



## Reducing vulnerability in Lao PDR: Advancing social protection and labour rights and entitlements in the coffee and tea sectors of Lao PDR (SoLaR)

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Name of consultant(s): Dwight Ordóñez (Lead) and Viriyasack Sisouphanthong

Name of Evaluation Manager: Rattaporn Pongpattana, M&E Officer from ILO ROAP

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## Acronyms

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ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities (of ILO)
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
ARC	Agricultural Research Centre of Southern Laos
ASDSP	Association to Support the Development of the Peasant Societies
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CBSS	Country-Based Support Schemes
CPC	Coffee Producers Cooperative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DC	Development Cooperation
DoLSW	Department of Labour and Social Welfare
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EU	European Union
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
ILO	International Labour Organization
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LCA	Lao Coffee Association
LFTU	Lao Federation of Trade Unions
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LSSO	Lao Social Security Organization
LWU	Lao Women's Union
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
MHP	Maeying Huamjai Phattana (Women Mobilizing for Development)
MOLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MSC	Most Significant Change
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PAC	Action Advisory Committee
PPE	Personal Protection Equipment
PTSE	Phan-Thin (Seeds of Community) Social Enterprise
PWD	People with Disabilities
PWG	Provincial Stakeholders Working Group
ROAP	ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium-size Enterprises
SS	Social Security
TOR	Terms of reference
TOT	Training of trainers
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
VSS	Voluntary Social Security (Scheme)
VZF	Vision Zero Fund
WIC	Worker Information Centres

## Executive Summary

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### Background and Context

Most of the workers and households engaged in the coffee and tea sectors in Lao People's Democratic Republic are in informal and vulnerable employment, often as unpaid contributing family work. Both sectors depend on seasonal labour, with high levels of participation by women (particularly ethnic minority women in the case of tea). Both sectors demonstrate similar decent work deficits with respect to lack of social protection access and systemic OSH risks. In response to these issues, between 2021 and 2024 the ILO and Oxfam jointly implemented the SoLaR project under the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Schemes (CBSS) Lao PDR. The project is supported by a financial contribution of USD 1,129,841 (Euro 1 million).

The key stakeholders for this action are the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), Lao Coffee Association (LCA), the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), the Tea Association, cooperatives, production groups, the Agriculture Research Centre, Lao Social Security Organization and its provincial and district offices, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and its provincial departments and district offices. Likewise, the three Civil Society Organizations which supported the implementation of the project.

### Project Description

The project's development objective is "Workers, particularly informal workers and women, in the Lao coffee and tea sectors have improved access to social protection coverage and occupational safety and health, realizing their respective labour rights". The project's specific objectives are: SO1: Extended and improved social protection and OSH delivery system and services at district level for women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors; SO2: Women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in three contiguous districts of the Bolaven Plateau of Lao PDR are organized and empowered to promote and protect their labour rights.

### Evaluation Purpose, Objective, and Scope

The final evaluation's **purpose** is to assure accountability and learning to the ILO constituents and key stakeholders. The findings and recommendations will be used as organizational learning to improve the design and implementation of future relevant project and programmes.

The **overall objective** of the independent final evaluation is to provide an assessment, following OECD-DAC evaluation criterion as used by ILO and adjusted to ILO mandate, of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the interventions and approaches used by the

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project in Lao PDR. The final evaluation assesses the project's performance as per its foreseen targets and indicators of achievement at outcome and output levels, the strategies and implementation modalities chosen, its partnership arrangements, and the constraints, and opportunities it faced. It also provides lessons to improve the design, performance, and sustainability of future similar initiatives. The evaluation **scope** covered project activities implemented at national, provincial, district and village levels, in Lao PDR between November 2021 and June 2024.

The Clients/Users of the evaluation are the Government of Lao PDR's relevant ministries (particularly, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare - MOLSW) and agencies (e.g., Lao Social Security Organization, others), employers' organizations and sectoral associations, trade union, the ILO, CSO/NGO as Oxfam and other implementing partners, and the donor (the European Union).

### **Evaluation Methodology**

The evaluation used a mix of evaluation approaches to ensure triangulation of information, basically: (i) a results-based approach to examine the project's outcome achievements; (ii) mixed methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings; and (iii) a participatory approach.

Data collection methods included an exhaustive review of documents; key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD). The evaluation data collection work was performed online and face-to-face in both Vientiane and in the three target provinces of the project.

### **Main Findings and Conclusions**

The project has attained most of its expected outputs and it has contributed to strengthen social security and OSH delivery capacity and advance gender equality in coffee and tea producing communities in three southern provinces of Lao PDR. However, more time and efforts would be needed to consolidate and enhance these achievements and expand the impact of project interventions around the country.

### **Relevance**

SoLaR project's objectives and design are relevant and consistent with the needs and priorities of a variety of stakeholders. The project's objectives are consistent with the Lao PDR National Social Protection Strategy, especially pillar 2, on extending the coverage of social security. Likewise, project objectives are consistent with the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED 2021-2025). SoLaR project's objectives align with ILO's Programme and Budget (2022-2023) objectives 6.2, 7.2, 8.1 and 8.2 and fit within "ILO's III Decent Work Country Programme for Lao PDR (2022-2026)", outcomes 2 and 4. SoLaR project's objectives are particularly relevant to ILO tripartite constituents as they are congruent with the MOLSW employment strategy, contribute to strengthen LFTU capacities and their

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goals of protecting labour rights and organizing informal workers, and complements LNCCI efforts to promote compliance with Lao PDR labour law and strengthen the business and export sectors. The project coincides with EU goal of improving living conditions in Lao agricultural sector.

### Validity of Project Design

The project design and logframe are very relevant to the situation of Lao male and female workers, and particularly to informal and female labourers in the agricultural sector. The combination of the project specific objectives, expressed in clear outcomes and outputs, offers a solid conceptual framework and a powerful programmatic path for advancing social protection, occupational safety and health, social dialogue (through collective bargaining), economic improvement, and gender equality in the coffee and tea sector. The activities included within this framework are all conducive to expanding and improving social protection, advancing gender equality and protecting labour rights.

### Coherence

There are currently four ILO projects addressing social protection issues in Lao PDR. While all these projects technically support each other, the ILO has avoided implementing repeated interventions on the same topic. Thus, while SoLaR takes the needs/ requests of people from provincial, district and village level to the national level, the other three projects are focused on improving the national social security system (e.g., capacity building of government staff, review of SS law and other legislation, overall development/ strengthening of the social security system, and on health insurance). SoLaR has coordinated certain activities with other international NGOs apart from Oxfam, exchanging information and trainings with the same (Winrock's CLEAN Project; Coffee Producers' Cooperative - CPC). It has also collaborated with other cooperation agencies in organizing the International Coffee Day at Vientiane. There is relevant potential for greater collaboration with other agencies in the future.

### Effectiveness

The project has been very successful in achieving its expected results. According to the project's monitoring system report, by June 2024, SoLaR had exceeded several of its direct services (e.g. men and women groups organized and empowered to promote and protect labour rights; additional workers registered with LSSO; additional people with increased understanding of NSSF, OSH, and gender issues; informal women workers who received gender-responsive technical and leadership) This appraisal is confirmed by the results of an independent endline study conducted between May-June 2024.

