



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: The improvement of labour relations and the promotion of Women's economic equality in Colombia project

Quick Facts

Country: Colombia

Final Evaluation: October 2005

Mode of Evaluation: independent

Technical Area: Social Dialogue/ Small Enterprise Development and Gender

Evaluation Management: Americas

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Project Start: November 2001

Project End: September 2005

Project Code: COL/01/51/USA

Donor: United States (US\$ 2,000,000)

Keywords: Social dialogue, gender, microenterprise, labour relations

Background & Context

Project Background: The project had two components, labour relations and women's economic equality, that were actually two discrete projects with different objectives, strategies, methods, activities, target groups, and implementation arrangements. The common feature to both was project management.

Objectives for the labour relations component:

1. Greater use of core international labour standards to improve labour relations;
2. Increased capacity of social partners to engage in healthy labour relations, negotiate collectively, and develop workplace cooperation; and

3. Systems and procedures for the settlement of labour disputes improved in selected regions and sectors.

Objectives for the women's economic equality component:

4. Increase business capacity of female entrepreneurs; and
5. A strengthened coordination mechanism in place to implement employment generation policies.

Evaluation Context: The purpose of the evaluation was to (a) determine if the project achieved its stated objectives, (b) assess and document the effects of project activities and outputs on the tripartite clients, (c) assess the impact of the project in terms of the likelihood that outputs will be sustained, and (d) report on lessons learned.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Labour Relations component: The project substantially achieved the objective of improved labour relations between the social partners (the Government of Colombia, labour judges and magistrates of the judicial authority, employers' and workers' organizations) based on results, benefits, and impact. The project promoted fundamental labour principles and workplace rights in national and regional fora, in addition to other activities. The Ministry of Social Protection (MPS) found the regional fora so successful that it is using its own limited resources to fund them until all 32 departments are covered. Regional labour

inspection directors were trained in international labour standards, as were labour judges and participants from the attorney general's office. The judicial academy pledged to include international labour standards and principles in its curriculum; trained judges and magistrates committed themselves to training their colleagues nationwide. The training of social partners in collective bargaining and conflict resolution was the most successful project activity. The U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) designed training programs using new techniques of win-win bargaining. A core group of technicians and leaders were also trained in new bargaining techniques and conflict resolution who, would train and/or implement programs for training at the national, regional, and industry levels. In addition, the project produced case studies on good practices in labour relations in Colombia, which were very well-received and much in demand.

The participation of social partners was substantial, especially employers' and workers' groups at the regional and individual enterprise levels. Tripartite participation was not realized to the extent hoped for because the government abstained from discussion of collective bargaining until July 2005, union membership has decreased significantly, and dissension among the three trade union federations obligated the project to hold separate training events for them.

The main project benefit was the creation of a space where labour, management, and government could meet and engage in social dialogue. Government observed that the project had contributed to the improvement of labour relations because it had advanced social dialogue and promoted fundamental labour rights. Management reported that the divide between labour and management had narrowed. The project promoted a new construction and a new culture for labour relations. A further impact was that through the United States Department of Labour (USDOL) and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the project transmitted a positive image of the United States in important sectors.

The sustainability of the different project training activities is likely because the groups and institutions trained planned to continue using their own resources. However, the sustainability of the social dialogue is uncertain because the social partners by themselves cannot maintain the neutral space for social dialogue that the project created; hence, they request that the project be continued.

Women's Economic Equality component:

The project substantially achieved the objective of increased economic equality opportunities for women, based on results, benefits, and impact. The target groups were women in poor communities who were already organized, such as women's business associations and individual microentrepreneurs.

The project developed a microenterprise/gender training methodology in collaboration with its social partners, including the Presidential Council on Women's Equity, MPS, regional and local governments, NGOs, and two women's federations. The project trained women from urban areas (56%), rural areas (38%), and indigenous communities (6%).

Among the benefits to the target groups were learning business management and personal skills such as how to speak in public. The methodology itself was a benefit because a methodology that combined microenterprise and gender training did not exist previously. The major impact of training was the empowerment of female entrepreneurs (i) at the personal level: which helped them to build decision-making skills and respect for themselves and others; and (ii) at the household level, where improved family relations contributed to business success. The planned sustainability strategy was the transfer of the methodology to public and private institutions that would carry on training, including the creation of Punto Focal, an NGO who helped develop the methodology and conducted training and post-training activities. Punto Focal was to be the principal training organization; it would have to mobilize

resources to fund training activities. The project held regional methodology transfer seminars, where professionals representing public and private institutions received microenterprise/gender training. As of August 2005, Punto Focal training proposals, such as the one submitted to the Embassy of Spain, had not been funded. The Presidential Council on Women's Equity initiated a program using the microenterprise/gender methodology in universities, where business and economics students would conduct microenterprise/gender training for women in low-income communities, as part of their practicum, under the supervision of a professor who had also been trained in the methodology.

The technical coordination team, which oversaw the microenterprise/gender training in collaboration with the Presidential Council on Women's Equity and MPS Department of Labour Relations, expanded into a policy group on women's equity and economic issues that was led by the Council; it also participated in numerous other policy and advisory groups. The women's economic equality component formed part of the Council's national plan for women's equity, which was an important achievement.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations:

With regard to the labour relations component, the social actors are committed to continue training activities but cannot maintain the neutral space for social dialogue that the project created, which was a remarkable achievement because it enabled project activities to go forward. The USDOL and ILO should undertake resource mobilization to continue the project or equivalent activities.

With regard to the women's economic equality component, given the demonstrated efficacy and impact of the new methodology, it is recommended that USDOL and ILO assist in the mobilization of additional resources in order to continue the training and further, that

the ILO request the Government of Colombia to provide resources to continue the training.

Lessons Learned:

Project design: When more than a year passes between project design and implementation, project design should be revised to take into account changed circumstances. It should be grounded in the political realities of a country and take into account the realistic capabilities of what the implementing agency can deliver. The project design should not attempt to combine entirely different projects under the same structure. In countries where labour relations are difficult, a project that aims to improve them should look for small outputs and successes rather than be ambitious but have no results.

Partnerships: In countries where labour relations are difficult, a project should be modest in relation to its goals for partners, know the partners very well, and use a very diplomatic approach, as well as a commitment to transparency. How successfully partners work together is beyond a project's control.

Management: Project management performance is enhanced by adequate technical support and regular, direct communications with other entities that have management and coordination responsibilities. The effective use of consultants and technical assistance is key to successful project management.

Implementation: The implementation of project activities at the regional and local levels produces concrete, on the ground results, as opposed to top-down activities that may not reach or respond to local needs.

Performance Monitoring System: The development of a performance monitoring plan by means of telephone conference is inefficient and should not be attempted again.

Sustainability: Project participants may agree to sustain project activities but the underlying expectation is that funding will continue. Planning for sustainability should be a well-defined activity in project design that begins with the start-up of project operations.