



Evaluation Summaries

ILO/Japan Managing Cross-Border Movement of Labour in Southeast Asia

Quick Facts

Countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand

Final Evaluation: November 2010

Mode of Evaluation: independent

Technical Area: Labour Migration

Evaluation Management: ILO ROAP

Evaluator: Hariette K. Mingo

Project Start: November 2005

Project End: December 2010

Project Code: RAS/05/M14/JPN ;
RAS/06/M09/JPN; RAS/07/M10/JPN ;
RAS/08/09M/JPN; RAS/08/13M/JPN ;
RAS/09/06M/JPN; RAS/09/04M/JPN

Donor: US\$ 2,327,388 Government of Japan

Key Words: labour migration, labour standards, migrant workers.

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The PRODOC reviewed the challenges of countries in the Asian region and stated the vision ‘to ensure that labour migration is managed properly for the benefit of all. Asian countries have sought to make the processes of labour migration more orderly and organized in order to provide certain basic guarantees of labour protection and to achieve beneficial outcomes for origin and destination societies’.

The project was designed with the **development objective** to assist participating countries to promote decent employment opportunities at

home and abroad through effective labour migration management.

Immediate objectives

1. Countries will have improved information and knowledge critical to formulation, implementation and evaluation of national migration policies and practices
2. Governments will have formulated and implemented coherent labour migration policies and programmes, which respect the fundamental rights of migrant workers and are beneficial to employment, economic growth and development in both origin and destination countries
3. Capacity of the governments, social partners and other specific target groups for good governance of migration processes will have been strengthened
4. Countries will have established efficient, safe and low cost remittance system and new initiatives for supporting services on micro-enterprise development in migrant workers’ communities.

The project’s interventions outlined in the PRODOC, were ‘to build capacities for formulating coherent and comprehensive policies on labour migration and effectively administering them and promoting closer cooperation between origin and host countries’ through the following project strategy:

- Promotion of a more informed debate involving the tripartite groups on the

employment and treatment of foreign workers in destination countries.

- Promotion on how best to provide national workers with better employment options at home and abroad.
- Contribute to the effectiveness of groups advocating ILO principles in the reform of policy and administration. Workers' and employers' organizations, civic groups, migrant associations and other organizations that can effectively push for reform would be targeted for assistance under the project.
- Dedicate considerable project resources for promoting bilateral, local level consultations on how to deal with practical problems in policy implementation. Attention will be given to local authorities to give them a say on how policies are to be carried out.

Present situation of project

The five-year project approved in 2005 for funding by the government of Japan started actual implementation in September 2006. A mid-term evaluation was conducted in 2008, as part of a cluster evaluation. The project ends in December 2010.

Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

In accordance with the ToR, the final evaluation examined whether the project has achieved its objectives, and to what extent it has contributed to the ILO Decent Work country outcomes on labour migration in participating countries, and the ILO Plan of Action on Labour Migration in Asia Pacific. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the project management has acted upon the recommendations of the mid-term independent evaluation; looked at the lessons learnt and any possible good practices particularly on the labour migration management identified by the project, the synergy with the other ILO projects, and the potential collaboration between the labour sending and the labour receiving countries in the Mekong Sub-region.

Scope

The final evaluation took into account all interventions, geographical coverage and the whole period of the project. It focused on the project implementation, its achievements, impact, lessons learnt and any challenges and opportunities. It took into consideration any collaboration and interactions with other ILO projects/programmes and with other partners' programmes/initiatives.

Methodology of evaluation

The final evaluation conducted:

- A review of project documentation: the project document, annual progress reports, annual table of outputs and indicators against the achievements and outcomes, report of mid-term evaluation and final project report.
 - A review of a number of publications of the project
 - Interviews in Thailand, 1-5 November and 15 November. These included briefings with the ILO ROAP management, experts and programme officers in ILO ROAP and the Decent Work Technical Support Team Bangkok ; the CTA of the ILO/Japan programme; the project officer of other migration projects, notably the Triangle: Tripartite Action to Protect Migrant Workers from Labour Exploitation project and the CTA of the ILO/EU Going Back-Moving On project, that deals with migrants including victims of trafficking who are returning from the EU and neighbouring countries.
- Meetings were also conducted with officials of the Ministry of Labour, Thailand and with a representative of the Human Rights Development Foundation, who were involved in the implementation of the project in Thailand.
- Visits to Lao PDR (8-9 November), Cambodia (15-17 November).

- Telephone interviews with Indonesia, complemented with written questions. These included a telephone interview with Peter van Rooij, Director of the ILO Office Jakarta, Lotte Kejser, CTA Combating Forced Labour and Trafficking of Indonesian Migrant Workers project, Mohammad Nour, National Project Coordinator ILO/Japan project based in Surabaya, as well as representatives of major partners such as the Provincial Labour Office, the Migrant Union Organization, SBMI and the Indonesian Manpower Services Association, APJATI.
- Questionnaire to the focal point for the project in the Ministry of Labour, Health and Welfare of Japan, representing the donor.

