Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) Project

Capitalisation of Experiences

26th November 2018

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Executive Summary

Creating sufficient employment for its young, growing population is a major challenge for Kosovo. A 2017 labour force survey found extremely high inactivity rates amoung the working-age population, with almost two-thirds of this group not economically active[1]. The problem is particularly acute for young people - 15 to 24 years olds are twice as likely to be unemployed than older people. For young women and populations from minority groups, particularly rural dwellers, the prospects of gaining employment are even more remote. This case study examines the experience of the Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) local economic development project and the contribution it has made to tacking the unemployment problem in Kosovo.

What did S4RE aim to do?

S4RE is managed by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and financed by Medicor Foundation and Helvetas, with additional contributions from other donors[2]. It launched its project activities in 2013 and is due to be completed by the end of 2018. The project's main area of focus was on stimulating local economic development through the creation of employment opportunities for young people in rural areas of Kosovo. S4RE's integrated approach to local economic development aimed to achieve this through a number of complementary project actions: *Supply-side* actions focused interventions aimed at equipping young people with relevant skills to quickly enter employment; On the *demand-side,* S4RE's actions focused on building the productivity and competitiveness of local businesses by improving their access to skills training for their employees. S4RE also aimed to link local agricultural producers with higher value markets, with a view to stimulating business growth and employment creation.

What did S4RE achieve?

S4RE adopted the *Learning Networks Approach (LearnNet)* to train and develop the skills of young people. Using this approach, young people in S4RE targeted areas (five rural municipalities) were organised into 'Opportunity Groups' through which the training would be planned, organised and delivered. The training curriculums were designed and delivered by local businesses to ensure the skills being learned were relevant to the needs of the local labour market and tailored to the background of local youth. The results have been very positive:

- Almost **250 Opportunity Groups have been organised** over the past 5 years, delivering **training to just over 2,500 young people**, a significant number of which entered employment after the completion of the training.
- S4RE recently commissioned a survey to track the employment status of the Opportunity Group graduates from the project's first phase (2013-2015), the survey found that **56% of the sample reported their current status as employed:** the majority (around 70%) are in part and full-time wage employment, primarily in the private sector, working 20-50 hours per week and earning €200 to €400 per month, the others have started their own businesses.

S4RE's supply-side focused interventions have resulted in significant numbers of local businesses (115 businesses and 1,300 employees) and agricultural producers (over 4,500) accessing training, learning new skills, expanding into new markets and growing their businesses.

There are questions though about the wider impact and sustainability of the project's activities. During the first phase, S4RE project delivery largely followed a traditional 'direct-delivery' model, with the project team and its local facilitators taking the lead on the organisation and implementation of project activities. This approach changed during the second phase where local partners were encouraged to take greater ownership of project activities, with a view to them permanently taking up these new practices promoted by S4RE. Although S4RE has done impressive work in developing the capabilities

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[1] ASK (2017) Labour Force Survey in Kosovo, Series 5: Social Statistics, available at http://ask.rks-gov.net
[2] Such as Julius Bär Foundation, Rieter Stiftung

of its local partners to be able to do this it is likely that they are not yet at a level to fully take on the role expected by S4RE.

What can we learn from the S4RE experience?

Some of the key lessons which can be learned from the S4RE experience include:

Project Design and Strategy Development

- **Understand the problem**: Understanding what people are doing to make a living or secure employment and the broader environment or systems which influences the choices they make, the opportunities available to them and the problems which they face is critical to ensuring any response is grounded in a thorough understanding of the context in which the project is operating.   An initial diagnostic exercise informed by market systems thinking can help develop this multi-dimensional understanding from the outset and can assist in the development of a broader range of project interventions.
- **Thinking long-term**: Good development practice should be about stimulating long-lasting changes. It is very important to have a clear vision and strategy from the outset of how the project's activities and new practices introduced would lead to long-lasting, sustainable systemic changes in the behaviours of project partners.
- **Including the excluded**: Pro-poor impact can only be achieved when marginalised, excluded and vulnerable groups participate in and benefit from the development process. The reasons preventing these groups from benefiting need to be continually assessed, additional resources and tailored interventions need to be targeted at these groups to ensure their inclusion if necessary.

Project Management

- **Getting measurement right:** Monitoring and results measurement (MRM) is an integral part of good development practice. Key lessons from the S4RE experience include:
    - MRM is not about just providing information to meet the needs of project funders.   Donors and implementers have diverse uses for information and thus different information needs - a good MRM system should meet the information requirements of both.
    - Projects aiming to stimulate long-term behaviour do not achieve results in a linear fashion. Results tend to slower in the beginning as the project tests and refines its approach, and then accelerate and spread as the project gains traction. Project implementers need communicate this message to funders and ensure they buy-into the approach which the project is adopting and the results which it expects to generate, particularly the sequence of these results.
    - MRM is technically demanding and requires resources.   At a minimum one project staff member needs to be dedicated full-time to managing and maintaining the MRM system.
- **Effective partnership management:** As enablers of change projects such as S4RE's role is to 'facilitate' and rely on local partners to lead on and deliver the change process.   Effective partnerships are therefore critical to the long-term success of the project. Key lessons from the S4RE experience include:
    - It's important to do your homework and understand potential partner organisations. It's particularly critical to try and understand whether potential partners are *capable* and *willing* to do what you expect them to do.
    - Being clear and consistent on the terms of the partnership from the outset is important, emphasising that partnership are reciprocal, temporary, based on mutual benefit and without large grants or financial support.   Starting partnerships off on the wrong terms leads to expectations of 'more of the same'.
    - It's important to continuously assess the effectiveness of partnerships, working towards a clearly defined exit strategy.

Introduction

Kosovo declared its independence in February 2008 and is recognised as an independent country by 114 out of 193 UN and 23 out of 28 EU member states. Although Kosovo has experienced a period of sustained economic growth since independence, it has not been able to significantly reduce high rates of unemployment and provide jobs for its young population, particularly for women and minorities. Two-thirds of the working age population are estimated to be unemployed. Young people are twice as likely to be unemployed than older people.

Failure to address the unemployment problem will have major consequences for the future development and stability of Kosovo. Over the short to medium term, widespread unemployment results in large swaths of the population losing out on valuable work-related skills and knowledge, meaning that a large portion of Kosovo's human capital is unused thus affecting productivity, and hampering economic growth. Long-term unemployment and inactivity is particularly problematic as it increases the potential for crime, violence and social unrest.

Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) is a local economic development project designed and implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, which initiated its activities in January 2013 and is due to finish by the end of 2018. S4RE aimed to contribute to addressing the unemployment problem in Kosovo, by stimulating job creation, particularly for young people, in a number of targeted rural regions of Kosovo. problem of youth unemployment in Kosovo. This case study explores the project's experiences over the past five years, with a focus on learning and critically assessing the long-term impact of the project.   It shouldn't be seen as an evaluation or an overall assessment of S4RE's work against its objective and project targets. Rather the case seeks to highlight key achievements of the project, of which there have been many, as well as things which could have been done better, with a view to extracting points of learning.

The report is set out as follows:

- Section 1 provides some contextual information, in particular on the some of the issues underlying high levels of unemployment in Kosovo
- Section 2 provides details on S4RE's approach as a project
- Section 3 explores S4RE's implementation experience, in particular the results which have been achieved and the longer-term impact of the project
- Section 4 builds on the preceding sections, highlighting some of the main lessons which can be learned from S4RE's experience.

1 Context

This section briefly sets out the wider context or bigger picture in which the S4RE project operated, highlighting some of the important issues and trends underlying the youth unemployment problem in Kosovo[3].

The Economy - Sustained growth with limited job creation

Since its formal declaration of independence in 2008 Kosovo has experienced a period of steady economic growth. Annual GDP growth averaged about 3.5 percent during the 2008-17 period[4]. With a GDP per capita of USD\$ 3,661 (2016) Kosovo remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, though. Economic growth has been driven largely by remittances (which have mainly been used for consumption as opposed to productive investment), donor assistance and public infrastructure investment (mainly in roads), while private sector growth, particularly in medium to large scale manufacturing and other labour-intensive sectors, has been very limited.

As a result, recent economic growth has not resulted in large scale job creation and employment. Limited employment opportunities are reflected in high rates of inactivity and unemployment. According to the latest labour force survey in 2017, the percentage of the working age population which is not economically active is 61 percent. Younger people aged15 to 24 are twice as likely to be unemployed than older people[5]. The problem is particularly acute for young women, less than 1 in 5 young women are employed.

Education and Skills - a major constraint to job creation

With a young population, Kosovo can benefit from investing in skills. Many local firms want to take on additional staff but report major difficulties finding local workers with the required skill sets. A 2014 survey of local firms reported that a third of medium to large firms employing between 10 to 250 workers rated finding suitable personnel and filling vacancies as a major problem[6]. Investing in skills is a challenge as general educational attainment levels are very low in Kosovo. More than a third of the young population have no education beyond primary school[7], two thirds of 15-year olds lack basic proficiency in sciences, and over three quarters are below basic proficiency in reading and mathematics.[8] Educational attainment levels tend to be lower amongst women, and young women are much more likely than men to drop out of basic education, particularly in rural areas.

Addressing the problem - skills development and job creation

The unemployment problem in Kosovo is complex and multi-dimensional. Solutions require coordinated action from multiple actors - across the public, private and non-governmental sectors - aimed at developing the skills of the workforce on the one-hand and stimulating job creation and employment opportunities on the other. A project such as S4RE can play an important role in stimulating and facilitating this type of coordinated action.

S4RE decided to focus its project activities at local actors aiming to develop the skills and knowledge of businesses and young people in number targeted rural areas of Kosovo.[9] These project activities aimed at triggering a number of key changes in the behaviour of these local actors. S4RE's vision of

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[3] An expanded version of this section can be found in Annex 2.
[4] World Bank data, accessed at https://data.worldbank.org/
[5] ASK (2017) Labour Force Survey in Kosovo, Series 5: Social Statistics, available at http://ask.rks-gov.net
[6] See KOSME (2014) Report on SMEs, available at http://www.eciks.org/repository/docs
[7] United Nations Development Project (2016). Kosovo Human Development Report 2016: Making the labour market work for youth and women, available http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library
[8] See 2015 Project for International Student Assessment (PISA), available at http://www.oecd.org/pisa/
[9] This decision was based on Helvetas's knowledge and experience of managing projects in Kosovo for a number of years as well as a scoping visit by Helvetas skills development experts to Kosovo in late 2011.

this change process is illustrated below, highlighting how project activities were expected to lead to changes and the adoption of new and improved practices by local actors (output level in the diagram), the resulting benefits (outcome level in the diagram) which these new practices were expected to generate and ultimately the pro-poor impact (jobs and income increases).