In addition to the above, the project has made significant contributions in piloting model interventions that may help the Government of Lao PDR (GOL), employers' and workers' organizations to advance the



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promotion of labour rights (social security, OSH, freedom of association and collective bargaining, gender equality), and particularly those of women and informal workers, in the rural sector. The project has contributed to increase the access to social security registration services for male and female workers in 34 rural communities belonging to three districts in three southern Lao provinces and has generated and increase awareness on the importance of occupational safety and health and an increased application of preventative measures and use of protective equipment.

Notwithstanding the above, it is necessary to highlight that the main participants in the SoLaR project are small landowners (“farmers”) residing in the target villages, but that this population does not include all “informal, agrarian workers”, and particularly seasonal workers, which are an unstable population, often younger than farm owners, and that often migrates to Thailand for better income opportunities. There is a need to develop mechanisms that reach this population, tallied in the thousands of workers, and whose social security and occupational safety and health needs remain unattended.

### Efficiency

SoLaR did an efficient use of the funds allocated for its implementation. The allocation of funds among implementing partners was adequate. Although the outcomes of the project are ambitious, and staff workload is important, SoLaR managed to deliver most of its planned activities.

### Impact

As result of SoLaR efforts, Lao PDR social security and OSH delivery systems and services have become more responsive to workers’ needs, particularly those of informal, male and female agricultural workers, and other labourers working at plantations and processing facilities in the coffee and tea sectors. For example, LSSO has adopted the mobile registration system as an institutional procedure, and after the pilot in Vientiane and its replication in the target provinces, it is transferring the responsibility for the implementation of the same to the southern provinces’ local SSOs. Registration in social security has risen among both male and female small-scale farmers and company employees, and the population in target communities and productive groups/ enterprise has become more aware of OSH hazards and their prevention. However, the effects of the project on informal, seasonal workers, the poorest in the agricultural sector, remains limited.

The project helped advance gender equality and women empowerment in the target communities by reducing gender gaps in the access to social security and OSH and promoting increased women’ participation in leadership positions in the community. As result the number of women occupying leadership positions grew. Female farmers enrolled in higher numbers in social security, with a higher proportion of female participants signing up compared to males. Gender equality and inclusion were

also reflected in the interaction of genders at community and household level, promoting a more egalitarian and cooperative relationship model among men and women. Women's voices are now heard and respected as equal in many communities.

### Sustainability

In the absence of an exit strategy, the sustainability of project interventions seems limited. While most SoLaR's interventions developed through trainer-of-trainers methodology, regarding social security, OSH, collective bargaining and gender equality could be replicated in the future by local SSO, FTU, ARC and other organizations, and the mobile registration and payment system will be continued by LSSO at local level, the representatives of most of the organizations participating in the project stated that in the absence of SoLaR's further financial support, it would be difficult for them to continue implementing activities, or at least, they will become less frequent, the outreach capacity of these institutions being greatly affected.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Duration of interventions: Increasing the coverage of social security systems and occupational safety and health practices is a long-term commitment that requires continuous action and investment by government agencies.
- Inclusion of seasonal workers: Special efforts/ means need to be developed to promote the registration of informal seasonal workers in social security and improve their knowledge on OSH.
- Accessibility to rural communities/ participants: It is important to organize outreach activities based on farmers schedules/ availability and on the limited accessibility to communities during the rainy season.
- Health sector engagement in delivery of services to member of social security: Villagers expressed their concern about bad quality of attention at hospitals, as well as their social security cards not being accepted by staff at small health centres and hospitals. It is important to ensure that health staff is sensitized by SSO.
- Economic empowerment: It is important to increase the capacity of farmers to enrol in social security. Increasing productivity through adequate equipment and improving access to markets helps boost income and thus supports registration in social security.

- Setting up of activities should be carried out on a more regular basis, as it takes time to organize activities and the participants may change/ new participants incorporate as beneficiaries, and some people may need to refresh the information received.

## **Good Practices**

- The holistic approach employed by the project, which combines various relevant labour-related issues, such as access to social security, occupational safety and health, and collective bargaining with advancing gender equality in the workplace and at community level.
- The integration of a wide range of stakeholders, (tripartite, CSO, communities) as implementers and beneficiaries, through training, of diverse project components, creating a framework for synergies and coordination.
- The piloting of mobile registration and payment services within the LSSO, which increased the accessibility to these services.
- A comprehensive visibility strategy, which included diverse means and topics, and helped convey, in an effective way, information on project's achievements and activities.

## **Recommendations**

### **1.1 Addressed to the European Union (donor)**

**Recommendation 1:** Design and fund a new phase of the SoLaR project for an additional minimum period of 36 months or 48 months, including the extension of its implementation to new regions (*addressed to: European Union, ROAP; priority: High; timing: Short-term; resources: Additional funding for new phase of project*).

### **1.2 Addressed to the ILO and Oxfam**

**Recommendation 2:** Include among the priority targets of the new project phase those informal workers who do not own land and work as seasonal labour in agriculture (*addressed to: ILO and OXFAM; priority: High; timing: Short-term; resources: New project budget*)

**Recommendation 3:** Partner with other major international cooperation projects to mainstream the promotion of labour rights and gender equality within these projects' agenda (*addressed to: EU, European partner organizations, ILO and OXFAM; priority: Medium; timing: Short-term; resources: New project budget*)

**Recommendation 4:** Incorporate activities in other languages, including communication in local media, to improve outreach to ethnic minorities (*addressed to: ILO and OXFAM; priority: Medium; timing: Medium-term; resources: New project budget*)

**Recommendation 5:** Design, implement and monitor an exit strategy since the beginning of the new phase of the project (*addressed to: ILO and OXFAM; priority: High; timing: Short-term; resources: New project budget*)

### *1.3 Addressed to the Government of Lao-PDR*

**Recommendation 6:** Provide partial or total subsidies on the cost of enrolment and contributions to social security for the poorest segments of Lao agricultural workers, and particularly, those under seasonal employment and insufficient income (*addressed to: MOLSW, government of Lao PDR; priority: High; timing: Medium-term; resources: Lao PDR national budget*).

# 1. Background and Programme Description

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## 1.1. Introduction

Although Lao PDR has ratified several International Labour Conventions,<sup>1</sup> the enforcement of international labour rights and standards is generally limited across the Lao PDR workforce, with poor working conditions, low wages, long hours, and systemic OSH issues prevalent in most sectors. Most of the workers and households engaged in the coffee and tea sectors in Lao People's Democratic Republic are in informal and vulnerable employment, often as unpaid contributing family work. Both sectors depend on seasonal labour, with high levels of participation by women (particularly ethnic minority women in the case of tea). Both sectors demonstrate similar decent work deficits with respect to lack of social protection access and systemic OSH risks. Employed workers are usually without proper employment contracts and social security coverage. Labour rights violations, hazardous working conditions, violence, and sexual harassment are not uncommon.

