

# **E&E Bureau Regional Workforce Competitiveness Initiative**

## **Background**

Over the past several years, USAID has successfully introduced cluster competitiveness initiatives. The E&E Bureau was a pioneer in this process by introducing the tools and approaches in multiple countries and providing expertise to the field for design and implementation. At the same time, USAID has also been a pioneer in introducing approaches to building a modern and flexible workforce that can be competitive in today's global environment. USAID recently developed a global contract to focus exclusively on workforce development as an emerging priority of USAID client countries. Many USAID cluster competitiveness initiatives have identified workforce development deficiencies as an important constraint and have formulated specific workforce initiatives to overcome them.<sup>1</sup>

Making education systems more relevant to the E&E region's changing economic needs has proven to be very difficult. This is true despite the fact that educational content and teaching methods are not meeting the demands of increasingly market-based economies. In the E&E region, higher education faces the problem of providing flexible and practical workforce education to keep up with rapidly changing industries requirements. Educational quality at the primary and secondary levels is declining in many countries raising concerns for long-term competitiveness. High levels of unemployment, especially among youth, threaten social and political stability. Thus, the dual challenge of creating sustainable employment for growing populations and better preparing workforces for success in the globally competitive marketplace has risen in importance within the overall development agenda.

It is timely for USAID to engage national leaders in business, education and government in creating more flexible labor markets and education systems that are responsive to the needs of workers and employers in dynamic market economies. Competitiveness and emerging workforce development methodologies offer approaches that galvanize local leadership to take necessary action. USAID's partners have developed a number of tools and approaches that link workforce development and competitiveness in complementary ways to address the employment challenge.

This task order provides an opportunity for USAID Mission to apply these interdisciplinary tools in E&E countries, assess their relevancy to the region and examine their potential contribution to USAID interventions in the region. It provides resources for experts in workforce development and competitiveness to help develop approaches for addressing workforce and competitiveness challenges within the context of Mission's current or developing country strategies. It provides an opportunity for bringing USAID's education and economic growth programs together in a cross-sectoral initiative to attack problems of mutual concern.

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<sup>1</sup> In Sri Lanka, for example, several industry clusters are implementing workforce initiatives. These include tourism, gems and jewelry and information technology. The project also assisted the Government of Sri Lanka in its successful passage of three critical legislative reforms affecting labor markets.

This task order will develop and refine strategies and approaches, introduce and field test them to audiences in selected countries, and present findings and recommendations for the next generation of effective USAID initiatives on competitiveness, education and workforce development in ways that promote the linkages among them.

## **Objectives**

USAID's objectives in this task order are to:

1. Introduce workforce competitiveness initiatives to interested USAID missions in the E&E region;
2. Further develop and refine USAID's methodologies;
3. Test the demand for workforce competitiveness initiatives with host country leadership; and
4. Provide benchmarking and analysis on workforce competitiveness indicators for at least 5 countries.

Apart from these specific objectives, it is hoped that his initiative will also influence policy and institutional reform, improve industry workforce strategy and provide specific practical recommendations to USAID.

## **Tasks and Activities**

### **Phase 1: Prior to Country Visits**

#### Task 1.1: Benchmarking

THE CONTRACTOR will benchmark the economic and workforce competitiveness of countries in the E&E region using available data and rank them regionally and relative to all countries of the world.

#### Task 1.2: Selection of Countries to be Analyzed

Five countries will be selected by USAID for field assessments based on the benchmarking and discussions with the contractor.

#### Task 1.3: Review of Past Analysis and Collection of Existing Data on Countries

THE CONTRACTOR will research previously completed analyses regarding competitiveness and workforce skills in the selected countries and present a bibliography and a brief report on its assessment of preceding competitiveness and workforce analyses.