Figure 1: S4RE Theory of Change
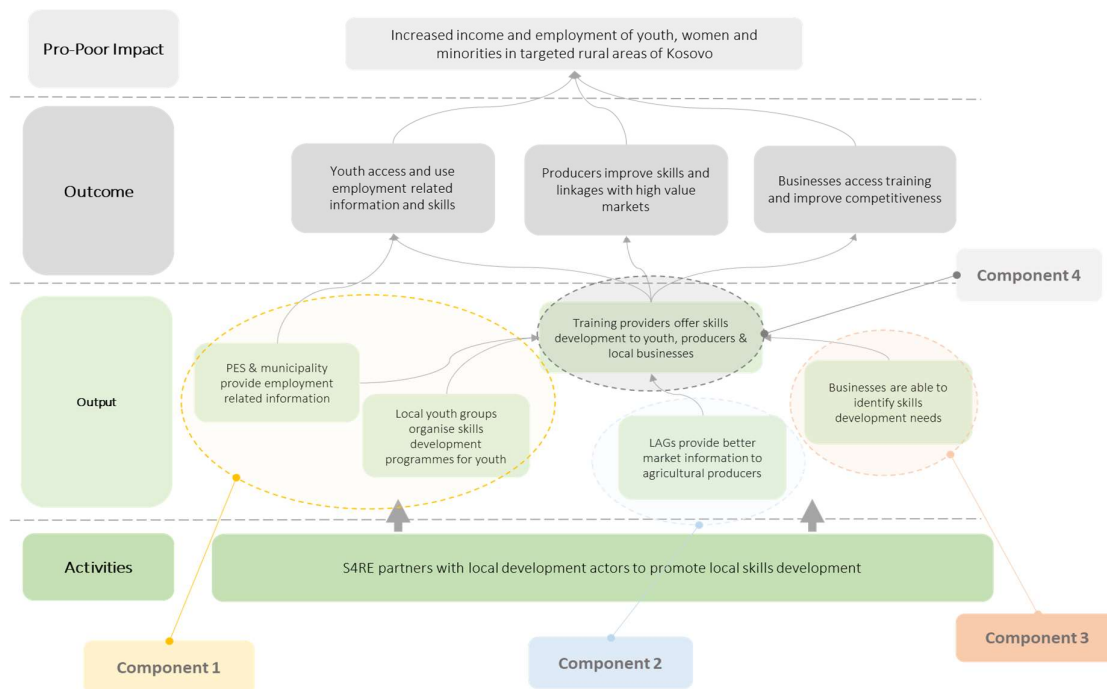
The sections to follow explore this Theory of Change in more detail. Section 2 provides further detail on the project activities and components, whilst section 3 explores the output, outcome and impact level results which S4RE has been able to achieve.

It is important to emphasise that a number of rural municipalities were targeted by S4RE. Project activities were initially piloted in four municipalities during the first phase – Dragash municipality in the Sharr Mountains region in the south of Kosovo and a further three municipalities further east, Shtrpce, Novo Brdo, and Kamenica. These are all rural areas which had been particularly badly affected by high levels of unemployment, limited economic opportunities, high levels of youth migration and radicalisation of youth. Dragash municipality for instance is reported to be the municipality in Kosovo with the highest number of migrants living outside Kosovo. These are also areas which have considerable unexploited economic potential, particularly in agriculture and tourism. This was later expanded to include Viti municipality in Phase 2.

2 S4RE Local Economic Development Approach

This section sets out S4RE's approach to implementing the project, outlining *what* S4RE set out to achieve and *how* this would be achieved (i.e. the actions or interventions designed to achieve the vision).

2.1 What did S4RE set out to achieve?

The goal of S4RE is to **reduce poverty in rural Kosovo by improving access to employment and income generating opportunities for young people, through the promotion of local skills development.**

S4RE's approach to achieving this goal focused on stimulating long-lasting changes in the practices or behaviours of key actors - public and private, formal and informal - involved in skills and local economic development in Kosovo. S4RE aimed to do this this by introducing and testing new ideas and approaches to skills development; brokering relationships and encouraging dialogue and collaboration between different actors (particularly public-private collaboration); and ensuring that local actors are fully involved in, and in many ways driving, project decision making, planning and implementation from the outset[10]. The key principles guiding S4RE's approach, particularly for its second phase, included:

- ▪ **Sustainability:** All S4RE activities aimed to stimulate changes which provide a means for local communities to derive social and economic benefits, beyond the period of the project.
- ▪ **Facilitation**: Achieving sustainable change required that S4RE play a facilitative role, acting as an external agent seeking to stimulate changes in local actors. S4RE's role as a facilitator evolved as the project progressed, particularly as it transitioned from phase 1 to phase 2 - this is discussed further below.

2.2 How did S4RE aim to achieve its goal?

As illustrated in the project theory of change in the previous section a number of complimentary and inter-linked intervention areas or components were designed to implement S4RE's approach and achieve its goal:

1) Component 1 - Youth Skills Development

This component **aimed to improve young people's access to employment and/or income generating opportunities by providing them with access to very practical training which would allow them to immediately enter employment**, either through formal wage paying jobs or self-employment.

To achieve this, S4RE piloted the *Learning Networks Approach (LearnNet),* which uses group-learning to provide solutions to a problem or need[11]. Empowering young people to take responsibility for their learning is one of the key guiding principles of this approach. In practice, this involves learners being fully involved in the planning, design and delivery of the training, in the process acquiring both technical as well as organisational, communication and life skills which will allow them to quickly access employment and generate income. More broadly this approach can be used to strengthen social structures and build trust networks in areas such as Kosovo which have recently been exposed to conflict.   The LearnNet approach has been successfully implemented in a number of African countries - this was the first time it was used outside of Africa.

The basic organisational structure of the LearnNet approach is the Learning Group, which S4RE called the Opportunity Group, consisting of 10 to 20 members responsible for making decisions at every phase of the Opportunity Group cycle from pre-training (deciding on the learning content and selecting the trainer), training and assessing and evaluating results. Each cycle of pre-training,

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[10] It's important to emphasise that S4RE's approach and project activities were designed to complement existing skills development initiatives on the ground,

[11] See https://www.giz.de/expertise/html/12752.html for more information on the LearnNet approach.

training and post-training is completed over 2 weeks to 6 months, depending on the topic and group activity[12]. Annex 3 provides further details on the process of Opportunity Group formation.

S4RE organised the *Opportunity Groups* in close collaboration with key local actors on the ground in the project's focus areas, particularly local municipalities and youth organisations (see Table 1 below). S4RE's approach to doing this evolved as the project progressed as explained further a bit later in this section.

2) Component 2 – Agricultural Producer Supply Chain Development

This component focused **on local agri-businesses, particularly small-scale farmers or producers, and aimed to integrate them into national supply chains for a range of agricultural products.** Again, the aim here was to develop the knowledge and skills of producers so they are better able to take advantage of opportunities to sell into higher value markets. Typically, this would involve linking these producers with actors further up the value chain, particularly processors and end-buyers, and supporting the producers to ensure they meet the quality and volume requirements of the buyer. Dairy, honey, vegetables, berries and fruits were identified as priority value chains.

3) Component 3 - Local Business Skills Development

This component **focused on encouraging local businesses (non-agricultural ones) to invest in the training and skills development of their employees with a view to increasing overall business productivity and growth**. S4RE aimed to do this by developing tailored training packages for businesses and linking them with relevant training providers, as well as connecting these businesses with VET courses or informal training projects (particularly the Opportunity Groups in Component 1) to stimulate new employment. In order to ensure ownership and commitment, these businesses would co-invest in these activities with S4RE.

4) Component 4 (Cross Cutting) - Training Market Development

One of the key objectives of S4RE was to **develop and leave behind a pool of qualified and competent training providers who would continue to provide skills development services** after the project had reached its end. S4RE planned to do this by creating opportunities for these training providers by integrating them into the training activities involved in the project's three main components outlined above. S4RE would also provide mentoring and capacity development support to these training providers to build the quality of their service offering and ensure their training services are relevant.

It's important to emphasise that **each of these project components were designed to be inclusive**, active measures were taken by the S4RE team to ensure that women and ethnic minorities participated in and benefited from project activities in each component.

Partnerships with local actors would be key to the successful implementation of each of these project components. A simple visual representation of S4RE's implementation model is shown in Figure 1 below. During first phase of the project - from February 2013 to February 2015 - S4RE used local facilitators, who were effectively part of the S4RE team, to coordinate and manage project activities on the ground. On a very practical level, in the case of the Opportunity Groups for example, this involved local facilitators taking the lead on identifying and organising group members, identifying the trainer and overseeing the delivery of the training to the group.
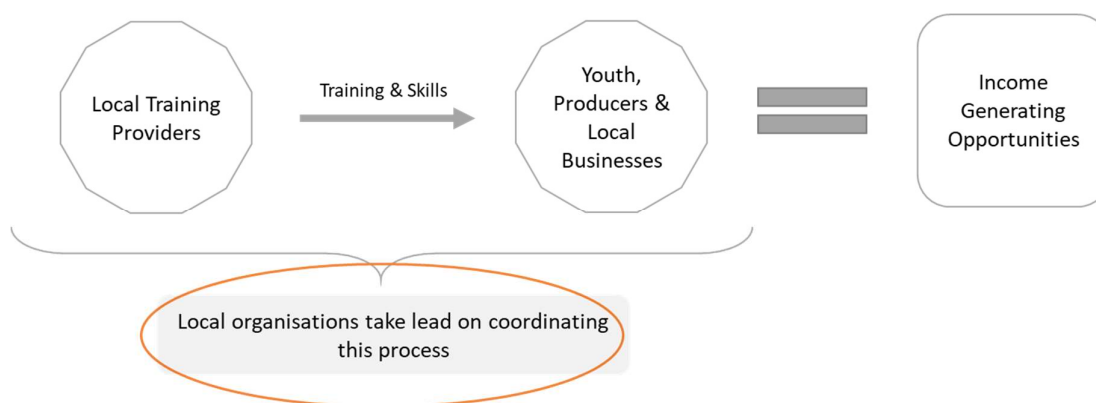
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[12] Annex 3 provides further detail on the process involved in Opportunity Group formation.

