusion of minorities. The target states that 25% of the project beneficiaries are minorities. The minority participation at project level is at 33%. Three minority learning groups have been supported in starting-up a business through opportunity fund one in tailoring, one in IT and one group has established a pig farm.

The project apart from impact in reducing unemployment had a great social impact. Soft factors related to behaviour of many youth living in target municipalities have changed. Municipal officials confirm that the perception toward agriculture activities has changed. An increasing interest of youth to enter the agribusiness has been observed. In addition, for women living in remote areas the project has influenced to enhance their integration and lessen their traditional exclusion from social life.

4. Project Management

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

Monitoring and Evaluation

A particular importance was given on the collection of the results related to the different activities implemented in 2014 and 2013. During the second half of 2014, the project continues to follow up with questionnaires of the tracer survey for the beneficiaries from 2013 related to the outcome 1. The independent verification of the results was done through phone survey, on random selection of the beneficiaries.

The Focus Group Discussion for beneficiaries of the Outcome 1 and 3 was organised in 4 municipalities. The purpose was collection of the qualitative data on the methodology used and the overall project implementation. Furthermore, a business survey was conducted in order to collect the information for better understanding the results and overall project impacts related to outcome 2 and 3.

The Midterm Review (MTR) of the project was conducted in October 2014. The objective of the MTR was reviewing the overall project implementation compared the plans and targets, review of the methodology and approach, giving the recommendation for the project implementation for remaining period of the current phase and give the recommendation for eventual extension of the project beyond the 2015.

The MTR was very positive about the overall implementation and provided several recommendations which could support the project for improving the overall effectiveness toward the implementation and achieving the desired planned objectives.

Capacity Development of Staff

All project staff has had the opportunity to travel abroad for study trips. The Project Manager (Luan Hoti) and Project Officer (Basri Pulaj) visited Tanzania in April to see Learning Groups in action at the U-Learn Program, a Swisscontact project financed by MasterCard foundation. Mimoza Mirashi (Project Officer) and Flutura Vidishiqi (Administration Officer) attended training in the Netherlands in May on Group Facilitation.

In addition, the project continues to be supported by international advisors. In January and July backstopping visits was completed by the International Project Advisor Mr. Stewart Pettigrew to refine implementation approaches and the Yearly Plan of Operation (YPO) as well review the project implementation and drafting project Half Yearly report (HYR). A further

visits by the International Project Advisor Mr. Peter Porten from HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation head office was completed in March and November. Mrs Katharina Walker supported project in November for preparation of the YPO 2015. Until the end of the project phase Mrs. Katharina Walker is going to remain the main back stopper of the project for skills and private sector development.

S4RE engaged two interns in 2014, each for the period of three months. Interns were engaged based on the agreement with two education institutions; International Business College based in Mitrovica and College "Riinvest" based in Prishtina.

The aim of these internships is to provide final year students with practical experience in project work, whilst at the same time increasing the staff resources for the project. The success of this activity in 2014 was encouraging, and it is intended to continue this activity also in 2015.

Project Reporting and Promotion

During 2014, a number of events and meetings were conducted to promote the activities and success stories of S4RE. Several articles were published in the web portal. Albinfo, a highly important news portal for the Albanian speaking diaspora living in Switzerland, portrayed S4RE and its work in the municipalities. Other articles and project updates were published on the S4RE website, and a number of case studies, success stories, project fact sheets and project information brochures were printed.

RTK, the public television of Kosova, made several films on different project activities. Interesting stories were shown in their regular programme via terrestrial and satellite broadcasting system.

The Project Manager visited Switzerland in June 2014 and met Mr. Fortunat Walther of Medicor Foundation, senior management of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation as well as fund raising staff. The purpose of this visit was to update key people on the results and performance of the project, and the visit was well received.

In September 2014, S4RE staff visited the project "Coaching for Employment" in Albania, a Swisscontact project funded by Medicor Foundation. This visit was a good occasion for sharing information and experiences by two project and looking forward for the future collaboration between two projects.

