



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: Strengthening the Social Partners Capacity for Promotion of Social Dialogue in Jordan

Quick Facts

Country: Jordan

Mid-Term Evaluation: October 2005

Mode of Evaluation: independent

Technical Area: Social Dialogue

Evaluation Management: Arab States

Evaluation Team: Keith Brown

Project Start: November 2001

Project End: July 2006

Project Code: JOR/01/50/USA

Donor: United States (US\$ 1,387,240)

Key words: institutionalizing social dialogue, promoting genuine, independent representative employers and workers organizations, promoting a more adequate legal frame work

Background & Context

Project Background: The primary objectives of the project are geared towards creating an enabling industrial relations environment and building the capacity of social partners at various levels. Technical advice delivered through the project team and its resources is intended to promote and institutionalize tripartism and social dialogue. The training element of the project is intended to support the advisory component, and is addressed to the industrial relations actors – workers’ and employers’ representatives at various levels, and government officials – both individually and jointly. The training component provides not only direct support to key actors. It also provides direct support to build the capacity to train through the training of trainers in the key industrial relations subjects of collective

bargaining, workplace cooperation and other workplace management related issues.

The project’s strategy focuses on the achievement of four immediate objectives (IO): promotion of an adequate legal framework (IO1); establishment of sustainable and effective social dialogue mechanism (IO2); enhancement of collective bargaining at the national, sectoral and enterprise levels (IO3); and enhancement of labour administration system (IO4).

Evaluation Context: The overarching purpose of the evaluation was “to better understand project progress towards its objectives and anticipated impact, to assess the likelihood for sustaining any potential impacts, and to identify any necessary or beneficial mid-course adjustments to the project.”

The evaluation team used multiple data sources and data collection methods: key informant interviews, group interviews, review of project documents and unstructured/informal direct observation.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Project implementation: The project managers pursued an implementation approach that focused project activities on the establishment and strengthening of a 36 member National Tripartite Committee (later expanded and renamed the National Committee on Social Dialogue). By raising the awareness, skills and understanding of National Committee members, the project hoped to establish a Jordanian working group that would provide advocacy and technical

expertise to supplement and catalyze the work of the project team. Four sub-committees were organized from the original 36 member committee, and helped the project pursue three principle achievements: (a) the establishment of a Jordanian economic and social council; (b) the establishment of a tripartite consultative body in the Ministry of Labour (MOL), and (c) reforms to the labour code.

This choice was made according to the prevailing situation in Jordan. Despite the fact that Jordan has ratified convention 98, the situation remains to be characterized by the lack of an adequate legal framework that promotes and organizes collective bargaining at different levels and by the lack of genuine representative and independent employers and workers organizations. The counterpoint to the emphasis on establishing and strengthening the National Committee has been the comparative lack of attention by the project to activities intended to support IO3 and IO4. Though project management intends to turn more of its attention over the coming year to activities that support these project objectives, it is questionable that adequate time and resources remain to both consolidate the changes the project has initiated and make meaningful and sustainable advances in collective bargaining and labour administration at the national level.

Current constraints to project implementation appear limited, but real. Instability at the MOL has been a constraint in the past but is not currently an issue. Even if a change in MOL leadership occurs, disruption to the project would likely be minimal given the maturity of the project and its many supporters. Amongst different civil servants from different ministries the project is supported as well from representatives of the civil society, including employers and workers' representatives and a number of parliament members and academic circles at the MOL. Resistance by a number of representatives of some institutions, including some members of the government and parliament, is of a greater concern. The project's commendable work to develop

recommendations and a draft legal code for the establishment of the economic and social council and the tripartite consultative group at the MOL, and its progress in terms of reforming Jordan's labour laws, could easily stall if there is active Parliamentary resistance.

However, major project activities – seminars, study tours and workshops – have been very effective in building the awareness and understanding of National Committee members with regard to the value and requirements of social dialogue.

Performance monitoring: by the project has been limited. The project is currently collecting and reporting performance data for only a few performance indicators. The project is not using performance information to make management decisions. However, the project should be able to make its performance monitoring system more operational in fairly short order. Importantly, the lack of an active performance monitoring system has had little negative impact on the management of the project to date. Because management decisions have not yet been focused at the Immediate Objective (IO) level – decisions have instead been directly related to project activities supporting the strengthening of the National Committee, the establishment of mechanisms for social dialogue, or the reform of labour laws.

Project impact and benefits: The project has produced substantial and important benefits for project beneficiaries. The project benefit most frequently and most enthusiastically noted by beneficiaries is the reality of open and productive dialogue between social partners. Project beneficiaries emphasized that the ability of social partners to exchange ideas and positions, and to actively listen to each other, represents a sea change for labour-management-government relations in Jordan. In addition, and of potentially far-reaching impact, is the project's apparently successful push for sweeping changes in the process by which Jordan's economic and social policies are discussed and debated – namely, the

establishment of an economic and social council and a tripartite consultative council in the MOL. Finally, labour law reform supported by the project and aimed at bringing the Jordanian labour code more in line with international standards represents yet another important project benefit. It is important to recognize that the work of the project is not yet done – the move towards social dialogue in Jordan is in its infancy, labour law reform has not yet been enacted (and the ability of the MOL to effectively implement new labour standards is also in question), and social partners do not yet have the depth or breadth of skills, understanding and experience to independently pursue productive social dialogue and legal reform.

Project sustainability: Sustainability of the project's activities, of its efforts to promote and facilitate social dialogue in Jordan, and of the benefits it has produced to date, is uncertain. It is unlikely that by the scheduled project completion date of September 2006 the requirements for genuine and productive social dialogue at the national, sectoral and enterprise levels will exist in Jordan.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations: The current work plan should be assessed regarding potential benefits of activities planned in support of IO3 and IO4. If it is possible to implement activities that result in important progress towards either IO by September of 2006, such activities should be quickly implemented. However, if managers conclude that substantial progress towards IO3 or IO4 is unlikely, the work plan should be revised and resources should be shifted to support the full institutionalization and consolidation of the project's current work under IO1 and IO2, dropping IOs 3 and 4.

Efforts to inform and educate Members of Parliament about social dialogue, labour law reform and the project's role in promoting improvements in both areas should be continued and intensified.

If politically feasible, the project should explore ways to gather input from social partners outside of the "project sphere" regarding project-proposed legal reforms and social dialogue mechanisms. By asking for reactions, concerns, or suggested improvements, such outreach will, at best, improve the legal reforms and social dialogue vehicles being promoted and supported by the project. At worst it will build awareness, understanding and support for the project and its objectives.

To facilitate on-going project learning and evaluation, post-activity assessments for any project event should be conducted through the use of brief questionnaires completed by participants following each project activity.

A substantial effort should be made to improve the working relationship between the project and ILO/Beirut's financial support office.

Project managers should move to operationalize the project's performance monitoring system since this will enhance the value of the project's final evaluation; further, the performance monitoring system will greatly facilitate the longer term management of the project.

For the remainder of the project, the priority for project resources and activities should be to ensure full implementation of the economic and social council, the MOL tripartite consultative council and the labour law reforms currently under consideration.

To the extent feasible, the project should support and facilitate efforts aimed at moving towards stronger unions and employers groups. Genuinely independent and credible unions and employers groups will help to improve social dialogue and expand collective bargaining.

Every effort should be made to identify additional sources of funding in order to allow the project to operate for at least one additional year. Additional funding will permit the project to consolidate and expand on its successes in facilitating the use of social dialogue and reforming Jordan's labour code.