



THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Thematic evaluation report: ILO projects on labour administration**I. Introduction****A. Choice of subject**

1. The theme discussed in this document was selected by the Officers of the Committee on Technical Cooperation. It focuses not only on the level of success in the implementation of labour administration projects, but also on their impact, sustainability, replicability as well as on the general lessons learned.
2. As the projects were launched more than five years ago, the term “labour administration” refers to the Labour Administration Programme as defined in the ILO prior to the internal reorganization that took place in 1998. The programme included activities in three distinct but related fields: general labour administration, labour inspection and employment services.
3. This paper analyses seven projects shown in the table below. All were backstopped by the then Labour Administration Branch. Most were initiated by the same branch, even though regional and area offices as well as multidisciplinary teams (MDTs, and prior to these the Labour Administration Centres) contributed in varying degrees to the initiation and backstopping. If these same projects were to be implemented today, they would be backstopped by three different sectors of the ILO.

Project	Region	Country	Duration	Donor
Improving capacity in employment services	Asia	Viet Nam, Cambodia, Lao PDR	1994-96	France
Assistance to Ministry of Labour	Europe	Albania	1996-99	Switzerland
Baltic labour inspection	Europe	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	1995-97	Finland
Re-orientation of PES under SAPs	Africa	22 countries	1988-99	Germany
MATAC	Latin America	8 countries	1997-2003	Spain
Re-orientation of PES under SAPs	Africa	22 countries	1988-99	Germany
Training for integrated labour inspection	Europe	Bulgaria	1999-2002	Germany

B. Project selection

4. In selecting the projects under review much care was taken to secure as broad a representation as possible. First, all three fields of activity were represented: two of the projects deal with general labour administration, three with labour inspection and two with employment services. Similarly, the different regions of the world were represented: three projects were implemented in eastern European countries, two in Africa, one in the Americas and one in Asia. The scope was also representative: three projects were subregional and four national. Size and duration were also comprehensive: the smaller project lasted just over two years and cost US\$380,000, while the larger was divided into three consecutive phases, lasting a total of 11 years, each costing around US\$1.5 million. Finally, care was also taken to represent different financial contributors: funding was provided by a different donor for each of the seven projects. Although not a criterion, it became apparent during the course of the review that the projects also apply a variety of approaches to evaluation.
5. The analysis and conclusions contained in this paper can be extended to the wider spectrum of projects implemented within the former Labour Administration Programme.

II. Project objectives

6. Such diverse projects could only aim at diverse objectives. In fact, all the projects included in this review set out to achieve different objectives.

A. Conformity with current strategic objectives

7. Ever since the adoption of the Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150), and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 158), the organization and effective operation of a system of labour administration has been a standard leading goal of the ILO. All medium-term plans and programme and budgets adopted by the Governing Body restate the need to establish a national capacity that will propose and implement legislation aimed at regulating the world of work and protecting people at work. It was the precise duty of the Labour Administration Branch to ensure that this strategic objective was achieved. All projects reviewed in this paper fall within this broad strategic approach.
8. The projects also fall within the strategic objectives of each of the recipient countries. For example, as Albania, Bulgaria and the three Baltic countries opened up to a market economy, they felt the need to set up a totally new labour administration or labour inspection systems, in line with those in force in other western European countries. Similarly, as Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam shed workers from public service and state-owned enterprises and called for private and foreign investment, they requested ILO assistance to set up a system to regulate their emerging labour market, retrain and re-deploy their labour force, while providing help to the unemployed. Kenya set out to and succeeded in increasing the number of private enterprises, but was pushed into upgrading its labour inspection system that was failing to secure credible worker protection and to stop the growing amount of abuse and complaints. In a similar vein, the Central American countries, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Belize realized that a faltering labour administration was a common obstacle to harmonized development and mutual exchange and sought the ILO's assistance to improve the performance of those systems.

B. Types of projects and strategies

9. All the projects under review chose a common strategy to achieve their objectives: to create or improve national capacity to manage – with no further outside assistance – a labour administration system. But individual projects used very different means to achieve that strategy. In one case – Albania – the project consisted in basic institution building as the country had a totally disrupted and obsolete labour administration system. In another – Bulgaria – staff and skills were available but were inadequate to perform the sort of tasks needed by a national labour inspection in a market economy context.
10. In Central America, Belize, Dominican Republic and Panama, the project consisted of establishing a skill base in labour administration in one of the eight countries and from that base provide consultancy services and training to meet the needs of the other seven countries. In Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, the project aimed at providing training at subregional level to key employment service staff from all three countries and complete this training by ad hoc consultancy services at the national level.
11. In Belize, Dominican Republic and Panama, the project consisted of establishing a skill base in labour administration in one of the three countries and from that base provide consultancy services and training to meet the needs of the other two countries. In Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, the project aimed at providing training at subregional level to key employment service staff from all three countries and complete this training by ad hoc consultancy services at the national level.
12. A similar approach was used by the regional employment service project, covering 22 English-speaking countries in Africa. Initially emphasis was placed on training at the regional level (at the African Regional Labour Administration Centre, in Harare) of middle-management employment service staff on the assumption that they combined the necessary management authority and the required technical skill to introduce durable change in their working environment. With time, this assumption turned out to be unrealistic, as little actual change was perceived. Regional training was later completed by consultancy services in countries which showed interest in and ability to introduce modern practices in their national employment services.
13. The project in the three Baltic countries was in fact the addition of three distinct projects, as each country appeared to have different labour inspection cultures, background and priorities. Instead of fielding one resident consultant in one country and expecting him to serve the other two, it was found more productive to each of the three countries to locate the consultant in Geneva and organize frequent, regular consultancy missions to the three countries, the interim time at headquarters being used to develop common training materials and to seek additional financial and technical support from other donors. This had a clear positive effect in that it encouraged self-reliance on the part of the countries and better focused services by the consultant on his regular visits.
14. In Kenya, a more traditional project was organized to improve labour inspection services. A resident consultant was appointed and his services completed by ad hoc short-term expertise drawn from different sources. The project consisted mainly in setting up two pilot district labour inspection offices and at the same time building the capacity to disseminate newly acquired know-how to the remaining districts. This capacity was built by training a body of trainers, by developing pertinent training material, by seeking the support of employers' and workers' organizations for the extension of reform, and simply by relying on the demonstration effect of the pilot districts.

