Evaluation Summaries

International Labour Office

Evaluation: ILO/Swiss Interregional Project on Addressing Labour Issues Through National Cleaner Production Centres

Quick Facts

Countries: Sri-Lanka, Vietnam, India

Mid-Term Evaluation: July 2005

Mode of Evaluation: independent

Technical Area: Management & Corporate Citizenship

Evaluation Management:

Employment Sector

Evaluation Team: Matthias Meyer, David Lamotte

Project Start: January 2003

Project End: December 2007

Project Code: INT/02/42/SWI

Donor: Switzerland (US$ 2,241,876)

Background & Context

Project Background: The ILO has established a multi-supplier training programme, known as the Factory Improvement Programme (FIP), which is designed to both raise factories' capacity to comply with international labour standards (ILS) and to increase their competitiveness. Initially the programme was piloted in Sri Lanka.

At the same time within the ILO a number of other parallel initiatives were being developed that also linked the business performance with ILS. Many of these initiatives had conceptual origins with the FIP.

In this project (ILO/Swiss project, addressing Labour Issues through National Cleaner Production Centres), the role of the ILO was to build on its experiences of the FIP to introduce labour-related services into National Cleaner Production Centre (NCPCs). This was to be done in collaboration with several other partners including local employers' organizations, UNIDO/UNEP and donors. Initially (Phase I) the project was to be conducted as a pilot with three participating countries and following the mid-term review it was envisaged that additional countries would be added (Phase II).

Evaluation Context: The main purpose of the midterm review was to learn lessons from the experiences of the project starting from the needs identification, project development, design and negotiation process to project implementation and its management. Furthermore, the review was required to suggest areas for the extent of activities in a second project phase.

The methodology consisted of interviews and factory visits, review of relevant documents and extensive discussions with the project team.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance: The experiences at the enterprise level and feedback from project stakeholders strongly reaffirm the relevance of the Factory Improvement Programme (FIP). The programme can be credited with stimulating real improvements in the participating factories. These improvements concurrently and positively impact on the workers and the enterprise. This is a very positive outcome and one that needs to be built upon in Phase II.

The experiences of this project suggest that there is very real opportunity to develop an innovative and internationally important approach of integrating economic and social concerns at the factory-level, in effect demonstrating the business case for good labour practices at the factory level.

Design: The review team finds that there are deficiencies in the design of the Project Document that have made the implementation of the project more challenging than necessary. These weaknesses in summary include: a poor analysis of the institutional framework in which the FIP will operate; lack of clarity concerning mechanisms concerning how and why participating countries and partner institutions should be selected; the need for a broader range of indicators and targets that show improvement in productivity, labour-management practices, working conditions; the need for and role of project Steering Committee for both the overall project and country level activities.

Impact and Sustainability: The experiences show that the programme has stimulated real improvements for both management and workers in the participating factories. The challenge ahead is to document the programme and its results, build a sustainable delivery model and replicate the programme to more enterprises and countries.

Furthermore the project has been successful in building the capacities of its national teams and to a lesser but equally important extent capacity within national partner organizations. These national staff can serve as an important resource in the expansion of the programme to local institutions, under future activities.

Notwithstanding the positive impact of the project, the Sri Lanka experiences shows that in its current form, the FIP is not yet sustainable. However, the project has made significant progress.

The project's major challenge is to build the capacity of local partners to integrate the Factory Improvement Programme into their core enterprise operations. To address this challenge, the review team concludes that the project needs to move its orientation from direct enterprises-level interventions to capacity building at the meso-level.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations: One goal of this project should be to develop the current pilot experiences into an internationally recognized programme suitable for replication to other countries, partner institutions and enterprises.

As a matter of priority, the weakness in the project design needs to be addressed through the preparation of (i) an overall integrating guidance programme document that focuses on the FIP-wide development issues, and (ii) linked country specific documents.

The project strategy in each country should be modified to allow for several partner organizations (in addition or instead of NCPCs) to be involved in integrating the FIP into their operations.

The project needs to put in place a tactical approach to building on the experience of FIP in Viet Nam and Sri Lanka and other relevant ILO programmes, with a view towards developing a core set of materials manuals, trainers' guides and presentations that can be used in other countries.

Project management responsibilities as well as technical and administrative backstopping need to be decentralized to National Project Managers.

As part of the future development and pilot testing of the project, there is a need to (i) review the cost structure of the FIP with a view to decreasing the programme costs, (ii) include strategies for building the market for the programme, and (iii) consider additional income generating aspects to the current service model.

The expansion of the programme to further countries (Phase II of the original project document) should be delayed until the project has consolidated its approach.