



Evaluation Summary



International
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Strengthening the Impact on Employment of Sector and Trade Policies – Independent Mid-Term Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Morocco, Myanmar, Philippines and Rwanda

Mid-Term Evaluation: 30 October 2017

Evaluation Mode: Independent

Administrative Office: DEVINVEST, HQ

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Project End: 30 September 2018

Project Code: GLO/14/37/EEC

Donors & Budget: European Commission and ILO (€ 7'600'000 of which EC contribution is € 6'500'000)

Keywords: Trade, balance of trade, decent work, employment creation, sectoral planning, trade negotiation.

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The STRENGTHEN project's overall objective is to strengthen the capabilities of country partners to analyse and design sectoral and trade policies that would enhance employment creation in terms of quantity and quality. It has two main components

managed by a separate Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) based at the ILO Headquarters with the support of national project teams. Component A is on employment impact assessment (EmpIAs), component B is on assessing and addressing the effects of trade on employment (ETE). These components have been rolled out in nine countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America in a differentiated way.

The project aims at developing **global knowledge and country-level knowledge** on how to strengthen the positive impact on employment of sectoral and trade policies through conducting global and country-level studies. The project objective is to **build the capabilities** of governments, social partners, development practitioners, and other relevant national stakeholders to identify, measure and assess the employment effects of sectoral and trade policies, and **provide guidance** to development cooperation practitioners in partner countries as well as the European Union (EU) on how to address the employment opportunities and challenges resulting from sectoral and trade policies. While Growth Domestic Product (GDP) in partner countries has been rising, countries were not able to address poverty, employment and social insurance issues at a faster rate. There is a need for structural transformation and for governments to take sector, trade and employment related decisions underpinned by empirical evidence.

Present Situation of the Project

The project has been launched in 9 countries. In Ghana, Guatemala and the Philippines (the three selected countries for this evaluation), first capacity building and technical workshops took place, providing mostly

theoretical knowledge to participants. Policy Working Groups (or Tripartite Working Group in the Philippines) have been successfully set up in the three countries bringing together ministries, employers and workers' representatives and other relevant stakeholders to support the project implementation. Global and country-level studies were conducted and are still ongoing at the country level.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This mid-term evaluation covered the project on “Strengthening the Impact on Employment of Sector and Trade Policies”.

The evaluation is for both main components, and while the scope is to evaluate the whole project, due to the relatively high number of countries in the project, more in-depth treatment was given to three project countries (Ghana, Guatemala and the Philippines). The evaluation covers the entire project duration from its start in October 2014 until September 2017. The evaluation included ILO managers and staff at headquarters, national project teams and all the main partners¹ of the project who are in majority at the same time the intended users of its results.

Methodology of evaluation

Different evaluation tools were combined to ensure an evidence-based qualitative and quantitative assessment. The methodological mix has included document review, semi-structured individual interviews, semi-structured interviews of focal groups and direct observation. The desk study includes the analysis of a high quantity of project documentation, including i.e. progress reports, financial statements, meeting / event / workshop reports and highlights and surveys conducted by the project. Given the tight time frame for conducting this evaluation, one major limitation encountered was that the main focus has hence been on covering the three countries visited. As no logic model was available, the mid-term evaluation proposes a model to be further discussed by the project team.

Main Findings & Conclusions

¹ Governments, statistical offices, research institutions, trade unions and employers' organizations in the partner countries, in addition to the EC and development partners of the project.

The body of the evaluation report presents answers to all key evaluation questions, which represent the proper **findings** of this evaluation.

(A) RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT

- **The national development frameworks are likely to be informed by the ongoing studies** in the three countries as key representatives of governing bodies are members of the Policy-respectively Tripartite Working Groups (PWG/TWG).
- **The project is aligned with countries' strategies and employment policies.** It supports key issues that are at the top of partner countries governments' agendas.
- **All national stakeholders interviewed confirmed that the project met their needs.** Generally, the project targeted relevant countries, industries and sectors for which national strategies exist.

(B) PROJECT PROGRESS AND EFFECTIVENESS

- **The conceptual and methodological tools** developed by the project and the country-level activities are **perceived as useful and of good quality by the majority of stakeholders.** The level of expertise of resource persons is highly satisfactory.
- **The integrative approach** of providing a set of tools and methodologies is **perceived positively** by project stakeholders. At ILO Headquarters (HQ) and in the three countries visited, interests to reinforce intra-, interagency and interinstitutional cooperation as well as coordination have been expressed.
- **The satisfaction rate regarding training and capacity building provided by the project is high.** Surveys and interviews with workshop participants revealed that the **level of training was however often considered too advanced and too technical** and should be better adapted to the target audience.
- The establishment of multi-sectoral, inter-ministerial and institutional **working groups** including employers, workers and other key national stakeholders **is perceived as a highly**

successful and valuable output of the project. The support of important stakeholders such as the ILO and the EU are of strong importance.

- **The integrative methodological approach and successful tripartite approach** in setting PWG and TWG settings in partner countries is **innovative and creates a new dynamism** that was needed in policy making while policies' impact on employment has most often been overlooked. The creation of "tripartite plus" platforms (PWGs / TWG) allowed to create an unintended positive outcome, i.e. conditions set for enhanced employment-related convergence activities.
- **Project staff in general received adequate support / cooperation from relevant ILO units and offices.** One of the issues regarding administrative project implementation lies in that **ILO procedures** are perceived as **lacking clarity and are burdensome** for both project teams at ILO Headquarters and at countries' level.