The three target districts of the SoLaR project, located in the Bolaven Plateau, produce 95 per cent of Lao coffee and supplies markets in Asia, Europe, and North America. It is estimated that **coffee production** involves up to 44,200 people and that the livelihoods of about 300,000 people depend on the sector. Coffee production is still dominated by small-scale farms, including contract farming, with 24,000 households engaged in Paksong District alone. Plantations account for around 30 per cent of coffee cultivation. Six farmers' cooperatives on the Bolaven Plateau comprised 3,450 households in 2019 (about 14 per cent of smallholder farmers). The 3,500 to 5,000 permanent employees in the sector are mainly found in plantations and processing facilities for roasting and exporting.<sup>2</sup> While the **Lao tea sector** remains small, its potential to grow is recognized in the identification of tea within the Agriculture Development Strategy to the year 2025 and Vision to 2030. Tea production is located at Lao PDR's northern provinces, but tea production is emerging, often alongside coffee, in the south. Over 8,000 households (approx. 44,000 people) are estimated to be employed in the Lao tea sector. Cultivation or collection of tea is primarily by smallholder farmers and local communities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Forced Labour 1930 (No. 029); Night Work of Young Persons, 1919 (No. 6); White Lead (Painting), 1921 (No. 13); Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182); Equal Remuneration, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), 1958 (No. 111); Minimum Age, 1973 (No. 138); Tripartite Consultation, 1976 (No. 144); Night Work (Women), (No.4), Denounced 2014; Night Work, 1990 (No. 171). *Source*; International Labour Organization, NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards. Available at <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:1:0::NO:RP>

<sup>2</sup> ILO Vision Zero Fund and Safety and Health for All. (2020). Improving occupational safety and health in global value chain of coffee in Lao People's Democratic Republic: Drivers and constraints. A case study.

<sup>3</sup> *Sources*: (1) European Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Lao PDR (ECCIL). (2017). *Lao Industry Report: The Tea Sector*. (2) Earth Systems in consultation with the Lao Tea Sector Stakeholders. (2016). *Sustainable Development of the Lao Tea Sector*. (3) Agriculture and Forestry Consultants Ltd (AFC). (2017). *Final Evaluation of Oxfam's Sustainable Food Program in Lao PDR 2014-2016 Supported by the Belgian Government*

## 1.2. Key Stakeholders and target groups

The SoLaR project is jointly implemented by ILO and Oxfam under the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Schemes (CBSS) Lao PDR, and it responds to EIDHR Objective 2.<sup>4</sup> The project is supported by a financial contribution of USD 1,129,841.

The SoLaR project continues and expands the progress and partnerships of the recent ILO EU/Vision Zero Fund (VZF) OSH Action in Champasak Province and aims to initiate similar initiatives with a similar mix of partners in Sekong and Salavan Provinces. Likewise, the project uses Oxfam's Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to raise awareness within communities and workplaces on gender equality (including addressing gender socio-norms and gender-based violence).

The **key stakeholders** for this action are the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), Lao Coffee Association (LCA), the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), the Tea Association, cooperatives, production groups, the Agriculture Research Centre, Lao Social Security Organization and its provincial and district offices, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and its provincial departments and district offices, as well as the three Civil Society Organizations (CSO) which supported the project. **Oxfam** supports the ILO in the coordination and delivery of Outputs 1.1-2.3 (see further in the text). Oxfam has a leading role for Output 2.3 "Informal women workers are better organized and have stronger leadership for gender equality in the coffee and tea sectors" where it assists the CSO Maeying Huamjai Phattana (MHP) in training CSOs/communities, and local government partners, such as district and provincial trade unions on the GALS methodology. Oxfam is in charge of disbursing and managing four Third Party grants to Association to Support the Development of the Peasant Societies (ASDSP), Maeying Huamjai Phattana (MHP), Phan-Thin Social Enterprise (PTSE), and the LFTU.

The project also has a **National Project Advisory Committee** (PAC) at the national level. The PAC was established to oversee, coordinate, and monitor the implementation of the project. At provincial level, **Provincial Stakeholder Working Groups** (PWG) provide coordination at the provincial level in Champasak, Sekong and Salavan.

## 1.3. SoLaR Project Objective and Outcomes

The SoLaR project aims to promote decent work in the coffee and tea sectors at the Bolaven Plateau, and promote the realization of labour rights, including with respect to OSH and access to social protection for all, particularly for informal workers in agriculture. The project supports the government and civil society to promote labour rights and improve access to social security

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<sup>4</sup> Particularly, to the following element of EIDHR Objective 2: Protection of women's rights in all contexts; (addressing) gender-based violence; fighting discrimination in all its forms; promotion of economic, social, and cultural rights; and advancing business and human rights by supporting sustainable trade and investment policies.

and occupational safety and health (OSH) for coffee and tea workers in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The key target group and direct beneficiaries of the SoLaR project, as originally planned, was 400 women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in the Bolaven Plateau of southern Lao PDR. These 400 workers were to be trained, and in their turn, they would sensitise other workers in their communities (14 villages) estimated to be an average of 200 households per village, learning about social protection and OSH. Better working conditions and access to social protection schemes would help attain better protection for workers and contribute to improved living conditions of their household members, benefitting indirectly up to 15,400 people. The project aimed to help strengthen CSO, farmers' groups and unions' capacities, and support women's voice, organization and leadership; it aimed to strengthen relevant technical and collective organizing capacities and the capacity to engage in multi-stakeholder initiatives and collective bargaining. The project also aimed to support improvements in Lao Social Security Organization (LSSO) outreach and service delivery at provincial and district levels. A further 24,000 workers in coffee and tea sectors in Bolaven Plateau, and 88,000 workers in the national coffee and tea sectors in Lao PDR, along with workers in other agriculture sectors (e.g. bananas, rubber, and vegetables), were considered as indirect beneficiaries of the Action, as a result of the improved capacities and effectiveness of the key government entities responsible for social protection and OSH policy and delivery.

The project's **development objective** is: "Workers, particularly informal workers and women, in the Lao coffee and tea sectors have improved access to social protection coverage and occupational safety and health, realizing their respective labour rights".

The project's theory of change assumes that workers' awareness about legal safeguards and labor rights protection, together with the effective implementation of gender-sensitive training and capacity building programs, will lead to improved social protection and OSH for women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in Lao PDR<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>The logic underpinning the project's theory of change is that: "IF women and men workers, particularly informal workers and small farmers, are aware of their rights and entitlements with respect to social protection and OSH, including the benefits and requirements of voluntary social security (VSS) registration;

- If women and men workers, particularly informal workers and small farmers, are organized and have skills and resources for advocacy to advance their own priorities and needs, based on their own circumstances;

- If women, informal workers, small farmers and community members are organized and have a strong voice on policies and services that affect them, their families and communities;

The project design identified several priority areas of intervention such as:

**Priority 1 - Social protection**

- Informal workers can advocate for their needs
- Better enforcement of social security and labour rights
- Recommendations for long-term policy and institutional change

**Priority 2 - Occupational safety and health**

- Create core groups of OSH promoters
- Expand partnerships from Champasack to Sekong and Salavan provinces

**Priority 3 - Gender equality**

- Sensitivity about gender equality and sexual harassment in workplaces
- Better organization and leadership of women in workplaces
- Awareness of gender-based violence in communities

**Priority 4 – Multi-stakeholder partnerships**

- Promote social dialogue and collective bargaining
- Stronger partnerships among government, social partners and CSOs
- New partnerships for informal workers, smallholder farmers and women

In response to the issues above and with the purpose of achieving its overall objective (improving female and male workers’ access to social protection and OSH in the coffee and tea sectors in Lao), the project established two **specific objectives**:

**Specific Objective 1:** Extended and improved social protection and OSH delivery system and services at district level for women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors.

