



Evaluation Summary



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UK Skills for Prosperity Programme for South-East Asia Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries:	<i>The Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia</i>
Final Evaluation:	<i>November 2023</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office:	<i>ROAP</i>
Technical Office:	<i>DWT-Bangkok</i>
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Project Code:	<i>RAS/20/52/GBR; PHI/20/52/GBR; IND/20/52/GBR; MYS/20/52/GBR</i>
Donor(s) & Budget:	<i>UK FCDO (USD 13,755,148)</i>
Keywords:	<i>Skills, Middle Income Countries, TVET Governance, Skills System Gender Equity and Inclusion, International Partnerships between TVET institutions</i>

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The **Skills for Prosperity – South East Asia (SfP-SEA)** programme was funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in three middle-

income countries. It aimed to address weaknesses in each country's Technical and Vocation Education and Training (TVET) system with interventions aligned with four “pillars” - **equity** (including social inclusion and access by women and vulnerable populations); **quality** (e.g., competency standards, curricula, capacity of teachers, lifelong learning, and labour market information); **relevance** (including industry engagement to ensure training meets current and future skill needs); and **cost effectiveness** (including sustainable national TVET financing arrangements). The programme focused on improvements both at the “downstream” level (i.e., for TVET institutions and TVET system users) and at the “upstream” level (e.g., on policy reform and labour market relevance).

Overall, the programme was the responsibility of the ILO's Regional Office for Asia and The Pacific (ROAP). Programme teams were established in each country led by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA).

Present Situation of the Project

Implementation began in September 2020 and ended on 30 June 2023 in Indonesia and on 30 September 2023 in The Philippines and Malaysia. The evaluation was conducted from June to November 2023.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose was to assess how well SfP-SEA delivered outcomes in line with objectives and the ILO's work programme/priorities. It covered all

three countries from the programme development phase to completion. The clients of the evaluation are the ILO, the programme teams, the donor, and national and local partners and ILO constituents.

Methodology of evaluation

It used a mixed method, “Outcomes Harvesting” approach, which examined results broadly, through the lens of the four pillars, presenting evidence of change and assessing how programme interventions contributed to these changes.

Data collection methods included:

- Review of documents related to the programme’s context, design, ongoing development and modification, technical and financial progress, monitoring and evaluation systems, and programme outputs.
- Field visits to each SfP-SEA country and key implementation sites.
- Personal, group and remote interviews with 245 programme stakeholders/beneficiaries including 137 women (56%).
- Case studies.

Methodological limitations and constraints: The compressed timeframe of the project in the three countries and the fact that the final evaluation took place while the programme was still finalising key outputs in Malaysia and The Philippines meant that some results and upstream policy impacts of the intervention cannot yet be verified. The evaluation considered the likelihood of these results and impacts being achieved but follow up may be required for confirmation.

The evaluation relied to some extent on the project teams to compile lists of stakeholders to be interviewed. To mitigate the risk of “cherry picking” informants with a positive perspective of the programme, the evaluation reviewed programme documents and reports to ensure that all stakeholder groups were included in these lists so that all perspectives were captured and were gender balanced.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance

The COVID-19 pandemic, changes to the programme’s budget and delivery timeline, the threat of early termination, and uncertainty about how best to support the evolving needs of each country all complicated the programme’s efforts to maximise relevance. Implementation plans were often revised, and activities were cut, modified, and sometimes rushed. Despite these challenges, the programme maintained its relevance and was also able to respond to new opportunities to advance TVET system development.

The needs of women, people with disability, indigenous people, people living in rural and remote areas, and other vulnerable groups were central to programme design. In meeting these needs, the programme included measures that supported institutional awareness and capacity building, demonstrated through pilots how access for these groups can be improved, and offered direct support to enhance equity in national TVET policies.

Coherence

SfP-SEA followed the priorities set out the ILO’s development cooperation frameworks and was able to find synergies with other current ILO projects.

To advance the programme’s goals, SfP-SEA helped to forge partnerships with and between various global, regional and country-level TVET institutions and other stakeholders. In Malaysia, where the ILO’s skills work was new, it established relationships with key institutions and brought these together to improve TVET system collaboration and understanding.

Effectiveness

Under the *Equity Pillar*, SfP-SEA contributed to the goal of making TVET more equitable and inclusive. It achieved results and demonstrated good practice by building the capacity of TVET institutions, conducting regional and sectoral pilots, and guiding the development and

implementation of national policy and programmes. Key results included:

- **Indonesia:** the establishment of taskforces and the development and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in polytechnics to prevent sexual harassment and violence. Economic development was supported in four disadvantaged coastal villages in North Sulawesi.
- **The Philippines:** capacity building and piloting of new models of TVET delivery and local collaboration for disadvantaged groups and communities.
- **Malaysia:** piloting new approaches to inclusion in two disadvantaged states, and integrating GESI into sectoral skills strategies and action plans.