Figure 2: S4RE Implementation Model - Phase 1

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┌──────────────┐   Training & Skills   ┌──────────────┐   ══   ┌──────────────┐
│ Local Training │ ──────────────────→ │    Youth,      │   ══   │    Income      │
│  Providers     │                     │ Producers &    │        │  Generating    │
│                │                     │    Local       │        │ Opportunities  │
│                │                     │  Businesses    │        │                │
└──────────────┘                      └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘

            S4RE and local facilitators coordinate this
                   process with local partners
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S4RE's implementation model underwent an important change after the completion of the project's first phase. This involved S4RE and its local facilitators encouraging much stronger local ownership of project activities. For instance, in the case of the first component this involved local youth organisations taking the lead (as opposed to local facilitators) on the planning, organisation and execution of the Opportunity Group training. The key reason for this change was to ensure the new practices and innovations introduced by S4RE became embedded within local institutions, thereby ensuring that these practices and resulting benefits would not only continue and be sustained but would also stimulate the adoption of these practiced and innovations in other non-S4RE municipalities. This change in approach presented a number of challenges for the S4RE team: firstly it required re-orientating existing project partners and changing the way they engaged and worked with the project; secondly, new partners needed to be identified; and thirdly the capacities of partners needed to be developed so that they could effectively take up the new practices introduced by S4RE.

Figure 3: S4RE Implementation Model - Phase 2

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┌──────────────┐   Training & Skills   ┌──────────────┐   ══   ┌──────────────┐
│ Local Training │ ──────────────────→ │    Youth,      │   ══   │    Income      │
│  Providers     │                     │ Producers &    │        │  Generating    │
│                │                     │    Local       │        │ Opportunities  │
│                │                     │  Businesses    │        │                │
└──────────────┘                      └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘

            Local organisations take lead on coordinating
                          this process
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The key local actors who S4RE would partner with to deliver the project and ensure its sustainability are set out in the table below.   The evolution of the project's delivery model involved not only changing the role of existing partners but also working with new partners as highlighted in the table below.   The roles of these partners are explored in further detail in sections 4 and 5.

Table 1: S4RE Project Partners

Local Actor	Contribution to S4RE
	Phase 1
Municipality Authorities	▪ S4RE sought to influence municipalities' approach to local economic development by providing them with new tools and ideas to build local skills and contribute to addressing unemployment in

	their local areas. In order ensure commitment and long-term ownership local municipalities were expected to commit resources (both money and in-kind contributions) to this process. ▪ S4RE aimed to demonstrate to municipalities that unemployment and income generation is a problem that can be addressed by local communities coming together and designing and implementing their own solutions.
Ministry of Labour & Social Welfare (MLSW) & Public Employment Service (PES)	▪ The PES operates under the Ministry of Labour & Social Welfare (MLSW), providing labour market information, the registration of skilled job-seekers and work placement services for job seekers. ▪ S4RE aimed to improve the coordination between PES and other local actors involved in the provision of labour market information to youth. quality.
Local Private Sector	▪ S4RE aimed to coordinate closely with businesses, both locally at the municipal level and nationally, to identify type of skills in demand, coordinate with them on-the-job training and identify business opportunities for self-employment. ▪ To ensure commitment and ownership businesses accessing training through S4RE were expected to co-invest in this training with the project.
Training Providers	▪ S4RE used local training providers to delivery skills development to local youth and businesses. S4RE aimed to improve the quality of the services provided by these training providers.
Phase 2	
Local Action Groups (LAGs) & Rural Development Network (RDN)	▪ LAGs are community-based organisations which design and implement local rural development strategies. LAGs LAGs are present in all municipalities in Kosovo, this is the reason why they were selected as the lead partner in the sustainable delivery of components 2 and 3 of the project. ▪ RDN is the national umbrella organisation for LAGs, providing them with funding and technical support. RDN was central to S4RE's scaling-up strategy for components 2 and 3 - S4RE expected RDN to encourage and stimulate the replication of the good practices adopted by LAGs in S4RE project areas to LAGs in non-project areas.
Local Youth Organisations	▪ Youth organisations, particularly Youth Centres and Youth Action Councils, are active in local municipalities and play an important role in mobilising youth and raising awareness of the issues they face. S4RE identified the Youth Centres and Youth Action Councils (supported by LAGs) as the lead partner in the sustainable delivery of component 1 of the project. ▪ Again as in the case of RDN, working closely with the Central Youth Action Council, the national coordination body for these local youth organisations, was a key stimulating the wider replication of the new practices promoted by S4RE.
Business Member Organisations (BMOs)	▪ BMOs have an important role to play, not only in representing and supporting their members but also in working with local and national Government to promote employment and competitiveness. ▪ S4RE identified BMOs as the lead partner who would lead on the sustainable delivery of the training and skills development of local businesses under component 3 of the project
Office for Investment and Business Support (OIBS)	▪ OIBSs are municipality operated entities which aim to promote investment and improve the general business environment in rural areas. ▪ In areas where functional BMOs were not operational or feasible, S4RE identified OIBSs as an alternative partner which could lead on the sustainable delivery of component 3.

3 S4RE Implementation Experience

S4RE's experience implementing the approach outlined in the previous section is explored and analysed here. The section is structured around a number of key questions which aim to assess the project's achievements and success; the factors which underpinned this success; and the long-term sustainability of new practices introduced by S4RE.

3.1 What has S4RE been able to achieve?

- ### Component 1 - Youth Skills Development

As noted in the previous section this component adopted the LearnNet approach, using Opportunity Groups to transfer practical skills to unemployed youth which would allow them to quickly start generating income, either through entering into formal wage employment or through self-employment.

In total 150 Opportunity Groups were formed across S4RE's four focus municipalities during the first phase of the project from 2013 to the end of 2015. The results proved very encouraging, particular in terms of employment creation and income generation.   According to S4RE project monitoring data just over 1,500 youth were trained through the Opportunity Groups - 65% of these trainees were able to immediately start generating income, either through wage or self- employment, according to data collected by S4RE (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Component 1 Results - Phase 1 (2013-2015, Cumulative)
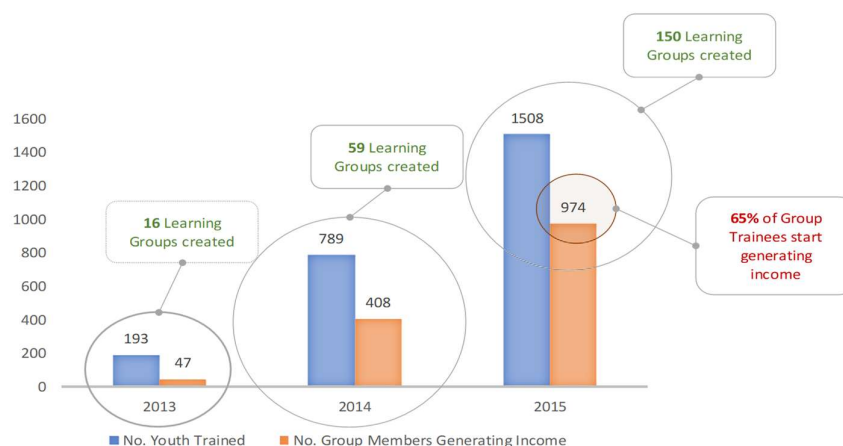

An external Tracer Study was commissioned in 2018 to validate this data.   The tracer study selected a sample of Opportunity Group participants from the first phase of the project (i.e. people who had completed their training two or three years prior to the study) to assess their perceptions of the training they received and the effect the training had on their income. Some of the findings of the study worth highlighting include the following:

- **56% of the sample reported their current status as employed**: the majority (around 70%) are in part and full-time wage employment, primarily in the private sector working 20-50 hours per week earning €200 to €400 per month. The other group in self-employment report starting their businesses or farms either independently or with other family or group members, many employing 2-5 other workers apart from the themselves, the majority of them earning less than €3,000 per year.
- **Unemployment rates have dropped in the four municipalities** covered by the study; by 20 percent in Dragash; by 24.6 percent in Kamenica; 13.4 percent in Novo Brdo; and 20.5 percent in Shtërpcë. These drops in unemployment have been accompanied by corresponding increases in wage employment in all municipalities;

- **Access to employment opportunities does vary according to gender and ethnicity though, with men, particularly ones from the Albanian community being much more likely to access employment after the training**. 75 and 66.7 percent of the Goran and Serb community participants respectively categorised themselves as currently unemployed at the time of the study, compared to 38% for participants from the Albanian community. 69.8 percent of women remained unemployed after the training, compared to 31.2 percent for male participants.

Most Opportunity Graduates are active in agribusiness, particularly fruit and berry cultivation) and beekeeping, others are involved in non-agricultural activities, particularly services such as hairdressing, tailoring, central heating installation and carpentry for which there is strong demand in local communities[13].   The process of Opportunity Group formation slowed during second phase - see figure 5 below (note that data on the numbers of youth who have secured employment is not yet available). The change in implementation approach highlighted above required that S4RE and its local facilitators take a back seat and allow local Youth Centres and Local Youth Action Councils lead on the process of establishing and managing Opportunity Groups. This was a significant challenge for S4RE and a lot of time and effort had to be invested during the early stages of phase 2 to orientate local actors on the change in approach and develop the capacity of the Youth Centres and Local Youth Action Councils to plan, organise and manage activities effectively. Activities and targets (in terms of numbers of youth to be trained) also had to be agreed between local municipalities and the local youth organisations, and formalised in partnership agreements clearly setting out the roles and responsibilities of each party. Importantly through these agreements local municipalities formally committed to resourcing the local youth organisations. For instance, in Viti the municipality provided the local Youth Centre with a full-time office and training space from which to operate. S4RE was part of these partnership agreements and shared some of the costs involved. At the same time S4RE worked closely with the national coordination body for these local organisations, the Central Youth Action Council, to encourage them to spread the Opportunity Group approach to other non-project municipalities through their local member organisations in these areas.   The change in approach worked well, and the partner youth organisations succeeded in organising almost 100 Opportunity Groups during the second phase. The key question of whether they will continue doing this after the withdrawal of project support is assessed a bit later in this section.

Figure 5: Component 1 Results - Phase 2 (2015-2018, Cumulative)[14]

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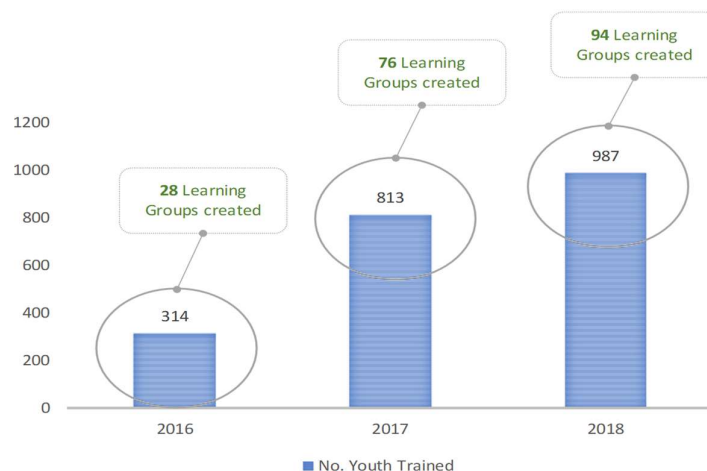
[13] See mini-case studies 1 and 2 in Annex 4 for practical examples of the occupations which young people have been able to enter as a result of participation in the Opportunity Groups facilitated by S4RE.
[14] Note that the 2018 data is for half of the year.