4.4 Project Partners

Local and national businesses, local authorities, public employment centres, VTCs in target municipalities remain the main project partners. The collaboration with the project partners is formalised with the signature of the agreements and several activities were implemented. The Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare enabled the collaboration with VTC in Prizren on quality assurance of the hairdressing training in Dragash.

MoUs signed with four municipalities where the project is active, allowed the project and its beneficiaries to use the municipalities premises as well the use of the natural resources. The official of the municipalities from the departments of youth, agriculture and economical development actively participate in the project activities.

The project continues to have strong collaboration with different organisation implementing projects in target municipalities, e.g. UNDP, Caritas, and USAID through regular meetings and exchanging the information to identify synergies and implement joint activities.

5. Lessons Learnt

Pragmatic approach: A range of tools need to be used to tackle the challenging task of improving youth employment in rural areas. Continuing to promote these range of tools,

technical and life skills training, and aiming slight adjustments to their implementation is the desired approach for an innovative project such as S4RE. S4RE have continuously addressed the obstacles and challenges toward success finding different options for implementation.

Practical training to match the opportunities: S4RE continues focusing on practical training, preferably on-the-job training activities to match the existing opportunities with local businesses. This approach has developed to encompass more on-the-job training, which allows the small business to increase their access to skilled workers whilst at the same time presenting an opportunity for income and employment to a slightly wider group of youth. Not only is this hands-on direct approach good for the businesses, it is also proving more interesting for trainees. The results have been very positive, as shown by the fact that businesses are now approaching S4RE with training ideas.

Match activities of diverse intervention area: Integrating activities from different intervention areas has also shown to be beneficial. Hit Flores in Dragash is a good example in this regard. Learning groups, training and supply chain activities were all implemented with the same partner. Outreach to families supplying the company was also an additional benefit. Such companies exist in several sectors, and S4RE should work to engage with the businesses, even when they may be located outside of the project area, but have linkages into them. Va gue

Develop capacities of the team: Strengthening of the S4RE team's knowledge and skills has also been important, with training and exchange visits. Colleagues from Nepal and Uganda visited Kosovo, and two members of the project team visited Tanzania. Such peer-level exchange visits are excellent ways to disseminate ideas and knowledge, and should be further encouraged, not only within S4RE but across other projects.

Achieving sustained changes to the level of employment and income in the target regions will remain a challenge, despite the positive results achieved so far by S4RE. But the approach of ensuring a strong private sector focus with matching skills to their needs is showing that results can be achieved, even in such a challenging environment.

7. Budget

The overall budget of the project for 2014 was CHF 457,108. The overall budget includes the overall costs for project implementation. The budget part related to the international staff (consultants) is managed by HQ and is paid in CHF, while the local costs which includes Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and Administrated Project Funds (APF) are managed in Euro. The overall budget planed for the local costs was € 319,275.18.

The total project expenditures in 2014 overtake the initial budget planning for 2%.

The overspendings which appeared in the office equipment which are for 322% or €1,109.78 higher are the expenditures related several project equipments e.g. computers for field facilitators, camera, and purchase of four monitors for the computers of the project staff which were not initially planned.

The under spending which appeared in the Outcome 5 (Project Management) are related to the the midterm project review expenditures which were initially planned within the outcome 5, while in meantime decision was taken that the midterm review to be conducted by the internal sources of Helvetas. The total expenditures related to midterm review were booked within the budget related to the international advisors, the budget which is managed by HQ.

8. Annexes

Annex 1: Monitoring Sheet for S4RE.

Annex 2: Facts & Figures for Outcome 1

Annex 3: Facts & Figures for Outcome 2

Annex 4: Facts & Figures for Outcome 3

Annex 5: Defining 'Employment' (Economic activity)

Annex 6: Case Studies & Success Story

Annex 7: Photos

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
		Target 2013	1st Half Year	2nd Half Year	Annual Total	Target 2014	1st Half Year	2nd Half Year	Annual Total	Target 2015	1st Half Year	2nd Half Year	Annual Total	Total
1.1	# of learning groups created	10	15	1	16	30	25	34	59	40				
1.1	# of facilitators created	8	7	0	7	0	6	0	6	0				
1.2	# of young unemployed trained	200	59	134	193	600	130	466	596	800				
1.2	# of women of young unemployed trained	100	33	57	90	300	35	122	157					
1.2	% of women of young unemployed trained	(50% of 200)	56%	43%	47%	50%	27%	26%	26%	50				
1.2	# of minorities of young unemployed trained	50	21	25	46	150	67	146	213					