**Specific Objective 2:** Women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in three contiguous districts of the Bolaven Plateau of Lao PDR are organized and empowered to promote and protect their labour rights.

In order to achieve these specific objectives, the project aimed to deliver the following **outputs**:

- 
- If there is an increase in women’s leadership within workers’ organizations (formal and informal), small farmers’ organizations, cooperatives and communities;
  - If employers and labour brokers comply with the requirements of the labour law and social security law;
  - If more women and men workers are in formal employment;
  - If LSSO and MoLSW/DoLSW systems and processes at provincial and district levels are responsive to the particular priorities, needs and circumstances of women and men workers, particularly informal workers, and,
  - If national social protection and OSH policies and institutional arrangements reflect, support and sustain the above by taking account of the priorities, needs and circumstances of women and men workers (particularly informal workers) at provincial and district levels,
  - THEN more women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in Lao PDR (particularly informal workers) will have expanded social protection and labor (including OSH) rights and entitlements.”



**Specific Objective 1:** Extended and improved social protection and OSH delivery system and services at district level for women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors.

**Output 1.1:** Measures piloted and promoted to improve the implementation of Social Security and Labour Laws at local level by provincial and district MoLSW/DoLSW and LSSO offices.

**Output 1.2:** Recommendations developed for longer-term strengthening of enabling policy and institutional frameworks at national and subnational levels with respect to social protection and labour rights and entitlements (including OSH), for women and men workers, particularly informal workers.

**Specific Objective 2:** Women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in three contiguous districts of the Bolaven Plateau of Lao PDR are organized and empowered to promote and protect their labour rights.

**Output 2.1:** Increased awareness of the benefits of registration with the LSSO among women and men coffee and tea workers in the targeted districts.

**Output 2.2:** Increased capacities of mass organizations, informal workers' organizations, farmers' organizations, CSOs, the Lao Coffee Association and small and medium producers to effectively advocate for the rights and needs of women and men coffee and tea sector workers, particularly informal workers, with a focus on social protection access and labour rights (including OSH).

**Output 2.3:** Informal women workers are better organized and prepared for stronger leadership, management and governance in the coffee and tea sectors.

In its turn, to achieve the above outputs, the project implemented different **types of activities**, including:

- a. Knowledge generation (e.g. baseline and endline studies, power mapping in the tea and coffee sectors, gender analysis)
- b. Formulation of gender-responsive policy and institutional development recommendations
- c. Technical assistance (e.g. support to MoLSW/ DoLSW and LSSO offices in improving the implementation of Social Security and Labour Laws at provincial and district levels; piloting of innovative alternatives of supporting increased access to VSS registration)

- d. Capacity building and institutional development (e.g., strengthen advocacy, research, policy, communications, and awareness-raising capacities of CSO, workers' organizations, farmers' groups, communities, and government agencies; develop trainings of trainers - TOTs- for the core group of OSH trainers in the coffee and tea sectors in target areas; expansion of TOTs on social protection for village and community leaders in all 3 target areas; trainings on leadership and capacity to organise adopting GALS methodology)
- e. Promotion of social dialogue (e.g. promote and support collective bargaining between coffee and tea sector workers and employers on social protection, OSH and formalization of employment by engaging individual employers in testing in practice a model employment contract for seasonal workers and in initiating at least one collective bargaining process to develop a collective bargaining agreement which includes social protection compliance and OSH provisions)
- f. Awareness-raising (e.g. raising the awareness of informal coffee and tea sector workers and their households on OSH and social protection -NSSF- registration benefits, and labour rights; awareness-raising among communities on gender socio-norms and roles)

## **2. Evaluation Purpose, Overall Objective, Scope, and Users**

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### **2.1. Final Evaluation's Purpose and Overall Objective**

The final evaluation's **purpose** is to assure accountability and learning to the ILO constituents and key stakeholders. Knowledge and information obtained from this evaluation will contribute inputs to the design of a future project expanding and adapting SOLAR activities. The evaluation will also contribute to strengthening local governance and building accountability of the government of Lao PDR, civil society organisations and the ILO.

The **overall objective** of the final evaluation is to assess the contribution of the interventions, strategies, and approaches of the project to enhance access to social security and OSH by coffee and tea-sector female and male workers, in the Lao provinces of Champasak, Sekong, and Salavan.

The **specific objectives** of the final evaluation are:

- a. To assess the project's relevance, coordination<sup>6</sup>, complementarity and added value, validity of design (intervention logic), monitoring and learning, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender equality and non-discrimination, social dialogue, International Labour Standards, environmental sustainability), and communication and visibility.
- b. To develop recommendations to carry forward the objectives and progress of the Action within the existing two sectors and three districts, as well as their extension in other agricultural sectors and localities, and particular implications and lessons for the EU's wider engagement in the agriculture sector of Lao PDR until 2027.
- c. To identify lessons learnt, good practices, innovative approaches, recommendations for future direction /implementation of the European Union and ILO, including those related to social protection, gender equality, social dialogue, tripartism, management and implementation of activities.

In summary, the evaluation seeks to determine to what extent the project specific objectives were achieved, how they were achieved and under what conditions. The evaluation covers the project's various components, its implementation as per the project workplan, and the sustainability of its results. The evaluation will also attempt to contribute to organizational learning by identifying how synergies among the project and other ILO and OXFAM relevant programmes, as well as cooperation with other international stakeholders contributed to the project's outcome.

## 2.2. Scope

The evaluation addresses project activities implemented at national, provincial and district level in Lao between November 15, 2021, and August 14, 2024. The geographical coverage of the evaluation includes all geographical locations where project operates. The period to be evaluated encompasses the entire project period from design to implementation. Meetings were held in Vientiane, Champasak, Sekong, and Salavan provinces. Meetings with ILO Specialists and project team during the inception phase were organized virtually.

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<sup>6</sup> The evaluation will assess the way in which partnerships among CSOs, local government authorities, INGOs, women rights organizations and the ILO translated into specific deliverables and effective collaboration among the same.

Integrating gender equality, social dialogue, and disability as cross-cutting concerns is part of data collection, analysis, and reporting. To the extent available, the evaluation team reviewed secondary data and information disaggregated by sex, gender, ethnicity, and people living with a disability. The evaluators assessed the relevance and effectiveness of the project's strategy related to gender equality and the inclusion of people living with a disability.

The evaluation team gleaned information from a diverse range of Project stakeholders and organizations who participated in and were intended to benefit from interventions in Lao. The evaluation interviewed and analysed the participation, contribution, and opinions of different stakeholders, including members of the Project Advisory Board (PAC), and members of Provincial Stakeholders Working Groups (PWG); representatives of the project's main partner – the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) - and other relevant government agencies (LSSO, ARC) at national and provincial level; representatives of trade unions and union federations (LFTU); representatives of employers' associations (LNCCI) and farmers' groups/cooperatives addressed by the project; female and male workers in the coffee and tea sectors, members of local CSO and of provincial level staff at LSSO and LFTU who received training(s) from the project on labour rights, social security, OSH, collective bargaining, GALS and other relevant topics, or other services from the project; representatives of the French Agency for Development (AFD, PRCC project), the EU Delegation to Lao; OXFAM and ILO project staff and ILO CO staff for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR; ILO DWT members at the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok; and other stakeholders as relevant.

