

# Strengthening Social Security Office Capacities in Policy Design with a Focus on Research and Actuarial Services

## ► Mid-Term Evaluation (April 2022)

### Overview

- This document represents the Midterm Evaluation of the above project conducted by an external evaluator during February and March 2022 in accordance with the evaluation commitments under the project agreement and ILO's policy governing technical and cooperation projects.
- The ILO contracted Mr. Mel Cousins to conduct the evaluation and as part of the process, he interviewed key project stakeholders during the evaluation period.
- The evaluator reviewed the project's progress against the expected project deliverables and outcomes so as to identify achievements, best practices and lessons learnt as well as providing recommendations for the remaining part of the project.

### Technical Summary

<b>Project Title</b>	Strengthening Social Security Office Capacities in Policy Design with a Focus on Research and Actuarial Services
<b>ILO Project Codes</b>	THA/19/01/THA
<b>Geographic Scope</b>	Thailand
<b>Administrative Unit in charge of the project</b>	DWT/CO Bangkok
<b>Technical Backstopping Unit</b>	Actuarial Services Unit, SOCPRO
<b>Type of Evaluation</b>	Internal
<b>Evaluator</b>	Mel Cousins
<b>Timing of Evaluation</b>	Mid-Term, February-March 2022
<b>Project Period</b>	Jul 2019 – Dec 2023
<b>Total Project Budget</b>	USD 1.354 million
<b>Funding Agency</b>	Social Security Office of Thailand (SSO)

## Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
The project .....	3
Background.....	3
Objectives and outcomes .....	3
The Evaluation .....	3
Purpose.....	3
Audience.....	4
Criteria and questions .....	4
Methodology .....	5
2. Key Findings.....	7
Project Implementation .....	7
Relevance .....	7
Coherence .....	8
Effectiveness.....	9
Efficiency .....	11
Impact and sustainability .....	11
Cross-cutting issues.....	13
Issues to be addressed before the final evaluation .....	14
3. Conclusions and recommendations .....	15
Conclusions.....	15
Recommendations.....	15
Use the MTE to refocus the project .....	15
Develop a roadmap for formal adoption of Actuarial Bureau .....	15
Improve project supports to enhance engagement with SSO .....	16
Focus on capacity building .....	16
Minimise outcome 3.....	16
Annex 1: Persons interviewed.....	17
Annex 2: Project implementation (based on Logframe) .....	18

# 1. Introduction

## The project

### Background

Thailand has one of the most comprehensive social protection systems in the Asia-Pacific Region. However, issues like the adequacy of benefits and the future sustainability of the system are significant challenges, particularly in a context of rapid ageing and a high dominance of the informal economy. The current social protection system, including the social insurance scheme run by the Social Security Office (SSO) as a major pillar, needs to adapt to new social and economic challenges, including an ageing society. Coverage needs to be improved to reach those without standard working careers. The need for further reforms towards the development of more comprehensive, inclusive and integrated schemes is recognised in the country as a key priority. This project, which is a result of extensive consultations with the SSO and constituents, aims to provide concrete outcomes to support social protection development and capacity in Thailand.

### Objectives and outcomes

The development objective of the project is

To enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of Thailand Social Security System and therefore contribute to enhanced and improved social protection of women and men residing in Thailand.<sup>1</sup>

An indirect objective of this Project is to explore the possibility of developing a Regional Actuarial Services Unit to provide actuarial services to other countries in the region, through the use of a South-South approach.<sup>2</sup>

There are three immediate outcomes:

Outcome 1 – The SSO Actuarial Bureau is in place and its team has the necessary capacity to provide the organization with actuarial services

Outcome 2 – Relevant and gender responsive Social Security Policy reforms are prepared and approved by the Thai Government, informed by evidence produced by the SSO Actuarial Bureau and by the Project services

Outcome 3 – Thai society, including social partners and Thai citizens in general, is increasingly aware of the functioning of social security schemes and to the importance of gender responsive Social Security.

## The Evaluation

### Purpose

The Evaluation is a mid-term evaluation of the project (which commenced in July 2019) in relation to its activities up to February 2022. The overall purpose of this exercise is to assess, evaluate and provide actionable guidance on the project's relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness, and impact and sustainability. This will not only help

---

<sup>1</sup> PRODOC.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS\\_744245/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_744245/lang--en/index.htm)

strengthen internal learning and promote accountability in project management and implementation, but also help inform the case for future work in this area.

Specifically, this mid-term evaluation focuses on two core objectives:

- i. Evaluate project progress achieved to date, focusing on the three Project Outcomes and associated Outputs
- ii. Comment and suggest realistic improvements to the project in its remaining period, including possible adjustments to strategy, activities and management to maximise impact, effectiveness and sustainability.

## Audience

The primary intended audiences of the evaluation are the ILO (including the direct project team, the ILO Country Office for Thailand, Lao PDR and Cambodia in Bangkok and relevant technical units from Headquarters) and the SSO. Secondary audiences may include relevant ILO workers' and employers' representatives, Permanent Secretary Office and Project Steering Committee Members.