- **Component 2 - Agricultural Producer Supply Chain Development**

This component targeted local agri-businesses, mainly small-scale producers, and aimed to integrate them into national supply chains for a range of agricultural products. Activities focused identifying high-value market opportunities for producers and building their skills, so they are better able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by these markets.

As illustrated figure 6 below over 4,500 producers have been trained and provided with improved access to markets through this component of the project[15]. The benefits of this training, in terms of generating higher level theory of change results, particularly increases in producer productivity, prices and incomes, is not yet clear. A survey of the businesses and producers who participated in this component, similar to the tracer study undertaken for the first component, will be required to better understand the extent of these benefits.

Figure 6: Component 2 Results - No. Producers Trained (2013-2018, Cumulative)
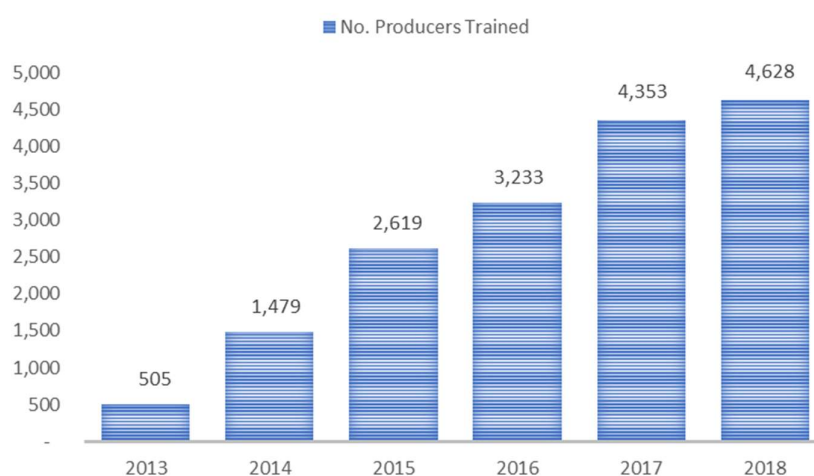
As with the first component S4RE's implementation model changed during the second phase. The key local actor identified to take ownership and lead on the implementation of project activities and the organisation of training was the Local Action Group (LAG) in each of the project's focus municipalities [16]. A lot of project time and effort during the early stages of the second phase had to be invested in the LAGs to develop the required institutional capacities. Although LAGs had been formally established in S4RE's target municipalities, they were not functioning in any meaningful way - for example, none had developed the local development strategies required to access funding. Working closely with LAGs national umbrella organisation, the Rural Development Network (RDN), S4RE developed the operational capacities of the LAGs, familiarising them with the activities of S4RE particularly around what would be required from them to take ownership of this component and ensuring they were adequately resourced and staffed - for example, in Kamenice the LAG was provided with an office space by the local municipality and S4RE's local facilitator was appointed as the LAG's local manager, ensuring the transfer of skills and knowledge from the first phase of S4RE. RDN were also expected to promote the scaling-up of project activities by supporting LAGs in non-project areas to adopt the improved practices adopted in S4RE municipalities. This process has produced positive results - the LAGs have succeeded in organising trainings for significant number of producers as illustrated in Figure

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[15] Mini-case study 3 in Annex 4 provides an example of a group of producers who accessed training through this component.

[16] LAGs are local community organisations made up of representatives from the local public and private sector which jointly decide on local development priorities formalising these in local development strategies. These strategies can be used to access funding through the EU's LEADER project. The LEADER project is an EU initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs. LEADER projects are managed by local action groups (LAGs). Each project must involve a relatively small rural area, with a population of between 10,000 and 100,000.

7 above. Again the question of whether they will continue to do this after the exit of S4RE is assessed in the following section of the report.

- **Component 3 - Local Business Skills Development**

This component focused on encouraging local businesses to invest in training and skills development of their employees with a view to increasing overall business productivity and growth, and ultimately employment. The training was delivered primarily by local training providers and were financed through a cost-sharing agreement between S4RE and the local businesses - S4RE covered up to 50 percent of the training costs involved.

The results of this component are shown in the figure below. S4RE partnered with a total of 115 local businesses during the project's two phases, training just over 1,300 employees. The training and skills development of these businesses has resulted in numerous benefits, including business growth, the creation of new employment and improvements in employment condition for existing employees (see mini-case studies 4 and 5 in Annex 4 for examples). Again, as with the previous component, a survey similar to the tracer study undertaken for component 1 is required to better understand the extent of these benefits.

Figure 7: Component 2 Results - No. Employees Trained (2013-2018, Cumulative)
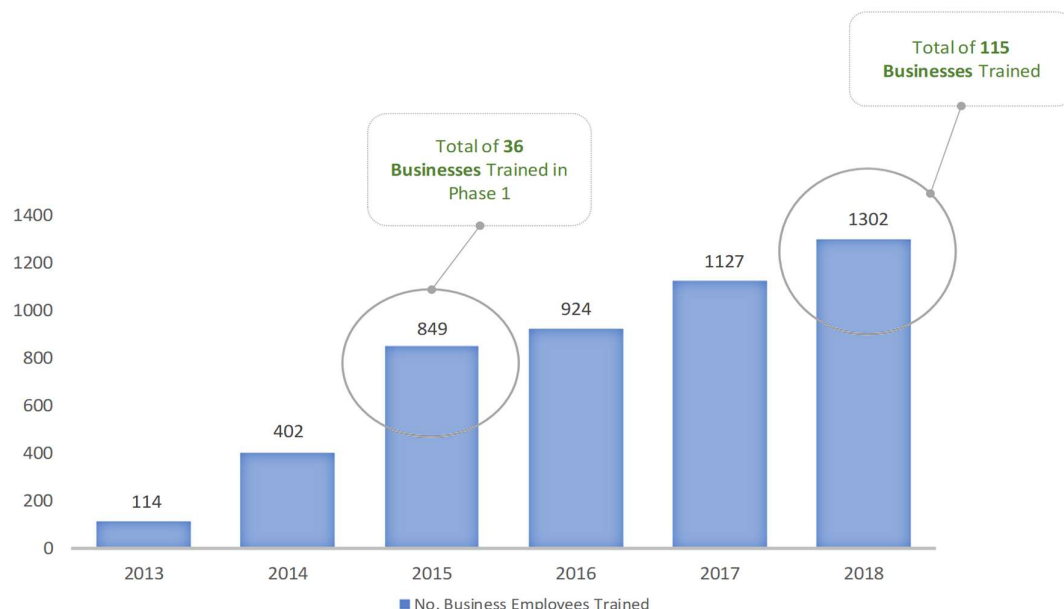
The change in approach in phase 2 required S4RE to identify and mobilise local actors who could take ownership of these activities. As with the other components this proved challenging.   Specifically, it required identifying actor(s) who would take ownership of the process of engaging with businesses, identifying their training and skills development needs and connecting them with appropriate training providers. Business Membership Organisations (BMOs) were identified as the actor best placed to perform this function.   However, it became quickly apparent to S4RE that the project's focus municipalities did not have functional BMOs. S4RE had to be resourceful and flexible and adapt its approach depending on the local context in each municipality. For example, in some municipalities there was appetite from the local business community to improve the functioning of the local BMO (in Dragash municipality for example) whilst in other areas where this appetite wasn't so evident, the project had to identify other actors who could perform this function (in Viti for example the municipality-managed Office for Investment and Business Support was identified as the actor to perform this function). Again, as with the second component, a period of hand-holding and mentoring by S4RE was required to develop the capacities of these actors to the stage where they could effectively perform the new

practices. As illustrated in figure 8, these project partners have succeeded in reaching significant numbers of businesses.

- **Development of Local Training Market**

One of the important objectives of S4RE's was to develop a pool of qualified and competent training providers who would continue to offer skills development services after the exit of S4RE. S4RE did this by integrating local training providers into its skills development activities in the three components of the project described above. This provided the training providers with opportunities to develop and improve their product and service offering as well as introducing them to a range of potential clients. To help promote the services of the training providers and link them to a wider market S4RE supported the establishment of an online platform linking training providers with potential clients. This platform was developed in collaboration with a local IT services provider and became operational during 2017. Training providers register their details on this platform and can use it to respond directly to training requests logged on the platform by S4RE project partners, particularly municipalities, local youth organisations, BMOs, and LAGs. S4RE has conducted awareness raising and training sessions with these local actors to ensure they are familiar with the platform and understand how to use it. For example, if a LAG identifies a business with a training need in their local community, the LAG can log the details of this training need on the platform and request that registered training providers respond to the request with proposals. To date over 100 training providers have been registered on the platform.

3.2 What are the key factors which have driven the success of S4RE?

S4RE has got a number of important things right as a facilitator of change, some of the key factors underpinning this success and worth emphasising include:

- **The quality of the team:** Good people are a key ingredient of successful facilitation. Having people with the correct blend of technical knowledge, project management as well as communication and relationship management skills is crucial to the success of any project aiming to stimulate change. S4RE's relatively small team - has demonstrated a good blend of these skills[17]. This is very evident from the quality of the relationships between the S4RE team and key partners on the ground. Project partners view S4RE as a neutral third-party bringing objectivity, clarity and solutions to local problems. In essence S4RE and its team have established strong credibility in the project's focus municipalities and are perceived as making a real, tangible contribution to addressing the youth unemployment problem and contributing to local economic development.

- **Identification of drivers of change:** Linked to the above point, the S4RE team has been smart in identifying and engaging with key local actors who can influence and drive change in local communities. One good example is the mayor in the project's focus municipalities. The S4RE team has done a good job in ensuring that the local major and his/her officers are not only aware of the project's activities in their local areas but also contribute materially in terms of resources. Having the backing and support local actors such as the mayor therefore not only provides the project with credibility but also a source of additional resources to achieve the project's objectives.

- **Cost-Sharing**: As a demonstration of their commitment to the partnership, project partners should contribute to the costs of implementing activities, particularly if these activities are expected to generate benefits for the partner (e.g. the creation of a commercial opportunity for a business). Assessing an appropriate level cost-share is important, but not easy to do in practice. Too much support undermines sustainability by eroding the partner's ownership and distorting their understanding of the true costs involved in the partnership. Too little support on the other hand can result in a partnership failing to generate results and the anticipated changes in behaviour. S4RE has been smart in ensuring that project partners, particularly businesses

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[17] The core local team consisted of a project manager, a deputy project manager, two component leads and a project assistant.

accessing training and skills development opportunities, contribute their fair share to project costs.