The evaluation team assessed if and how the strategies and approach adopted by the project are coherent with ILO global policies, the ILO Programme and Budget 2022-23, the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Lao PDR and Country Programme Outcomes, and the SDG Goals. The evaluation team also assessed the project's consistency with key social security and OSH standards and Conventions [e.g., on social security -minimum standards- (C102), on safety and health (C155), on OSH (C187)], and other relevant tools.

The lessons learned, emerging good practices, and recommendations identified by the evaluation may be used by the ILO, OXFAM and ILO Constituents to replicate successful strategies at national level and to eventually inform a new phase of the SoLaR project.

### **2.3. Users**

The users of this final evaluation are:

- The Government of Lao PDR (particularly the MOLSW and the LSSO), and workers' and employers' organizations (at national, provincial and district levels)
- The Implementing Partners and CSOs at the provincial, district and village levels
- The donor – EU Delegation to Lao PDR and European Commission as the contracting authority
- The ILO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP), including its DWT – Bangkok specialists and programme officer  
The Project team (ILO and Oxfam) and the ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR
- Other relevant ILO policy departments (including SOCPRO), branches and programmes.

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation were shared and discussed with members of the National Project Advisory Committee and Provincial Stakeholder Working Groups during the stakeholder validation workshop.

#### **2.4. Ethical Considerations**

To guarantee the development of an impartial, independent, unbiased, and credible evaluation process, the evaluation team is subject to the highest standards of conduct. The evaluation team maintained strict confidentiality with respect to the information it received from the ILO and relevant stakeholders. The ILO Code of Conduct for independent evaluators applies to this evaluation.

#### **2.5. Evaluation Criteria and Questions**

The Evaluation used as evaluation criteria the standard OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for evaluating development assistance: Relevance and validity of design; strategic fit/ coherence with other efforts; effectiveness; efficiency of resource use; progress toward impact; and sustainability.<sup>7</sup>

ILO's cross-cutting policy drivers on Decent Work, including the International Labor Standards, the promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, and social dialogue, were taken in account when evaluating the project.

Specifically, the evaluation team considered the gender responsiveness of the project throughout design and implementation and its impact on the needs of men and women, taking

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<sup>7</sup> See [ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation \(2020\)](#)

in account *ILO's Guidance Note 3.1, on Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation*<sup>8</sup>. This includes ensuring both men and women are involved in the consultations, and the gender dimension is considered in the evaluation analysis and evaluation reporting. The evaluation team reviewed data and information that is disaggregated by sex, and assessed the relevance and effectiveness of gender-related strategies and outcomes to improve the lives of women and men.

A list of 30 key questions was formulated in order to guide the information gathering, analysis, conclusions and recommendations, as well as lessons learned and good practices. The specific evaluation questions are listed in Annex 1.

### 3. Evaluation Methodology

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The evaluation follows the ILO's evaluation policy which adheres to international standards and best practices, articulated in the OECD/DAC Principles and the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System approved by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

As per the TORs, the evaluation uses a mix of evaluation approaches and ensures triangulation of information. It uses a results-based approach to examine the SoLaR project's outcome achievements; mixed methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings; and a participatory approach in that, to the extent possible, the evaluation involves ILO key stakeholders such as beneficiaries, ILO Tripartite Constituents, ILO staff and strategic partners.

The evaluation acquired a hybrid form, and data collection work was performed both face-to-face (by the national evaluator), and online/ remotely (by the team leader), with key stakeholders and project participants in both Vientiane and the selected provinces and districts. EU and ILO ROAP and CO staff were interviewed in a remote way, using conference calls at internet platforms, as relevant.

#### 3.1. Evaluation framework

The methodology for the evaluation takes into account: i) the need to identify issues, needs and constraints specific to Lao; ii) the need to evaluate *levels* of achievement of project outcomes

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_165986.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_165986.pdf)

and outputs, good practices and lessons learned; iii) the project's contribution supporting Lao government in achieving increased compliance with ratified international labour standards (social security and OSH-related); iv) the need to formulate conclusions and recommendations as an input for future action and follow-up coffee, tea and other sectors in Lao; v) and the project's theory of change, logical framework and indicators to be used as a basis for addressing key questions.

Additionally, the evaluation addressed the ILO's *cross-cutting policy drivers*, especially: International labour standards, social dialogue, and gender equality and non-discrimination.

In particular, the final evaluation of the SoLaR project considered the gender dimension as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables, and final report. This implies involving both men and women in the consultation and evaluation analysis, reviewing data and information that is disaggregated by sex, and assessing the relevance and effectiveness of gender-related strategies to improve the lives of women and men.

### **3.2. Methods and Techniques**

The evaluation team selected methods and techniques aimed to ensure relevant data collection and provide the evidence needed to generate useful findings, address the evaluation criteria, and answer the evaluation questions.

To strengthen the credibility and usefulness of evaluation results as well as to ensure data accuracy and facilitate its interpretation, the review used a mix of data sources addressed through multiple methods and techniques. This use of mixed methods and data from mixed sources or "triangulation" helped the evaluation team overcome the bias that comes from using single information sources, single methods, or single observations.

Evaluation methods and techniques collected primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of information the evaluation team collected directly from stakeholders about their first-hand experience with the interventions. This data was collected through face-to-face and remote meetings, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Data collection and storage was done in a confidential manner.

Secondary data is documentary evidence that has direct relevance for the purposes of the evaluation and that has been produced by the ILO, Lao authorities, and other individuals or agencies for purposes other than those of the evaluation.

The evaluation team engaged the tripartite constituents. The tripartite constituents comprise representatives from the Lao Government bodies (particularly MoLSW, DoLSW, LSSO, ARC), the employers' associations (LNCCI, LCA, Tea Association), and union confederations (LFTU national and provincial level representatives).

Evaluation methods and techniques include:

*a. Document Review*

Based on the information provided in Annex 3, the evaluation team conducted a document mapping of background data, relevant documents, and research at the country level. The evaluation team reviewed a variety of documents related to the current evaluation. Examples include the project document, inception report, ROM and quarterly reports, logframe, MOUs, baseline and endline studies workplan and other documents, videos and communication products.

The list of documents reviewed can be found in Annex 3.

*b. Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups*

The evaluation team carried out face-to-face and remote/ online interviews and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders.

Interviews followed the UNEG Norms and Standards. The evaluation team conducted a total of **96 key informant interviews (KII)**, with 55 male and 41 female respondents, among which representatives of the following stakeholders:

- ILO DWT at ROAP, Bangkok
- ILO CO for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao
- European Union (EU) Delegation at Lao
- Agence Francaise de Développement (AFD) en Lao PDR, PRCC II project
- ILO SoLaR Project Team
- OXFAM SoLaR Project Team
- Baseline/ endline consultant
- Lao Social Security Organization (LSSO), in representation of MoLSW
- Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU)
- Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)
- Association to Support the Development of the Peasant Societies (ASDSP)
- Maeying Huamjai Phattana (MHP)



- Phan-Thin Social Enterprise (PTSE)
- Local Department of Labor and Social Work representatives at Champasack, Sekong and Salavan provinces (in representation of the local PWGs)
- Provincial representatives of LSSO and LFTU at Champasack, Sekong and Salavan provinces
- Lao Ngam district Social Security Office
- Agricultural Research Centre of Southern Lao (ARC)
- Lao Coffee Association
- Paksong Tea Promotion Cooperative

A total of 31 government, CSO, employers' and workers' organizations-related persons, of which 21 male and 10 female, participated in KII. The geographic distribution of interviews was as follows.