## Criteria and questions

The evaluation addresses key ILO evaluation criteria set out in the ILO's *Policy Guidelines for Evaluation* (4th edition, 2020). Gender equality and non-discrimination, international labour standards, social dialogue are considered as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables and final report of the evaluation.

The detailed questions to be answered are as follows:

Criteria	Questions
<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the project addressed the needs of the SSO and other relevant stakeholders (as identified in the project document)?</li> <li>• To what extent have constituents / relevant stakeholders been involved in the (design and) implementation of the project?</li> <li>• To what extent does the project take into account the institutional arrangements, roles, capacity and commitment of its key stakeholder, the SSO?</li> <li>• To what extent has the project-maintained relevance in response to COVID-19?</li> <li>• To what extent is the project design (objective, outcomes, outputs and activities) logical and coherent?<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Coherence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does the project work effectively with other ILO projects and staff to maximise impact and minimise duplication?</li> <li>• To what extent does the project work effectively to promote social protection consistently with other ILO initiatives in this area?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the SSO project made progress towards its intended outcomes? To what extent has the project advanced on the three outcomes?</li> <li>• How effectively have project strategies contributed to the achievement and</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Question added by evaluator.

	<p>sustainability of project outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the project delivered quality outputs?</li> <li>• To what extent are constituents and key stakeholders satisfied with project services/outputs?</li> <li>• To what extent has the project identified and engaged with the right stakeholders to achieve its objectives?</li> <li>• What key challenges have detracted from the effectiveness of project activities?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the allocation of financial, human, institutional and technical resources been optimal for achieving project outcomes?</li> <li>• Are project staffing structures and resourcing of activities contributing to quality of performance and impact?</li> <li>• Have project activities been completed on-time/according to sequencing anticipated by the project document adjusted to take into account COVID? If not, what factors have hindered timely delivery and what counter-measures have been taken to address them?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact and Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What impact has the project achieved to date, and in which areas has impact been stronger than others?</li> <li>• How successful has the project been in developing the actuarial bureau and staff capacities?</li> <li>• Who uses project knowledge and outputs? Are they likely to be catalysts for change?</li> <li>• To what extent are the final outcomes of the project likely to be achieved by project end?</li> <li>• What project approaches have potential for further upscaling and/or replication, either in a possible next phase or through future work by ILO and its partners?</li> </ul>
<b>Cross Cutting Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are programme management and implementation guided by tripartite dialogue and contribute to international labour standards (ILS) and gender equality and non-discrimination?</li> </ul>

## Methodology

The evaluation complied with ILO's evaluation norms and standards and followed ethical safeguards as specified in the ILO's evaluation procedures. Due to COVID, all data collection was conducted online/virtually, with logistical, interpretation and administrative support from the ILO project team as required.

The evaluation methodology included:

- Desk review and analysis of project documents (PRODOC,<sup>4</sup> progress reports, etc.).
- Consultation with ILO, project team and key stakeholders – a slight majority of those interviewed were women (see Annex 1)

<sup>4</sup> The PRODOC provided is not the final signed version and includes an incorrect final date (July 2023). It is assumed that the rest of the PRODOC was not altered before signature. Outputs and activities appear to be in line with the description in the progress reports.

- Analysis of documentary and interview evidence
- Finalisation of report (as per ToRs).

Due to the limited time allocated to the Mid-term evaluation (MTE) and as a quality review of outputs was not the main purpose of this evaluation, the evaluator did not review the content of project outputs.

## 2. Key Findings

### Project Implementation

The outputs and activities of the project have been set out in detail in the annual progress reports and will not be repeated here. An overview of the work which has been carried out against indicators is set out in Annex 2.

Overall, the project has implemented a significant part of its outputs and activities. In short:

Outcome 1 (Actuarial Bureau): The project has completed necessary work on supporting the establishment and development of the Bureau. The SSO is currently in the process of seeking internal and external approval, including requirements related to employing actuaries by the SSO at appropriate wage scales. It is not clear at the time of writing when final approval may be granted. Work has been done on capacity building but this has been delayed, partially due to COVID. There is scope to do significantly more capacity building to ensure that SSO has 'the necessary capacity to provide the organization with actuarial services' (PRODOC).

Outcome 2 (Social Security Policy and reforms): Significant activities listed under outcome 2 have either been completed (e.g. Workers Compensation Fund (WCF) actuarial valuation, Investment Strategy) or are ongoing (Social Security Fund (SSF) valuation, coverage extension, pension reform). In general, these outputs have been positively received by SSO (with the exception of work on the Investment Strategy where there was some constructive criticism, see below).

Outcome 3 (Communications): There has been more limited work in this area, due in part to the restrictions linked to COVID but, more recently, ILO has contracted two agencies to carry out studies in relation to the operation of the communications (Havas) and training (Dale Carnegie) functions of SSO.

Project implementation is discussed in more detail as relevant to the evaluation criteria below.