- **Rewarding quality and good performance:** S4RE's contracting procedures for service providers were structured to incentivise and reward good performance. For instance, in the case of training providers' contracts were 'outcome based' to ensure that the training provider continues to engage with the trainees after the completion of the formal training, providing mentoring and further support to increase the trainees' chances of securing employment.

Facilitation is a delicate balancing act. Projects such as S4RE often face conflicting and competing pressures on the one-hand to 'facilitate' change (a slow, long-term process) and on the other hand to 'make things happen and generate quick results'. S4RE faced this dilemma during the first phase of the project, arguably more often than not doing too much and leaving less space for local partners to take ownership of activities. Although this generated positive results, the problem is that it created the expectation of 'more of the same' - the implication of this is discussed below. This problem often arises as a result of not developing a clear vision from the outset of the project setting out 'where we are going' and how things will work in the future and the contribution of the project's activities. This is discussed further in the lessons learned in section 4 of this report.

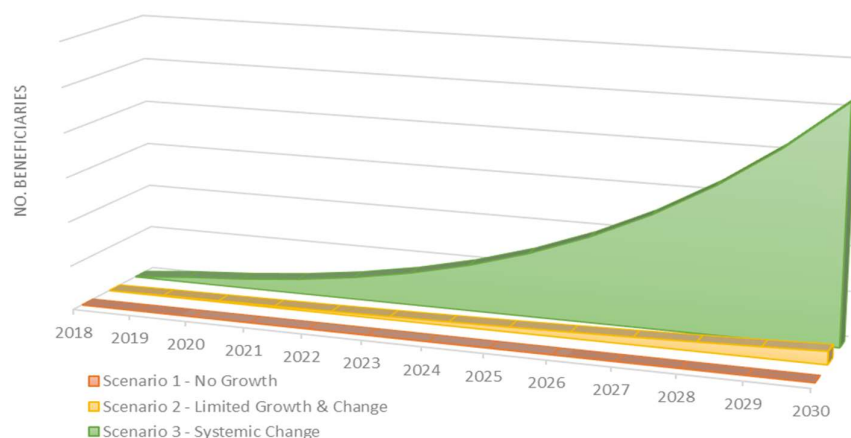## 3.3 Are the changes and new practices introduced by S4RE sustainable and scalable?

The previous sections highlighted the positive results which have been generated by S4RE. Ultimately though, S4RE's success as a project will be assessed on whether these benefits will continue to be generated into the future, well beyond the exit of S4RE. For this to happen the mechanism which has generated these benefits (i.e. the organisation of skills development initiatives for local youth, businesses and agricultural producers) needs to continue.

As emphasised previously, S4RE's implementation model shifted during the second phase to encourage more local ownership of project activities with the objective of ensuring that the new practices introduced by S4RE would be sustained. The key project partners who were expected to do this included: national and local youth organisations, particularly Youth Action Councils and Youth Centres, who would continue to organise Opportunity Groups to develop job skills for local youth; Business Member Organisations (BMOs) and/or Municipal Offices for Investment who would continue to coordinate skills development activities for local businesses; Local Action Groups (LAGs) and their national umbrella organisation the Rural Development Network (RDN) who would continue to link local producers with high value markets; and training providers who would continue to offer skills development projects to local youth and businesses.

At this point the likelihood of these project partners continuing to provide the services envisioned by S4RE after the project's exit seems unlikely. Three simple scenarios are presented in figure 9 below to put the wider and longer-term impact of S4RE in perspective:

- The first scenario envisions the project resulting in no long-term growth and change.
- The second scenario is less ambitious and envisions project partners in S4RE focus municipalities continuing to provide services based on the new practices learned from S4RE, with limited innovation in the nature and scale of these services.
- The third scenario is optimal, under which the practice changes promoted by S4RE will not only be fully adopted by partners in the project's focus municipalities but will also be taken on by similar actors in non-project municipalities. Under this scenario benefits (i.e. access to training and income generating opportunities) will continue to be accrued by more and more young people and businesses across a range of municipalities in Kosovo. At this point this scenario is extremely unlikely.

Figure 8: S4RE Long-Term Impact Scenarios

S4RE's long-term impact trajectory is likely to lie somewhere between scenario one and two at this point. The key reason for this is that the changes and new practices introduced by S4RE remain fragile, the ability or capacity of local partners - particularly in terms of their organisational capabilities and human resources - to uphold the practice changes remains weak. As emphasised in the previous sections the partners earmarked to take ownership of project activities during phase 2 were generally operating with very limited capacities - some such as BMOs in a number of municipalities had to be created from scratch. S4RE therefore had to invest a lot of time and resources in these partners to help them develop basic operational capabilities which would allow them to take up the new practices being promoted by S4RE. S4RE has done this well, some of the achievements include:

- Local Youth Action Councils and Youth Centres are better resourced and organised and have a much stronger capacity to plan and manage the activities involved in organising Opportunity Groups as well as to raise awareness of the issues facing young people in their local areas. Local municipalities in each of S4RE's five focus municipalities have allocated full-time office space to these youth organisations to allow them to more effectively plan and manage their work. Critically these youths have much stronger visibility and credibility with their local municipality authorities, who will need to continue to provide them with resources to continue to operate in the coming years, as well as local Employment Offices who register the Opportunity Group graduates and provide them with assistance in seeking employment.

- Similarly, LAGs in each of the five municipalities are much better organised and resourced, all now having full-time office spaces and staff to coordinate their activities. Crucially S4RE has supported each of these LAGs to develop the local development strategies and secure the certification and accreditation required to access funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. S4RE has also worked closely with the Rural Development Network (RDN), the LAGs national umbrella organisation, to strengthen their capacity to coordinate and support the LAGs.

- BMOs have been established in Dragash, Shtrpce and Novo Brdo to coordinate skills development projects for local businesses in these areas. Local Offices for Investment have become functional in Kamenice and Viti to play a similar role. The office in Kamenice was actually newly established, modelled on the one in Viti.

- An online platform has been established for training providers through which they can market and promote their services to potential clients.

These new practice and changes are all very new and recent though. Further support and 'hand-holding' is likely required to ensure that these local partners continue to develop and fully uphold these new practices to put them on the path envisioned under scenario 3. The sustainability of the training platform is also very uncertain at this stage as it is still not clear who will continue to fund the maintenance and expansion of the platform in the absence of S4RE.

The evidence would also suggest that the wider adoption or crowding-in of actors in non-project municipalities is also unlikely at this stage. The S4RE team have done a lot of work in engaging with stakeholders at the national level, particularly the Ministry of Labour & Social Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, RDN and National Youth Action Council (NYAC) and Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) as well as the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport, to keep them informed on project and local partner activities and achievements to encourage these organisations to promote these new practices in non-S4RE project areas. S4RE has also organised a number of exchange visits between actors in project municipalities to stimulate information sharing and collaboration. Again, these activities are all very recent, having largely been initiated over the past year, and will likely require further S4RE intervention and coordination to stimulate the wider adoption of the new practices.

4 Learning from the S4RE Experience

This section draws on the experiences of S4RE and highlights some lessons which can inform future project design and implementation.

1) Unpacking the youth unemployment problem in Kosovo

The disadvantages people face in securing employment or improving the conditions of existing employment depend on a range of factors - this can depend on who they are (young or old; men or women; or member of a marginalised community), where they are (urban or rural) and the type of work they do (wage or self-employment, part-time or seasonal work).   Understanding what people are doing to make a living or secure employment and the broader environment or systems which influences the choices they make, the opportunities available to them and the problems which they face is critical to ensuring any response is grounded in a thorough understanding of the context in which the project is operating.

- **What worked?**

S4RE identified rural youth unemployment as a problem which the project could address through a mixture of project actions focusing on 'informal skills' training for young people; the upskilling of local businesses through encouraging them to invest employee skills development; and linking small agricultural producers to more formal markets. As outlined in this document this approach has resulted in real successes and the creation of employment.

- **What could have been done better? Lesson 1**

S4RE could have benefitted from a deeper analysis of the 'employment problem' in Kosovo when the project was being conceptualised and designed.   This would have provided a more rounded understanding of the issues limiting job creation in Kosovo, in particular the issues which are causing large-scale youth unemployment in rural areas.   An initial diagnostic exercise focused around the problem of youth employment in rural areas and informed by market systems thinking would have helped the project develop this understanding and led to a mix of *targeted* interventions focused on particular sectors and skills (which the project largely did) as well as *enabling* interventions targeting broader problems in the enabling environment.

2) Having a 'Systemic Change' mindset from the beginning

Good development practice is about stimulating enduring changes in the behaviours and practices of local actors targeted by the project, which delivers long-lasting benefits for the poor and excluded.   A common pathway towards this is to begin with a pilot intervention, which works intensively with a few public or private players to test the feasibility of the new practice or innovation. The focus then shifts - if the pilot has been deemed to be successful - to activities that aim to crowd-in others. At this point interventions work less intensely with more actors to encourage wider behaviour and practice change.

- **What worked?**

The first phase of S4RE can be seen as an intensive and long-lasting piloting stage. The results of this phase were largely positive in terms of numbers trained and income generation for local youth. Importantly the project also gained credibility with key local actors, particularly local municipalities and the private sector. At the end of first phase S4RE quite rightly recognised that in order to ensure the practices and innovations introduced were sustainable, a change in approach would be required for the second phase.

- **What could have been done better? Lesson 2**

During the beginning of the second phase S4RE spent considerable time and effort identifying and building the capacity (often creating these actors or institutions from scratch) of the local actors who

were meant to take ownership of and continue to deliver the new practices after the exit of S4RE[18]. If a 'systemic-change' mind-set and vision had been in place earlier in the project, S4RE could have worked on identifying and grooming these local actors from the beginning whilst in parallel implementing activities 'directly' to get things moving and gradually scaling back the support provided to these partners. This would have allowed a much smoother transition from phase 1 to 2 and allowed the project to focus more explicitly on promoting broader 'systemic-change' - crowding-in and stimulating the adoption of the good practices introduced in other non-S4RE municipalities.

3) Getting measurement right

Monitoring and results measurement (MRM) when done well makes an important contribution to both making sense of and demonstrating the impact of development projects. In other words, MRM is not simply the component of that project that captures log frame indicators for the donor to 'prove' that the project is being effective. A good MRM system should inform daily decision-making across the project to improve its performance.