1.2	% of minorities of young unemployed trained	(25% of 200)	36%	19%	24%	25%	52%	31%	36%	25				
1.3	# of young unemployed moving into self-employment or employment after training	120	4	43	47	360	14	318	332	60				
1.3	% of young unemployed moving into self-employment or employment after training	(60% of 200)	7%	32%	24%	60%	11%	68%	56%	60				
1.3	# of MoUs signed with MFI partner	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1				
2.1	# of MoUs signed with private sector businesses	5	6	2	8	8	7	3	10	7				
2.2	# of large business' employees (new and existing) trained	100	0	48	48	150	45	102	147	150				
2.2	# of new employees trained (large business)	25	0	21	21	38	5	24	29	38				

2.2	% of new employees trained (large business)	(25% of 100)	0%	84%	84%	(25% of 150)	13%	63%	76%	25%				
2.2	# of SME employees trained (new and existing)	200	0	66	66	200	69	72	141	200				
2.2	# of new employees trained (SME)	50	0	10	10	50	29	11	40	50				
2.2	% of new employees trained (SME)	(25% of 200)	0%	20%	20%	(25% of 200)	58%	22%	80%	25%				
2.3	# of contracts signed with training providers for employees	5	0	5	5	0	7	11	18	0				
2.3	# of contracts signed with training providers for business planning	5	1	3	4	0	3	0	3	0				
3.1	# of VC identified and MoUs signed	6	4	0	4	0	2	0	2	0				
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - NTFP Wild harvest	200	60	40	100	400	49	276	325	500				

3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - NTFP Cultivated	50	0	10	10	100	51	0	51	100				
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Berries & Fruits	100	105	3	108	100	51	47	98	100				
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Dairy & Livestock	100	142	38	180	200	191	94	285	200				
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Honey	50	95	12	107	100	99	8	107	100				
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Textile & handcraft	0	0	0	0	50	16	12	28	50				
3.1	# of beneficiaries trained - Services (IT/Financial)	0	0	0	0	50	20	60	80	50				
3.2	# of supplier groups with improved skills	30	29	2	31	60	32	30	62	60				
4.1	# of training providers strengthened	4	2	13	15	3	11	34	45	3				
4.1	% of training providers engaged in projects other than S4RE	(50% of 4)	0%	150%	150%	(50% of 3)	150%	0%	150%	50%				

Annex 2: Facts & Figures for Outcome 1

Monitoring Information for Outcome 1, (2014)																	
Profession	Learning Groups		Group Training Cycle		Group Business Plans		Ethnicity (Groups)			Gender		Employment (Individuals) ¹					
	Number	Participants	Ongoing	Complete	Ongoing	Complete	Alb.	Serb.	Other	M	F	Full Time		Part Time		Self	
												M	F	M	F	M	F
Tailoring	2	25	0	2	0	2	14	6	5	0	25	0	11	0	0	0	5
Hairdressing	3	50	0	3	0	2	50	0	0	0	50	0	2	0	0	0	18
Pruning	1	7	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beekeeping	9	116	0	9	0	8	54	51	11	107	9	0	0	0	0	83	0
Nail Technician	1	5	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0
Waiters	1	15	0	1	0	0	0	12	3	14	1	4	0	0	0	0	0
Chick cultivation	1	9	0	1	0	1	9	0	0	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
NTFP identification & collection	2	26	0	2	0	2	26	0	0	26		0	0	0	0	19	0
Jewellery	1	12	0	1	0	0	0	4	8	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	4
Video-design	2	18	0	2	0	1	6	0	12	11	7	4	0	2	0	0	0
Carpentry	1	5	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Handbags	1	8	0	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	2
Strawberry cultivation	7	58	0	7	0	0	27	1	0	52	6	0	0	0	0	25	6
Blackberry cultivation	6	45	0	6	0	0	45	0	0	39	6	0	0	0	0	20	6
IT	1	9	0	1	0	1	0	9	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	4	1
Raspberry Cultivation	13	133	0	13	0	1	61	48	0	96	23	0	0	0	0	100	14
Upholstery	1	5	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
Patisserie	2	21	0	2	0	1	0	8	13	13	8	0	2	0	0	0	0
Pig cultivation	1	5	0	1	0	1	0	5	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	4	1
Thermo-isolation	1	7	0	1	0	1	0	0	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Central Heating	1	15	0	1	0	1	15	0	0	15	0	5	0	2	0	0	0
Kebab-shop	1	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
Total	59	599	0	59	0	22	332	149	64	413	172	18	19	4	2	261	57

