



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

Evaluation Office

## *Improving Labour Market Data Sources in Myanmar through Support to the National Labour Force and School-to-Work Transition Survey – Final Evaluation*

### Quick Facts

**Country:** Myanmar

**Final Evaluation:** October - December 2015

**Mode of Evaluation:** Independent

**Administrative Office:** ILO Liaison Office Yangon

**Technical Office:** ILO Statistics Department

**Evaluation Manager:** Markus Ruck

**Evaluation Consultant:** Ganesh P. Rauniyar

**Project End:** December 2015

**Project Code:** MMR/12/01/RBS

**Donor & Project Budget:** ILO RBS USD 1,284,264

**Keywords:** Myanmar, labour force survey, decent work, child labour, transition from school to work

### Background & Context

#### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Myanmar had its only labour force survey (LFS) conducted by the Ministry of Labour in 1990. Public policy and programmes have relied on scanty projections from this survey and Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessments of 2004-2005 and 2009-2010. A third assessment is in progress and expected to be complete in 2015. The Government conducted its Census of Population and Dwelling conducted for the first time in 2014 since 1983.

Myanmar does not have a comprehensive labour and employment policy. The available data and information

had been inadequate for preparing and monitoring evidence-based sound labour and social policies and programmes. The Government recognized the importance of a good labour market information system and sought technical and financial support from ILO in early 2013 for conducting a second LFS. ILO responded to the Government's request and approved a project proposal in 2013, supported from its Regular Budget Support Special Account (RBSA).<sup>1</sup>

The Project's development objective was increased capacity of Myanmar to produce comprehensive, up-to-date, gender responsive, and internationally comparable labour market data through regular labour forces, as well as using data for informed employment policy formulation and monitoring. It envisaged three specific immediate objectives (outcomes) aimed at delivering a timely relevant, reliable and credible LFS and improved capacity in national institutions:

- Improved labour market information system in Myanmar through a comprehensive national Labour Force, Child Labour and School-to-Work Transition Survey 2013-2014;<sup>2</sup>
- Enhanced capacity of tripartite constituents and relevant government agencies to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies, programmes and projects for decent work through improved labour market information;
- A framework for regular data collection of labour statistics developed with regular budget allocation from national budgeting.

<sup>1</sup>ILO's RBSA supports the Decent Work Agenda through flexible un-earmarked voluntary contributions to the ILO's technical cooperation programme.

<sup>2</sup> ILO planned to conduct the survey in 2014 but it actually materialized only in 2015.

### **Present situation of the project**

ILO plans to close the Project on 31 December 2015, following a 12 months extension from the original closing date. The labour force, child labour and school to work transition (LFS-CL-CTST) survey has been completed, data entered and verified. An independent consultant is currently validating survey methodology and results. ILO and the Government plan to release data once verified by the consultant.

### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

An independent evaluation provides an assessment of development effectiveness of the Project including efficient use of ILO resources, both from accountability and learning perspectives. The evaluation looks back and assesses project formulation process and design, implementation arrangements and progress and continued relevance at the time of evaluation in achieving Project's development and immediate objectives. It also draws lessons based on project experience in terms of design and implementation and offers a set of lessons and recommendations for ILO, social partners and the Government.

The survey is nation-wide and covered about 24,000 households. Key clients are ILO Liaison Yangon, ILO-ROAP, Myanmar government agencies, Central Statistical Organization, and employers and workers' organizations.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation followed ILO Evaluation Policy and ILO EVAL Guidelines. Comprehensive terms of reference (TORs) for evaluation formed the basis for evaluation. It adopted a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

The Evaluation Manager in consultation with the key stakeholders prepared and finalized the draft Terms of Reference (TORs) for evaluation. ILO engaged an independent evaluator for the evaluation and evaluation process comprised three broad steps:

Step 1: *Review of documents*, including TORs, project documents, initial briefing by the Evaluation Manager over a skype call and at the ILO Liaison Office, Yangon, and the preparation and submission of an inception report;

Step 2: *Fieldwork in Nay Pyi Taw* for meetings with key informants and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders, including senior government officials, workers' representatives, Project Technical Working Group Committee members, selected field enumerators and supervisors, and officials of the UNFPA and the World Bank. The Evaluator obtained draft survey result tables from the Project. He also conducted an observation study capturing capacity development at the Department of Labour staff in data management and data table extraction.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES) organized a stakeholder workshop at which the Evaluator delivered his presentation highlighting emerging findings and recommendations. Twenty-four participants from different stakeholder groups attended the workshop and actively participated in the discussion.

