



Bringing Back Jobs Safely under the COVID-19 Crisis in the Philippines: Rebooting Small and Informal Businesses Safely and Digitally – Independent Final evaluation

QUICK FACTS

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Technical Office: LABADMIN/OSH and ENTERPRISES

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The COVID-19 crisis has brought unparalleled impacts on the people of the Philippines, particularly those in the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) that form the backbone of the economy and employment.

While tremendous efforts have been made to address the extreme vulnerability of MSMEs and informal businesses under the pandemic, there are two areas which would merit further support in the world of work at this stage – the occupational safety and health (OSH) including the prevention and mitigation of the COVID-19 risks (COVID OSH) and the digitalization of business operations for those currently left behind the big wave of digitalizing economy. The COVID-19 risks for MSMEs and the capacity gaps among them are deemed larger outside of Metro Manila.

The ILO and the Government of Japan have partnered to help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) operate safely under the prolonged community quarantine and adapt to the New Normal business environment with improved workplace safety and health practices and better equipped to take advantage of the available digital tools and the expanding digital economy opportunities. The project is part of the [ILO's Flagship programme Safety+Health for All](#).

With this understanding, the project aims at contributing to improving the safety and health of workers in MSMEs in the non-metropolitan regions of the Philippines and mitigating the negative socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

Project objective

The Bringing Back Jobs Safely Project will contribute to improving the safety and health of workers in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Philippines and mitigating the negative socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

Project outcomes and key activities

Outcome 1: Workplace of regional MSMEs is made safer and more productive in the New Normal



	<p><u>environment with the COVID-19 risks.</u></p> <p><u>Outcome 2: MSMEs and alternative livelihoods have reduced the risk of COVID-19 infection and enhanced productivity with digital modalities for business operations.</u></p> <p><u>Outcome 3: Strengthened awareness and/or promoted knowledge exchange among non-beneficiary MSMEs on the advantages and modalities of safe workplace and digitalized business operation.</u></p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>Purpose Specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evaluate the extent to which the project has achieved its planned objectives, and whether there are any factors contributing or hindering the achievement of the project; • To assess the performance of the project as per OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) including ILO cross-cutting criteria (ILS, social dialogue, gender and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability); • To document lessons learned and good practices <p>Scope This evaluation, as a product of analysis of the implementation of the project in its entirety, will examine the entire project intervention from 15 June 2021 to 31 March 2024. It will consider all the documents linked to the project. This includes the project document, periodic reports, results of midterm evaluation and implementation of its recommendations as well as documents produced as outputs of the project (e.g. knowledge products, policy strategies).</p> <p>Clients of the Evaluation Respondents during the data collection were identified through a list provided by the project team. They were interviewed based on availability during the 2-week data collection. The evaluation relied on the coordination and communication of the project team to the</p>



	interview respondents with regard to the scheduling of the interviews. Selection project sites visited were based on availability of the target respondents in the area.
Methodology of evaluation	This evaluation followed multiple methods, with analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, in order to capture the intervention’s contributions to the achievement of expected and unexpected outcomes, including triangulation to increase the validity and rigor of the evaluation findings, engaging with tripartite constituents, stakeholders and partners of the project, at all levels during the data collection and reporting phases. Secondary data was utilized particularly those that have been gathered during the internal midterm evaluation and progress reports formulated by the project team and those submitted by consultants.
MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS OECD/DAC Findings	<p>The evaluation finds that while the project design was found to be ambitious in some key areas, particularly in its target beneficiaries, it has proved to maintain its relevance even beyond the pandemic. It is clearly recognized that this project has put greater attention on how its government partners are responding to the needs of MSMEs, more so those from the informal sector. The OSH component of the project aiming to support safer and productive workplaces and its digitalization component intending to create digital modalities for business operations have both served as eye openers in fostering further collaboration between government agencies including the DOLE, DTI, DOH, OSH Center, DICT, TESDA and the LGUs; as well as between employers, workers and informal economy organizations.</p> <p>Relevance</p> <p>The project is well aligned with the interests of Japan in its long history of relationship with the Philippines. The project was envisioned to be part of the ILO’s Flagship programme Safety+Health for All. It is aligned with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 and programs of national government partner agencies.</p>



Coherence

This project has built on the ILO's Programme expertise and mandate in SIYB, Financial Education, OSH and digitalization. Synergy between project components was not fully explored except for the overlap of beneficiaries.

Effectiveness

This evaluation learned that there are challenges in targeting the informal sector as a project beneficiary. Given the delays in the implementation brought by several factors elaborated in the *Efficiency* section of this report, the PMU had to adopt a catch-up plan in order to meet completion of target activities and outputs before March 2024.

Efficiency

The BBS was conceived to be a year-long response program to the COVID-19 pandemic, a timeframe believed to enable signing of implementation agreements, design training modules, conduct trainings per project component, construct innovation hubs, establish a knowledge management system and produce results as enumerated in the target outcomes and outputs. This, however, proved to be unrealistic and ambitious in producing such results within this limited period. Due to the several NCEs, a midterm evaluation was added and conducted.

Impact and Sustainability

The positioning of BBS in partnering with DOLE, DTI, DICT, OSH Center, DOH and even LGUs played a crucial role in ensuring that the project components will continue even after the end of project. At the national level, the project intervention's objective in ensuring safety at workplaces, particularly looking into the informal sector for inclusion, had direct positive effects.

Cross-cutting themes

This project has given greater attention to gender parity as manifested in the number of women beneficiaries across all the four training modules. Disability inclusion was manifested in this project through the SCORE and SIYB trainings.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1

Conduct a follow-up survey on the behavioural change of the project beneficiaries and partners, particularly on SIYB, WISE and SCORE

Recommendation 2

Continue and strengthen partnership established by the project with the regional/local level partners either through other ILO projects or post-project collaboration efforts

Recommendation 3

Explore collaboration of the BBS project components in OSH and digitalization with STEM

Recommendation 4

Look into the possibility of partnership and collaboration between the DTI Negosyo Centre and the Innovation Hubs, TESDA training and DTI brand development for MSME beneficiaries under SIYB, urging digital and tech companies to adopt MSMEs in support of their digital transformation of their business operations, and possibility of enjoying tax incentives/holidays from BIR for participating MSMEs in SIYB, Financial Education, SCORE and WISE

Recommendation 5

Consider how to build on from the gains of this project on gender empowerment and disability inclusion that might be incorporated into future programme design in the country, region and globally

Recommendation 6

Ensure clear guidelines on cohesive ways of support system between administrative and finance operations within different the ILO project management teams

Main lessons learned and good practices

The project has faced several challenges as enumerated in prior sections of this report. However, those challenges are also opportunities that test the integrity of decision making and creativity to find solutions. This pushed the PMU to keep itself abreast with the changing situation and spot areas that need improvement towards the achievement of the project objectives. This is why catch-up plans become very crucial in the success of the completion of the project outputs. Recalibration of M&E and to a certain extent, program



interventions such as the design of the innovation hub and the timing of the conduct of each project component, have all been critical in ensuring relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the project. It is a realization of this project that working with government partners would require a more proactive approach in ensuring that MOUs are put in place ahead of time because they will serve as an impetus to the whole structure. Synergies must not only be sought but cultivated internally and externally.

The project is sound in terms of ensuring that capacity building activities are demand-driven and carried out sustainably through market-based models. The challenges met at the onset of implementation and even towards the tail end of its completion taught valuable lessons on flexibility.