¹ More info See Annex 5

Annex 3: Facts & Figures for Outcome 2

Fact and Figures - Monitoring Information for Outcome 2, (2014)													
Municipality	Companies	Training field	Employees trained		Training Cycle		Ethnicity			Gender		Employment (Individuals)	
			New	Existing	Ongoing	Complete	Alb.	Serb.	Other	M	F	Full Time	Part Time
Dragash	Opoja Farm	Chicken farm	8	3	0	11	11	0	0	11	0	3	8
	Connect ISP	Information technology	0	11	0	11	11	0	0	11	0	11	0
	LLC Hit Flores	NTFP processing	21	24	0	45	45	0	0	34	11	10	35
	SMEs	Business management	0	17	0	17	17	0	0	15	2	17	0
	SMEs	Business plan development	0	3	0	3	3	0	0	3	0	3	0
	Business Association	Promotion & promotion	0	10	0	10	10	0	0	10	0	10	0
Kamenica	SMEs	Business plan & Marketing	0	43	0	43	43	0	0	27	16	43	0
	Termo Concept	Ventilation, heating etc	6	2	0	8	8	0	0	8	0	4	4
	Tri Term	Heating system	7	2	0	9	9	0	0	9	0	4	5
	DPZ Tradita	Confectionery & food	14	7	0	21	21	0	0	0	21	6	15
	Fat Blea	Promotion & marketing	0	8	0	8	8	0	0	4	4	4	4
	NT Fungo Kos	NTFP processing	0	23	0	23	23	0	0	7	16	4	19
	DPZ "Hana"	House thermo-isolation	4	4	0	8	8	0	0	8	0	6	2
	NGO Take Action	Media & Communication	5	10	0	15	15	0	0	0	15	3	12
	LLC Malesia	Business management	0	6	0	6	6	0	0	4	2	6	0
	NPT HAKIU F & N	Wood processing	0	10	0	10	10	0	0	3	7	3	7
Novoberdo	KRS Komerc	Upholstery	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	0	5
	SME	Business plan development	6	6	0	12	0	12	0	9	3	12	0
	N.P Natyra	NTFP processing	0	11	0	11	11	0	0	3	8	2	9
	LLC Panorama Parku	Flower Production	9	3	0	12	12	0	0	6	6	4	8
Total			85	203	0	288	271	17	0	177	111	155	133