15. The initial objectives and strategic approach remained mostly unchanged throughout the implementation of all the projects under review. Only in some cases were these objectives better defined, time-framed or focused, as in Bulgaria, where a tripartite conference organized midway through the project helped design training around tasks and job content of labour inspectors. Similarly, a successful phase one, sanctioned by an evaluation report, led to a clearer and more focused restatement rather than a radical change of objective, as occurred in the Regional African Employment Service and the Albanian labour administration projects.

III. Evaluation results

16. This central part of the paper will deal with all relevant aspects of evaluation and examine in orderly succession the main factors that determine the success or failure of a project. It will be divided into 13 sections.

A. Project design

17. The projects were overall fairly well designed in that development and immediate objectives as well as activities and work plans were clearly and consistently stated. Project design failed in other aspects. Clear statement of objectives and activities is a major improvement over preceding practice. The structured approach to design was definitely a reflection of ILO design and evaluation culture.

18. Design flaws were mainly related to discrepancies between activities to be carried out and immediate objectives to be achieved, as well as between inputs and anticipated activities. In more than one project, the objectives seemed to be too ambitious in respect to the activities planned, in the same way as inputs seemed to be too few for the intended activities. For example, the regional project for Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam aimed at creating capacity (starting practically from nil) in each country in order to cope with the huge and growing problem of redundant workers. But only 1.3 expert/years were made available for all three countries to organize training courses, 0.3 expert/years to develop ad hoc training material, and 0.3 expert/years for consultancy services. Similarly, in the subregional project for the Baltic countries, an array of activities, including consultant services, workshops, training of trainers, setting up of workplace registration system, etc., all to be replicated in the three countries, relied on the performance of just one full-time expert for two years and US\$10,000 in consultancy fees.

B. Indicators and activities

19. All the projects under review detail the activities expected to be carried out, all concerned assuming that the extent to which these activities were to be carried out would be a clear enough indicator of achievement of objectives and therefore of project success. There was one exception – the subregional project on labour inspection in the Baltic countries – where a genuine attempt was made to identify precise indicators of achievement. The statement of the three immediate objectives was followed by a number of verifiable events, which would provide a good measure of project achievement.

C. Prerequisites/assumptions

20. Prerequisites or assumptions are the only conditions external to a project (and over which the project staff has no control) that need to take place for a project to be successful.

Proper prerequisite identification and assessment should normally be a necessary exercise to be carried out before any decision is made to start a project. Sometimes, project designers submit projects for funding despite apparently unrealistic prerequisites. One example is the subregional project for the modernization of labour administrations in Central America, Belize, Panama and the Dominican Republic (MATAC).

21. Most countries included in the MATAC project have no career civil service. Lack of a civil service implies high turnover of government staff and therefore a lack of long-term commitment on their part to any duty requiring heavy investment in self-training. Normally, the existence of a career civil service should have been a prerequisite to the approval and implementation of the ILO project, since no labour administration can be modernized and made efficient with transient staff. Nonetheless, despite the evident risk of failure, it was decided to continue with the project. Clearly, designers and donors made an optimistic bet that project staff could convince governments of the need for introducing stability and a sense of commitment in national civil service. The bet paid off. Three-and-a-half years after the inception of the project, several governments in the subregion had adopted an organic law introducing a career service, which contributed to stabilizing the labour administration staff.
22. In many other projects, there was no evidence that designers or donors put real emphasis on adequate identification and assessment of prerequisites. In some cases, project shortcomings were attributed to “unforeseen” events. For example, the political instability, which brought the labour administration project in Albania to a standstill for many months, was defined as such.