- **What worked?**

S4RE had a monitoring system in place from the beginning. The monitoring system was based on a good overall results or logical framework which clearly set out the activities which the project would initiate and the pathway which would result in the achievement of the project's anticipated outcomes and impact. Indicators to track and measure progress along this pathway were also developed. It is important though to keep in mind that logical frameworks only tell part of the story of a project and are not designed to capture everything a project does. Projects such as S4RE aiming to stimulate long-term changes in behaviour need to collect more data beyond that required by the logframe to adequately measure and assess the impact of their activities. During the first phase of S4RE monitoring activities focused primarily on measuring and reporting on a narrow range of logframe indicators. These indicators were narrow in the sense that they focused mainly on measuring the results of project activities (e.g. number of training groups formed, number of people trained) as opposed to broader indicators which would provide insights into the changes and benefits which the project was generating.

Recognising that more information needed to be captured the S4RE team changed and adapted its approach during the second phase, and an improved MRM system based on the DCED standard was developed. This system included good results chains for each project component as well as comprehensive measurement plans.

- **What could have been done better? Lesson 3**

Overall S4RE has done a good job on monitoring and measuring the results and achievements of the project. Some of the things which could have been done better and some of the lessons worth highlighting include the following:

- An MRM system needs to produce information for project funders or donors as well as for its implementers. Donors and implementers have diverse uses for information and thus different information needs. Donors are typically interested in 'neat' numbers or stories which can be used to showcase the impact of a project to funders or sponsors back home. These numbers and stories do not however capture the 'messiness' of the change process on the ground where a diverse range of data and sources need to be used to understand this process and the contribution which the project is making.

- Linked to the above point, it's important to educate the donor and help them to understand broader changes which the project is aiming to achieve, and be realistic about the results which can be expected, particularly the sequence of these results. During the first phase of S4RE reporting showed the donor an upward and 'linear' trajectory in results in terms of project activities and outputs (e.g. number of trainings organised, numbers participating in training).

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[18] Delays in the approval of the approval of the work plan and the budget for the second phase made this even more challenging.

On the surface this indicates that the project is doing more and reaching larger numbers. It however tells very little about the real impact of these activities in terms embedding new behaviours and practices which will lead to benefits sustaining into the future. More often than not projects such as S4RE aiming to stimulate long-term change results do not happen in a neat, linear sequence. Rather results tend to slower in the beginning (often the first couple of years of a project) as the project tests and refines its approach, results then accelerate and spread as the project gains traction. The donor needs to be brought along on this journey and be convinced of the approach which the project is adopting and the results which it expects to generate.

- MRM is technically demanding and requires resources to be done properly and contribute effectively to project implementation and management. As emphasised above S4RE established a good DCED aligned MRM system in the second phase of the project. This new system contained all the ingredients of a good system, however what was missing was a dedicated team member to manage and maintain the system. At a minimum for an MRM system to be effective it requires at least one dedicated staff member managing and overseeing the system on a daily basis.

4) Including the excluded

Pro-poor impact can only be achieved when marginalised, excluded and vulnerable groups participate in and benefit from the development process. Understanding how and why these groups are being excluded and incorporating this into project design and implementation is therefore very important.

- **What worked?**

The inclusion of marginalised groups, particularly young women and people from ethnic minority groups, was part of S4RE's agenda from the beginning and S4RE did manage to include significant numbers from these groups in project activities. Again though, these efforts seemed to be narrowly focused. For example, it seems there was a lot of emphasis on ensuring marginalised individuals participated in training events, as is often the case to ensure donor targets are met, with little focus on the real reasons why labour market outcomes of these groups are so poor. The results of the Opportunity Group tracer study demonstrated that the marginalised groups, despite participating in the group training were still very unlikely to be able to secure employment afterwards.

- **What could have been done better? Lesson 4**

A deeper analysis and understanding of the issues preventing marginalised populations from accessing the labour market would have been very useful for S4RE. This would potentially have allowed the development of more focused interventions and allocation additional project resources to address the needs of these groups.

5) Partner selection and management

As emphasised earlier in the report S4RE transitioned into a much 'purer' facilitative role during the second phase of the project, relying on local actors to lead and take ownership of the change process. Selecting the right partners and managing these partnerships effectively is critical to the success of this approach. Partners should be selected based on a thorough assessment of their capacities and willingness or incentive to test and adopt the new practices being promoted by the project. This involves gathering information and doing your homework on potential project partners[19].

- **What worked?**

S4RE's partnership approach has worked, up to a point[20] Focusing first on capacities, as emphasised earlier there have been clear improvements in the ability of project partners, particularly key partners

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[19] See Annex 5 for some of the key questions which should guide the process of partner selection
[20] Worked in this case is defined as 'stimulating changes in the capacities and willingness/incentive of project partners'.

such as LYAC/CYAC, RDN/LAGs, and to a lesser extent BMOs to plan and manage activities. The credibility and visibility of these organisations in their local areas also seems to be much stronger.   As highlighted though there are doubts as to whether these changes are permanent and whether these partners have a strong willingness or incentive to continue developing and further adapt the practices promoted by S4RE[21].

- **What could have been done better? Lesson 5**

The key lessons on partnership selection and management which can be drawn from the S4RE experience include the following:

- Know the organisation: It goes without saying that a project needs to know and understand a potential project partner to be able to make an informed assessment as to whether they are the right partner. An assessment of the partner should focus on understanding whether the organisation is technically and financially capable of taking on board the new practices and behaviours expected by the project but probably more importantly *why* or *what* is motivating them to do this.

- Focus on the organisation rather than the individual: It is important to work towards partners as entities, with a view to embedding new behaviours and practices, so that the process of change manifests itself beyond any one individual counterpart within the organisation.   Projects can often rely too heavily on individuals within partner institutions. Individuals may leave the partner to work elsewhere or, as is often the case in public agencies, be rotated to another department. It's possible that the credibility which these organisations have in their local communities will quickly be lost if one or two key individuals leave.

- Create and manage expectations from the beginning: As emphasised earlier effective facilitation requires striking a balance between providing enough support to get things moving whilst at the same time ensuring that the partner takes ownership and is driving the process. Being clear and consistent on the terms of the partnership from the outset is important, emphasising that partnership are reciprocal, temporary, based on mutual benefit and without large grants or financial support. S4RE initial partnership approach during phase 1 seems to have created the expectation of 'more of the same' from the project's partners, an expectation which is hard to break once set.

- Continuously assess the effectiveness of partnerships, working towards a clearly defined exit strategy: Managing partnerships is an iterative process, the project needs to continuously reflect on progress and decide whether to maintain, alter or end partnerships.   It is critically important to, for example, assess whether there has been a tangible behaviour or practice change that is being continued without project support. The transition from an initial test or pilot to activities aimed at scaling up impact should only begin once you are certain your initial partner has fully adopted and integrated the behaviour and practice changes.

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[21] For example, the Youth Action Council seems like a fragile organisation. Its board and staff consists of young people working largely on a voluntary basis. There is a regular turnover of staff as these young people move on, obviously disrupting the work of the organisation. There are also concerns around the politicisation of the organisation, particularly the process for the election of the LYAC president. The willingness and incentive to continue to adopt and embed the changes may be a bit stronger for RDN and LAGs as they have access to potentially large amounts of EU funding if they develop functioning organisational structures. As with the Youth Action Council RDN and LAGs as organisations seem to be quite shallow, in the sense that they are driven by one or two individuals.   Projects can often rely too heavily on individuals within partner institutions. Individuals may leave the partner to work elsewhere or, as is often the case in public agencies, be rotated to another department. It's possible that the credibility which these organisations have in their local communities will quickly be lost if one or two key individuals leave. BMOs potentially have the strongest incentive to permanently adopt the changes and practices promoted by S4RE.   This is likely due to the fact that BMOs represent and are funded by the private sector, who will continue to provide funding and support to the BMO if it is seen to be making a contribution to business growth. In other words, the commercial incentive seems to be much stronger in the case of BMOs.

Annex 1: Key Capitalisation Questions

The key questions which this case study set out to answer included the following:

- **S4RE's approach of Local Economic Development (LED)**
  - What are the most significant changes in terms of intermediate outcomes, possible impacts in the selected municipalities? Are the changes systemic and sustainable?
  - Which were main obstacles for S4RE? What can we learn from the obstacles?
  - What are the main factors of success and failure of S4REs approach of Local Economic Development, and what the lessons that can be learnt from it?
  - What are the good practices of S4REs Local Economic Development approach that have emerged?

- **Influence of S4RE on its target group**
  - How well did the interventions address constraints faced by the primary stakeholders (unemployed youth, farmers, businesses) over time? Are there unemployed youth, farmers, businesses that could increase their agricultural production or/and working efficiency more than others? What are the characteristics of these farmer / farmer groups?
  - Did (a) youth get access to employment and/or increase income, (b) farmers generate additional income and (c) businesses increase their competitiveness through S4REs intervention?
  - How did the new employment and/or additional income change the life of the families of the primary stakeholders?

- **Application of a MSD approach in a Skills Development Project**
  - How did S4REs facilitative approach benefit national bodies such as RDN and CYAC? What are the changes observed in RDN and CYAC? '- What activities of expansion/replication/scaling up of RDN and CYAC can be observed?
  - Are there signs that they are sustainable? What are the do's and don'ts in promoting local economic development? What worked well? What not? What should be done differently?
  - What were the best practices in applying a systemic (MSD) approach, in combination with LED, in a skills development project?
  - What were the positive / negative impacts resulting from the shift towards an MSD approach?

Annex 2: S4RE Country Context

Further details on the wider context or bigger picture in which the S4RE project operated are highlighted below.

The Economy - Sustained growth with limited job creation

Since its formal declaration of independence in 2008 Kosovo has **experienced a period of steady economic growth.** Annual GDP growth averaged about 3.5 percent during the 2008-17 period[22]. With a GDP per capita of USD$ 3,661 (2016) Kosovo remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, though. According to data from the most recent 2015 Household Budget survey, 17.6 percent of Kosovo's population lives below the poverty line (€1.82 per adult equivalent per day), with 5.2 percent living below the extreme poverty line (€1.30 per adult equivalent per day). Poverty levels are more pronounced in rural areas - whilst about 60 percent of population lives in rural areas, nearly two-thirds of poor and three-fourth of extremely poor people reside in rural areas[23].

Post-independence economic growth in Kosovo has been driven largely by remittances (which have mainly been used for consumption as opposed to productive investment), donor assistance and public infrastructure investment (mainly in roads), while **private sector growth, particularly in medium to large scale manufacturing and other labour-intensive sectors, has been very limited**.

The **private sector in Kosovo is dominated by large numbers of small firms, most with limited growth potential**. Over 90 percent of formal firms are micro firms with between 1 and 9 employees. The vast majority of start-ups are micro firms, a small fraction of which (less than 4%) grow beyond 9 employees within five years[24]. Micro firms make a very significant contribution to employment, though[25]. The problem is that very few of these firms are growing. Local firms in Kosovo face a number of constraints to growth including poor infrastructure, a generally challenging local regulatory and business environment, and **limited access to a skilled labour force**, all of which limit their competitiveness and growth potential.