Annex 4: Facts & Figures for Outcome 3

Fact and Figures - Monitoring Information for Outcome 3, (2014)															
Municipality	Value Chain (VCh)	Groups trained		Farmers trained		Training Cycle		Ethnicity (Participants)			Gender (Participants)		Employment (Individuals)		
		Number	Participants	New	Existing	Ongoing	Complete	Alb	Serb	Other	M	F	Full Time	Part Time	Self
Dragash	Tourism	1	20	20	0	0	20	5	0	15	20	0	0	0	20
	Dairy & Livestock	4	75	0	75	0	75	53	0	22	75	0	0	75	75
	Honey	2	35	0	35	0	35	0	0	35	35	0	0	35	35
	NTFP	6	124	66	58	0	124	119	0	5	124	0	0	124	124
	Handicrafts	1	6	6	0	0	6	0	0	6	0	6	6	0	6
Sterpce	Fruits & Berries	5	72	56	16	0	72	17	55	0	35	37	0	72	72
	Dairy & Livestock	4	78	0	78	0	78	55	23	0	0	78	0	78	78
	Honey	1	17	0	17	0	17	0	17	0	0	17	0	0	17
	NTFP	5	90	0	90	0	90	3	87	0	23	67	0	90	90
Kamenica	Dairy & Livestock	7	128	0	128	0	128	124	4	0	124	0	80	44	128
	Fruits & Berries	1	18	0	18	0	18	18	0	0	18	0	0	18	18
	Business plan	1	13	13	0	0	13	13	0	0	13	0	0	13	13
	Honey	1	7	0	7	0	7	7	0	0	7	0	0	7	7
	NTFP	7	120	25	95	0	120	120	0	0	113	7	0	120	120
	Handicrafts	2	22	22	0	0	22	22	0	0	0	22	0	22	22
	Homemade Product	5	47	40	7	0	47	42	5	0	0	47	0	47	47
Novoberdo	Honey	4	48	1	47	0	48	18	30	0	41	7	0	48	48
	NTFP	3	42	13	29	0	42	39	3	0	40	2	0	42	42
	Fruits & Berries	1	8	8	0	0	8	6	2	0	6	2	6	2	8
	Dairy & Livestock	1	4	0	4	0	4	3	1	0	3	1	0	4	4
Total		62	974	270	704	0	974	664	227	83	677	293	92	841	974

Annex 5: Defining 'Employment' (Economic activity)

Quantitative indicators:

The graduates of the SR4E component 1 training measures will be mainly employed with self-employment endeavours, whereas wage-employment will cover only a low percentage. Self-employment will happen mostly in the field of agribusiness, circumscribed through its seasonal character. In order to find indicators which describe wellbeing taking in account the reality of opportunities in the rural project area, we use the criterion of income.

Reasoning:

- The minimum wage for young people per labour law of Kosovo is 130 EUR per month for full time employment.
- In order to consider the seasonal character of the jobs an additional indicator about the definition of part-time has to be included. OECD defines part-time work as less than 30 hours per week, meaning less than 75% of a normal 8 hour work schedule. In other words, working 75% of normal working hours and above indicates full time employed.

Calculation:

- Monthly minimum wage for youth multiplied with 12 month multiplied with 75%
- $130 \text{ EUR} \times 12 \text{ month} \times \text{with } 75\% = 130 \times 12 \times 0.75 = 1170 \text{ EUR per year}$

Indicator:

Taking self-employment in consideration **1000 EUR net income per year** represents a decent income and shall be used as indicator for successful employment.

Furthermore, S4RE should count all graduates who get wage-employed or self-employed according to this threshold even if the employment is not within the area of training. In order to make detailed assessments about the relevance of the training, the monitoring should distinguish between "graduates working according to their training fields" and "graduates working in other fields".

Qualitative indicators:

The technical training is combined with life skills training. The monitoring scheme has not reflected this aspect so far. Hence, an additional indicator which gives a qualitative statement about the acquired life skills should be added in the monitoring scheme.

Indicator:

Graduates' assessment on the relevance of the acquired life skills.

Scale of assessment

5 = contributed to a very significant extent

4 = contributed to a significant extent

3 = contributed to a moderate extent

2 = contributed to a small extent

1 = contributed to a very small extent

0 = no contribution achieved

n = no contribution planned

Annex 6: Case Studies & Success story

Tailoring in Kamenica: Skills training enables employment

Led by Ibadete Sermaxhaj, DPZ ER-ROSI was registered as a tailoring shop almost five years ago. Ibadete started to work as a tailor by herself with only one tailoring machine. Initially she ran her business with a few of costumers and worked hard to raise her profile and customer base. She had no assistance from other projects or organizations, until she heard about Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) and was interested to establish cooperation with the project.

S4RE facilitated the establishment of a Learning Group, and Ibadete provided vocational education on tailoring to a group of 14 girls. They attended a 3 month training and also had the chance to work and create incomes through the business. ER-ROSI covered the training cost, and some of the costs for the group transportation. At the conclusion of the training, ER-ROSI has access to a trained workforce capable of starting tailoring at a level acceptable to her customers.

