



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Independent Final Evaluation: ILO/Korea Partnership Programme Towards the Realization of the Asian Decent Work Decade (June 2009 – May 2014)

Quick Facts

Countries: *Regional*

Final Evaluation: *October 2013–February 2014*

Mode of Evaluation: *Independent*

**ILO Office Administratively backstopping the
Project:** *RO-Bangkok*

ILO Technical Backstopping Office: *DWT-BKK*

Evaluation Manager: *Pamornrat Pringsulaka*

Evaluation Consultant: *Christoph David
Weinmann*

Framework End: *May 2014*

Project Code: *RAS/13/60/ROK;
RAS/12/58/ROK; RAS/11/55/ROK;
RAS/10/55/ROK; RAS/09/50/ROK*

Donor & Project Budget: *Government of Korea
(US\$ 5,151,000)*

Keywords: *labour migration, social protection,
skills, partnership building*

vulnerable workers (Research and Policy Framework).

- By the end of the Programme, selected countries will have enhanced their capacity to formulate and implement coherent policies and frameworks to improve protection of vulnerable workers, and support sustainable productivity and growth (Capacity Building).

The Programme, moreover, works with three components: 1) competitiveness, productivity and jobs; 2) labour market governance and social protection, and 3) labour migration management.

The Strategy emphasizes capacity building as a main vehicle for achieving the objectives. The Programme is mainly based at the ILO ROAP, where Korean experts and ILO specialists jointly design and organize the implementation sub-projects that contribute to the objectives in many countries of the region.

The ILO/Korea Partnership Programme is organized in 5-year frameworks and is relatively young. The current 5-year framework ends in 2014.

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The ILO/Korea Partnership Programme strives to contribute to the realization of Decent Work in Asia through creating enabling environment to foster sustainable and productive growth (Development Objective). Immediate Objectives are:

- By the end of the Programme, participating countries will have improved their information, knowledge and policy frameworks on sustainable productivity and growth, incorporating improved protection towards

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the achievement and impact of the five-year framework in order to provide useful recommendations for future programmes and partnership between ILO and the government of Korea.

The objectives of the evaluation were twofold 1) to evaluate the five-year framework as per ILO evaluation criteria including documenting lessons learnt and; 2) to review the effectiveness of the partnership between ILO and Government of Korea .

The final evaluation covered all immediate objectives of the ILO-Korea five years framework. The evaluation included all outputs that have been

produced since the start of the programme up to now. The evaluation addressed the geographical coverage of the programme.

Methodology of evaluation

The main methodological elements of this evaluation consisted of a desk review of programme documents, meetings with available stakeholders (including Korean partner institutions involved), group discussions, field visits to Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Sri Lanka, semi-structured interviews (following the standard project evaluation criteria set), triangulation of observations in the field, as well as informed judgement.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The ILO/Korea Partnership Programme

- is fully relevant to the different processes supported in the target countries as well as to ILO and Korean higher-level strategies -- relevance of project design is ensured both by ILO specialists, ILO Country Offices and the Partnership Programme coordination at the ROAP
- has been effective in delivering its planned outputs, though not across the board and with room for improvements
- could increase its efficiency by adjusting a number of features of its operations
- could enhance effectiveness, sustainability, and impact by becoming more selective and focused in its approach and deepening the assistance provided to specific processes
- is unique and bears significant potential for up-scaling if additional resources can be mobilized. Alternatively, it needs to be more selective in order to avoid "scattering" the resources generously made available by the Korean side.
- The specific shortfalls of the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme may be characterized as teething problems of a young and dynamic partnership of both mutual and regional benefit.
- Both the ILO and the MoEL should feel encouraged to continue this partnership and increase its effectiveness, its efficiency, the sustainability of its results, and its impact in a spirit of continuous improvement.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

1. ILO and MoEL need to recognize that the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme currently is perceived in the context of a story line where an LDC has become an OECD member, and

need to mitigate against potential misapprehensions resulting from this perspective by actively seeking to place knowledge sharing by the Korean side in proper development context and by supplementing knowledge sharing with country-specific, tailor-made technical assistance.

2. ILO and MoEL should ensure that sufficient funds are available to achieve sustainable impact in a given development context. This can be done by increasing the funding available, or by limiting the number of projects funded under the programme (so as to increase the funding available to specific projects), or both.
 - Opening up to stronger cooperation with KOICA (cf. 3.13) may lead to mobilization of additional funds (while retaining a high degree of visibility for Korea).
 - Reducing the number of partner countries (e.g. to developing member countries of ASEAN) or the fields of intervention (e.g. "only OSH and skills") is another option.
3. ILO and MoEL should establish the total budget (expressed in monetary equivalents or in other suitable units, e.g. expert-months, or a mix of both) of the ILO/ Korea Partnership Programme so as to better acknowledge the full amount of the Korean contribution and so as to establish a sound basis for any programme or project cost-benefit calculations.¹
4. ILO and MoEL should make all efforts to ensure that the programme's implementation is not being held up by Korean annual budget processes. A three-year budget cycle would be appropriate to most projects respectively project phases for long-term development processes.
5. ILO and MoEL need to ensure that indicators are not only formulated, but that they are sufficiently specified (including quantity, time, and location) to allow for measurement.
 - A smaller set of specified (and hopefully reliable) indicators at outcome and impact levels should inform the Executive Committee.

