



SAFETY AND HEALTH FOR ALL WORKERS IN MYANMAR

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Myanmar

Evaluation date: 30 November 2023

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: ILO Liaison Office, Yangon

Technical Office: LABADMIN/OSH

Evaluation manager: Audrey Le Guével

Evaluation consultant(s): Frances Barns

DC Symbol: MMR/19/02/JPN

Donor(s) & budget: Government of Japan, USD 1,625,832

Key Words: *Labour Intensive employment, employment creation, education and training programmes*



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Safety and Health for All Workers in Myanmar is a 45-month project, originally planned to be implemented from March 2020 to December 2022, with a total budget of US\$1,625,832. The project is funded by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare of the Government of Japan and is implemented by the ILO-Yangon Office.

The project design was built around the new Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Law adopted by Myanmar’s parliament in March 2019, which was a major step towards the Government’s provisions for safer and healthier workplaces. The project design was built around the new Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Law adopted by Myanmar’s parliament in March 2019, which was a major step towards the Government’s provisions for safer and healthier workplaces. The project components focused on tripartite institutions implementing regulations, policies and programs to support the integration of the law into bureaucratic and industry standards and practice.

Following the military coup in February 2021, the ILO and all United Nations (UN) agencies paused all activities involving the Myanmar government and instituted interim Principles of Engagement, requiring an internal review of projects and forbidding interaction with the de facto military authorities. The project undertook the review and was deemed to have viable activities but was prohibited from engaging with the de facto authorities. The project did not undergo a redesign but rather sought to retain the components of the project that did not involve partnering with the Government. Objectives 1 and 2 which focused on strengthening government institutions. Instead, the project focused on Objectives 3 & 4 which focused on social partners and education institutions and demand for OSH among workers.

In designing new activities, the project team identified potential stakeholders or implementing partners and set up meetings to learn their needs and to determine the suitability of the project intervention. A cross-analysis was then conducted with the original project objectives and outcomes to identify alignment with the current needs of the available constituents and newly identified available stakeholders. Where alignment or a connection was identified or could be made, activities went ahead. The SHFA project team also collaborated with the VZF team, utilizing the stakeholder network and action plan to identify partners and activities.



	<p>The project team developed a suit of activities including COVID-19 training materials, Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), translation of Safety Data Sheets, participation to the XXII World Congress for Safety and Health at Work 2021, organisation of sub-regional workshop on mainstreaming OSH in the promotion of FPRW, sharing of information on mental Health at Work, integration of OSH into TVET training with training materials development on recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases into curricula.</p> <p>In carrying out these activities, the project team collaborated with the Vision Zero Fund (VZF) , , ILO TRIANGLE project, the WHO, the CTUM Migrant Resource Centre, Union of Myanmar Federation of Chamber of Commerce (UMFCCI), independent OSH consultants, Myanmar Construction Entrepreneur Federation (MCEF), Skill for Humanity (SFH), Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB), and Labour Rights Organization, Migrant Civil Society Organizations and Confederation of Trade Unions, Myanmar (CTUM) via the ILO-Triangle Project and not-for-profit TVET institute CVT Myanmar.</p>
Present situation of the project	At the current time, all activities have been finalised on the project
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The main purpose of this independent final evaluation is to demonstrate accountability to the ILO member states and key national stakeholders and development partners on key results and achievements. The evaluation also sought to promote key learnings based on the experience of implementation and management. The scope of the final independent evaluation covers the entire project period, i.e., it encompasses all activities and components of the project under the direct responsibility of the ILO from its start in October 2020 up to December 2023. The clients of this evaluation include as primary users the Government of Japan and ILO units directly and indirectly involved in supporting the implementation of the project, including the ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar, the Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific, Decent Work Team (DWT) in Bangkok and the Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) branch in Geneva. Due to security concerns, the report will not be shared with the secondary users, which are the stakeholders in Myanmar.