#### Task 1.4: Advance Visit to the Five Countries

THE CONTRACTOR will conduct advance field visits to the five countries selected for the project to work with Mission staff to ensure effective convening of leadership groups on workforce competitiveness issues under Phase 2. A team member will conduct these one week field visits well in advance of the scheduled meetings and in consultation with USAID Missions will identify appropriate leadership groups including business associations, think tanks, economic and business faculties, chambers of commerce, trade unions, education and government leaders, media representatives and donors. This person

will interview local groups and key leaders to prepare a preliminary country report. Locally contracted experts will assist with this activity and provide the necessary background information.

#### Task 1.5: Preparation of Tailored Presentations for Each Country

THE CONTRACTOR will prepare a tailored presentation for each of the five countries that is relevant to its specific labor market situation, industries, workforce development and education systems. These presentations will be used in high level leadership meetings to be convened during Phase 2 of the project.

#### **Phase 2: National Workforce Competitiveness Assessments**

THE CONTRACTOR will field a competitiveness expert and workforce expert who will convene key stakeholders in workforce competitiveness in 2-3 hour industry-specific meetings to present information on workforce and competitiveness challenges facing their industry and country, and to determine the relevance and receptivity of these groups to workforce competitiveness initiatives. The experts will spend 1 week in each selected country and brief USAID and other donors on the conclusions of the visit at the end of the visit. A series of approximately 3-5 leadership meetings will take place in each country depending on the local situation.

#### **Phase 3: Final Report and Briefing to USAID/Washington**

The team will make its final report to USAID/Washington in the form of both a briefing on the results as well as a final report. This report will provide a report for each country including a description of the leadership meetings and the attendees, feedback on critical constraints, recommendations to improve the competitiveness and workforce situation in each country and recommendations on specific strategies and action plans that USAID might take to address workforce competitiveness issues.

#### **Deliverables**

The contractor will prepare and present the following deliverables first in draft form for USAID review and comment, and then in a final report taking into account USAID feedback:

- Workforce Competitiveness Benchmarking Report on countries in the E&E region;
- Workforce Competitiveness presentations and report for each country participating in the assessment;
- Brief summaries of approximately 15 leadership meetings in 5 countries including the number of participants, the quality of participation, and their feedback and insights; and
- Final report summarizing the results of the Task Order with recommendations and suggested action plan.

#### **Results**

- USAID Missions in the E&E region will have received benchmarking data, country analyses and focus group feedback from a wide variety of country stakeholders that

will inform and improve future strategies and interventions related to economic growth and education.

- The Workforce Competitiveness Benchmarking report, coupled with country Workforce Competitiveness presentations and ensuing publicity will have generated awareness and support for workforce competitiveness initiatives in the countries visited.
- USAID will have received confirmation or modification of its approach to workforce competitiveness assistance and improved the methodology used prior to a subsequent launch in the region.

### **Level of Effort**

Senior Workforce Development Generalist	45 Days
Senior Competitiveness Specialist	45 Days
Mid-Level Competitiveness Specialist(s)	60 Days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify leadership in each of five countries</li><li>• Conduct advance work to ensure effective convening</li><li>• Assist in preparing presentations</li><li>• Assist in country write-ups</li><li>• Assist in developing country benchmarking reports for five countries</li><li>• Assist in background research for tailored country presentations</li></ul>	
Local Economists/Workforce Specialists (30 days per country)	150 Days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help convene leadership</li><li>• Provide local data for country reports</li><li>• Co-present</li><li>• Utilize tools and presentations</li><li>• Ensure good press coverage and dissemination</li></ul>	
Local Translators	30 Days

### **Time Frame**

This project will be carried out from May 2004 through November 2004 with a final report submitted by November 30, 2004.

### **Qualifications**

The Senior Workforce Specialist should have a minimum of 20 years of experience in workforce-related policy and strategy and familiarity with workforce and education issues in the E&E region. The Senior Competitiveness specialist should have 20 years of relevant experience, experience with USAID competitiveness methodologies, and prior extensive experience in implementing such projects in the E&E region. The mid-level workforce development generalist(s) should have at least five years of relevant prior experience, should speak at least one of the major languages of the region, preferably

Russian, and should have prior experience with USAID competitiveness methodologies and projects.

