



Evaluation Summary



International
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From the Crisis towards Decent and Safe Jobs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Phase II – Mid-Term Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

Midterm Evaluation: January 2017

Evaluation Mode: Independent

Administrative Office: CO-Moscow

Technical Office: DWT-Moscow

Evaluation Consultant: Katerina Stolyarenko

Project Code: RER/13/01/FIN

Donor & Budget: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland/
USD 5.4 million

Keywords: employment policies; employability of vulnerable groups; working conditions; OSH management systems; social security policies and systems; maternity protection

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

From the Crisis towards Decent and Safe Jobs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (DW II project) supports the ILO tripartite constituents in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to implement specific decent and safe labour-related issues related to the pursuit of Decent Work. Phase II was designed as a follow-up to the project “From the Crisis towards Decent and Safe Jobs in Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, phase I” implemented by the ILO from February 2010 to February 2014.

The immediate objectives of the DW II project are three-fold: (1) Increase the Constituents’ capacity to promote more and better jobs and enhance employment opportunities for young people; (2) Enhance workplace compliance through Labour Inspection and facilitation of transitioning from informal to formal economy; and (3) Improve the capacity of constituents to extend national social protection systems.

Present Situation of the Project

The Contribution Agreement between ILO and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland for the implementation of the Phase II was officially signed in March 2014. However, the actual implementation of the Project started in August 2014 when the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) was recruited. The expected overall duration after project revision constitutes 48 months.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

Purpose: The MTE focused at reviewing the progress made towards the achievement of the project outcomes, looking for ways on how to improve programming and implementation for the remaining duration on the project.

Scope: The MTE covers the Phase II implementation starting from March 2014 to December 2016 inclusive, in both target countries and across all thematic areas.

Clients: The principle audiences for this evaluation are the ILO (ILO HQ and DWT/CO - Moscow management and technical specialists, DW II Project team, the Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the social partners and the national project partners in the two target countries, and the donor.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation had a participatory character and was based on a mixed-method approach. Data collection procedures included:

- (i) a desk review of literature;
- (ii) preparation of an evaluation matrix with related evaluation questions;
- (iii) semi-structured interviews with key informants and stakeholders;
- (iv) surveys among ILO staff and key project partners;
- (v) direct observation during field visits to Moscow/Russia, Bishkek/Kyrgyzstan and Dushanbe/Tajikistan; and
- (vi) de-briefing consisting of discussion on MTE findings, conclusions and recommendations with senior ILO officers and project staff in Moscow.

In total, more than 70 project documents have been reviewed, 40 interviews (21-m/19-f) with key project informants and project staff have been held, and 8 ILO staff, including project staff and DWT/CO Specialists (3-m/2-f) and key project partners (1-m/2-f) took part in the surveys.

Major limitations to the methodological approach included: (a) Attribution of the project's results; (b) Sample size and (c) Memory Bias.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance: The DW II Project is highly relevant to the ILO tripartite constituents in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and, fully corresponds to their needs and priorities. The Phase II is effectively aligned with the National Development Frameworks in each target country and has clearly defined and direct relevance to the ILO priorities globally and regionally. The DW II project's use of participatory approaches that include holding regular discussions with stakeholders, organizing consultation workshops and conducting in-depth needs assessments, is effective in mobilizing stakeholder engagement in the project. These practices reinforced its relevance and stakeholder ownership by fitting the project strategies within the stakeholder priorities. Phase II underwent revision of its design after one year of implementation, which allowed to simplify and make the intervention more focused and in line with Phase I. The project strength is its light design, which allows fine-tuning during implementation.

In some areas of the logical framework, however, there is space for improvement. The components are outlined separately and there is no narrative, which demonstrates the inter-connection/synergy between these components and the overall internal coherence of the project. In addition, the project design of Phase II is lacking a clear description of a strategy for knowledge-sharing, exchange of experience and joint interventions between two target countries.

Effectiveness: Despite the challenging environment, the project shows good progress in the achievement of the set targets under all its components. More visible and substantial achievements can be seen under Outcome 3, whereas most of the activities under Outcomes 1-2 are in the process of implementation and are on track. In overall, the project team maintains positive relations with all stakeholders in each target country and engages in positive collaboration with the project donor. It also established strong collaboration with other ILO projects of DWT/CO-Moscow. Phase II has an inherent focus upon the promotion of equal opportunities and access to basic rights and services, which are supported by standard ILO generic guidelines and policies relating to gender mainstreaming and balanced representation; however, the project would benefit from articulating a more detailed strategy for gender mainstreaming and developing a strategy for strengthening the gender orientation of policy makers and the tripartite partners in particular.

Efficiency: Human resources at various levels of the ILO are engaged in the project implementation and contribute toward achieving the project outcomes. The project team is perceived by the constituents as highly professional, with highly valued expertise and deeply experienced in the matters of the project. Phase II faced financial constraints due to reduction in financing by the project donor for 2016 - 2017 and deteriorating USD-EUR exchange rates. To cope with these financial constraints, the project was very successful in complementing the project's resources through cost-sharing and in-kind contributions through other ILO projects (i.e. the Skills project and the YE project) and the usage of different ILO funding instruments. The DW II Project has established a good documentation system; however, the project's M&E system requires improvement.