The project has been implemented by a chief technical adviser (CTA, part-time) and consultants (ex-colls) have been recruited to support specific activities. More recently some activities under outcome 3 have been contracted out to specialist companies. There was no national project co-ordinator but since 2021, the co-ordinator of the UN Joint Programme (UNJP) on social protection provides ad-hoc support as co-ordinator for this project

### Relevance

***To what extent has the project addressed the needs of the SSO and other relevant stakeholders (as identified in the project document)?***

***To what extent has the project-maintained relevance in response to COVID-19?***

The project is very relevant to the needs of the SSO and other relevant stakeholders including the Royal Thai Government (RTG) and individual Ministries and to workers' and employer's organizations which are represented on the SSO board. For example, the study of pensions (conducted with UNJP) is relevant to a range of agencies which are involved in pension policy and provision. This relevance has been maintained during COVID-19 (despite logistical difficulties in implementation) and the SSO have, for example, consulted ILO on the impact of COVID on its work.

***To what extent have constituents/relevant stakeholders been involved in the (design and) implementation of the project?***

As the main stakeholder, SSO has been involved in the design and implementation of the project. However, as discussed below in more detail, perhaps not enough attention was given by either ILO or SSO as to how such engagement would be managed and how SSO ownership of the project would be maximised. This challenge has, of course, been contributed to by COVID which has disrupted face-to-face working.

***To what extent does the project take into account the institutional arrangements, roles, capacity and commitment of its key stakeholder, the SSO?***

In the same way, the project arguably does not sufficiently take into account the institutional arrangements, roles, capacity and commitment of the SSO. The PRODOC includes a project steering committee which meets as needed and has fulfilled its oversight function. However, it is suggested that ILO and SSO need to discuss and agree on how to improve the extent to which SSO institutional arrangements, roles, capacity and commitment can better be taken into account over the remainder of the project.

***To what extent is the project design (priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities) logical and coherent?***

In general, the project design is logical and coherent especially as to outcomes 1 and 2 which are closely related. Arguably, the PRODOC may not sufficiently address how the outputs are to be converted into policy outcomes and this is discussed further below. In addition, outcome 3 is not clearly related to outcomes 1 and 2 and requires different skill sets to deliver. If taken at its full scope, it would require a budget significantly larger than that allocated. Obviously, it was not intended to be read broadly but then it is not clear what can be achieved with the allocated budget or that SSO could not fund activities itself. Some more specific comments are included in Annex 2.

## **Coherence**

***To what extent does the project work effectively with other ILO projects and staff to maximise impact and minimise duplication?***

***To what extent does the project work effectively to promote social protection consistently with other ILO initiatives in this area?***

The project works effectively with other ILO projects and staff to maximise impact and minimise duplication. In particular, the project has co-operated with the UN Joint Programme (UNJP) on social protection on issues such as pensions reform. The UNJP includes International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF and UN Women. The project work on coverage extension is also related to the UNJP work on the informal economy. In addition, the project has worked closely with the ILO social security specialist in Bangkok and it has supported the establishment of a regional actuarial facility which has been able to provide actuarial supports in a number of countries including Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> See [https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS\\_833517/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_833517/lang--en/index.htm)

Given the high level of co-operation with other ILO work, the project work has worked effectively to promote social protection consistently with other ILO initiatives in this area.

## **Effectiveness**

### ***To what extent has the SSO project made progress towards its intended outcomes? To what extent has the project advanced on the three outcomes?***

The project has made good progress towards achieving its objectives (see Annex 2). It has provided the necessary assistance for the establishment of the Actuarial Bureau (AB) (activity 1.1) and SSO specifically said that no further technical inputs were required to complete this. However, the AB has yet to be formally established and this requires approval by the relevant RTG authorities as well as meeting the relevant SSO internal requirements and approval processes. At present, this appears to be paused within SSO as other business units finalise proposals for reform (unrelated to the Actuarial Bureau). The formal establishment also has implications for the employment of actuarial staff as SSO employees. It will be important for SSO and ILO to prioritise formal approval of the AB and employment of staff (as agreed in the PRODOC). The fact that the AB is not formally established has had implications for activity 1.2 (AB staff training) which has also been delayed somewhat by COVID.

In relation to outcome 2, a number of activities have been completed, e.g. the Workers Compensation Fund (WCF) actuarial valuation (2.4) and the Investment Strategy (2.6). Work on others is well-advanced, e.g. pension reform, coverage extension and SSF valuation (2.1-2.3). It would appear that some of the listed activities (e.g. 2.5, 2.7) may no longer be a priority for SSO and, if this is the case, this should be formally agreed so that resources can be directed elsewhere.

Progress was perhaps slower in relation to outcome 3 but ILO have commissioned studies of the HR and training functions of SSO and these are at an advanced stage. Other activities, such as face-to-face work with social partners has been delayed or limited by COVID.

### ***How effectively have project strategies contributed to the achievement and sustainability of project outcomes?***

It is not clear that the project has explicit strategies relating to the achievement (in the sense of translating from project outputs to policy) and sustainability of project outcomes. The project appears to be based on the assumption that quality outputs will translate into policies and does not perhaps sufficiently address the political economy factors involved. This is an issue which needs to be addressed by SSO and ILO in planning for the remainder of the project (see chapter 3). However, it also needs to be recalled that social protection policy develops over the long-term and that it may not always be possible to translate outputs such as actuarial valuation reports into specific policies. Indeed, the long-term nature of policy development in areas such as pensions is recognised in the PRODOC itself.