D. Respect of input commitment

23. Late or lack of delivery of inputs is the most common feature in technical cooperation activities. Generally, delay in delivery of material inputs due to mismanagement, transport difficulties, personnel incompetence and the like is an unavoidable problem that most projects learn to live with. Delays are compensated by rescheduling activities or even by anticipating these delays at the time of planning these activities. Much more serious problems are created by the failure to deliver human inputs, such as appointing national counterparts to international advisers or nominating staff to attend planned courses, as occurred in the three Asian countries. In Albania, the designated national counterpart was taken up by so many other duties that he could not devote his or any of his delegate’s time to project activities. In some cases, national human inputs were made available but lacked the necessary basic skills or motivation.
24. The labour inspection project in Kenya was a victim of its own success. The number of inspections carried out in enterprises rose in two years, with no additional staff resources, from 3,600 to a staggering 26,000. This increase, however, required a parallel increase in material inputs, such as petrol, stationery, office equipment, etc., which could not be met due to a slow and inflexible Ministry of Labour budgeting system.

E. Government and social partner involvement at local level

25. All the projects showed a reasonable record of government and social partner involvement at the local level. Government involvement, especially that part of government acting as counterpart to the project, is a steady feature of practically all projects at the implementation stage. Except in one case (Albania, and only temporarily) did the international team of experts find itself operating in a vacuum. The government staff

directly involved was not always of the required competence and motivation, but the general government attitude was one of constant presence and interest in the achievement of project objectives.

26. Unlike projects in other sectors of activity, which could operate successfully with a government counterpart alone, labour administration projects require by their very nature close involvement by employers' and workers' organizations. If active tripartism does not work in labour administration, it will not work in any other field of social life. Social partner involvement in practically all the projects ranged from good to excellent.
27. In Kenya, for example, latent conflict and overt diffidence towards labour inspection services on the part of employers was replaced by a general spirit of trust and cooperation thanks to the ILO's efforts to involve them. This helped labour inspection evolve from an authoritarian, sanction-prone body to a more employer-friendly service providing advice on how best to enforce labour laws. That same spirit of trust and cooperation was extended to workers, which drastically reduced the number of complaints filed with district inspectorates.
28. In the first phase of the MATAC project in the Americas, the project team involved social partners in the implementation of the project and even offered direct assistance to serve the specific needs of employers' and workers' organizations, setting up an automated register of recognized workers' organizations, for instance, at the subregional level. In addition, consultative tripartite bodies were created at the labour inspection level in Costa Rica and at the entire labour administration level in the Dominican Republic, while in Honduras a tripartite Social and Economic Council was launched. Social partners' involvement appeared so relevant to all countries participating in the project that phase two of that project included consultation and participation of social partners among its four major objectives.
29. The most noteworthy example of active tripartism was offered by the labour inspection project in Bulgaria. The project was launched after a common decision by the Government, employers' and workers' organizations, made at a national high-level tripartite meeting, specially convened for the purpose. Subsequently, throughout its operational life, the project was closely monitored by a tripartite project steering committee, which approved the yearly work plan, assessed past results and fine-tuned the objectives in light of these results. Social partners' involvement in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the project made it a lot easier for the entire project team in their day-to-day technical work to secure the cooperation of workers' and employers' organizations. This close involvement by social partners was one of the major factors in the success of the project.

F. Coordination with other donors in the field

30. Uncoordinated assistance from several donors in the same or adjoining fields can seriously hamper a project's success. Project designers and field staff alike are well aware of this basic rule. Several structures are in place for that very purpose.
31. The best example of cooperation is shown by the labour inspection project in the Baltic countries. Thanks to existing coordinating mechanisms, as well as to the time and abilities invested in negotiations by the ILO project team, three otherwise overlapping projects, were placed under the supervision of the ILO project, which was commonly referred to as the umbrella project. De facto, the ILO project became the addition of three projects, its own plus a UNDP-financed project on the development of national protection policies in the Baltic States, as well as a French Government-financed project on strengthening inspection practices on general conditions of work in the Baltic States. This almost-merger

type of coordination proved extremely beneficial to the Baltic countries. It was unanimously recognized that the three projects would not have performed as effectively had they been implemented in isolation.

32. Competition among donors is the unfortunate result both of the lack of adequate coordinating capacity on the part of the recipient country, and of a disorderly flood of cooperation offered by many donors out of sympathy for a country going through a challenging time of transition. Albania's decision to open up to a market economy, for example, sparked significant interest in the West and led the Albanian Government to seek more cooperation projects than its weak and inexperienced structures could absorb. Furthermore, unaware of technical cooperation practices, ministries, including the Labour Ministry, came to submit the same project to different donors, assuming that to be sure to get it from one they had to submit it to many. In several cases, several donors approved the same project. The ILO project, once financed and fielded, found itself competing with projects from other donors.
33. The otherwise successful labour inspection project in Kenya experienced a case of conflict with the World Bank. The ILO recommended a reasonable increase in appropriations in the Labour Ministry to sustain its increased labour inspection performance. The recommendation came at a time when the World Bank's structural adjustment programme (SAP) was pushing for a substantial decrease in general Government expenditure. The SAP recommendations prevailed, despite the efforts by the ILO project team before the Government to allow for an exception in the Labour Ministry. The ILO was forced to seek ways of maintaining acquired results in labour inspection services with decreased counterpart contribution.

