



Evaluation Summaries

Special action programme to combat forced labour (SAP-FL) 2006-09

Quick Facts

Countries: Inter-regional

Type of Evaluation: Cyclical/final

Date of Evaluation: May 2010

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Forced labour

Evaluation Management: DECLARATION

Evaluation Team: Ms Judy Walker

Donors: Netherlands GLO/06/59/NET

Keywords: Forced labour, bonded labour, ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

Background & Context

The Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour [SAP-FL] is part of the ILO's programme to promote the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The aim of which is to assist countries – with the support of technical cooperation – to respect, promote and realize the principles concerning non-discrimination, freedom of association/collective bargaining and the elimination of forced labour. SAP-FL was established following the Director-General's global report on forced labour, June 2001. The elimination of child labour – the fourth principle of the 1998 Declaration – is addressed by a separate programme, the

International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

Since its inception, SAP-FL has relied entirely on voluntary contributions – in the form of technical cooperation (or extra-budgetary) projects. It has proved to be a popular and relatively well-supported area of the Declaration attracting a significant amount of funding. Between December 2006 and July 2011 – the “core” funding amounted to \$9,296,573.

The goal of SAP-FL has remained consistent since 2002. It acts to combat forced labour and exploitative human trafficking - areas that have been called slavery, contemporary slavery or extreme labour exploitation. Its work addresses human rights and it tackles the causes and consequences of human vulnerability and poverty. Forced labour is a contentious area that is almost impossible to eliminate unless there is a political will to do so on the part of Governments and Social Partners.

Preceding and during the evaluation period, there have been enormous, far-reaching, world-changing events. Global economic recession has impacted on labour markets with deeply felt consequences. In developing countries, this period has seen further promotion of the Paris Declaration and follow-up principles alongside greater pressures to collaborate within the UN system.

During the period under evaluation, the ILO itself has been undergoing a number of policy shifts and organisational systems modifications. There have been major policy introductions - the concept of Decent Work now firmly underpins all ILO thinking and a further Declaration on Social Justice and Fair Globalisation was adopted. Managerially, the ILO made many changes in this period including promoting the Decent Work Country Programmes [DWCPs], establishing an additional form of funding [the Regular Budget Supplementary Account – RBSA] and making significant shifts in favour of managing for results. At the commencement of 2010, there is a new Strategic Policy Framework in place for 2010 –2015 which is to be implemented by a results-driven programme and budget for the 2010 –11 and subsequent biennia.

Within this maelstrom of policy and operational changes, SAP-FL has had the unchanging goal of eliminating all forms of forced labour worldwide by 2015. We think this is quite a challenge.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This is an independent evaluation of the SAP-FL programme that covers the four years (2006 to end-2009) since it was last evaluated. The purpose of the evaluation is to consider:

- Progress and achievements of SAP-FL since the previous evaluation in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of programme outputs and outcomes;
- The main lessons from SAP-FL's operation since 2006, taking into account the recommendations from the previous evaluation;
- Recommendations for the future operation and orientation of the SAP-FL, taking into account the current policy environment and ILO resource mobilization strategy.

The evaluation looks at the totality of SAP-FL's work – including its core support received from donors but, according to the

ToRs, it excludes its field-based operational projects. However, the evaluation has taken into account available summaries of lessons learned from field-based operational projects – because they are important to the dynamic of the core programme and to future choices.

Clients for this report are SAP-FL donors; members of the SAP-FL team and their collaborators; other ILO staff working on the Declaration programme and closely linked programmes (GENDER, IPEC, MIGRANT); the ILO Managers in Sector 1; PARDEV and Evaluation Departments and the ILO Social Partners – who take an active interest in this subject. Additionally, this evaluation is undertaken in connection with the Netherlands/ILO Cooperation Programme. Other donors may also be interested in this evaluation including Irish-Aid on whom SAP-FL core funding now depends.

Methodology of evaluation

This evaluation has followed the methods described by the ILO for evaluation studies – which are based on the OECD/DAC framework for evaluation. The Evaluation Department offered clear verbal guidance at the outset of the assignment.

Evidence has been taken from reports and papers – giving special emphasis and attention to the proposal and progress documents provided to SAP-FL's three core donors¹. Additional information has been taken from the “lesson-learning” papers provided by some (not all) operational field projects. Other sources of information are ILO publications (by SAP-FL & others), Governing Body Papers & published documents. During a week in Geneva and subsequently, we have also conducted a series of interviews and held electronic or phone conversations with involved people.

From these documents a series of tables, matrices and summaries have been produced. These now form the annexes of this report.

¹ DFID; The Netherlands; Irish-Aid

Occasionally, where the accuracy or comprehensiveness of information has been incomplete, we have “tested” points or statements on the staff of the SAP-FL team for their views. The SAP-FL team has been actively engaged. They have been very helpful. Their inputs have helped to finalise the report.

During the first week – spent in Geneva – we conducted a “time-line” exercise with the SAP-FL team. They constructed a time-bound history of SAP-FL events and outputs. [This is too large to be annexed – but it is available electronically]. At the end of the same week, we held a brief feed-back session in which some suggestions for future direction of the SAP-FL programme were discussed [See Annex 7].

The Evaluator brings a measure of prior involvement with the SAP-FL programme. The “lens” adopted to review this programme is predominantly one that draws on “managing for results”.