Methodology of evaluation

The approach to the evaluation involved a qualitative led mixed methodology, combining a range of methods to answer the key evaluation questions and sub-questions. The key data collection methods include a desk review of program and other relevant secondary documents including a survey conducted during a self-managed MTR. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) based on purposive stratified sampling with project stakeholders were also conducted.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation found the project remained **relevant** on several levels. The Myanmar situation is a humanitarian crisis with humanitarian needs such as core relief items (CRIs) to meet basic needs, shelter assistance and cash transfers. However, since the military coup in Myanmar, problems of rights abuses and poor working conditions among workers have not gone away and addressing these issues remains a priority. Moreover, the COVID-19 outbreaks and the deteriorating situation in Myanmar resulted in an increase in interest in occupational health issues. Additionally, many organizations used the current slowdown in the economy and in some cases suspension of activities, to improve knowledge and skills. the project can be seen to have selected partners and activities that were relevant to the crisis context and in line with the ultimate aims of the project. By addressing the ad hoc or emergency needs, the project gained access to the attention of new stakeholders, resulting in the opportunity to educate these stakeholders on the project's original objectives.

In terms of **coherence**, the findings of the evaluation were mixed. Activities were focused on the overall aims of the project and relevant to current conditions and beneficiary needs, however, the lack of an institutional basis for the project reduced the potential for integration, adoption and scaling out of outcomes.

In terms of **effectiveness**, the project team responded well in developing a network and a suite of activities. The project team strove to ensure that the activities were designed and planned in alignment with the project's immediate objectives, while also adhering to the UNCT principle of engagement and responding to direction from ILO Country Team management on engagement with constituents and responding to their immediate needs. The COVID-19 training implemented with UN and CSO partners helped to improve their mitigation behaviour. Moreover, the training materials have been used by other development



partners. The translation of Globally Harmonised System Safety Data Sheets on Asbestos, Diethylene Glycolglycine Ether and Lead into Myanmar Language paved the way for employers to develop a safety program for workers. The development of curriculum on mental health at work training which was implemented in collaboration with employer, trade unions and civil society organisations, helped unemployed workers to cope with economic and security challenges, and materials were made available to other development partners. The development of modules on OSH for the private TVET training institute CVT set the institute on a path toward integration of OSH content into their curriculum. Overall, pre and post-survey results and interviews by the evaluator with project stakeholders revealed a positive response by beneficiaries in regard to the usefulness and applicability of project training activities. The project team performed well in regard to providing detailed and timely reporting on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the Safety and Health for All Flagship Program.

In regard to **cross-cutting issues**, the project has made efforts to improve gender and inclusiveness considerations in its activities, for example, providing curriculum for separate sessions on mental health at work and helping to reduce women's household burden in capacity building for unemployed workers pertaining to mitigating COVID-19.

In regard to **efficiency**, program costs (which included seminars, sub-contracts, international consultants and national consultants) covered 16.8% of the budget and operational costs covered 83.2%. However, the proportionally high operational costs were in part due to the fact that, based on consultation with the donor and Senior OSH Specialist based in DWT Bangkok, a portion of the fund was reshuffled to implement regional-level OSH activities. At the end of the project, the project team spent 77% of the budget, which can be considered reasonable given the need to deviate from the original design.

Concerning **the impact and sustainability** of the project there were some important achievements, although under the circumstances the original design focused on strengthening Government systems could not be achieved. Key sustainable outcomes include the mainstreaming of OSH into CVT's TVET curriculum. In addition, the training materials for COVID-19 mitigation, mental health at work and the translation of GHS chemical classification Safety Data Sheets are all resources that will be useful to a range of development partners and the ILO Liaison Office would do well to promote these.

One of the most important aspects of sustainability is the partnerships that were established, and the project team did well to support partnerships with civil society organisations, employer organisations, worker organisations, private TVET institutions, other ILO projects and UN agencies.