**Table 1. Number of KII per Region**

Organization Region	Government (LSSO, local SSO, ARC)	LFTU	LNCCI	CSO	Total Male	Total Female
Vientiane capital	4	1	1	6	8	4
Champasack province	2	1		1	4	
Paksong district	2	1		2	4	1
Salavan province	2	1			1	2
Laongam district	2	1			2	1
Sekong province	2	1			1	2
Thateng district	1				1	

The evaluation team conducted **Focus group discussions (FGD)** with female and male farmers, workers and other stakeholders that participated directly in project activities, in the following villages:

- **Paksong district:** KM35, KM36 and KM 45
- **Thateng district:** Donesa, Takiao, Kokphoungtai, Kokphoungnuer, Kongtayoun, and Lakkhao
- **Lao Ngam district:** Laonha, Dong, Nongjua, Phakkoud, Phuakyai, Nambeang

These districts were selected by the evaluation team because of their exposure to/ participation in diverse project interventions (each FGD concentrated on one or two issues addressed by the project).

The total number of participants in FGD was 65, of which 33 male and 32 female. The geographic distribution of participants was as follows:

**Table 2. Number of Participants in FGD per district**

Province, district, villages	Male	Female	Total
Province: Champasack District: Paksong Villages: KM35, KM36 and KM45	9	12	21
Province: Salavan District: Lao Ngam Villages: Laonha, Dong, Nongjua, Phakkoud, Phuakyai, Nambeang	10	8	18
Province: Sekong District: Thateng Villages: Donesa, Takiao, Kokphoungtai, Kokphoungnuer, Kongtayoun, and Lakkhao	14	12	26

The list of stakeholders addressed and an itinerary/schedule for interviews and FGD is included in Annex 4.

The intersection of qualitative data -from interviews- and quantitative data - basically obtained through documentary analysis- will allow an external validation of the different subjective perceptions. The evaluation team developed **Draft KII and FGD guides** for the evaluation. These are presented in Annex 6.

### ***c. Workshop to Review and Validate Preliminary Findings***

At the end of the field work the evaluation team presented the preliminary findings to the project key stakeholders (PAC and PWG) in an online workshop, organized on August 2, 2024, to discuss, validate and refine the findings and fill information gaps.

#### *d. The evaluation matrix*

The evaluation matrix serves as the main framework for organizing and clarifying the focus of data collection efforts. It consists of a double-entry table in which sources of relevant information are identified for each evaluation category and question. In this way, the evaluation team captures and systematises all relevant information within a single document. In addition to clarifying and focusing data collection, the matrix facilitates the subsequent data analysis and reporting. The evaluation matrix is presented in Annex 2.

### **3.3. Limitations**

The lead evaluator could not travel to Lao PDR due to budgetary limitations. Thus, data collection relied on online interviews, in some cases working with the aid of interpreters, while the national evaluator attended to all face-to-face interviews.

Sampling for FGD relied in purposive sampling, as the events reunited people from several villages that had to be transported to a meeting point, and it was difficult to confirm in advance the identity of participants. The evaluation team planned for 8 FGD with a total of 96 participants. In the end, only 4 FGD, with 65 participants could be completed for the evaluation, as some villagers did not assist in sufficient number to some FGD, and the effective attendees had to be regrouped/ merge into other groups. It appears that the rainy season was a hazard that affected the responsiveness of participants to the evaluation exercise.

Connectivity problems in Lao affected in some cases the effective participation of the lead evaluator in some interviews, having to rely on the summary notes provided by the national evaluator.

The evaluation findings are based on information collected from background documents, the project's monitoring and evaluation system, and key informant interviews and FGD. The accuracy of the evaluation findings is predicated on the integrity of information provided to the evaluation team from these sources. All efforts were made by the evaluation team to triangulate this information and mitigate any information bias.

## 4. Project Status

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The Project formally ends on 14 August 2024. As per the information received from the ILO and Oxfam, the donor is considering the possibility of funding a new, second phase of the project during the following years.

## 5. Findings by Criteria

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### 5.1 Relevance and Strategic Fit

1. *To what extent have the intervention's objectives and design continued to respond to tripartite constituents', beneficiaries', donor's, country, and partner/institution needs, policies (including the National Social Protection Strategy, issued in 2020), and priorities, as well as the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Lao PDR and ILO Country Programme Outcomes?*

SoLaR project's objectives and design are relevant and consistent with the needs and priorities of a variety of stakeholders. The project's objectives are consistent with the Lao PDR National Social Protection Strategy, which aims to ensure that by 2030, "Lao people have access to basic social protection services, consisting of health insurance, social security and social welfare, in an equitable, adequate, effective and sustainable way."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, project objectives are consistent with the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED 2021-2025) which integrates the Sustainable Development Goals and under outcome 2 (improved quality of human resources), output 3 (improved work skills and productivity) aims to promote job diversification, labour rights and promote implementation of occupational safety and health measures. Likewise, the project is consistent with several outputs of outcome 3 of the NSED 2021-2025, such as "poverty alleviation in rural and remote areas" (output 1), "promotion of equal access to socio-economic development opportunities and protection of the rights of women and children" (output 3), and "expansion of access to more efficient social protection services for the people, including workers and self-employed individuals" (output 5).

SoLaR project's objectives align with ILO's Programme and Budget (2022-2023) objectives 6.2 "equal opportunities, participation and treatment between women and men, including equal remuneration for work of equal value", 7.2 ("safe and healthy work conditions"), 8.1

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<sup>9</sup> Lao PDR Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Department of Planning and Cooperation (2020), "National Social Protection Strategy – Vision 2030, Goal 2025."

(“sustainable national social protection strategies, policies or legal frameworks to extend coverage and enhance benefit adequacy”), and 8.2 (“measures to enable social protection systems to be sustainable and provide adequate benefits”). SoLaR project’s objectives also fit within the “ILO’s III Decent Work Country Programme (2022-2026)”, as it is linked to DWCP’s outcomes 2 (on social protection) and 4 (on rural development), and as it prioritizes gender inclusive interventions and opportunities. SoLaR project’s objectives are particularly relevant to ILO tripartite constituents as they are congruent with the MOLSW employment strategy, contribute to strengthen LFTU capacities and their goals of protecting labour rights and organizing informal workers, and complements LNCCI efforts to promote compliance with Lao PDR labour law and strengthen the business and export sectors.

The project coincides with EU goal of improving living conditions in Lao agricultural sector, as it helps improve people’s access to social security and OSH prevention, as well as to improve labour rights and working conditions among farmers and informal workers, particularly women, in the coffee and tea sectors. It is expected that in the future the coffee exported from Lao will benefit from sustainable production conditions and enhanced competitiveness to improve its access to the EU market.