### ***To what extent has the project delivered quality outputs?***

In general, feedback from SSO and other stakeholders has been very positive as to the quality of ILO technical work, e.g. the WCF valuation and the work on pensions and coverage extension. One exception to this was some of the inputs on the Investment Strategy where it was, for example, felt by SSO staff that the investment allocation proposed was inappropriate for SSO. It is not possible for the MTE to resolve differences of opinions as to

the appropriateness of these outputs. The most important point for the project would be to learn lessons from this for future work, e.g. ensuring that expectations are aligned with the needs and above all capacities of the SSO so that the work undertaken is appropriate. In addition, it is important that there is clear communication regarding the aims of the project – the ILO seeks to provide not only certain deliverables but importantly, the tools to carry out current and future work so as to ensure legacy for the project (e.g. for the investment work, a spreadsheet model and manual to assess optimum Strategic Asset Allocation was delivered and for the actuarial valuations, the model and training was delivered) .

A number of SSO staff suggested that the project Work Plan should be more detailed in terms of the content of activities although there is, of course, a limit to what can be put in the Plan as opposed to specific terms of reference developed for individual activities. Whilst the ILO responded when requested to specific requests for additional information, it is important that the desired format of reporting and planning can be suggested by the SSO and agreed with the ILO.

***To what extent are constituents and key stakeholders satisfied with project services/outputs?***

As noted above, the feedback in relation to project work has been generally positive and SSO staff (and other stakeholders) see the benefits of the project and want to work with it. SSO staff also stated that the project had been very responsive to specific requests for support. Some social partners interviewed did express a desire for greater involvement in the project in future work and for more direct engagement as part of social dialogue (rather than simply as workshop participants). It seems likely that COVID has been a significant contributor to the level of engagement with social partners which may have been less than originally planned. For example, an Employers Day has been planned but has had to be deferred on a number of occasions due to COVID.

***To what extent has the project identified and engaged with the right stakeholders to achieve its objectives?***

The project would, in general, appear to have engaged with the correct stakeholders (subject to comments above in relation to more in-depth social dialogue). In addition to SSO, the project has engaged closely with the UNJP on social protection, Mahidol University, Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research (PIER) which is attached to the Bank of Thailand, and has also involved some other development partners such as the World Bank in its activities. As discussed elsewhere, the project needs to look at engagement between SSO (and possibly other RTG stakeholders) and ILO at a more senior level in terms of seeking to translate activities into policy outcomes.

***What key challenges have detracted from the effectiveness of project activities?***

Apart from COVID, the main concerns relate to the extent to which the project work has been able to assist policy development within SSO. It is not clear that SSO has been able to take full advantage of the project and perhaps there was insufficient planning on both sides as to how it would engage on an ongoing basis. This creates a risk that the work of the project will not be institutionally embedded by project end.

## **Efficiency**

A total of \$1,037,000 has been paid to date by the SSO (figures up to 1 February 2022). Of this

- \$478,000 (approx. 45%) had been spent
- \$310,000 (approx. 30%) has been committed and
- \$249,000 was the outstanding balance as at this date (approx. 25%)

Spending is somewhat lower than expected due to a) COVID and b) lower than planned inputs from the CTA. Somewhat lower than planned expenditure has been the norm for many ILO projects during COVID.

### ***Has the allocation of financial, human, institutional and technical resources been optimal for achieving project outcomes?***

Insofar as can be established, the allocation of resources has been broadly appropriate for achieving project outcomes. However, it would appear that the project needs additional resources to support engagement with SSO, both human and institutional. Originally, there was there was no allocation for interpretation and translation so it has been necessary to reallocate resources to meet these costs.

### ***Are project staffing structures and resourcing of activities contributing to quality of performance and impact?***

Generally, the resourcing of activities has contributed to the quality of performance and impact. However, it is not clear that initial project staffing structures were sufficient for the project. There was initially no national project co-ordinator. The national project co-ordinator (NPC) of the UNJP now acts in addition as co-ordinator for this project and it appears that his time is split roughly 50:50 between the two. It is recommended below that a dedicated NPC should be attached to this project, based in SSO, to carry out project co-ordinator work, act as interpreter for the CTA and generally work to increase day-to-day engagement with SSO units.

### ***Have project activities been completed on-time/according to sequencing anticipated by the project document adjusted to take into account COVID? If not, what factors have hindered timely delivery and what counter-measures have been taken to address them?***

Project activities have been progressed broadly on-time and according to sequencing anticipated by the project document adjusted to take into account COVID. As noted above, however, the formal adoption of the Actuarial Bureau has not yet taken place and this should be addressed as a priority.