Sustainability and impact orientation: The ILO undertakes all necessary steps which are under its control and within its mandate to promote sustainable project's outcomes, although the project does not have

a separate sustainability plan. In overall, the project has good signs of short-to-medium term impacts. A considerable impact can be found under Outcome 3, as the project determines the main directions for implementation of the Social Development Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic. Positive signs of impact could be seen under Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. The National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan started to apply a more quality approach when planning and conducting Labour Force Survey (LFS). In the long-run, the participation of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in LFS pilot will allow for a more accurate reflection of the actual Labour Market situation in each country and in such a way to contribute to the development of appropriate employment and labour market policies. The provision of the support to the Public Employment Service of Tajikistan will allow in the long run to form the labour market in the country. The updated National OSH profiles will be the basis of the new OSH National programmes in each target country. The enabling environment for businesses could be strengthened through the implementation of recommendations of National Assessment reports. However, limited impact could be seen so far in the area of enhancing employment opportunities for young people and enhancing workplace compliance through facilitation of transitioning from informal to formal economy.

Conclusions

The project has a high relevance, staking its claim as a foundation for the implementation of the DWCP/DW Agenda in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which is entirely consistent with the tripartite partners' priorities, as expressed in the official policy documents and ILO programming documents.

The actual project management structure is only partly effective, although it allows for reaching sustainable and meaningful results.

The DW II project has made progress in achieving its outcomes in supporting inclusive job-rich growth and improving employment opportunities, working conditions and social protection of women and men.

The Project has shown positive signs of short-term and medium-term impacts under each component. A focus on increasing sustainability and orienting the project towards long-term impact will be key for the remaining duration of the project.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

The main recommendations are summarized as follows:

General recommendations

1. The ILO should develop a clear sub-regional strategy for the office which will spell out the objectives, areas and approaches on how the regional cooperation among target countries and institutions is taking place. This will allow to make proper assessment of regional initiatives undertaken within the Phase II.
2. Taking into consideration the fluctuations in donor funding for Phase II, it is recommended for ILO to expand the donor base and explore a possibility of introduction of a Donor/Multi-Donor Support Facility for the possible next phase of DW project.
3. To strengthen the project management structure of DW II Project in Tajikistan, it is recommended to consider either hiring a National Project Coordinator or making promotion of the National Project Assistant.
4. The project should strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation System to better manage the process of monitoring, analysing, evaluating and reporting progress toward achieving the project's objectives.
5. ILO should consider the development of a comprehensive capacity-building strategy for the project which will include an approach towards institutional strengthening of the tripartite partners, as well as standards towards trainings conduction, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. A database system for capacity building component across DW II Project should also be established and should include information both on trainees and trainers prepared by the project.
6. To introduce from 2017 the Output-Based Budget (OBB) method for preparation of the DW II Project budget, which will link project expenditures to the specific activities, outputs and objectives.
7. The DW II Project could make great input in the achievement of SDGs and monitoring of the implementation of SDGs by both target countries of the project.

8. ILO should better articulate an outcome-based strategy towards gender mainstreaming in order to strengthen the gender orientation of the project activities and the activities undertaken by its partners, as well as the impact of the project.
9. ILO should develop a sustainability plan for the DW II Project which should outline both the steps that should be taken throughout the rest of the implementation period to ensure sustainability and describe how the tripartite partners intend to carry the project results forward.

Country specific recommendations

For Kyrgyzstan

1. To ensure better sustainability of the work undertaken under Social Protection Floor (SFP) initiative in Kyrgyzstan, ILO should ensure that the results of Assessment-Based National Dialogue (ABND) exercise will be incorporated in the new Social Protection Development Programme for the Population of Kyrgyzstan to be developed during 2017.
2. During the implementation of OSH risk assessment and management programme in Kyrgyzstan in 2017 – 2018, make sure that as many as possible of the 27 labour inspectors of the State Inspection for Ecological and Technical Safety under the Government of Kyrgyz Republic pass Training of Trainers (ToT).
3. For achievement of the set targets under the OSH component, ILO should continue to advocate for the preparation and approval of the OSH National Programme.
4. Further work is necessary for enhancing the capacity of constituents to address labour market inclusion regulatory aspects.

For Tajikistan

5. The Constituents, government in particular should consider conduction of public awareness raising campaign to increase the knowledge of population at large and youth in particular about the new Labour Code.

Important lessons learned

The important lessons learnt are the importance of the adapting the interventions to the local situation in the

country and plan them in early stage in the process together with constituents. To some extent, the DW II Project showed that it allows for experimentation and exploration, followed only then by implementation. At this point in time, this is a rather rare strength of a development project. Here, the basic assumption is that if labour management systems are facilitated to change from within, rather than through a number of direct and distorting interventions, better and more sustainable results can be achieved.

Regular and sustained communication between the Project Management and the tripartite partners can prevent misunderstandings. Through regular communication the building of trust is substantially enhanced. Regular communication could typically include National Project Advisory Groups meetings; regular bilateral meetings with the Government, the trade union and the employers' organizations and business associations by the Moscow-based Senior Specialists, National Coordinators and Project staff in the target countries.

Emerging Good Practices

A specific feature of the DW II project is its contribution to the implementation of the DW Agenda in two target countries, since it is putting large additional personnel and financial resources at the disposal of the ILO, which allows the ILO to take a broader and more integrated approach in its work.

Creating awareness, influencing policy, mobilizing political decision-makers requires time, coordination and resources, but, most importantly, it requires the use of an appropriate medium, because beyond contributing to practical changes, it first has to mobilize them on cognitive and emotional levels. Under the DW II project, innovative and creative ways were used to convey messages to social groups about the informal economy, i.e. development of cartoons and their broadcasting on the national and regional media.

See the full report for all recommendations, lessons learned and good practices.