During the training program the girls gained skills and knowledge not only on tailoring. They learned how to use and maintain the equipment, work as saleswomen, learned how to make offers and do orders and also learned about customer relations.

Skills in customer relations gained during the training enabled two of the girls to find jobs other than tailoring. Twelve members of the group have continued working at ER-ROSI and they are very happy and content with the opportunity provided by S4RE.



The training program was very successful, and the willingness to gain knowledge about this profession ensured ER-ROSI was happy at the end of the training to employ the trainees. According to Ibadete Sermaxhaj, during the training time the business was able to respond to a greater number of clients leading to an increased income for the

business. More clients means more employees, and more employees means less unemployment in the region.

“The training helped us to learn many things and to generate incomes. I was able to support my family with about €150 per month. We never thought we would be this satisfied at the end”, said Aferdita Lecaj one of the project beneficiaries.

Cooperation can bring job opportunities

Success Story

More than 60% of the Kosovo population are between the ages of 18-35, but there are only few opportunities for youth to engage in employment.

On-the-job training is one avenue for students to gain valuable experience and improve their chance of gaining employment. However, there are only some schools which offer such trainings for students, mainly technical schools.

Jobs like heating system installation require not only theory but also practice. Bujar Kryeziu, the owner of Tri-Term, a small business in heating installation, saw an opportunity to expand his work by engaging students with theoretical knowledge but not practical experience.

Mr. Kryeziu has been operating his business in Kamenica for 5 years and has 2 employees.

He heard about Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) project from another participant and he thought that he could engage some high-school students to the project through his business. He got in contact with 5 motivated students and he took them to his workshop to start on the job training. The training provided by Mr. Kryeziu and supported by S4RE made it possible for these students to put on practice what they learned in school and also offered them a job place after the training.



According to Bujar Kryeziu the training took 2 months for participants to learn the necessary basics of heating installation, and just one month after the training they were able to operate in the workshop by themselves. They were able to buy materials, do orders and do a complete heating installation. On the job training helped them to work during their summer holidays and also to gain more experience.



After they developed these skills, three of the trainees started working continuously at Tri-Term. One of the other trainees decided to open his own business and the other one works part time with the company.

S4RE project not only helped the trainees to engage in developing themselves but also helped Bujar Kryeziu to increase his business. It has become easier for him to manage his business now while he can go and finish other duties and he can

trust these trainees in the workshop. They are very happy and excited that they had this opportunity.

At first we thought that there will only be a training where participants can learn things and do practice. We didn't believe we will have these results at the end. I and the boys are very happy about the opportunity given from S4RE project and we are working to expand the business.

Bujar Kryeziu, Tri-Term

Youth programs ease entry into employment

Background

A growing economy and a stable business environment are basic requirements for investment and job creation. Access to energy and infrastructure and a skilled workforce are also important. With many of these basic requirements a challenge, areas like Dragash have particular difficulty in creating employment for youth.

Intervention by S4RE

Whilst a project of the scale of S4RE cannot solve all these issues, increasing the opportunities for youth to enter the labor market can be enhanced by improving their skills.

Meat processing requires specific skills on preparing and working with the products. Businesses in the region of Dragash are well known for their delicious meat dishes. Summer is an especial busy time, due to the diaspora community visiting their families and tourists visiting the Sharr Mountains. Sevdil Mehmeti has been working at a kebab shop in Montenegro, and in 2012 he has moved to Dragash and opened his own business. Having seen an increased demand for kebab shops, Mr. Mehmeti was seeking a possibility to open another shop. However, an obstacle was skilled workforce to capture the market during the peak season. Meeting with Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) staff was a great opportunity for the business to express its needs. S4RE helped find a group of local youth who was willing to learn and get into the labor market.



The training started before the summer season so as to prepare them for when the season starts. The project provided a 9 day training for 5 youths that acquired skills in meat processing products like hamburgers, sausages and kebabs. This is a competitive business, and DPH Lezeti recognized that better skills amongst new staff would provide him with a competitive advantage.