## **Impact and sustainability**

### ***What impact has the project achieved to date, and in which areas has impact been stronger than others?***

### ***How successful has the project been in developing the actuarial bureau and staff capacities?***

As this is a mid-term evaluation, it would not be expected that the project would have achieved significant long-term impacts. The main focus on this section is on identifying issues in relation to enhancing impact and sustainability over the remainder of the project and on any issues in relation to the final evaluation and impact and sustainability.

With a view to the final evaluation, it may be worth noting that while outcome 2 refers to social security policy *reforms approved* by the RTG, the activities under that outcome relate to reviews, reports and recommendations. The PRODOC perhaps assumes that such activities will translate into actual reforms without sufficiently identifying the political economy factors necessary to convert one into the other. It is also worth noting that social security policy reform tends to be a long-term issue (as indeed the PRODOC recognises) and this is particularly the case with studies such as actuarial reviews. Finally, it is not always easy to identify the impact from outputs (reports, reviews) to outcomes (policy reforms) since there are usually a range of factors involved.

With these factors in mind, it is recommended that, in preparation for the end-of-project evaluation, the project team should (on an ongoing basis) identify and document any areas where they feel that project outputs have had an impact on policy. This would assist the final evaluation in identifying such outcomes.

As noted above, the project has been successful in developing the structures for the proposed Actuarial Bureau. Indeed, SSO stated that no further technical input by ILO was necessary. However, the Bureau has *not been established* to date and there is *no specific timeline for its establishment*. As this is one of the key project outcomes, it is recommended that ILO follow this up with SSO and other key stakeholders at a management level. It is noted that the PRODOC identified *the key element in guaranteeing the sustainability of the intervention* as being ‘the creation and the development of the capacity of the Actuarial Services Bureau within the SSO’.

### ***Who uses project knowledge and outputs? Are they likely to be catalysts for change?***

The SSO staff in line bureaux were very positive about the project and the additional support which it provides to their work. They use the project knowledge and outputs and would like to deepen their knowledge and skills in this area. To this extent, the skills learned by SSO staff are likely to be future catalysts for change. In relation to the specific project outputs, many are still ongoing and it is perhaps too early to be definitive about their impact. However, the limited engagement referred to above has perhaps restricted the extent to which these outputs have been catalysts for change to date. It is, of course, a matter for SSO to decide whether and when it is appropriate for project start to present issues to senior management but perhaps a more collaborative approach could be envisioned for the remainder of the project.

### ***To what extent are the final outcomes of the project likely to be achieved by project end?***

There is ground for serious concern about whether the Actuarial Bureau will be formally established by project end and in a position directly to employ actuarial staff. SSO and ILO are best placed to assess the risk that this will not happen but it is proposed below that issue should be discussed arising from this MTE and that a definite roadmap to approval be agreed.

In relation to outcome 2, the activities will be completed (subject to some minor issues noted in Annex 2). The extent to which they have an immediate impact on policy is

somewhat outside the power of the project itself to influence and a broader range of political economy factors are involved.

Finally, in relation to outcome 3, it is recommended below that a minimalist interpretation of the outcome should be adopted and that the project should work to achieve the (generally rather unspecific) indicators set out in the PRODOC logframe.<sup>6</sup> It is anticipated that this should be possible.

***What project approaches have potential for further upscaling and/or replication, either in a possible next phase or through future work by ILO and its partners?***

Given that one of the main objectives was to establish an Actuarial Bureau and that technical work is largely completed, at this stage, it is not clear that there is a need for a next phase of this project in this regard. Similarly, valuations will have been carried out of both WCF and SSF and a further valuation will not be required for some years (and should, in any case, be largely carried out internally). SSO may wish to engage with ILO on broader policy issues (such as pension reform, coverage extension or long-term care) but given that there are nearly two years of the project to run, it is perhaps too early to identify specific areas at this point.

There was a specific rationale for the project in Thailand both from SSO's perspective (given Thailand's large population and relatively well-developed social protection system) and from ILO's perspective (regional actuarial facility). It is not so clear that there are many other countries in the region which would require a similar national facility although many may require specific ILO inputs on specific actuarial issues.<sup>7</sup> ILO could look at how to bring specific experiences from the project (e.g. on coverage or actuarial valuation) to other ASEAN countries through the regional actuarial facility.

## **Cross-cutting issues**

***To what extent are programme management and implementation guided by tripartite dialogue and contribute to international labour standards (ILS) and gender equality and non-discrimination?***

In terms of gender, the PRODOC makes frequent reference to 'gender-responsive' outcomes and the project marker identifies it as a project which 'Includes gender equality in the outcome(s), and some outputs/activities specifically address gender issues'. It is clear that the project is very relevant to gender-related issues. For example, some of the groups considered as part of coverage extension (e.g. domestic workers) are largely female. Similarly, pensions are very relevant to both men and women and there are somewhat different gender issues arising in terms of access to and levels of pensions. Participants in training both within the SSO and on Mahidol University courses have been broadly 50:50 men and women in line with PRODOC objectives (slight majority of women if anything). It is understood that the project plans to do a specific gender report in the remaining period of the project and this may be a useful way to bring out the gender implications of the project

---

<sup>6</sup> Note that the actual wording of Outcome 3 ('Thai society ... is increasingly aware of the functioning of social security schemes') is unrealistic for a project of this size other than as a broad aspiration and that even if any change in the indicators (based on SSO annual research of public satisfaction and awareness) was apparent, it would be impossible to attribute this to project activities.