Export markets provide opportunities for firm growth. However **most local firms are not productive enough to access export markets and the local business environment makes it challenging to attract new outside firms and investment**, particularly ones with the skills and knowledge to increase Kosovo's export competitiveness. The World Bank's Doing Business 2017 ranks Kosovo as 60th among the 190 economies it evaluated, only Bosnia (ranked 81st) ranked lowest among regional West Balkans peers. The survey notes major challenges securing construction permits, accessing electricity and credit, protecting minority investors and enforcing contracts[26].

As a result, recent **economic growth has not resulted in large scale job creation and employment**. Limited employment opportunities are reflected in high rates of inactivity and unemployment. According to the latest labour force survey in 2017, the percentage of the working age population which is not economically active is 61 percent. Younger people aged 15 to 24 are twice as likely to be unemployed than older people. The problem is particularly acute for young women, less than 1 in 5 young women are employed. **The severity of the problem is highlighted by the fact that 31 percent of young are**

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[22] World Bank data, accessed at https://data.worldbank.org/

[23] ASK (2016) Results of Household Budget Survey, Series 5: Social Statistics, available at http://ask.rks-gov.net

[24] World Bank Jobs Diagnostic (2017), accessed at http://documents.worldbank.org

[25] The World Bank 2017 Jobs Diagnostic notes that Kosovo stands out in international comparisons in terms of the contribution of micro firms to employment. In most countries large firms provide most jobs, but in Kosovo both large and micro firms equally account for most employment. Large firms (100 or more employees) account for 35 percent of employment on average but represent only 0.5 percent of the firms. Micro firms provide 36 percent of jobs and comprise 91 percent of the firms. In other countries large firms provide a higher proportion of all jobs because they are proportionally more numerous and because they are larger.

[26] See https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/doing-business

categorised as NEET - not in education, employment and training. Again, this is higher for younger women[27].

Growth without job creation is concerning as **Kosovo has a growing, young population**, with large numbers entering the labour market seeking employment every year. Youth (under 15) make up 25 percent of the population, while working age (15–64) account for 67.6 percent. Kosovo's ratio of working age population to dependents is projected to increase from 1.88 in 2011 to 2.24 in 2021 and will not dip below the 2011 level before 2046[28]. The latest UNDP Human Development Report from 2016 estimates that 20,000 people are entering the labour market annually in Kosovo[29].

The **unemployment problem is particularly acute for women, the less educated and the rural population**.   The gender gap in terms of access to employment has already been highlighted above. Additionally, the women who are employed tend to be over represented in lower grade jobs or occupations, specifically the ones which offer limited opportunities for progression (5 percent of employed women compared to 9.2 percent of employed men work as legislators, senior officials or managers, and just 2.6 percent of women compared to 5.7 percent of men supervise any staff.[30]

Education and Skills - a major constraint to job creation

With a young population, Kosovo can benefit from investing in skills. **Many local firms want to take on additional staff but report major difficulties finding local workers with the required skill sets**. A 2014 survey of local firms reported that a third of medium to large firms employing between 10 to 250 workers rated finding suitable personnel and filling vacancies as a major problem[31].

Investing in skills is a challenge as general educational attainment levels are very low in Kosovo. There are major issues regarding access to and quality of education at all levels. For instance, more than a third of the young population have no education beyond primary school[32], two thirds of 15-year olds lack basic proficiency in sciences, and over three quarters are below basic proficiency in reading and mathematics.[33]

Educational attainment levels tend to be lower amongst women, and young women are much more likely than men to drop out of basic education, particularly in rural areas. In Kamenica municipality for example, one of the focus areas of the S4RE project, over 75 percent of unemployed women under the age of 40 have no education beyond primary school, compared to 60 percent of men[34].

The higher education system, particularly the Vocational and Educational Training (VET) system, is largely failing to deliver the skills demanded by employers, particularly the skills - marketing, sales, design, computer and IT skills and foreign language proficiency - required for a modern global labour market. **Local firms generally perceive the curricula and training provided by the VET system as outdated**. Coordination between the government and private sector to address skills gaps has been limited, resulting in a large gap between employers needs and workforce development[35].

There has been significant donor investment in improving the curricula and delivery of VET programs in recent years though, particularly in ensuring training is more relevant to local labour market needs.

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[27] ASK (2017) Labour Force Survey in Kosovo, Series 5: Social Statistics, available at http://ask.rks-gov.net
[28] World Bank Jobs Diagnostic (2017), accessed at http://documents.worldbank.org
[29] United Nations Development Project (2016). Kosovo Human Development Report 2016: Making the labour market work for youth and women, available http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library
[30] Ibid
[31] See KOSME (2014) Report on SMEs, available at http://www.eciks.org/repository/docs
[32] United Nations Development Project (2016). Kosovo Human Development Report 2016: Making the labour market work for youth and women, available http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library
[33] See 2015 Project for International Student Assessment (PISA), available at http://www.oecd.org/pisa/
[34] Helvetas (2012) S4RE Project Document 2013-2015 Phase 1
[35] Ibid

The Vocational Education Support Project (VES) implemented by Swisscontact worked with several schools to improve curricula, as well as developing linkages with potential local employers. Danida has supported agriculture schools to improve the curricula and services they offer to students. GIZ is leading a number of donor initiatives to develop what they call Centres of Competence - VET schools with improved facilities and services. USAID and EU initiatives have also supported improved infrastructure and teacher training. Helvetas also hasa similar labour market focused development project currently running in Kosovo – Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project.

It is also worth noting that access to higher education and the VET system is more challenging for rural populations. These schools tend to be located in urban centres, with relatively poor transport linkages making it time-consuming and expensive for rural populations to access them.

Rural-Urban Disparities

It is important to emphasise that the unemployment problem is particularly acutely felt in rural areas. Rural dwellers are twice as likely to be economically inactive or unemployed compared to their urban counterparts[36]. A range of factors explain this. First and foremost, the economies in and around urban areas are much more vibrant and diverse than in rural areas. This translates into higher job creation in urban areas. As a result, and as highlighted below, rural areas of Kosovo have experienced large scale outward migration, particularly of young people over the past decade. This problem is exacerbated by poor access to basic services, particularly education and skills development, in rural communities. Education attainment levels in particular are much lower in rural areas compared to urban ones. To being with early childhood education access and attendance levels vary significantly between urban and rural areas - attendance in urban areas is 23% versus 9% in rural[37] - these disparities continue through primary, secondary and further higher levels of education. Poor access to other services, such as transport and child care services are a further disadvantage for the rural population, particularly for young women. One of the main reasons for inactivity amongst women is family responsibilities, specifically looking after children. Access to childcare facilities which would free up women's time, is virtually non-existent in rural Kosovo[38].

Consequences of Unemployment - migration and radicalisation

One of the most striking consequences of the lack of employment opportunities has been large scale emigration. **More than half of Kosovo's citizens are estimated to have family members living abroad. The majority emigrate to EU countries, mainly illegal emigration which results in applications for asylum.** The number of asylum seekers from Kosovo increased from 18,000 in 2013 to 35,000 in 2014, to a peak of 68,000 in 2015, before declining in 2016 to about 7,500[39]. The majority of those emigrating are of working age - the average age at time of migration for men is 25 years, whereas for women it is 22 years[40].

Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, also leads to general disenfranchisement and disillusionment with life prospects in Kosovo amongst young people, potentially fuelling social and political unrest. The latest Life in Transition survey from 2016 reveals a bleak opinion on life prospects in Kosovo. Just 8% of respondents believed that the economic and political situation in Kosovo today is better than four years ago. Views on social and economic mobility are also pessimistic, over a third of respondents viewed political connections as the most important factor for success in life[41]. A UNDP report on religious extremism in Kosovo highlights one of the *push* factors in the

[36] World Bank Jobs Diagnostic (2017), accessed at http://documents.worldbank.org
[37] UNICEF (2016) Policy Brief on MICs 2014 findings, see https://www.unicef.org/kosovoproject/Kosovo
[38] World Bank Jobs Diagnostic (2017), accessed at http://documents.worldbank.org
[39] European Asylum Support Office (EASO) data, see https://www.easo.europa.eu/information-analysis
[40] United Nations Development Project (2016). Kosovo Human Development Report 2016: Making the labour market work for youth and women, available http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library
[41] See EBRD (2016) Life in Transition Survey, available at http://litsonline-ebrd.com/

indoctrination and radicalisation youth to the lack of local economic opportunities and unemployment. Significant numbers of young Kosovars have been recruited to fight in the on-going conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) is a local economic development project which was conceived to address some of the challenges highlighted in this section.   The project aimed to build on the successes of the a previous Helvetas project in Kosovo, the Horticulture Promotion in Kosovo (HPK) project which supported the horticulture agribusiness sector in generating employment, income and economic growth in rural areas.   The concept for S4RE project was based on a Helvetas scoping visit to Kosovo in late 2011. The key finding from this scoping visit was that there was a need and room for a local development project focusing on practical skills training and non-formal education aimed at youth in rural areas, which would allow them to quickly enter the labour market and find employment.   The next section explores how S4RE set out to achieve this.

Annex 3: Organisation of Opportunity Groups

The process of organising the Opportunity Groups and delivering the training involved the following activities:

1) Pre-Training - Organisation of Opportunity Group

The beginning of the process involved undertaking awareness raising at the local community level, through workshops, meetings and general dialogue with key local stakeholders, to build understanding of the LearnNet approach and get feedback from the local community.

Once the initial awareness raising was completed, the next step involved organising the youth into groups. Using its local facilitators, S4RE underwent a process of engaging with young people in its various focus municipalities to better understand their interests and needs, particularly the type of skills and professions which they were most interested in. This also involved undertaking an assessment of the economic opportunities available in the local community, particularly the types of services and products, which were in high-demand both in local as well as national markets - S4RE called this a Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA). The RMA was also useful in identifying and assessing businesses interested in participating in the Opportunity Groups as trainers. Based on the feedback from youth and the findings of the RMA the young people were allocated to their Opportunity Groups. Each group was focused around a particular technical skill or profession, with each group typically having between 10 and 20 members.

2) Training

Local training providers, typically local businesses, were used to manage the delivery of the skills training. The cost of the training was shared between S4RE and the businesses involved in delivering the training. Using local businesses was important for a couple of reasons; firstly, it ensured the training was focused on the needs and skills requirements of local businesses and secondly it provided the Opportunity Group members with access to a potential employer. As discussed further below many of the Opportunity Group graduates secured employment with the business who delivered the training.