Results of collaboration

The collaboration with DPH Lezeti resulted in 4 people from the training group starting work. Organizing youth and improving their skills through training and on the job experience is proving a successful model to improve the livelihoods for young people in Dragash.

According to Rushid Rushiti who was unemployed for 2 years, the training helped him to learn a lot of things about this business. Now after he has a job he is also able to help his family. Active



programs for youths are a very important way of reducing unemployment and if more job opportunities would be accessible to young people this has the potential to also reduce migration from rural areas to the urban centres.

Reducing youth unemployment

Background

High youth unemployment in Dragash is due to few employers recruiting young people, resulting in less opportunities for youth to enter into the labor market. On the job training which may take the form of apprenticeships, internships, or learning-by-doing while employed would help alleviate this constraint. Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) is working on reducing poverty by enhancing youth employment. This requires cooperation between the project, businesses and sometimes schools.

Intervention

Analyzing the needs of this area, S4RE cooperated with an experienced trainer and entrepreneur in providing training to a group of youth who was eager to learn about installing central heating. A group of 15 youth attended theoretical part of the training which provided knowledge on how to calculate, install, and cut heating tubes.

To foster the youth learning and integrate the theoretical knowledge into practice, the youth acquired practical skills in working with a community of professionals. Divided into two groups they rehearsed their learning in private companies operating in Dragash and Prizren, enabling them to connect directly with the labor market. The practical part of the training motivated the participants, proving to be a successful way for youth to find employment. It increased their skills while doing central heating installation and importantly they also learnt how to deal with customers.

Final Result

As a result the group found itself more secure on what they were doing because of the theory training provided. The on-job training encouraged them to open their own businesses. Seven youth from the group were employed after the training, including two who work part-time.

Shkëndim Bislmi and Reis Ahmeti became very successful during the training and afterwards. They learned how to do a complete heating installation and became professional in this field. What made them really excited about the training was the certification they will get at the end of a work well done.



"It is an incredible opportunity for the youth to acquire skills and find employment. Therefore, I would strongly recommend to the project to continue helping the youth in Dragash, who have very limited opportunities"

Reis Ahmeti

TOURISM IN DRAGASH – Job opportunities by learning how to run a business

As an area rich in natural beauty, Dragash is recognized for its tourism potential. However, only a few initiatives have looked at this sector, and tourism has largely been neglected in the last 5 years. An area that has received virtually no support has been the area of skills development for local tourism operators.

There is no company or business who promotes tourism in Dragash directly, only some hotels or restaurants which indirectly promote tourism. As an oasis of untouched natural beauty, with extensive flora, fauna and cultural traditions, Dragash is a very important location for Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) project.

Due to this needs analysis, S4RE project started identifying local resource persons able to contribute to developing tourism, and contacted Mr. Suad Tosuni, who had sufficient experience in tourism.

This activity started by completing the documentation required from the project, including training materials. The youth were informed by public notification in each area of Dragash and all those who applied were accepted. A group of 20 youth participated in the 10 days training provided by Mr. Tosuni and supported by the S4RE project. Training was based on direct job and interactive programs. Participants learned a lot about tourism, including methods of leading tourist groups. S4RE offered facilities for training as well as supporting the cost of the training.



At the end of the training, every participant did a final exam to show the skills and knowledge they gained during the training.

The approach of S4RE to skills development, where training is provided by sector experts in the business context is seen as a specific tool for youth to enter private business. As a final result, 3 people from the group started to work on this business, offering services as tourist

guides for which they earn from €30 – €60 per day. Four other participants are in the process of applying for jobs with tourist businesses in the region.

S4RE is continuing to work with this group, trying to connect them with other local businesses like restaurants and hotels, in order to create new job opportunities.

Cultivation of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) helps increase incomes and employment

Background

Kamenica is a multiethnic municipality in the north east of Kosovo. With an estimated 5,000 young unemployed men and women, Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) identified Kamenica as an important area for increasing income and employment opportunities.

Kamenica has favorable conditions for agriculture, and a group of young farmers were interested to invest in order to increase their income and create job opportunities.