<sup>7</sup> Several ASEAN countries have a larger total population than Thailand but GDP per capita is significantly lower and these countries have lower social protection coverage per the World Social Protection database.

work. However, it would also be desirable that individual outputs should specifically address relevant gender issues.

In relation to international labour standards (ILS), the project is very relevant to standards such as the ILO Recommendation on Social Protection Floors, No. 202 (2012).

Recommendation 202 provides guidelines for the project regarding the expansion of coverage and the design of the different schemes, particularly in terms of the system coverage and schemes' adequacy.

Finally, as to the extent to which programme management and implementation guided by tripartite dialogue, the Thai social partners are direct recipients of the project and both employers and trade unions are represented on the board of the SSO. Direct activities (such as an Employers Day) have been delayed to some extent due to COVID.

### **Issues to be addressed before the final evaluation**

Work has been carried out with Mahidol University to provide an elective social security option on its actuarial science course. The intention has been to improve the knowledge of young actuaries in relation to social security issues with a view that some of them may work in SSO (and other relevant agencies) in the future. In 2021, 11 students participated in this and in 2022, 34 are participating. This is referred to in the PRODOC but it is not specifically identified as a project activity.<sup>8</sup> If this is to be counted as a project output, with a view to the final evaluation, ILO should decide where this falls as a project activity and have this agreed with SSO. If it is categorised as activity 2.8 (SSO staff knowledge), then SSO staff need to participate in the course (which might well be a useful option anyway). Otherwise, it is not clear where it formally fits within the project. The same point may apply to the assessment of SSO's training function where it would be useful to clarify exactly where this fits in to the PRODOC.

There are a small number of activities under outcome 2 which do not appear to be a high priority for SSO (2.5 and 2.7). If this is indeed the case, this should be formally agreed with SSO and resources can be allocated to other activities.

---

<sup>8</sup> The PRODOC could be read as suggesting that this is an activity for the regional actuarial service.

### 3. Conclusions and recommendations

#### Conclusions

Overall, the project is very relevant to the work of both SSO and ILO itself and it has achieved a lot in its initial period. The work has been done to allow the Actuarial Bureau to be established and most of the activities under outcome 2 have been completed or are in train. Generally, the SSO feedback on the project and its work has been positive. The staff of Research and Development (R&D) bureau and line units see the benefits of the project and want to work with it.

However, it is not clear that SSO has been able to take full advantage of the project and perhaps there was insufficient planning on both sides as to how it would engage on an ongoing basis. ILO and SSO appear to have made assumptions regarding project ownership and how management would work. Given that these assumptions turned out to be incorrect, it is now clear that a different approach is required.

There is a risk that the work of the project will not be institutionally embedded by project end. Face-to-face activities have obviously been constrained due to COVID and this has limited work on capacity building/training but also importantly on informal but essential networking. At this mid-point, it is an ideal time to look at what can be done to maximise the impact of the project's work given the almost two years remaining. Otherwise, the project impact may not achieve full potential and, given the planned tapering off of CTA inputs (see PRODOC, p. 13), the impact of the project might be attenuated in the remaining period.<sup>9</sup>

#### Recommendations<sup>10</sup>

##### Use the MTE to refocus the project

It is suggested that ILO and SSO should use the MTE to refocus the project and that ILO (at appropriate senior level) should meet with SSO senior management and board (Secretary General (SG) or DSG, chair of the board, trade union and employer members) to review the project as Thailand (hopefully) moves towards a post-COVID environment. These meetings should focus on activities for the remaining project period and how the project will engage with SSO. In particular, this should look at how ongoing management of the project will work and how there can be closer engagement and feedback.

##### Develop a roadmap for formal adoption of Actuarial Bureau

One specific topic for discussion is how to develop a roadmap to get final approval for the establishment of the Actuarial Bureau and employment of actuarial staff as SSO employees. There appears to be a significant risk that the Bureau will not be established (or sufficient staff employed) by project end.

---

<sup>9</sup> The original plan is that the project will fund only 2 months of the CTA's time in 2023.

<sup>10</sup> There are also a number of recommendations in chapter 2 with a view to the final evaluation including tracking the impact of activities and clarifying the status of particular activities.

### Improve project supports to enhance engagement with SSO

It will be important for the project to engage as much as possible with SSO staff and to be visible and available to respond to their needs. The project needs additional and ongoing ILO and SSO support to facilitate this. As soon as ILO rules allow, it would be important that there are more face-to-face activities and meetings at the SSO with appropriate ILO staff involved in the project. These should be regularly organised to discuss technical and project management issues.

It is also proposed that the project should employ a project co-ordinator, probably on a part time basis but to be confirmed, who can take over the work currently carried out by the UNJP co-ordinator, act as interpreter for the CTA and generally work to increase day-to-day engagement with SSO units (e.g. Investment, WCF, etc.) in addition to the enhanced engagement with management (above). In order to do so, project staff need to have appropriate office facilities in SSO and a clear schedule of meetings, etc.