It should be noted that in the PRODOC's log frame the development objective of the project has been elaborated into four immediate objectives, outputs, activities, indicators, means of verification and finally assumptions, hypothesis and risks. The log frame does not however contain (expected) outcome (s). The evaluation therefore reviewed the projected outputs and the related completed activities as deliverables of the project.

Limitations

In view of the late start of the evaluation towards the closure of the project in December 2010, the Evaluation Manager decided not to include Indonesia among the countries to be visited for the evaluation. Instead, it was decided to conduct telephone interviews with Indonesia. Difficulties were however encountered during the telephone calls. Connections were not optimal, by regular as well as by mobile phones. The information received through the calls was complemented with a written response to the questions which were sent to the ILO Jakarta Office and to the National Project Coordinator.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project faced budgetary constraints starting from FY 2008, caused by a combination of low spending levels of the project at that time and a financial reform measure in 2007 at donor level, which had as effect a 20% decrease in project funding. Low spending levels were caused by the delayed start of the project in September 2006, due to the rather late appointment of the CTA. This was reinforced by cautious spending as a response to the expected downfall in the budget.

Deficiencies in the project design have resulted in not clearly defined immediate objectives, particularly immediate objectives 2 and 4, as well as in the formulation of outputs that are beyond the direct control of the project or the ILO as have been found by the mid-term and the final evaluation.

Conclusions:

1. Overall, the project has been able, despite deficiencies in the project design and budget constraints to achieve results that are of strategic importance for the participating countries to improve the governance of labour migration. As stated, not all the outputs - formulated in the PRODOC - could possibly be tackled by the project as they are beyond the direct control and responsibility of the project or the ILO. The project has therefore partly attained its outputs and immediate objectives. Attainment was best with regard to output 1.1 and 1.5 under immediate objective 1; output 2.1 and 2.2 under immediate objective 2; all outputs under objective 3 were addressed in each country, however in a varying limited degree; and finally output 4.4. under immediate objective 4, but limited to Indonesia.
2. The results are profound in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Indonesia; in **Cambodia** with the formulation of a Labour Migration Policy, the revision of Sub-Decree 57 on the sending of Khmer Workers abroad and the formation of the Cambodian Association of Recruitment Agencies; in **Lao PDR**, with the Decree on Employment Services and the

development of an Employment Operations Manual that will help in establishing and managing employment services, in **Indonesia** with the amendment of the local Ordinance, the formation of a Migrant Workers Working Group, its structured consultations, the active engagement of the Migrant Workers Union and its growing outreach in many districts in East Java, and the cooperatives formed by migrant workers.

3. Compared to the achievements in the previous countries, the achievements in **Thailand** are less profound, although there are indications that perceptions and attitudes are changing among the social partners, which may lead to the development of policies that are more supportive towards the protection and promotion of migrant workers rights. One outstanding example is the initiative of the Standing Committee on Labour of Thailand's House of Representatives to review and amend the Alien Employment Act.
4. With the aforementioned achievements, the project has contributed significantly towards recognition of the urgent need to improve governance of labour migration. In each participating country the project has contributed to attaining tangible results for the government and the ILO to build on. These are windows of opportunity for strengthening ILO's role in establishing labour migration management policies as partners are looking up to the ILO for further assistance.
5. The project has contributed to achieving the Decent Work Country programme priorities in the participating countries as well as PALMAP and MFLM, as described in the following chapters.
6. The project has contributed to improving practices of social dialogue and has contributed to greater awareness of international labour standards and ILO's policy frameworks concerning the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers.
7. The project has been less successful in developing economic activities to boost local economies in the target countries, with the exception of Indonesia, where through entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, micro-finance training and strengthening of migrant workers' cooperatives, migrant workers are stimulated and trained to invest their earnings more profitably for themselves and their families, that will ultimately benefit the communities where they reside.
8. The project was not very successful in improving remittance services, particularly for Burmese, Cambodian and Laotian migrant workers in Thailand, except for the publication on *Migrant workers remittances from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Synthesis report on survey findings in three countries and good practices*. Sensitization of financial institutions to support migrant workers' access to financial services, including services for safe and efficient transfer of remittances, did not lead to groundbreaking initiatives due to the poor financial infrastructure and complicated banking procedures in both sending and receiving countries. On a limited scale, commercial banks in Thailand have started introducing ATMs with services in the Burmese language.
9. The project has operated predominantly at national level by advocating and facilitating processes leading to the development of labour migration policy and procedures to promote orderly migration, improving working conditions and better protection for migrant workers. It has not reached the stage of introducing interventions that link and involve both sending and receiving countries directly.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations

The final evaluation concurs with the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation and adds the following summarized recommendations addressed to ILO ROAP and the Decent Work Technical Support Team:

1. The work undertaken thus far by the ILO/Japan project be built upon and expanded.
2. The ILO should seek to be technically involved in the meetings of the ASEAN Committee on the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration.
3. It is recommended that ILO identifies opportunities for linking ILO projects with other UN agencies, IOM as well as Intra-governmental committees (such as COMMIT) and Working Groups on Human Trafficking, that are active in the area of managing labour migration, especially in circumstances where ILO's presence at the country-level is limited like in Lao PDR.
4. It is recommended that ILO facilitate learning and exchange of country-level experiences between countries.
5. It is recommended that the ILO looks into providing follow-up training and equipment support to Lao PDR, to ensure that the project's investments in developing a Labour Migration Information system are not wasted.