*“SoLaR is a very good project that responds to the five-year planning to protect workers, how to protect the right of informal workers. SoLaR supports us with technical knowledge and budget, to set a strategy for 5 years. We now have more knowledge and have learned how to protect workers. We have organized informal workers as a group according to law. They have a strategy to protect themselves, register at LSSO, and also promote gender equality. Women have now more rights, they have become members of production groups, they make decisions. Before it was only men. Now men help women more with household chores.”*

**LFTU representative**

## 5.2 Validity of Intervention Logic

2. *Is the project design and the log frame (outcomes, outputs, activities) relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground?*

The project design and logframe are very relevant to the situation of Lao male and female workers, and particularly to informal and female labourers in the agricultural sector. While the project’s development objective (e.g., “Workers, particularly informal workers and women, in the Lao coffee and tea sectors have improved access to social protection coverage and occupational safety and health, realizing their respective labour rights”) is comprehensive, the

combination of the project specific objectives, expressed in clear outcomes and outputs<sup>10</sup>, offers a solid conceptual framework and a powerful programmatic path for advancing social protection, occupational safety and health, social dialogue (through collective bargaining), economic improvement, and gender equality in the coffee and tea sector. The activities included within this framework (e.g., awareness raising through campaigns and other means, training on various topics, coordination among diverse public, union, private sector and civil society stakeholders, promoting voluntary registration in social security through mobile registration system, creation/ strengthening of farmers' organizations and improvement of production standards, etc.) are all conducive to expanding and improving social protection, advancing gender equality and protecting labour rights.

Notwithstanding the above, some factors provide challenges to workers' registration in social security, such as:

- Low-income level among farmers and labourers, which makes many of them feel not being able to pay social security dues on a regular basis; this problem is increased by the seasonality of work and income in the coffee and tea sectors, and the economic crisis/ high inflation rate currently affecting Lao
- Frequent migration of workers within the country and abroad, due to economic reasons, which leads to unstable availability of labourers contributing to social security; this has led the project to mostly focus its efforts on small plot owners ("farmers"), that work on their own land, and on middle-aged workers, rather than young labourers
- Distrust of public health services, perceived by some as being non-reliable/ of poor quality
- Limited infrastructure in rural areas, with inadequate transport and/or communication networks that hinder farmers' ability to access social security services and documentation processes
- Limited knowledge of the benefits provided by the social security system
- Age: The youngest group is less likely to register in social security and the oldest (above 60), are unable by law.

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<sup>10</sup> That is, of achieving "extended and improved social protection and OSH delivery system and services [outcome 1; e.g., through "pilot **institutional mechanisms**" (output 1.1) + "**policy recommendations**" (1.2)], and of promoting that "**workers** (men and women) are **organized and empowered** to promote and protect their labour rights" [outcome 2; e.g., through "**increased awareness** about benefits of registration in LSSO" (output 2.1) + "**increased capacity** of (diverse, grassroots) organizations to advocate for labour rights and social protection of workers" (output 2.2) + "**strengthened organization and stronger leadership** of informal women workers" (output 2.3)].

3. *Does the project design and log frame adequately provide for participation of ILO constituents (employers and workers) in project activities?*

SoLaR project implementation provides multiple opportunities for the active participation of ILO constituents within its activities. The project design is based on the articulation of efforts from diverse organizations, such as government agencies [LSSO, at national and province level, MoLSW, Agricultural Research Centre), union representatives (e.g., LFTU at national, province and district level), private sector (LNCCI, companies), and CSO (project implementing partners)], as well as coffee and tea production groups, village chieftains, and individual workers acting as social protection promoters or/and receiving training/ trained as trainers on OSH and other topics.

4. *How relevant and useful are the indicators and means of verification described in the project document and the M&E matrix for assessing the project’s progress, results, and impact?*

Following the ROM assessment, some project indicators were adjusted/ modified to better reflect the results of the interventions carried out by the project. Most of the indicators and means of verification included in the current version of the project’s M&E matrix, made available to the evaluation team, appear as SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound), and allow to keep track of project’s progress and results.

However, some indicators do not allow to fully capture the results/ impact of some project activities. For example,

Indicator	Issue
I3. Number of improvements in service delivery implemented or piloted at the district level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to a diversity of valuable but different interventions, that should be registered separately, as different kinds of improvements</li> <li>• Does not capture the result/ impact of these interventions</li> </ul>
I7. Number of collective platforms, processes and events supported by the Action to strengthen collaboration and develop recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to a variety of learning, exchange, research and advocacy <b>activities</b>, which have a vague relationship and an indirect effect on the output (formulation of recommendations)</li> </ul>
I9. Number of additional people in the target districts of Bolaven Plateau who are reached by social security awareness raising activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to the <b>coverage</b> of awareness raising campaigns, but does not reflect the effective level of awareness reached by the participants in such campaigns, as described in output 2.1 (“increased awareness of... among women and men...”)</li> </ul>
I10. Number of initiatives completed to strengthen the basis for ongoing efforts beyond the Action to improve workers’ access to social security and OSH.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not reflect output 2.1 (“increased awareness”)</li> <li>• It is an enumeration of activities</li> <li>• Partially repeats I3</li> </ul>
I11. Number of initiatives to strengthen advocacy capacities of stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measures/ lists the <b>activities</b> carried out by the project, but not its results</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It would be better if the indicator reflects the number of participants in those training and other kind of activities (with a breakdown by training topic), and not the number of activities. That does not add up much.</li> </ul>
<b>I12.</b> Number of advocacy initiatives completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same as above (I11)</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Coherence

5. *To what extent have other interventions and policies supported or undermined the project interventions, and vice versa?*

The evaluation collected no evidence on the existence of other interventions and policies that may have undermined the SoLaR project interventions.

Regarding the ILO, there are currently eight ILO projects in Lao: Two projects related to migration issues, one project on skills development, another project on rural employment promotion, and other four projects on social protection, including SoLaR. SoLaR takes the needs/ requests of people from district and provincial levels to the national level, while the other three projects are focused on improving the national social security system (e.g., capacity building of government staff, review of SS law and other legislation, and on health insurance). While all these projects technically support each other, the ILO has avoided implementing repeated interventions on the same topic. All these different projects, which address different issues/ angles of social protection, are supported by ILO's Social Protection Specialist working at the DWT in ILO ROAP, in Bangkok. While SoLaR is a project that works on direct action outside of Vientiane, with rural beneficiaries at the provincial and district levels, the other three projects are focused more on policy making and capacity building at the national level. However, SoLaR staff participates in coordination meetings with the other social protection projects.

As a member of the UN family, the ILO works with the UN country team on Social Protection, complementing the action of other agencies: For example, UNICEF works on a child protection grant, and UN Women and UNFPA on advancing the rights of women.

SoLaR has coordinated certain activities with other international NGOs apart from Oxfam. For example, with Winrock CLEAN project, which support market-ready farmers, agro-enterprises, entrepreneurs and traders in selected horticultural value chains at the Bolaven plateau. In this case, each organization has invited the other to participate in the trainings they have organized.



Given that these projects are working in similar target communities, SoLaR has encouraged Winrock to also disseminate information on social security and OSH among its participants. The project has also exchanged information with CPC (Bolaven Plateau Coffee Producers' Cooperative), on the project's aim and activities. At central level, the project has collaborated in organizing the International Coffee Day at Vientiane and Luang Prabang with other agencies and partners, such as the International Trade Centre, the UK Trade Partnerships Programme, United States Department of Agriculture, Winrock International, Oxfam, CARE International, and the Lao Coffee Association, Lao Coffee Culture or Coffee Lovers, Bolaven Plateau Coffee Producers Cooperative, and others.