Given the stance of the military towards the people and the lack of clear government, there was more potential to achieve results by working through the private sector. A general trend in this direction can be seen on the project through support for the TVET training, links with apprenticeships and collaborating with Employers organisations and OSH consultants.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main Findings & Conclusions	Recommendations
-----------------------------	-----------------

Recommendation 1: Consider conducting further research in multiple conflict zones where SHFA is being implemented to further investigate preliminary lessons pertaining to advancing the OSH agenda in conflict zones, identify other lessons and establish whether these lessons could be more widely applicable and whether there is potential to formalise any programming approaches or modalities for OSH in contexts of civil conflict and fragile governance.

Recommendation 2: Take a cautious approach to programming, remaining mindful of the risks involved to the ILO and partners in carrying out development interventions in the current context of political instability. Given the legal and administrative challenges related to commencing new programs, look for opportunities to link OSH programming to ongoing interventions where feasible.

With the above caveat on programming, the following potential areas for future programming could be explored.

Recommendation 3: Look for opportunities to continue to support CVT to integrating OSH into TVET training, first with a focus on supporting ToT of current modules and subsequently focusing on OSH for specific trades/profession, expanding OSH into apprenticeship programs and eventually into other TVET institutes. Consider conducting training in an actual workplace setting. It would be useful to explore specific OSH curriculum related to specific skill streams further down the track.



	<p>Recommendation 4: Look for opportunities to support training in managing mental health at work building on the focus on the ‘health’ aspect of OSH that has been brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic. In this vein, continue the partnerships with employer organisations such as MCEF, as well as CSOs and other UN agencies. Since several stakeholders mentioned that the online format was less appealing and they struggled with the English language, consider conducting in person sessions and videos translated into local languages.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: Continue with social media-based awareness programs but consider focusing the support on specific audiences with more agency to affect OSH for workers. Consider enlisting the collaboration of “influencers” to increase engagement in campaigns.</p> <p>Recommendation 6: Promote the use of training materials developed by SHFA among other donors, development partners and other private sector and civil society organisations.</p> <p>Recommendation 7: Consider further developing training materials from the project to be tailored and used in other countries in the region and beyond.</p>
<p>Main lessons learned and good practices.</p>	<p>Lesson Learned 1: Several preliminary lessons learned emerged in regard to progressing an OSH agenda in a context of conflict and fragile governance. These include (i) the ILO’s position as a normative agency can be a useful for retaining engagement when it is difficult and fraught for development partners to do so, (ii) the potentiality of partnering with education institutions, CSOs, the private sector and social enterprises to advance the OS agenda when partnering with the Government is not realistic (iii) workers and employers may show a tendency toward an enhanced interest in training for professional and personal development during periods of economic downturn and (iv) expectations must be kept low, given difficult conditions in the economy.</p> <p>Lesson Learned 2: In situations of conflict, violence and political instability there are certain principles that the need to be adhered to. Given the potential threat to individuals in the political context and the risk that programming brings to representatives of organisations, consideration of the do-no-harm principle must be paramount in programming. Also, careful consideration must be given to not being seen to be endorsing a regime not accepted by the local community, particularly when it has by no means gained full control of the country.</p>



Lesson Learned 3: When activities must be developed in a design-and-implement manner due to a change in direction after the design period, it's important to ensure that all ILO offices are on the same page and are sufficiently agile to adapt activities from the beginning of the activity. There is a need to redefine "sustainability" and to have a complete buy-in thereof across all stakeholders of the project from the beginning.

Lesson Learned 4: There is a need to adopt a common approach across project stakeholders. With the new definition of sustainability understood, the new approach would need to be displayed for common understanding that in crisis the thinking on approaches is not orthodox but needs adjustment. Communication on the new approach is therefore necessary.

Lesson Learned 5: The mental health of workers suffers in contexts of instability and conflict. Training programs aimed at supporting mental health at work can provide useful tools for coping and resilience skills among people in the context of an OSH agenda.

Lesson Learned 6: There are limitations to the applicability of regional or global training aimed at the development of national level OSH systems in the current Myanmar context.

Lesson Learned 7: Social media and awareness campaigns could be enhanced by focusing on targeting specific audiences that might be in a position to effect OSH such as employers. Moreover, it would be a good practice to have continuous/year-round campaign using the same Facebook account.