(C) EFFICIENCY OF RESOURCE USE

- Despite the dedication of ILO HQ and country project teams to keep up with tight deadlines, the project has faced **strong delays** and requires **continuous, strong and proactive dedication of all administrative support staff to reach expected results.**

(D) EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- **Management, planning and reporting mechanisms are generally considered appropriate,** although they need further improvement with regards to project monitoring.

(E) RESULTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

- The STRENGTHEN project's **interventions are integrated** in supporting the implementation of the new National Employment Policy in Ghana, National Decent Work Policy in Guatemala and the Philippine Labour and Employment Plan.
- At the current stage of the project, the **capacity building needs to be strengthened and simplified for non-technical participants.** No **knowledge transfer strategy** has yet been defined by the project.
- Assessing the likelihood of sustainability of results at the country level is tricky at this stage. Nevertheless, the evaluation team has witnessed some **elements that point to some risks related**

to sustaining project benefits beyond its duration (such as not building the capabilities of stakeholders at the expected level and the loss of momentum).

(F) LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

- The three countries visited present common strengths and challenges (such as PWGs / TWG very well received) and capacity building material that can be used in other countries. **Global knowledge is transferable to all countries** if publications, such as desk reviews and methodological studies, are systematically shared with recommendations to countries on how to use them.
- The practices of establishing "tripartite plus" **working groups and consultative processes** are seen as **very valuable.** **Promoting employment impact assessments is currently not a standard practice** in ILO projects.

These findings lead to the following **conclusions:**

Conclusion 1 on project preparation and relevance

The Project prepared by the ILO addresses **impact on employment of sector and trade policies with an appropriate and holistic approach** using various tools and methodologies in an innovative way. The project is of **high relevance to partner countries and is aligned with countries' national frameworks** and governments' key priorities. Time plans, budgets and human resources planning proved to be too ambitious and unrealistic. Monitoring tools and processes have not been sufficiently tailored to the needs of project implementers. The project does not integrate gender equality related objectives in the logframe at the design stage of the project.

Conclusion 2 on project progress and effectiveness

The project did an **excellent work in establishing appropriate conditions for sustainable project effectiveness through a consultative approach,** working in close cooperation with key ministries and social partners. This is highly appreciated by national stakeholders and led to a high level of ownership. The PWG / TWG initiated inter-ministerial, inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary cross-cutting dialogue on employment issues. Studies and capacity building workshops are conducted by highly qualified

experts. The training provided allowed participants to achieve a basic theoretical knowledge. Simplified, tailored and more practical technical training modules need to be developed. A **knowledge transfer strategy** should also be systematized, formalized and monitored by the project.

The project experienced significant delays in partner countries at various degrees.

Conclusion 3 on effectiveness of management arrangements

ILO project teams receive **adequate administrative support**. However, ILO procedures lack clarity and are burdensome, especially in countries with no ILO Country Office. The project is **responsive to the needs of country beneficiaries** and provided technical assistance to support national employment and trade policies. There is currently low involvement of Delegations of the EU in the project at the country level.

Conclusion 4 on results and sustainability

The **likelihood to maintain sustainable project results could be jeopardized by the project's very tight deadlines**, particularly in countries with the strongest delays. There are **some difficulties in institutionalizing** policy working groups and in strengthening national capacity for more autonomy.

In the opinion of the evaluation team, the STRENGTHEN project is of high quality and is very well received by partner countries. It is technically up to date providing solid expertise with a potential to improve capacity building, notably for non-specialists, and its sustainability through more rigorous project management.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up:

1. Recommendation 1 (from conclusions 2 and 4) proposes to the EC and ILO Headquarters a **project extension of at least one year to conduct remaining planned activities and implement proposed improvements**. (Priority / Importance: High)

2. Recommendation 2 (from conclusions 1 and 2) to ILO HQ: **Establish solid project management tools, methodologies and Results-Based Management (RBM) guidelines**. (Priority / Importance: High)
3. Recommendation 3 (from conclusions 2 and 3) to ILO HQ and National Project Coordinators: **Establish regular monitoring and reporting mechanisms which should be updated at least quarterly and jointly analysed**. (Priority / Importance: Medium)
4. Recommendation 4 (from conclusions 2 and 4) to ILO HQ and project experts: **Capacity Building and knowledge sharing should be reinforced and distinct training programmes should be set up with different levels of technical complexity (for decision makers / generalists and technical staff)**. (Priority / Importance: High)
5. Recommendation 5 (from conclusions 2 and 4) to EU / ILO Headquarters, project teams and local partners: **PWG / TWG platforms and activities should be institutionalized and local communities should be involved**. (Priority / Importance: High)
6. Recommendation 6 (from conclusions 2 and 4) to ILO HQ / country project teams and national stakeholders: **Enhance employment-related convergence activities triggered and coordinated by national "tripartite plus" platforms**. (Priority / Importance: Medium)
7. Recommendations 7 (from conclusion 2 and 4) to ILO HQ and National Project Coordinators: **The project visibility and knowledge sharing should be improved at the national and international levels**. (Priority / Importance: High)

To operationalize these generic recommendations, sub-recommendations have been formulated in the mid-term evaluation report, distinguishing short-term and medium- to long-term recommendations, whereby the short-term sub-recommendations are the ones that could be implemented in the current phase of the project. The mid-term recommendations are useful for a possible project extension and long-term components could serve for future projects.