### Focus on capacity building

As discussed above, the project has already completed several of the outcome 2 activities (e.g. WCF valuation) and others are ongoing. It is recommended that the future project work should focus on capacity building for key SSO staff (e.g staff in R&D and key business units) and (if possible) management. Insofar as possible this should involve practical learning-by-doing and involve the project assisting in SSO work rather than doing standalone work.<sup>11</sup> For example, if there is to be a study of a specific sector re coverage extension, it would be preferable that SSO staff do it with project support rather than vice versa. The project should *not* do large-scale basic training unless it can be shown that this will provide added value to either SSO or ILO.

### Minimise outcome 3

It is recommended that ILO and SSO should (a) interpret outcome 3 in a way so as to simply meet objectives/indicators; and (b) focus entirely on project-related activities such as the actuarial reports or coverage extension. For example, for activity 3.1 (journalists), organise one briefing for journalists on a key project output. Similarly, if it is planned to go ahead with the development of individual development plans (following up on the training assessment), focus these on the R&D bureau staff.

---

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, this is the original intention as set out in the PRODOC.

## Annex 1: Persons interviewed

Name	Role
<b>SSO</b>	
Tanit Loipimai	Current lead coordinator, Director of Research & Development and (previously) International Cooperation Bureau
Chompoopen Sirithorn	Adviser to Secretary General, ex lead coordinator
Pharichart Pipadwadcharasopon	Head of SSO Bangbuathong Branch, ex lead coordinator
Napoom Suwannapoom	SSO Actuary and operational coordinator
Supakorn Laohapithakvorn	Specialist, Investment Bureau
Songsamorn Lamsanpang	Specialist, WCF Office
Rattanapat Suwansit	Specialist, Training Division
Winittri Ponpaha	Specialist, Communication Unit
Supaporn Kumdech	Specialist, HR Bureau
Suwit Sripian	Director, Employers' Confederation Thai Agriculture and Business Industry, Employer representative on SSO board
Tawee Deeying	President, National Congress Private Industrial of Employees (NCPE), Employee representative on SSO board
<b>External</b>	
Nada Wasi	Research Director, Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research (PIER)
Siriwan Romchatong	Secretary-General, Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)
Ukrish Kanchanaketu	Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)
Kornchai Kaewmahawang	Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)
Suree Monta	Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)
<b>ILO</b>	
Vasu Thirasak	National Project Coordinator UNJP and ILO SSO Project
Nuno Cunha	Senior Social Protection Specialist, ILO
Simon Brimblecombe	CTA, ILO SSO Project
Jittima Srisuknam	Programme Officer for Thailand and Lao PDR, ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR

## Annex 2: Project implementation (based on Logframe)

Project structure	Indicators	Means of verification	MTE Comments
<b>Development Objectives:</b>  <b>To enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of Thailand Social Security System and, therefore, contribute to enhanced and improved social protection of people residing in Thailand</b>			
<b>Immediate Objective / Outcome 1: The SSO Actuarial Bureau (SAB) is in place and its team is equipped to provide the organization with actuarial services</b>	<p>SAB is created and running</p> <p>SAB staff conducts an actuarial valuation with only the support of the CTA according to the CTA planned work-months</p>	<p>Approval by the Office of Civil Service Commission</p> <p>Part of the next SSO Strategic Plan</p> <p>SAB Actuarial Report</p>	<p><i>SSO and ILO have carried out preliminary work to establish SAB but approval is pending at the time of writing and there is no firm timeline for final approval.</i></p> <p><i>The same applies for approval to employ actuaries as SSO employees (with appropriate pay scales).</i></p>
<b>Outputs</b>  <b>1.1 SSO Actuarial Bureau structure developed and approved</b>  <b>1.2 SSO Actuarial Bureau officials have enhanced capacity through their participation in training activities</b>	<p>SAB structure approved by the management of SSO</p> <p>At least 50% trained project assistants become SAB staff</p> <p>Number of trainings Number of staff trained</p>	<p>Approval document signed by the management</p> <p>Number of staff contracts</p>	<p><i>As above</i></p> <p><i>Pending.</i></p> <p><i>Training to date includes:</i></p> <p><i>Extension Seminar (48 participants 26F/22M)</i></p> <p><i>Training for WCF Valuation (8-11 participants over 6 sessions)</i></p>