G. Ratification and application of international labour standards

34. Contrary to the not so remote time when technical cooperation and international labour standards were almost totally independent, and ILO activities used their own channels to pursue unrelated goals, the labour administration projects reflect a recent change in policy and attitude in the ILO. Increasingly, and especially in the Labour Administration Programme, technical cooperation projects are seen as a means to promote ratification and application of relevant standards.
35. Practically all the projects under review incorporated the standard dimension in activities. Phase two of the MATAC project listed increased application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations in labour administration among the four major objectives. Illustration of contents and significance of relevant standards was part of training courses carried out by the project team in the Baltic countries (Albania, Bulgaria) and Kenya, as well as the employment service subregional projects in Asia and Africa. In four of the formerly centrally planned economy countries (Bulgaria and the three Baltic countries), the ILO provided advice to governments on policies to be adopted, measures to be taken and procedures to be followed for Conventions to be more readily ratifiable. A record was kept of progress towards ratification (not only of directly related labour administration standards). This was regularly reported to the ILO Labour Standards Programme. At the same time, all action taken by the project and all recommendations made for future action was in line with the provisions of ILO standards.
36. However, one of the projects faced serious difficulties. Eager to meet the challenge of high unemployment, Cambodia decided to set up what was called public employment companies (their role was to register, advise, retrain and place the urban unemployed) and allowed them to charge fees to both employers hiring workers referred to them and

workers registered with the company. Traditional public employment services were maintained and called on to operate free of charge. When the ILO team was required to provide advice on the organization of Cambodia's employment companies, it was placed in a dilemma: either deny assistance to one of the three subregional countries, or defect from the application of one of the leading provisions of the Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88), which states in paragraph 1, Article 1, that countries would maintain a free public employment service. A compromise was found in that the Government was advised to charge fees only to employers and a future unified institution providing free services born from the merger of the traditional employment service offices and the more recent employment companies were created. Unable to secure immediate application of the Convention, the project team wisely aimed at its possible future ratification and application.

H. Support and interaction

- 37.** One of the crucial factors determining the success of a project lies in the quality and timeliness of the technical and organizational support provided by the ILO unit in charge of project backstopping. In reviewing project achievement, this factor is mostly either taken for granted or overlooked.
- 38.** Adequate quality support can be attributed to the ILO permanent structure. The decentralization policy adopted by the ILO and implemented over the years did not prevent the Labour Administration Branch from taking primary responsibility in direct backstopping of the projects. The six labour administration centres which were at one time in existence in four regions of the world (prior to the creation of MDTs) were themselves active providers of advisory services and training to single countries, and useful contributors to the monitoring and implementation of other sizeable projects. The closing down of four of the centres led to a significant reduction of the quantity and quality of advice and training made available to countries and, ironically, to a re-centralization at headquarters of the promotion and technical support provided to projects.
- 39.** No major flaws in providing support can be recorded in this respect for any of the projects under review. Many were initiated and designed by the Labour Administration Branch. In some cases, such as the subregional employment service project in Asia, the need for assistance was first noted by either the MDT or the ILO area or regional office and relayed to the competent headquarters branch.
- 40.** In reviewing project performance it was clear that, on the whole, experts and advisers were recruited on time and adequately briefed. Inputs were delivered when they were expected. Consultation between project and headquarters support staff was regular and advice about alternative courses of action to follow and difficulties to overcome were offered whenever requested. On occasion, headquarters technical staff participated directly in the implementation of the project. One frontline person at headquarters acted as the sole correspondent to project staff who, whenever warranted, channelled to other responsible financial and administrative units, specific requests for services.
- 41.** However, interaction between project and support work was less than fully satisfactory where publications were concerned. The training manuals and material issued by the Labour Administration Branch were considered to be a very useful resource, and were largely used and disseminated by project trainers. But high-quality studies and training material developed by project staff remained confined to the specific project needs and were not sufficiently distributed to potential trainees in other or planned projects.