¹ Note that normally even the contributions by the beneficiary countries need to be calculated for an accurate assessment.

- Monitoring of output indicators and activities is part of programme management. It provides information that facilitates management decisions and allows managers to anticipate whether planned outcomes and impact are likely to be reached during the time frame agreed, and steer the programme accordingly. This information is not essential for Executive Committee decisions, but may be drawn on selectively to provide background information and to test the validity of the intervention logic.²
6. If ILO and MoEL wish to continue supporting a relatively large number of relatively small projects in a larger number of countries, reporting formats need to be adapted accordingly. They would adopt more graphic and tabular information and make use of color codes for quick identification of problem areas so as to reduce the cost of monitoring. Deviation reporting is also an option that may facilitate monitoring.
 7. ILO and MoEL should probe more deeply into the assumptions that come with specific project strategies (intervention logics), in particular whether assumptions at the output and outcome levels lead to any risks for achieving outcome and impact. If so, either the intervention logic needs to be adapted accordingly, or, if these assumptions entail a high level of risk that cannot be mitigated for, the respective project should be canceled and the resources allocated to other projects.
 8. ILO and MoEL need to ensure that agreed higher level goals of the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme are being met independent of the availability of ILO specialists in order to maximize effectiveness. Where certain activities cannot be implemented as originally anticipated, programme and project managers must redesign the project in such a way that the agreed outcome can still be achieved (subject to a reasonable cost of the alternative design and its implementation).
 9. ILO and MoEL should ensure that all activities of the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme are coordinated with the ILO Country Offices (or Coordinators) in the respective countries at all times. This is particularly important for the organization of fellowships where the

programme may benefit from the Country Office's intimate knowledge of the country's constituents and where misunderstandings may occasionally lead to unnecessary frictions.

10. ILO and MoEL should ensure that all experts deployed, on a short-term or a long-term basis, under the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme are being prepared for and supported during their deployment. The cost of any induction trainings for experts seconded on a long-term basis will be quickly recovered by a high speed of integration into the ongoing programme. In locations where Korean long-term experts face higher cost compared with Korea, they should be compensated for the additional cost so as to not incur financial losses from their deployment.
11. ILO and MoEL should actively and regularly interact and form pragmatic alliances with KOICA in the different countries involved in the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme in order to enhance impact and visibility.
12. ILO and MoEL should ensure that any potential language issues are systematically anticipated when deploying experts under the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme.

Lessons Learnt

1. Avoid scattering resources even when your ambition is to achieve impact in a larger region. The odds are that impact will be minimal and your efforts may even go unnoticed. Furthermore, the likelihood that your impact will be sustainable is comparably low. This is a lesson learned from trying to assist many Asian countries achieving the goals of the Asian Decent Work Decade where we involved some 20 countries with a donor budget that amounted to ca. USD 5 million.
2. When labor-related departments of ILO member governments make available funds for TC projects to the ILO, they may ignore TC projects that other departments of the same government are already implementing in recipient countries. It may be mutually beneficial for both departments to cooperate in the field, however, and TC projects can benefit from such a joining of forces. ILO should encourage such cooperation to increase its leverage.
3. If we are keen on learning about the efficiency of our projects and programs, the first step is to

² Note that normally the programme management should have the autonomy to adjust inputs and outputs if it finds such adjustment will enhance the achievement of the agreed outcome.

correctly know about our cost. Efficiency relates to the relationship between inputs (activities) and outputs (results). Benefits sometimes are difficult to measure because not all of them can be expressed in monetary form, and some cannot be quantified. However, costs can always be expressed in monetary form, and we should always be able to fully account for them. Otherwise we lack the denominator of our fraction and cannot assess benefits in proportion.

4. Unless result indicators are properly specified according to quality, quantity, time, and location, it is not possible to measure whether objectives and results leading to the achievement of objectives have been reached. Some projects and programs appear to stop short of this specification. While appropriate indicators have been identified, the last step in making them operational has remained unfinished. This possibly points to insufficient attention or insufficient allocation of resources to indicator specification or monitoring and evaluation more generally.
5. Specifying and monitoring assumptions is an important task, no less important than specifying results and activities. For any project or program, careful thought not only needs to be given to the sequencing of activities and results, but also to the assumptions which go with the respective activities and results. They are inseparable elements of the same equation in a strategy designed to achieve outcomes. The logframe of the project or programme cannot go without assumptions. In our case, experts occasionally assumed that lectures and fellowships would be sufficient to trigger specific developments in the partner countries. Had these assumptions been spelled out from the start, stakeholders in partner countries and specialists could have signaled early on that this may not be sufficient in the cases concerned.