The nature and duration of the training varied, largely depending on the skills being transferred. For example, a furniture manufacturing business in Kamenica municipality designed a 2-month Opportunity Group training curriculum - the training was delivered at the business's premises 4 afternoons per week over this 2-month period (see mini-case study 1 below). Members of a raspberry cultivation Opportunity Group in Dragash municipality on the other hand participated in a 16-day training course (see mini-case study 2 below)

To ensure training quality S4RE collaborated with Vocational Training Centres to design and monitor the training and perform a competency test after the completion of the training. Successful trainees obtain a certificate that is recognized nationally.

3) Post-Training

S4RE undertook a number of activities after the completion of the training to assist the Opportunity Group members in securing employment. This involved encouraging training providers to continue to engage with and mentor Opportunity Group graduates after the completion of the training; the registration of graduates with the PES office; and assisting graduates interested in entering into self-employment with securing start-up finance for their business.

Annex 4: Mini-Case Studies

Mini-Case Study 1: Opportunity Group - Carpentry

Linda ES Ltd is a small furniture business based in Kamenice municipality in Eastern Kosovo. The business has been operating for 5 years producing living room furniture, specialising in upholstery, which it sells to local retailers in big towns and cities such as Gjilan, Ferizaj and Pristina. Linda ES was approached by S4RE to participate in an Opportunity Group to deliver carpentry training to local unemployed youth. Linda ES was very interested, particularly because they had experienced problems recruiting locally qualified youth and often had to look outside of the country to find qualified staff. Linda ES designed a 2-month training curriculum for an Opportunity Group consisting of 10 members, between March and May 2015. All the training sessions took place in Linda ES's business workshop. The group members were trained on using working tools and machines, wood pattern making, pattern cutting of fabric/leather and foam as well as assembling and finishing final living-room furniture sets.

Pajtesa Kryeziu, 24, (shown above) was one of the Opportunity Group graduates who was taken on as an employee of Linda ES following the completion of the training. Pajtesa had been seeking full-time employment for a couple of years, however with a primary school education and no technical training, opportunities were limited. Pajtesa attended an S4RE awareness raising event in her local community and expressed interest in receiving technical training in furniture production. Pajtesa commented that "I am surprised with the outcome of the training…in a very short period of time, less than two months, we have learnt the whole production process, I work as a pattern cutter and have a monthly income of €250. I'm very happy now, I can cover family expenses and some personal needs. We have a great working environment, a motivating and friendly staff. We are growing together, hoping to become leaders in the furniture industry, so I can continue working with the same employer."

Mini-Case Study 2: Opportunity Group - Raspberry Production

Blaq is a village in Dragash municipality in Southern Kosovo. The area is suitable for the cultivation of a wide variety of agricultural products. With S4RE support an Opportunity Group was formed in this area to train local unemployed youth on raspberry production.   Raspberries are relatively easy to cultivate, requiring limited investment in inputs and land, and there is strong demand for fresh, frozen and dried raspberries locally as well as in regional and international markets.

The raspberry Opportunity Group consisted of 10 young men from the local area who attended a 16-day training course on raspberry production. The training was delivered by a local agri-business (Hit Flores Ltd) involved in the cultivation and marketing of raspberries nationally and regionally.

Following the training five members of the group formed their own raspberry production business, planting 1,000 raspberry seedlings on 0.2 hectares of land belonging to one of the group members. Egzon Imeri, 22, (shown above) is one of the Opportunity Group members who established this business. Egzon and his new business colleagues sell the harvested raspberries locally in their community, they have also started selling to Hit Flores through their collection centre in the local area, providing them with access to bigger national and regional markets. Egzon commented that "We pick raspberries together early in the morning, and then sell them to Hit Flores' collection centre. We are planning to expand and have 0.25ha for each of the members. We have difficulties to find available land for rent, but we are working on it. We are happy that our parents and the community are convinced that we have made a good decision, we have a job and we can contribute to our families"

Mini-Case Study 3: Agric Skills and Market Linkages - Medicinal Plants

Agro-Product Plc is a local business involved the aggregation and processing of medicinal plants in Kosovo. As part of its Component 3 activities S4RE approached Agro-Product to better understand its business model, particularly its sourcing requirements from farmers. Agro-Product expressed interest in working with S4RE to increase the volumes of the *black marshmallow* plant - a medicinal plant for which there is high demand in international markets - supplied to them by local farmers in the Kamenice area.   S4RE facilitated introductions to the farmers in the local area and in collaboration with Agro-Product a training project was designed.

The training on *black marshmallow* cultivation was delivered by Agro-Product staff to a group of 21 farmers over a 3-month period. Agro-Product also distributed 3,000 seedlings to the farmers, which allowed them to begin their own production. S4RE also supported the farmers to complete a proposal and successfully access a grant from the local municipality to invest in drying equipment for the harvested plants. These farmers now sell to two Agro-Product managed collection centres in the local area, for onward sale to export markets, primarily in Germany and Switzerland. Nexhmedin Kryeziu (shown above on the left) is one of the farmers now producing *black marshmallow* for Agro-Product. His first harvest yielded 75 kilograms of dried flowers of *black marshmallow* which he sold for €10/kg to Agro-Product.

Mini-Case Study 4: Local Business Skills Development - Meat Processing

MEKA Ltd is a meat processing company located in Dragash municipality in Southern Kosovo. In collaboration with S4RE MEKA undertook an assessment of its processing facility to identify gaps and weaknesses and areas where skills development would be required. The assessment highlighted weaknesses in MEKA's production process potentially compromising the safety of the food it produces. The assessment recommended addressing these weaknesses through adoption of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) practices. HACCP is an internationally recognized system for reducing the risk of safety hazards in food. Any company involved in the manufacturing, processing or handling of food products can use HACCP to minimize or eliminate food safety hazards in their product.

S4RE identified a local training provider to work with MEKA on integrating HACCP practices into its production process. The trainer and MEKA jointly developed the HACCP training curriculum which aimed to build MEKA's employees knowledge and skills on conducting food hazard analysis, the identification of critical control points and limits (e.g. temperature, time, ingredient levels) at key points in the production process to prevent or eliminate hazards; the establishment of monitoring procedures for these control points to ensure compliance; as well as record keeping procedures. 20 MEKA employees participated in the training over 15 days.

After the completion of the training MEKA successfully applied for HACCP certification. The benefits of HACCP certification are not only improvements in the company's production processes but also the access it provides to higher value markets, particularly export markets which require compliance with HACCP. Burim Pira, MEKA's managing director, commented that "We are very happy with training as well as with gaining the HACCP certification…. comparing with last year, product sales have increased, in addition, the company is more competent in cost saving, targeting new markets, lowering risks and supporting product innovation".

Mini-Case Study 5: Local Business Skills Development - Dairy Processing

Malësia Ltd is a small dairy processing firm based in Kamenice municipality which has been in business since 2013 producing mainly cheese and yogurt. Malësia's business development and expansion, both in terms of the quality and volumes of products produced, had been hampered by difficulties finding skilled employees in the local area. In partnership with S4RE Malësia undertook an assessment of the skills gaps in the business. As a result of this assessment Malësia hired three new staff - two new technologists and a laboratory technician.

The new staff had the basic qualifications required for the positions, however further training and skills development would be required before they took up their new positions. In collaboration with S4RE Malësia identified a skilled dairy technologist (shown the picture above) who designed and delivered a 10-day on the job training curriculum for the new employees which took them through the entire production process for Malësia key products. The cost of the training was shared between Malësia and S4RE. As a result of hiring the new staff and the training Malësia has expanded the range of products it produces which it distributes and sells through an expanding range of stores and supermarkets in Eastern and Southern Kosovo.

Annex 5: S4RE Local Economic Development Good Practices

The local economic development good practices evident in the work of S4RE and which contributed to the positive results highlighted in this section include the following:

- **Ensuring local actors lead and drive the change process:** As emphasised earlier, sustainability was one of the key S4RE operating principles. Whenever possible S4RE encouraged local actors to taking the lead on the execution of project activities to ensure the new practices and benefits sustained into the future.

- **Development of solutions tailored to the needs of the local economy and community**: Rather than imposing pre-designed ideas or answers, good local economic development is based on solutions which are grounded in the reality and the needs of the local economy and actors. S4RE ensured that the design and implementation of the training and skills development in each of project components incorporated inputs from a variety of local actors, from both the public and private sectors, and were relevant to local economic conditions.

- **Involvement of local government:** Local government has a key role to play in monitoring and coordinating the local economic development process and ensuring the sustainability and inclusiveness of these activities. From the outset S4RE made sure that the mayor's office in each of the project's municipalities was aware of and actively contributed to project activities in the local community.

- **Participatory decision-making and dialogue**: Bringing local actors together and facilitating dialogue and discussion helps to build trust, encourages innovation and promotes the creation of social networks. Also, critically it fosters social cohesion and reduces the potential for conflict. S4RE's Opportunity Groups in particular succeeded in facilitating very constructive (i.e. ones which have led to skills development, employment and income creation) dialogue between various local stakeholders, particularly young people, youth organisations and the local business community.

- **Implementation strategy**: Local economic development should be guided by a clearly defined strategy, including a vision, goals or objectives and coherent set of activities. S4RE had well defined strategy from the beginning with an accompanying results measurement framework to guide assessment of progress and project decision-making. As emphasised in later sections this strategy could have been expanded to include a vision and plan for the wider systemic change which the project set out to achieve in its second phase.

- **Inclusion:** Taking into account the needs, priorities and opinions of both women and men, particularly ones from minority groups, should result in benefits accruing from the development process being equally accrued and inequality reduced. S4RE had clear plans from the outset to ensure the participation of minority groups in project activities.

Annex 6: Selecting project partners

Some key questions which can guide this process of project partner selection include:

- **General Background**
    - What is the organisation's current mandate or business product and/or service offering?
    - What is the size of the organisation and/or business (revenue, staff etc.)?
    - Is there a functioning organisational governance structure?
    - Is their potential to adapt and/or improve existing product and/or services?
    - What is the organisation's relationship with our target group?
    - Is the business working with similar projects and/or other donors?

- **Willingness**
    - What are the partner's short to medium term interests?
    - Why do they want to partner with the project? What are the benefits for them?
    - Have they come to the project with an idea or is it the project's idea?
    - How proactive have they been in moving the partnership forward?

- **Capacity**
    - Do they have the technical knowledge (know-how) to deliver the required services or products which may be involved in partnering with the project?
    - Do existing staff have the time to take on new projects or new tasks involved in potentially partnering with the project?
    - Is the organisation able to hire and train new staff?
    - Do they have the financial resources to potentially co-invest in activities with the project?
    - Are there individuals in the firm who want to try out new ideas (forward thinkers, visionaries, early adopters)?
    - Does the organisation have good relationships with local decision makers and relevant government agencies?