I. Objectives achieved

42. As can be expected, the record of objective achievement varied. It would be misleading to even attempt to place the seven projects on a score chart and rank them from one to ten according to whether objectives have been achieved or not. However, some analytical comments are appropriate.
43. The Bulgarian labour inspection project stands out as the most successful project in the programme. It benefited from a very rare combination of mutually supportive positive factors. Among these were: rigorous design, unusually strong and lasting commitment to implementation by the Government, constant tripartite participation, competent and imaginative contributions by international advisers, close scrutiny and support by headquarters technical staff, and, more importantly, well-trained staff who were motivated to develop skills into more advanced professional practice. Overall, the objectives achieved by this project went beyond those defined at the design stage.
44. Considering the rather weak government environment, the Kenyan labour inspection project achieved many of its initial objectives and even surpassed them by increasing the quality and quantity of inspection visits and gaining the support of employers' and workers' organizations.
45. As mentioned earlier, measuring objective achievement in the labour inspection project in the Baltic States was made easier by the use of indicators. Eleven outputs were identified and measured as the project production needed to achieve the four stated objectives. Four outputs were totally completed, one was completed up to 80 per cent, one up to 75 per cent, one up to 50 per cent, another to 40 per cent, still another to 20 per cent, one was left totally uncompleted, while the last one was completed by an outside project financed by the European Union but implemented in consultation with the ILO. The reasons why all anticipated outputs were not produced were spelt out convincingly. This project can be rated as having achieved, in the midst of many uncertainties, a more than reasonable amount of its objectives.
46. The African subregional employment service project, which focused on sensitizing high-level decision-makers and on training and upgrading middle-management employment service staff from 23 Anglophone countries, can be shown to have achieved its training objectives. All courses planned were delivered. At completion, the participants themselves carefully evaluated each course. Satisfaction for new skills acquired and for their relevance, and desire and motivation to implement these skills was rated highly by the vast majority of participants. Demand for these courses was constant which probably explains why the project was extended to a third phase and lasted 11 years altogether.
47. In the absence of a precise measure of achievement, the Asia subregional employment service project gives the impression of having fallen short of its stated objectives. However, it cannot be written off as totally unsuccessful. Indeed it was extremely beneficial to the subregion, especially when activities carried out are matched to the available inputs. This project offers an example of inflated and overstated objectives with respect to its budgeted resources. The design was certainly at fault
48. In some projects, the goal is presented with open-ended objectives, making it difficult at times to assess its achievement. The objective of the MATAC project was to bring about the necessary transformations to allow labour administrations systems to effectively formulate and execute, in a climate of social dialogue, policies which adequately respond to the social demands of employers and workers. Due to the nature of the project, specific objectives had to be analysed in order to realize how it carried out such an impressive number of activities with relatively limited resources at both subregional and national

levels. All these activities were in line with stated objectives and resulted in important and significant changes in some countries.

49. The Albanian labour administration project can be placed at the bottom of the list assessing achievement of objectives. Not that the project produced no outputs. It designed a compact but effective labour administration system showing charts of functions, management and communication methods, training needs, chronogram of implementation etc. At one point, some of the project indications received government approval and were planned for implementation. Unfortunately, most of these results were washed away by political turmoil and resulting civil service staff instability. However, these activities are not totally lost. They can be used again once the country stabilizes.
50. Any project perceived as being successful or promising is normally extended to a new phase. Apparently, the technical cooperation system, whether international or bilateral, has no reverse mechanism whereby unpromising or dead-end projects are terminated before their scheduled time, unless the personal safety of project staff is put at risk. The Albanian project could have made a case for early termination. But somehow, once the funding is approved, the advisers recruited, the agency costs paid, the existing system finds it hard, probably for management or budgetary reasons, to collect funds back, to interrupt advisers' contracts or to redirect resources to other more promising projects.

J. Project sustainability

51. Project sustainability conveys an idea of duration and implies that a project started with outside assistance matures to the point of being viable and self-reliant and of operating on a permanent basis after this assistance is withdrawn.
52. If the concept is clear, the way of handling it at both the project design and evaluation stages is not. For the most part, sustainability remains a wish and a hope because at the design stage there is no clear-cut indication that a project will last after the international advisers have gone. Technical cooperation project designers may have the feeling that a project is there to last but not a base of hard facts to be used at the time of assessing its worth. At some point in the implementation stage, it may become clear that, in a given context, some project objectives are more liable than others to be achieved on a more solid and lasting basis. When the project is over, project performance will be assessed on how many of the initial objectives were achieved and not on whether the objectives achieved are thought to be sustainable. This implies that the project team finds interest not in concentrating on sustainable objectives but rather in showing that as many of the initial objectives as possible have been achieved.
53. Some of the projects examined in this programme offer hints about possible sustainability. The Government and social partners' commitment to the achievement of the objectives of the Bulgarian labour inspection project was so strong and constant that project sustainability seemed clear.
54. Similarly, the labour inspection project in the Baltic countries, especially in Estonia, was part of a process aimed at European Union membership. For this reason, achievement of objectives was likely to be sustained because these objectives may be included among the measures that the European Union will monitor and support in the perspective of membership.
55. Some activities, on the other hand, are sustainable because by nature they are hard to reverse. For example, the gradual adoption of laws and regulations aiming at introducing a

career civil service in many of the countries participating in the MATAC project is a lasting achievement.

K. Project replicability

- 56.** Like sustainability, replicability is not an easily manageable concept at the project design stage. Priority funding cannot be reserved for replicable projects, simply because no data, other than personal impressions, can determine in advance whether a project is replicable. At termination, however, experienced evaluators can indeed identify which projects or which parts thereof are replicable. In many instances, they do point to the need to disseminate experience to other countries. This was the case in the MATAC project, where sensitive legislation in labour protection was more easily adopted in one country thanks to the experience gained in the same field in another country of the subregion.
- 57.** By nature, pilot projects are born to be replicable. At first, reform efforts are concentrated in one area and, when proven successful, extended to others. That is quite a traditional, well-established and wise way of operating. It can be a very successful one too in the context of the same country or in the same subregional project. For example, in Kenya labour inspection practice was renovated in one district while plans were adopted to gradually extend reform to others. In the same vein, the labour inspection project in the Baltic countries acted on the assumption that achievements obtained in one of the three countries were to be made available to the other two. Sometimes regional meetings are held gathering countries facing similar problems with the precise intention of getting them to disseminate their own results and thus of favouring replicability.
- 58.** Two obstacles to replicability can be observed. The first relates to ILO information storage. The good practices and lessons learned are not always published and will not be easily available to other interested potential users. When there is a time lag between a starting and a terminating project, there is no automatic way at any of the ILO territorial levels, of identifying and retrieving the past projects that could be replicated to the benefit of the new. The second obstacle has to do with the limited propensity by recipient countries to exchange experience among themselves and therefore to facilitate replicability of successful projects. All the hope invested in technical cooperation among developing countries has remained largely rhetorical. For example, the labour inspection project in Kenya should have been a showcase for other African countries. Interest in increasing performance is still largely expressed by the South to the North and cooperation provided by the North to the South. If project replicability is to be used to its full potential, there is a lot that developing countries can do to offer their achievements to their peer countries.