Step 3: *Document and data analysis and report writing* based on data and information collected during the fieldwork, document review, and the draft reports generated by the Project's consultants. During this step, evaluator also held virtual discussions with ILO-IPEC, ILO ROAP, ILO Statistics Department staff and a statistician at the Asian Development Bank in Manila working on the statistical capacity building technical assistance project to Central Statistical Organization in Myanmar. He also sought and obtained additional data on project related capacity building activities and verified data collected during the fieldwork in consultation with CTA and ILO Liaison Office in Yangon.

The Evaluation Manager shared the draft report with relevant stakeholders and provided consolidated comments to the Evaluator for revising and finalizing the report.

## **Main Findings & Conclusions**

A summary of the final evaluation findings and conclusions based on ILO EVAL criteria follows:

### **Relevance and strategic fit**

The Project has been highly relevant for Myanmar throughout the entire project duration because it is the first initiative in 25 years, which aims to provide timely, reliable and credible employment and labour statistics disaggregated by sex at the national and State/Provincial/Union Territory levels. The Project is demand rather than supply driven. ILO responded to the Government's request for conducting a LFS soon after ILO Governing Body lifted a 13-year long ban on Myanmar attending the International Labour Conference and provided access to its technical assistance fund.

It is timely because Myanmar is going through economic, social and political transformation and project outcomes will help in formulating evidence based policies and programs.. It is credible and reliable because it relies on ILO's expertise in the field and complies with international standards associated with collection of labour and employment statistics.

The data generated from the survey serves as a benchmark for formulating informed strategies, policies and programme to benefit wider population. It also facilitates the Government's commitment in reporting labour statistics to the international community.

The Project aimed to present a clear picture of depth and width of child labour in work place and youth employment in different parts of the country, including the worst forms of child labour and forced labour. Myanmar is committed to providing safe workplace environment and eliminate child labour. Employment and labour statistics collected through the survey under the Project are highly relevant from strategic point of view for the country. It has a good strategic fit with the Government's national policy and commitment to provide better income and employment opportunities for its population.

The Project, although not stated explicitly in the project document, also provides baseline scenario for monitoring and evaluating progress resulting from reforms implemented by the Government in labour market, with an emphasis on employment and labour policy, decent jobs, workplace with no child labour and no forced labour, and fair wage conditions. The project outcomes have strong potential to influence both public and private sector investments in all major sectors.

#### **Validity of design**

Overall, the validity of project design was somewhat satisfactory on the lower end of the scale. In principle, the project design was sound based on consultations stakeholders. However, it envisaged Myanmar to deliver a credible detailed labour force, child labour and school-to-work transition survey and strengthen capacity of key national institutions in 18 months. The evaluation finds that the project design originally envisaged for

implementation set overambitious targets both in terms of outputs and outcomes given that the main implementation agencies had weak capacity to complete the job.

The Project could have identified prevailing and potential assumptions and risks clearly through an in-depth due diligence of the two key implementing partners. The project document lacked these along with realistic time bound activities to facilitate its smooth implementation. The Project design and budget had a provision of engaging consultants. However, the project document did not contain their TORs.

#### **Effectiveness**

Overall, the evaluation concludes that project effectiveness was only somewhat satisfactory. The technical backstopping from ILO ROAP, ILO Statistics Department and ILO-IPEC has been useful in project implementation. Their continuity in some form at later critical stages would have mitigated initial implementation arrangement and minimized start up delays.