Intervention by S4RE

Farmers first heard about the possibility of growing black marshmallow as a medicinal plant from S4RE. After several meetings with the farmers S4RE in cooperation with Agro Produkt LLC, a Kosovo processor of NTFP, joined forces to support 21 farmers. This support included a 3 month training program about cultivation of the crop, as well as 3,000 seedlings for each farmer to develop their own plantings.

The group leader, Mr. Nexhmedin Kryeziu was further supported by S4RE to submit a proposal on behalf of the group to the municipality of Kamenica to help with the purchase of a drying facility. A grant to the value of €3,675 was awarded to the group, which allowed them to dry the product prior to sale, thereby achieving a higher price.

As part of the training, farmers have been facilitated to reach a contract for selling their products and to increase their business skills, leading to a great willingness to continue with this farming activity.

Results of the collaboration

As a result of this collaboration, there are 21 farmers producing black marshmallow. Despite poor weather conditions during the growing season which reduced the potential yield, the farmers are satisfied with the quantity collected and each of them engaged 2 young people in the harvesting process.

Mr. Kryeziu harvested and sold 75 kilograms of dried flowers of black marshmallow at the value of €10 per kilogram.

S4RE linked farmers with 2 local collection points in the Kamenica region, which collected the final product from them and sold to Agro Produkt. As a result of this successful collaboration, the black marshmallow grown in Kamenica is now being sold in a range of natural products in Germany and Switzerland!

The original group of farmers have formed 2 new groups of local growers who will attend trainings in 2015 and are ready to invest in the cultivation of NTFP. Farmers are very happy for this opportunity offered by S4RE and Agro Produkt. This is the first time that a project has invested with them in NTFP production and provided them with the opportunity to generate sustainable income and employment for their families and community.



Increasing product quality and job opportunities for local companies

Background

Rich in natural resources, Dragash is well known for its remote mountains and forests. This natural landscape produces wild forest fruits and mushrooms which represent very important income and employment opportunities for the local population. Families here have been collecting mushrooms for generations for personal consumption, and since the 1990s several businesses have been exporting these crops to a range of markets.

Intervention



“The idea to collect wild forest fruits came in 2005 according to the resources of the rich Sharr Mountains” says Mr. Nuredin Bajrami, the CEO of Hit Flores. His company has been cooperating with different non-governmental organizations and the business has developed strongly. However, skilled staff are difficult to find in the region of Dragash. As a result, Hit Flores joined their efforts with Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) on developing their staff for processing mushrooms.

S4RE organized 4 days of training for 45 employees of which 25% were women. As the business has been expanding in recent years, 20 of these employees were also new. On-the-job training helped them to learn about identifying, classifying, cleaning, processing and packaging of mushrooms.

Results of the collaboration

This cooperation from S4RE project and Hit Flores resulted in a more professional staff that now has more knowledge, which led to their final product having a higher quality and increased the sales to export markets. 15 tonnes of frozen mushrooms were exported in 2014.

Some of the 20 new employees trained had been used by Hit Flores in previous years as day workers. In 2014 they have been employed on a seasonal basis, earning a more stable income.



Fatlind Neziri, who is engaged in the packaging sector of forest fruits, mushrooms and aromatic plants, is one of the employees who tells that the project helped them a lot. They improved their knowledge and by this they increased the quality of the products and now they are also able to teach their families on how to identify and collect mushrooms as a family business too.

The increased capacity of Hit Flores is resulting in more families using the natural resources of the area by collecting mushrooms and berries. Participants in the training indicated a wish that there will be even more trainings not only about mushrooms but also about collection of other wild non-timber forest products.

In addition, this work compliments the work undertaken by S4RE in 2013 and 2014, working with raspberry production in Dragash region. Hit Flores hopes to collect raspberries from 100 hectares of cultivated plantings within the next 3 to 5 years.

Annex 7: Photos



LG Beekeeping, Sterpce



LG Jewelry, Kamenica



Processing mushrooms



Thermo-isolation



Handicrafts Gorani group



Raspberry production, Sterpce



TOT for learning facilitators and training providers