L. Cost-efficiency

- 59.** Unlike cost-effectiveness that is concerned with maximizing impact on the target group, cost-efficiency has to do with costs measured up against results, or to use a common term in technical cooperation, against outputs. In fact, inputs of all labour administration projects were identified not so much in relation to costs as to common sense, convenience, existing practice, expediency, and perceived acceptance by counterparts and donors. Possible alternatives have not come to the minds of project staff and designers. Throughout, casual identification of inputs is perceived as the only possible way of going about producing outputs.
- 60.** However, the cost dimension is not absent from labour administration technical cooperation staff behaviour. For example, the decision to post the chief technical adviser of the labour inspection project in the Baltic countries to Geneva was taken on the basis of

cost considerations. In other projects, national advisers were given preference over those recruited abroad, fellowship programmes in the Bulgarian project were organized in nearby countries rather than in distant ones, train travel was preferred to air travel, etc. All these efforts are commendable. But they are unsystematic, unmonitored, unevaluated, unrewarded and rely solely on individuals' good will and good conscience.

61. The design methodology could be completed and improved in order to enhance sensitivity to costs. To start with, after inputs have been identified, project staff could be encouraged to strive for efficiency and be rewarded when, as a result of their efforts, their project shows a surplus. Instead, in the rare cases when they do show a surplus, projects are perceived as being unable to adequately deliver their inputs, extending the project termination date.

M. Impact

62. A project is said to have maximum impact when, within the set resources and deadline, it reaches the target group, it leads to intended change, this change is lasting and expands to reach other groups akin to the target group, and, finally, when it has no unanticipated negative effects. Such a project is also said to be most cost-effective.
63. One can easily infer from the above proposition that projects having achieved all their stated objectives are not necessarily those obtaining maximum impact. In some extreme cases, projects claiming to have achieved their objectives may have no or limited or even negative impact. Two of the projects under review can be shown as examples of success in achieving objectives and of relative failure at producing impact.
64. The two subregional employment service projects in Africa and Asia aimed at increasing skill and competence of key employment service staff. That objective was obviously the means chosen to lead employment offices to deliver efficient service to jobseekers and employers. Both projects, and especially the one in subregional Africa, did achieve their objective of training key staff. But they failed at having an impact because, as it appeared in both cases, institutional inflexibility and higher level mismanagement were so ingrained that trained staff, on their return, felt too weak and isolated to improve existing procedures, let alone introduce significant change in their environment. Soon, the trained staff became frustrated at their own powerlessness and sought to use their new skills in private enterprises, or were recruited by private enterprises searching for employees with skills. Both projects missed the fact that training staff out of their context and with no attempt on their part at acting within that context, would lead to limited change in the performance of the employment service at large.
65. At the other end of the spectrum, the MATAC project in the Americas, with average rating as to its ability to achieve its intended objectives, did have a real impact in many areas of labour administration: it helped design and adopt basic legislation on conditions of work; it led countries to ratify and apply ILO standards; and it started a wave of reforms in staff stabilization and civil service career systems. The impact is all the more significant because most reforms are durable, exportable and with no perceivable negative side effect.
66. The labour inspection projects in Bulgaria and the Baltic countries offer a good example of success at achieving both project objectives and obtaining impact. These results are due, as was mentioned earlier, to counterpart and social partners' continuous commitment, but also to the fact that, at the time of identifying objectives, special care and thought were put to selecting these objectives which, if achieved, would necessarily lead to lasting changes. What was aimed at in these cases, right from the start, was not to get away with easily reachable objectives but to introduce radical change in labour inspection culture in line

with existing practice in other modern western European countries. When objectives seek lasting change, achieving them naturally leads to maximizing impact.

67. The Kenyan labour inspection project did have a significant impact on the performance and credibility of the whole national inspection service. The *ex post* evaluation carried out almost two years after the project was completed showed that the impact was largely sustained despite curtailment in the Ministry's annual budget. But it also pointed to some unexpected negative results. Worrying tensions grew among the different departments of the Labour Ministry due to the fact that some of them, notably the employment service and the occupational health and safety services, which had benefited from no outside assistance, lagged behind the inspection service in terms of performance, image and staff motivation.
68. The Albanian labour administration project started in the hope of achieving a strong durable impact. Activities were carried out in that perspective and its beginnings were promising. Because of subsequent government instability whatever impact was obtained was lost before the completion of the project. Only an *ex post* evaluation, if at all warranted, can tell how much of that initial impact can be restored.
69. The level and quality of impact at the end of a project may differ quite substantially from those recorded after a time lag. The full measure of sustainability can be given only by comparing the impact perceived at completion of a project with that perceived after, say, two years from completion. It is quite regrettable that nothing other than hopes and impressions can be said about the sustained impact for any of the projects under review except the labour inspection project in Kenya. If sustainability is to become a meaningful concept, a standard method needs to be adopted to measure it.

