Evaluation Summaries

International Labour Office

Evaluation: Evaluation: Promoting Democracy through Fundamental principles and rights at work and Tripartism in Nigeria (NIDEC Project)

Quick Facts

Country: Nigeria

Final Evaluation: June 2005

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Social Dialogue

Evaluation Management:
Social Dialogue Sector

Evaluation Team: William Millsap

Project Start: Aug. 2001

Project End: Dec. 2005

Project Code: NIR/00/50/USA

Donor: United States (US$ 1,348,856)

Background & Context

Project Background: The ILO in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labour implemented the project known as the Nigerian Declaration Project (NIDEC). It was designed to promote the application of the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The focus of the pilot project was twofold: 1) supporting the reform of the existing labour laws in Nigeria and 2) building institutions and strengthening local capacity for solving labour disputes through tripartite social dialogue (Ministry of Labour, unions and employers' associations).

Nigeria was considered an early candidate for this type of project since it had only recently held its first democratic elections (1999) after 29 years (1966-1979 and 1983-1999) of military rule. Nigeria was reviewing its labour laws for possible reforms. Since it was seeking to improve its image as an open and pluralistic society, the new government was open to a tripartite approach. Social dialogue also was seen to bear potential to help in some of the other daunting tasks the new government was confronted with: rebuilding an oil- and gas-based economy, defusing long-standing ethnic and religious tensions, institutionalizing democracy, and overcoming endemic corruption and mismanagement.

Evaluation Context: The purpose of the final evaluation was to: determine if the project has achieved its stated objectives and explain why/why not; assess and document the effects of project activities and outputs on the tripartite clients; assess the likelihood that outputs will be sustained; and report on lessons learned. Data collection methods consisted of document review, key informant interviews and focus group sessions with selected tripartite representatives.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project strategy and objectives: Both of the project's main objectives - labour law revision and capacity building in key institutions dealing with labour issues - were relevant to the Nigerian context, but were not adequately vetted with local stakeholders prior to project start-up. The Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) observed in numerous discussions with stakeholders, that the objectives of the project had not been widely shared among the various partner organizations. As a result, full understanding of the project was restricted to a few individuals. The revised strategic approach to labour law revision - i.e. the creation of the Committee of Experts - was a useful step in ensuring to respect the interests of all parties. The strategic approach to strengthening institutional capacity in gender mainstreaming and social dialogue, in particular through training of trainers, was only partially successful due to the amount of time involved in gaining acceptance of such issues.

Impacts on target groups: The most substantial impact of NIDEC was in the area of labour law reform. The provisions of the new labour laws, revised by the tripartite experts, carry the potential for a significant improvement in labour negotiations, labour standards, occupational safety and health, and employee compensation. Project stakeholders were exposed for the first time to the process of social dialogue and acknowledged that this exposure gave them an important insight into the benefits of tripartite cooperation on labour issues. Stakeholders acknowledged the general benefit of training and the opportunity to "dialogue" with tripartite groups but they also said they had expected more by the way of grants or materials given directly to individual organization to build their capacity. While all stakeholders acknowledged the general benefit of project training on the ILO Declaration, one third of focus group interviewees indicated that more specialized training in institution-specific interests could have produced more results.

The project implementation: Project implementation was handicapped by logistics, poor understanding of project objectives by beneficiaries and, in particular, a sluggish Nigerian bureaucratic environment, elections, slow access to the office promised by the Government of Nigeria (GoN), and an ad hoc approach to training activity implementation. Over the life of the project, four different work plans were developed. Changes were made to meet beneficiary expectations or to resolve unanticipated logistical issues. For example, the GoN was tardy in providing office space as promised and there were considerable problems with maintaining reliable communications between the project office in Abuja and the ILO office in Lagos. Less than 50 percent of the project's planned training activities were ever carried out, despite the extension of the project period and the addition of over $1.1 million in project funding. Given these delays and the inability of the GoN to agree to a CTA replacement, the ILO and the DOL jointly decided to terminate the project early. Once this decision was made, approximately $1 million of the extension funds were reprogrammed for other projects. The project successfully completed the revision of Nigeria's labour laws and the ratification of outstanding ILO Conventions within the extended timeframe.

Sustainability: Additional benefits may accrue to the target institutions from the follow-on "Department for International Development" (DFID) project due to start in June 2005. NIDEC can be credited with drawing DFID attention to its social dialogue and institutional strengthening initiatives, which served to interest DFID in making those elements central to its anticipated new project, thereby creating an opportunity for sustaining the work that NIDEC had begun. Even though the project never developed or implemented a formal sustainability plan, revision of the labour laws conducted under the auspices of the project should be sustained through the revised legislation currently in process of approval.

Effectiveness of project management: ILO/Geneva and DOL should have been more assertive concerning the delays in the implementation schedule and the poor quality data submitted in the Project Quarterly Reports. Project Quarterly reports lacked substance and provided little by way of detail on the project performance. In retrospect, it is also surprising that the mid-term evaluation (Oct 2002) was so laudatory about the project management, when, in fact, the project admittedly was struggling to overcome problems associated with working in Nigeria. Project reporting left a great deal to be desired; however, the ILO and DOL officials did not insist that the CTA finalize a performance monitoring plan to serve as the basis for measuring project performance.

Effectiveness of project performance monitoring: The very general draft indicators developed during the performance monitoring workshop were never refined into useful tools to measure progress. The project operated over its entire life without any verifiable indicators to measure its progress or performance. This hampered the ability of the project to demonstrate quantitatively the progress being achieved towards expected results.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations: The evaluation recommends that in the future, projects similar to NIDEC should be designed with a greater focus on objectives and indicators—under NIDEC, the objective for revision of labour laws was clear, but the component on strengthening institutional capacity was never clearly defined in terms of measurable outcomes.

Potential partners should be consulted as early as possible in the design stage so that they take ownership of the design and more time should be allocated to design and implement a project like NIDEC where the interaction among social partners is critical to its success.

Realistic timelines should be applied to project implementation work plans based on a thorough knowledge of the local culture, working conditions and receptivity of social partner to project goals.

Training activities should be driven by a formal needs assessment of partners and not by the needs of the project to carry out training activities; it must also be made clear to partners that the purpose of the project is to provide technical assistance and not direct grants or other materials. Project training should be evaluated on its quality, substance, and relevance to the participants.

Key project personnel should be hired based on the skills set required for the job, with emphasis on strong management and administrative skills for CTAs. Where possible, projects should make greater use of local expertise and institutional resources to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of projects.

Quarterly reporting formats should be standardized, detailing the status of each project activity, the percent of total activities completed, underway, pending, or eliminated; as feasible, each activity should be linked to the amount of resources allocated, used, or returned to the general project budget for reallocation.

No project should be allowed to go forward without a Performance Monitoring Plan in place with well-defined performance indicators to measure progress towards project objectives.

Formal guidelines and notification procedures should be established by DOL and its implementing partners concerning early termination of project activities.