The Project provided training to a large number of field cadres in data collection and supervision who had very little or no required experience. As a result, the survey was completed, data entered and verified, and key summary tables generated. At the current pace, the Project will not be able to disseminate the results and reports by the project end date of 31 December 2015. The Project is not likely to undertake additional activities such as detailed dissemination of results and reports along with capacity building of relevant stakeholders in extracting data subsets, analysis and report production within the given timeframe.

The findings show that while the Project has strengthened the Department of Labour's capacity to some extent, they are less likely to conduct follow-up LFS surveys on their own without external technical support. Concerned agencies' capacity has continued to remain weak.

#### **Efficiency of resources used**

Overall, the evaluation considers that the Project has been somewhat efficient based on the evidence that it slipped in time although remained within the original budget ceiling. This, however, resulted in several key activities delayed or unattended.

The Project experienced nearly eight months delay in mobilizing a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), which required ILO to extend the Project by additional 12 months. In addition, it took nearly 18 months for reaching a service agreement between the ILO Liaison Office in Yangon and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES). This resulted in slow implementation progress.

### **Effectiveness of management arrangements**

The management arrangements for the Project is somewhat effective. ILO mobilized an experienced CTA, although with considerable delays.

Communication gap between CSO and MOLES and weak implementation capacity along with bureaucratic inefficiencies contributed to delay in signing of service agreement for conducting the survey and data entry work.

### **Gender issues**

The Project mobilized more than 80% field female staff of the Department of Labour based throughout the country. The gender representation in staffing at other levels also has been satisfactory.

The labour force related summary tables extracted by the Project based on the survey data shows adequate gender disaggregation, which will help relevant agencies to formulate gender sensitive policies and programmes. However, the Project could have taken similar approach in generating child labour and school-to-work transition summary tables for appropriately reflecting gender disparities, if any.

### **Impact orientation**

The Project has not released dataset and reports and hence the evaluation could not adequately assess impact orientation. However, given strong interest in the survey data and results, evaluation foresees that potential impact will be substantial, if the Project releases data and reports soon for further analysis, research and policy formulation.

### **Sustainability**

The survey completion after 25 years is a major achievement for Myanmar. However, in order to properly establish a credible labour market information system, regular follow-up surveys need to be conducted by the Government. With continued commitment, the Government can sustain Project benefits in the future, but it will require continued technical support at least for next few years and a harmonized approach from development partners in designing, collecting, generating, and reporting at frequent intervals.

## **Recommendations & Lessons Learned**

1. ILO should extend the closing date of the Project to 31 March 2016 at no additional cost so that the

Project can deliver unfinished outputs and make substantial progress towards achieving envisaged outcomes or immediate objectives.

2. The Project should prepare a detailed road map for data and results dissemination for better understanding of survey outcomes and use of data for informed policy and programme formulation by the Government and all stakeholders in the labour market.
3. The Government should take a lead in strengthening CSO in both technical and managerial roles.
4. ILO should explore feasibility of providing technical assistance from its own or external sources so that the Government can undertake regular LFS annually, and child labour survey and school-to-work transition survey every 3 years.
5. The Government, with technical support from a development partner, should plan follow-up labour market survey capturing seasonality and hence at least two points in a year reflecting high and low economic activity seasons.

### **Key lessons learned**

1. Countries with no labour force survey for several years need a longer project duration so that the projects can make adequate social preparation and develop minimum technical and managerial capacity in implementing agencies. There is a need to devote at least six months in social preparation and required initial capacity development in implementing arrangements.
2. In a technical assistance project, it is important to have a clear understanding and agreement on the roles and responsibilities of implementing partners and detailed job description or terms of reference is required of any short- or long-term engagement. Project funding linked to consistency in implementation arrangements delivers better results.
3. A clear project implementation plan should accompany project design document. One of the key objective of technical assistance is to strengthen capacity of national institutions and thus the project must ensure that there is a clear pathway for technology (knowledge) transfer.
4. Any project irrespective of its size or coverage need to go through a proper quality assessment prior to funding approval.
5. Labour market surveys need to take into account respondents' background, focused on priority data needs and institutional capacity.