O. Assessment of the evaluation exercises undertaken

70. All seven projects composing this sample disclose the same general interest in achieving performance. Assessment of progress is pushed for by the regulations in force in the ILO technical cooperation system and by donors.
71. Evaluation by project staff is carried out as a matter of course at mid-term and every time the project approaches the end of one phase, and, it is sought to extend it to a second one. In some cases, the staff evaluation is completed by a joint outside evaluation carried out by the ILO technical support staff and representatives of the recipient and donor countries. In two cases, Albania and Kenya, the donor subcontracted evaluation to a private management consultancy firm that carried it out with its own methods and approaches. In two cases, the African subregional project and the Baltic countries project, the chief technical adviser carried out the final overall evaluation with no outside contribution. In the MATAC project, an on-the-spot review was entrusted to a tripartite delegation appointed by the ILO Governing Body from among its members. In the subregional project in Asia, no formal final evaluation was drafted but a member of the headquarters' support staff organized an informal evaluation mission some time after the end of the project. The only *ex post* evaluation carried out was in Kenya in fact undertaken by the person who had previously served as chief technical adviser.
72. There is more to evaluation than the formalized evaluation exercises. Progress reports written by project staff usually contain very revealing evaluative comments that are later reflected in the more formal evaluation reports. Similarly, outside monitoring of projects such as the one carried out by the tripartite steering committee in Bulgaria are, in fact,

ongoing evaluation exercises and are perceived as such by government, social partners and the project staff alike.

73. On the whole, the approach to evaluation starts from the immediate objectives and checks are carried out to see whether these have been achieved. When they have not, evaluators critically identify the reasons for the gap, point to difficulties, make a general assessment on the overall results of the project and recommend corrections, re-directions, or possible extensions. Only some offer comments on sustainability and replicability. The question of faulty design or lack of assumptions and indicators is hardly ever raised or only very incidentally.
74. Not one of the project designs reviewed make any mention of strategies, objectives or activities inspired by preceding, successful experiences. In this respect, evaluation is no help to replicability. For example, one of the lessons that can be drawn from evaluation of two of the projects reviewed in this paper is that training provided at the regional level to trainees taken out of their professional environment can, in the end, produce no impact. As things stand today, at least in the Labour Administration Programme, there is no way, other than relying on human memory, that would enable a future project designer to get hold of relevant past evaluation reports, and to incorporate lessons learned or avoid repeating the same mistake. Overall reviews like the one attempted in this paper can perhaps provide a partial answer to this shortcoming.

P. Lessons learned

75. The more thorough and rigorous the project design, the easier is the project implementation and the better the project evaluation.
76. The simplified design document already in use (summary project outline known by its acronym “sprout”) to start negotiations on funding should be complemented systematically by a more rigorous and exhaustive design document to be signed and committed to before project implementation.
77. Essential lessons can be drawn that might improve project implementation. The labour inspection project in Bulgaria offers a good example of active ongoing participation of the social partners. It deserves to be replicated. In Bulgaria, a tripartite steering committee met at regular intervals throughout the project and had both a monitoring and evaluative role. In a sense, monitoring is a useful tool for management because it enables results to be assessed and objectives to be adjusted on a continuous basis. Monitoring also feeds perfectly into evaluation which becomes easier to make and more meaningful. In addition, the tripartite nature of the steering committee facilitates support by social partners, without which labour administration projects run the risk of failure. Whenever possible, monitoring should be encouraged to become a regular tool of management of any labour administration project and tripartite monitoring encouraged even more strongly.
78. Implementation leads to better results when backstopping is competent, timely and well integrated in the day-to-day activities of a project. In the Labour Administration Programme, a fair amount of interaction between field and headquarters’ work was noticed. Support staff should be more closely involved in project implementation and be sent to the field to deliver specific advisory services, contribute to training courses, provide inputs to the preparation of training material, etc. This closer integration would lead to more technically sound projects.
79. Publication of technical materials requires study, with a closer link developed to the central ILO publication policy.