Under the *Quality Pillar*, SfP improved the capacity of government, industry and TVET institutions to design and deliver training to meet international standards and current and future skill needs and to improve systems for skills recognition and lifelong learning. Key results included:

- **Indonesia:** Development of new training programmes, teaching methods, competency standards and assessment schemes, and lessons from UK partner institutions.
- **The Philippines:** Capacity development of industry and government on training package design, and development of competencies and standards.
- **Malaysia:** Integration of STEM in TVET to enhance future readiness; creating a new micro-credential; supporting a National Skills Registry to enhance quality of TVET planning and delivery.

Under the *Relevance Pillar*, SfP-SEA strengthened TVET systems alignment of training with the current and future needs. Key results included:

- **Indonesia:** Strengthening the role and capacity of polytechnics' Industry Advisory Boards and supporting the development at a national level of Sectoral Skills Councils.

- **The Philippines:** Introducing new approaches for collecting and using labour market information to ensure local relevance of TVET; reviewing lifelong learning practices, and supporting the a shift towards learner-centred TVET delivery approaches.
- **Malaysia:** Bringing stakeholders together to develop sectoral skills strategies, piloting new industry led training/apprenticeship models, and laying the groundwork for improvements to TVET governance structures.

Work under the **Cost Effectiveness Pillar** was reduced, but outcomes included a report on global financing mechanisms for promoting social inclusion in TVET and country level support in Indonesia and The Philippines.

Efficiency

The programme squeezed a lot into its reduced timeframe but, in some cases, there was not enough time left to guarantee the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of activities and results.

Although programme resources were reduced, SfP-SEA found ways to adapt. Most outputs were delivered, but on a smaller scale. At the TVET systems level, there was good progress towards achieving the intended outcomes.

Key working relationships were sometimes challenging and awkward, affecting the efficiency of programme administration and decision making. Communication was sometimes poor leading to misunderstanding and tensions, especially in the early stages of the programme.

Impact and Sustainability

Considering the relatively short duration of the programme, the impact and sustainability of its results were good at the TVET systems level. Ultimately, these systemic improvements would be expected to have impacts for the systems' users – including trainees, employers, and on the economy. Other than some encouraging early signs from the pilots (e.g., growth in income from the local economic development pilots in Indonesia) this type of impact data is not yet available.

Conclusions

Expectations of the programme were high, but the it faced huge, unexpected challenges from the start. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent cuts to the budget and timeframe for implementation, cashflow management challenges, and hesitancy to plan beyond the short term when early termination seemed likely, ultimately left the programme with little time to achieve the intended reforms. Many activities were squeezed into the last twelve months of the programme, leaving little or no time to document and share their results and to use them to influence reform. All stakeholders faced intense pressure to get results and relationships sometimes became tense.

Ultimately, despite these challenges, the programme adapted and produced good results. Some activities were dropped, but new opportunities to add value were seized and activities were hastily designed and implemented. Indonesia realised most of its original project vision and squeezed in even more, achieving some important policy level breakthroughs in the process. The Philippines reoriented itself to meet the needs of a TVET system that was becoming more decentralised and, though its pilots were implemented agonisingly close to the wire, they did their job. Malaysia also produced a whirlwind of programme activity in the final eighteen months, adding value and fostering collaboration to the point where the ILO.

SfP, particularly Quality Apprenticeships. The ILO should also leverage the work done through SfP in Malaysia on micro-credentials which is a model that could be encouraged more widely in the region and has appeal for workers seeking to recognise/upgrade their skills and employers seeking a time-efficient way to improve the skills and productivity of their workers.

4. Ensure guidelines and management mechanisms are in place within the ILO that trigger action to resolve internal breakdowns of communication or relationships – especially where these are adversely affecting workplace harmony and programme efficiency/effectiveness.
5. Consider how the elements of SfP-SEA that generated positive results in gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the inclusion of other vulnerable groups might be incorporated into future programme design in the region and globally.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

1. Conduct a follow-up survey in 18 months or two years' time to measure the downstream impacts of SfP programme activities and outcomes.
2. Explore ways of building on the programme's work in institutional capacity building and TVET policy reform in each of the three participating countries.
3. Revisit and seek to contribute to TVET system reforms which were not fully addressed by