Main Conclusions

We consider that the programme’s objectives were right and relevant for the task. They are also relevant to international policy and agencies, changing international economic circumstances, demands from donors and member states with their social partners. The programme is relevant to the ILO’s policies on Decent Work and the more recent Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

We believe that the programme has been effective. But, we also think that more work should be commissioned to consolidate the learning from a range of operational projects with particular focus on Brazil, China and India. There have been effective steps forward in defining and refining data methods. There is more to be done to consolidate this. On policy / legal definitions, SAP-FL has contributed to international understanding on human trafficking and forced labour. The materials

produced for training law enforcers have filled a gap. These are also believed to be effective. A supportive and innovative series of partnerships have been created with the social partners. There is good reason to think that effectiveness has been achieved with the employers’ and workers’ group.

We have not found systematic evidence that would allow us to make an informed judgement about efficiency.

There are several programme outputs that can be considered to be sustainable. But this does not include the current funding arrangements or the transaction costs of reporting to many donors. Forced Labour is a topic that will constantly shift in its location, size and impact – and therefore will require continuing dynamic support from a “knowledge base” the funding of which, presently, is insecure and inconsistent.

In terms of the past four years of management of the SAP-FL programme, we consider that more could have been done to apply well-established business management tools. In this period, the ILO systems have not always been demanding enough. There is a dearth of systematic reporting and information and analysis of the results of the programme.

Finally, we think that the SAP-FL has a strong comparative advantage because of its close involvement with operational programming and the motivation and drive of its staff.

Recommendations and Lessons Learnt

1. We recommend that the ILO maintains the SAP-FL Unit. It is a knowledge unit and needs to continue its work. Without a SAP-FL core unit, the elimination of forced labour activities of the ILO will diminish in integrity and dynamism.
2. We believe that the objectives adopted by SAP-FL are the right and relevant combination – but SAP-FL needs to test

this. SAP-FL should undertake work to extract the lessons learned from its operational programmes in China, India, Brazil and the Caucasus, reflecting also on what has been learned from operations elsewhere. We believe that these will provide a focus for a future strategy.

3. SAP-FL is advised to reassess the meaning and roll-out of plans to create “a global alliance”. We believe that a rethink should take place around the objective for creating a global alliance. The level of ambition may need to be adjusted.
4. For the benefit of all donors as well as the unit, any future operational projects need to include sufficient financing and a plan for lesson learning and evaluating the project’s contribution to the SAP-FL strategy. Operational projects should all be designed to capture learning. This is best achieved by establishing, from the outset, a hypothesis that is being field tested. As it does this, the Knowledge Centre of SAP-FL needs to consciously maintain its comparative advantage of being operationally focused.
5. This is the right time for the Unit to review its role, progress and strategy. SAP-FL should reconceptualise its role – being more explicit about its comparative advantage as a “Knowledge Unit” and identifying what this entails. SAP-FL would be well advised to look around for management examples of other “knowledge units”. It can build upon the precedents of other units such as IPEC and Better Work. Examples may come from inside the ILO or from other organisations.
6. SAP-FL should spend 2010 consolidating its future strategy and direction. Work needs to begin on this immediately because preparations for the 2012 – 14 biennium will begin by the summer of 2010. SAP-FL would benefit from a clear “mission statement” that sets out exactly

what it wants to deliver. The general idea is that SAP-FL positions itself to be able to deliver advice and expert support (i.e. an approach) to member states.

7. SAP-FL should present its strategy to senior managers asking for guidance on the future of the Unit and seeking approval for suggestions on the direction of combating forced labour in the ILO. A strategy should include options for continuing or accelerating the elimination of forced labour. These choices will each imply different funding levels.
8. Good practice suggests that SAP-FL needs to learn and apply techniques for managing for results. There are many instruments that SAP-FL can borrow and adapt for this. These would ideally be based on a new strategy for the next five years. A strategy should demonstrate that it understands the differences between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact. It should include targets that are measurable in quality, quantity and time. These can be adjusted over time as necessary. Targets should take account of evaluation requirements to demonstrate relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. SAP-FL must put systems in place for regular and accurate reporting against its targets.
9. SAP-FL should be celebrating its success stories and the advances it has already accomplished. We encourage it to produce the evidence of outcomes that it now requires.
10. SAP-FL will require new funding support. At this stage of maturity, these should not all be extra-budgetary as these have proved to be insecure and inconsistent. New methods of funding the involvement of social partners should be identified. The link with IOE has obviously been very positive for both organisations and steps should be taken to try to maintain some sort of close working relationship. It

may be possible for IOE to propose ways to fund this link in future. Funding for the Workers' activities is likely to have to come from the RBSA via the country programmes.

11. It would also be appropriate to identify when and how to measure trends in global forced labour victim numbers to check against the (over-optimistic) target date of 2015.

The key lesson arising from this evaluation is that SAP-FL needs to redirect its effort to planning for, and capturing lessons, arising from its work in HQ and in country operations. The best way to achieve this is to design and manage projects with this in mind. The evidence base for the knowledge SAP-FL develops needs to be credible and systematic.

The second lesson learned is that SAP-FL needs to reconsider its level of ambition taking account of its comparative advantage, its international position and its realistic level of funding support. We suggest this is accomplished by setting out a carefully planned strategy or business plan that targets time and results.