80. Sustainability is another area for possible improvement. Sustainability is hard to assess at the design stage but a lot easier at the implementation stage. Progress monitoring, project mid-term review and interim evaluation exercises should systematically address the question and push for decisions to drop the more weakly sustainable objectives and concentrate resources on the more sustainable.
81. With all their diversity, the evaluations as currently carried out are sound exercises. One aspect deserving attention, however, is self-evaluation. Self-evaluation relies on the personal professional honesty of the evaluator who happens to be the project adviser, i.e., the very person responsible for the achievement of objectives. Because of the obvious conflict of interest, self-evaluation does not offer a strong enough basis to guarantee genuineness of the conclusions and recommendations proposed. This question deserves to be addressed and resolved. Evaluation is definitely an area where participation of social partners is warranted.
82. The on-the-spot mission carried out by a tripartite ILO Governing Body delegation to review the MATAC project has had positive effects. Its tripartite nature gave considerable weight to the recommendations they made and the time devoted to consultations has contributed to improve the social partners' cooperation to the activities of the project.
83. *Ex post* evaluation is essential in determining what factors favour or prevent sustainability. Only sound *ex post* analysis can help separate the more viable from the less viable project proposals and provide a tool for planners to streamline resources and reduce the risk of future failure. The question of sustainability should not only be raised at the time of *ex post* evaluation. It should be raised earlier during the implementation and final evaluation stages. *Ex post* evaluation should come to confirm, contradict or complete the conclusions reached before the project ends. Only one out of the seven projects contained in the sample was evaluated *ex post*. This percentage needs to be considerably increased before informed planning for sustainability can be facilitated.
84. Feeding experience gained into future project design and planning is one of the major problems in the Labour Administration Programme. This question needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
85. Another related area for improvement is that of exchange of know-how among recipient countries. Regular transfer of know-how would multiply effects and give a true meaning to replicability. Some work is already being done in this respect: subregional meetings are convened among specialists and achievements are flagged by technical cooperation staff during missions. Electronic inter-country circulation of information could perhaps be a less haphazard, more systematic and reasoned way of organizing exchange of relevant achievements on technical cooperation.
86. Over 20 years ago, a network of subregional labour administration centres was launched. Six such centres were in existence in 1994 at the time of the ILO field reorganization. Some of the skills available in the centres have been redistributed to the MDTs, which were gradually coming into existence. Three of these centres are still in operation. They oversee activities in English-speaking Africa, in French-speaking Africa and in the Arab region. They have become self-financed intergovernmental institutions receiving occasional external technical inputs from the ILO. The ILO Labour Administration Programme visibly benefits from the existence of these centres. They can offer short-term advisory services and signal technical cooperation needs and opportunities. Their contribution also enables project backstopping to be more regular and responsive. In general, the centres contribute to amplify headquarters operations and help adjust to country needs. Some means should be found to improve the performance of MDTs and to

lead them to achieve the same performance level as that achieved by the centres both vis-à-vis national labour administrations and single projects.

Geneva, 31 January 2002.

Appendix

Project No.	Title	Budget US\$	Period of duration	Donor	Objectives
RAS/93/M12/FRA	Improving capacity in employment services Viet Nam, Cambodia and Lao PDR	386 804	5/94-6/96	France	To favour human resources development and skills in the process of workforce redistribution, promoting active employment policies and employment promotion in informal sector. <i>Building-up skills and know-how focused on employment services officers and supervisors.</i>
ALB/95/M01/DDA	Technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour of Albania	1 327 436	7/96-6/99	Switzerland	To assist in the transition process towards a market economy and economic development contributing to build up structures and appropriate industrial relations. <i>Organization of units; adapting services; labour law texts understandable for social partners; labour inspection promoting social dialogue; and pilot public employment offices.</i>
RER/94/M02/FIN	Baltic Labour Inspection Project <i>(Pilot project on assistance in labour inspection and better working environment for new democracies of the Baltic countries)</i> Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania	910 224	5/95-12/97	Finland	To make labour inspection systems and their field structures function more effectively and efficiently, in line with relevant ILS, and making the legal systems and practical applications sustainable and approaching those in EU member countries.
KEN/88/M02/NET KEN/94/M01/NET	Implementation of International Labour Standards: ILO Conventions Nos. 81, 129, 144 and 150; and Recommendations Nos. 81, 82, 133, 152 and 158 (Kenya Tripartite Labour Inspection Project) Kenya	1 167 908	7/91-12/94	Netherlands	Organization and management of labour inspection to upgrade and substantially improve the execution of its functions and to raise in particular the overall number of inspections.
RLA/97/M04/SPA RLA/97/M05/SPA	"Modernizing the labour administrations of Central America" MATAC Eight countries	2 930 000	11/97-12/00 1/01-4/03	Spain	To favour appropriate transformations so that labour administration systems are in a position to formulate and execute relevant policies, in a climate of social dialogue, while responding effectively to the social demands of employers and workers.

Project No.	Title	Budget US\$	Period of duration	Donor	Objectives
RAF/95/M06/FRG	Re-orientation of public employment services under structural adjustment programmes in English-speaking Africa 22 countries	3 600 000	1988-99 (in three phases)	Germany	To improve the awareness on the role of PES with a specific view to the vocational guidance and counselling activities. <i>To increase the human resources capacity to contribute towards institutional development at national level and to enable the partner institutions to better absorb external support.</i> <i>To improve the implementation of selected core functions of PES assisted.</i>
BUL/98/M03/FRG	Training for integrated labour inspection Bulgaria	617 631	1st phase 3/99-2/01 2nd phase 3/01-8/02	Germany	To improve the labour protection system and working environment by developing and implementing comprehensive labour inspection training policies and programmes.