			<p><i>Training for SSF Valuation (8-11 participants in 2 sessions with 4 more to come)</i></p> <p><i>Investment Governance training (2 sessions, 15-20 participants)</i></p> <p><i>One SSO officer (M) attended the ITC Training Course on Employment Injury and presented the findings to colleagues</i></p> <p><i>One SSO officer (F) attended the ITC Actuarial Modeling for Social Protection Analysts and presented the findings to colleagues</i></p> <p><i>Two SSO officers (1F&amp;1M) attended the ILO regional health actuarial training in Viet Nam in 2019</i></p>
<p><b>Immediate Objective / Outcome 2: Relevant Social Security Gender Responsive Policy reforms are prepared, informed by evidence produced by the SSO Actuarial Bureau and by the Project services</b></p>	<p>Reforms relevant to pension sustainability and adequacy are adopted</p> <p>Reforms relevant to coverage extension are adopted</p>	<p>Modifications to legislations</p> <p>Modifications to SSO strategic plan</p> <p>Modifications to legislations</p> <p>Effective coverage has increased</p>	<p><i>Work on policy-related activities is ongoing and impact can be assessed in Final Evaluation.</i></p> <p><i>The extent to which activities can be expected to translate into policy change is discussed in the body of this report.</i></p>

<b>Outputs</b> <b>2.1: Report is available to inform a gender responsive Pension Reform in 2017/18, using the actuarial model developed by ILO to carry out the actuarial valuation of 2015, updated to incorporate the latest discussions (2017) - including adding a survivor pension</b>  <b>2.2: Policy recommendations for universal social protection for all women and men are available, including costing estimations</b>  <b>2.3: SSO Actuarial Review produced and available to inform policy decisions</b> <b>2.4: Workers compensation actuarial valuation produced and available to inform policy decisions</b>  <b>2.5: Options for the introduction of contributions from retired members for health insurance: available and presented to the Social Security Office board</b>  <b>2.6: A Gender responsive Funding Policy and reviewing the Investment Policy established</b>  <b>2.7: Research and dialogue on options to expand the scope of hospitals available to SSO members for use</b>  <b>2.8: Increased knowledge of SSO Staff (central level and provincial level) on social security concepts</b>	Technical note to the satisfaction of SSO; Meetings with stakeholders	Technical note List of participants	<b><i>Report on pension reform is being completed with UNJP</i></b>
	Feasibility study report, which include findings of the dialogue process and roadmap for coverage extension	Report	<b><i>Work on coverage extension is ongoing</i></b>
	Actuarial valuation produced mainly by SAB staff	Report	<b><i>SSO Actuarial Valuation is ongoing</i></b>
	Actuarial valuation produced	Report	<b><i>WCF Actuarial Valuation has been completed and presented to SSO</i></b>
	Report on recommendations on options, financial impacts and recommendations	Report	<b><i>Activity 2.5 does not appear to be a high priority for SSO. As discussed in the report, this should be clarified.</i></b>
	Report on Funding Policy finalized and discussed with the SSO Board Report on investment policy review is finalized and discussed with the SSO Board	Reports	<b><i>Investment strategy work has been completed</i></b>
	Report with policy options (including costs)	Report	<b><i>Activity 2.7 does not appear to be a high priority for SSO. As discussed in the report, this should be clarified.</i></b>
	Training material	Training material List of participants	

and principles (covering all project), with minimum critical mass of 35% women course facilitators as well as participants, with the target of parity (45% to 55%)	Number of women and men trained		<i>Project has commissioned an agency to review SSO training function. See above re specific training activities</i>
<b>Immediate Objective / Outcome 3: Thai society is increasingly aware of the functioning of social security schemes and to the importance of gender responsive Social Security</b>	SSO Annual research of people satisfaction, awareness, experience  Improvement in the indexes measured by the Annual research	SSO Annual research document  SSO Annual research document	<i>The objective is unrealistic for a project of this size other than as a broad aspiration. It is very unlikely that the project would have any impact on general public awareness of or satisfaction with social security (as measured by SSO surveys) and even if there was a change it would not be possible to attribute it to project work.</i>
<b>3.1: Journalists and/or correspondents have increased knowledge in Social Security topics, with the target of parity</b>	Training material produced Number journalist trained (women and men)	Training material List of participants Evaluation forms	<i>Pending</i>
<b>3.2: Social Partners have increased knowledge in Social Security topics, with a focus on those represented in SSO Board, with minimum critical mass of 35% women participants, with the target of parity (45% to 55%)</b>	Training material produced Number of social partners trained (women and men participants)	Training material List of participants Evaluation forms	<i>Pending</i>
<b>3.3: Capacity of all SSO Departments increased to communicate social security gender responsive technical messages</b>	Communication package produced Number of workshops Number of departments	Communications package List of participants/departments	<i>Project has commissioned an assessment of the communications function of SSO and this is being finalised</i>

<b>3.4: Annual Public Statistical and Actuarial Updates available and shared with the broad public (one per year), including gender disaggregated data</b>	New section on the annual report is produced and online	SSO Website	<i><b>Pending</b></i>
<b>3.5: Increased knowledge of the planning agency, line ministries and parliamentarians in the area of social insurance, with minimum critical mass of 35% women participants, with the target of parity (45% to 55%)</b>	Training material produced Number of trainings Number of women and men trained	Training material List of trainings List of participants	<i><b>Pending</b></i>
<b>3.6: A public dialogue on Social Security is created at national level involving broad relevant national stakeholders, inclusive of women representative associations</b>	A dialogue mechanism is created at the national level	Dialogue mechanism Meetings' minutes	<i><b>Pending</b></i>