Good practices

The evaluation noted the following good practices:

1. The engagement between government and civil society in Cambodia and Indonesia leading to the integration of civil society concerns in the Labour Migration Policy (Cambodia); common efforts to revise the local Ordinance as well as the formation of a Migrant Workers Working Group that holds structured regular consultations involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders

(Indonesia). This is an important achievement ensuring broader societal involvement in the advocacy and monitoring of migrant workers' interests.

2. In the absence of a country-level project team of the ILO/Japan project, specifically the MOLVT Cambodia and MOLSW Lao PDR have been given a lead role in the implementation of project activities. This has had a positive impact on these partners, who by taking responsibility and by doing, have gained knowledge and insights into the complex dimensions of labour migration and are able to articulate views in negotiations and meetings dealing with labour migration.
3. The synergies between ILO projects and ILO experts, in particular in the technical assistance provided to Lao PDR, leading to the development of the Employment Operations Manual, with proper integration of an overseas employment component. The same applies to the coordinated approach in Indonesia, where two ILO migrant workers projects were seeking to complement and reinforce each other.
4. The push that was given by the project at the final stage of the formulation of the Employment Decree in Lao PDR. Convening consultations to review the text of the Draft Decree was a good opportunity to ensure that international labour standards are properly addressed in what was not entirely the fruit of ILO's labour. The consultations at the final stage have given critical to give the Decree a final push.
5. The cooperation with social partners who have mobilizing power and capacity to reach out to larger segments of society and the media (SBMI in Indonesia and HDRF in Thailand) is of strategic importance for the outreach of the project.
6. The social dialogue in Thailand involving Burmese migrant workers communities, NGOs and the provincial labour office in Tak Province, through para-legal training and consultations has contributed to a

consultative approach and improved relations between the provincial labour office and representatives of migrant workers.

7. The consultations organized in Thailand, that included bringing together governmental bodies in 5 provinces in the North of Thailand with a high density of migrant workers, is a practice that can be replicated in other provinces. Participants in the social dialogue included hospital workers, immigration officials, labour and social welfare officials, police and local administrators to stimulate coordination and cooperation. The dialogues have been very fruitful in discussing problems regarding referral of migrant workers and victims of irregular migration. It appeared that officials did not know each other. It has been observed that the dialogues have improved service delivery and consultations between concerned offices.
8. The attempt to help the target countries and more specifically migrant workers to develop and promote savings and productive investments of remittances, has not only looked into openings in the formal banking system but also into developing alternative savings and investments opportunities that are traditionally closer to the local communities such as (savings) cooperatives in Indonesia.
9. The involvement of Thai experts in the trainings organized in Cambodia and Lao PDR is a good practice. This contributes to mutual exchange and a better understanding of the challenges and constraints that both Cambodia and Lao PDR are facing as sending countries and Thailand as receiving country.
10. The timely development of a follow-up project, specifically the Triangle project, including assuring its funding is a good practice. This enables the ILO to provide timely follow-up to the achievements of the ILO/Japan project.

Lessons learned

1. The most important lesson to be learned from this project is that a well-designed project document as well as the timely delivery of resources (both financial and human), is vital for a project.
2. However, even a well-designed document is the product of knowledge and understanding that is bound to a specific time. Especially with development work it is necessary to constantly monitor changes. Project partners, more specifically the ILO and the donor should show flexibility to adequately respond to these changes.
3. In future when designing regional project that involved number of countries, its design must be very thorough and criteria for selecting countries should be clear and its selection can promote the regional nature of the interventions.
4. A reality check or a rapid assessment at the very start of the project would have helped in discovering incorrect or out-dated assumptions, irrelevant or (over) ambitious deliverables and to correct them. Moreover, given the fact that this project started implementation in October 2006, it would also have been appropriate to adjust the timeline and the breakdown of the budget. The latter is certainly relevant in view of the agreement governing the spending of project funds between the ILO and the donor.
5. It is most unfortunate that even the recommendation of the mid-term evaluation to review the immediate objectives and outputs was not acted on. Although the project was half-way, the recommendations opened-up the opportunity for a revision. A revision would have given clarity about achievable outputs and the necessary budget. This would have stopped the airing of 'messages', such as the alleged shortage of funds which was often cited as the main problem of the project.