6. *Are there possible ways to maximize synergies and improve collaboration with new or existing actors?*

In a new phase of implementation, the SoLaR project could expand its influence zone to other coffee/tea producing provinces in Lao, mainly in the north of the country, and to other agricultural/ forestry sectors where there are decent work deficits too, such as rice, vegetables, banana, honey and others. The project could thus maximize synergies and improve collaboration with other international cooperation actors, such as the Green CUP Project (which is one of two flagship projects under the umbrella of the "Global Gateway Team Europe Partnership with Laos to increase sustainable and inclusive Trade, Investment and Connectivity in the Agriculture and Forestry sectors -e.g., TICAF programme") and the PRCC-II (Project for the Reinforcement of Commercial Capacities in the Lao Coffee sector/PRCC COFFEE NORTH), implemented by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The latter project is working in seven Lao provinces, in which coffee production is scattered among a diverse mountainous landscape. SoLaR could coordinate with these organizations to mainstream through the same its information on labour rights, gender equality, social security and OSH addressed to target groups shared with the same. The project team is open to exploring other opportunities and partnerships that may arise, aiming to further enhance collaboration and amplify the impact of SoLaR's initiatives.

"In the north we are also reinforcing farmers organizations. In the future, if ILO goes north, we can cooperate with them."

**AFD representative**

## 5.4 Effectiveness

7. *How has the project contributed to the changes in the social protection and OSH system and services at the district and provincial levels, in the targeted districts of the three provinces, both directly and indirectly?*

SoLaR is a small, pilot project, with targets in the hundreds of direct participants. The project has been very successful in achieving its expected results. According to the project’s monitoring system report, by June 2024, SoLaR had exceeded several of its direct services’ targets in more than 80% (e.g. men and women groups organized and empowered to promote and protect labour rights; additional workers registered with LSSO; additional people with increased understanding of NSSF, OSH, and gender issues; informal women workers who received gender-responsive technical and leadership; etc.. This appraisal is confirmed by the results of an independent endline study conducted between May-June 2024.

The following table shows SoLaR’s performance as according to some of its indicator. For more detailed information, please refer to the project’s logframe with targets in Annex 5.

**Table 1:** Project’s overall performance as per for some its indicators

Indicator	Baseline (July 2022)	Current value (June 2024)	LOP Target (August 2024)
<b>I1.</b> Number of additional workers in three districts of Bolaven Plateau registered with LSSO	Total: 640 Female: 244 Male: 396 Enterprise scheme: 601 Female: 222 Male: 379 Voluntary scheme: 39 Female: 22 Male: 17	Total: 1,446 Female: 408 Male: 1,038 Enterprise scheme: 1,091 Female: 214 Male: 877 Voluntary scheme: 355 Female: 194 Male: 161	Total: 800 Female: 320 Male: 480 Enterprise scheme: 700 Female: 280 Male: 420 Voluntary scheme: 100 Female: 40 Male: 60
<b>I2.</b> Number of additional people in target districts of Bolaven Plateau with increased understanding of NSSF, OSH, and gender issues	Total: 0 Male: 0 Female: 0	Total: 12,612 Male: 6,519 Female: 6,093	Total: 5,000 Male: 2,500 Female: 2,500
<b>I4.</b> Number of organized groups in three districts of Bolaven Plateau	51	72	70

I5. Number of local social protection promoters trained in the target districts	0	34	34
I6. Number of core OSH trainers	Total: 2 Female: 1 Male: 1	Total: 24 Female: 9 Male: 15	Total: 12 Female: 6 Male: 6
I9. Number of additional people in the target districts of Bolaven Plateau who are reached by social security awareness raising activities	Total: 0 Female: 0 Male: 0	Total: 38,647 Female: 18,980 Male: 19,667	Total: 20,000 Female: 10,000 Male: 10,000
I13. Number of informal women workers who received gender-responsive technical and leadership training	0	242	100
I14. Number of women who moved into leadership and administrative roles in communities and workplaces	0	23	20

In addition to the above, the project has made significant contributions in piloting model interventions that may help the Government labour rights (social security, OSH, freedom of association and collective bargaining, gender equality), and particularly those of women and informal workers, in the rural sector.

As per the qualitative information collected by this evaluation and the data reported by June 2024 in SoLaR's monitoring system, the project has contributed to increase the access to **social security registration services** for male and female workers in 34 rural communities belonging to three districts in three southern Lao provinces (e.g., Champasack province: Paksong district, 12 communities; Salavan province: Thateng district, 12 communities; Sekong province: Laongam district, 10 communities). This is confirmed by the results of an independent endline study on the project carried out between May-June 2024, which found a rapid increase in the number of insured individuals across target districts between 2022 (baseline) and 2024. Given that SoLaR was the only project supporting social security-related campaigns and services in the southern provinces during that period, the endline study suggests that this change may be attributed to the project.

In fact, the introduction/ adoption by LSSO of mobile registration and payment services at province and district is a game changer initiative supported by SoLaR project. If expanded at national level to other target groups/ provinces, this mechanism may help expand the coverage of social security (SS) registration and reach the informal workers population, which constitutes the majority of Lao workforce.

The establishment of Worker Information Centres (WIC), together with awareness raising campaigns, dissemination meetings, trainings, workshops, banners, brochures and other advocacy activities and means, has helped increase the targeted villagers' awareness on the benefits associated with social security and occupational safety and health, increased their knowledge of labour rights, decent working conditions and collective bargaining, as well as raise their awareness on the need to increase women's participation and their access to a more egalitarian work and personal relationships.

SoLaR-sponsored awareness raising work and trainings plus the donation of personal protection equipment (PPE) to coffee and tea sector workers, has generated and increase awareness on the importance of **occupational safety and health** and an increased application of preventative measures and use of protective equipment. People at target communities are aware of the risks associated with the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and other OSH issues such as heavy weights, sharp-edged tools, being hit by rocks when cutting grass, snakes, and other agricultural work-related hazards. They have learned about how to use machines safely, how to handle heavy equipment, the importance of not storing chemicals in the house, and the prohibition of drinking or smoking while using chemicals. Notwithstanding the above, the disciplined implementation of OSH preventative measures is a long-term process until the consolidation of an "OSH-oriented culture" at community level. It requires both the availability/ acquisition of knowledge AND the willingness to adopt new practices. However, although this process may take a longer period than the lifetime of the project, SoLaR project has contributed so far (together with other cooperation projects and companies working in the same target zones) to the implementation of effective OSH-preventative measures in the tea and coffee sector in the target provinces. Awareness raising campaigns and training sessions concerning occupational safety and health (OSH) have led to changes in the way workers in these sectors organize their work to prevent OSH hazards. This appreciation is confirmed by the results of the endline study, which found that access to information on OSH increased significantly between 2022 and 2024 among farmers, and that the number of yearly workplace-related accidents/illnesses decreased by four times during the same period. The endline study also found that injuries caused by machinery were linked to gendered division of labour within families, thus affecting mainly male workers.

Notwithstanding the above, it is necessary to highlight that the main participants in the SoLaR project are small landowners (“farmers”) residing in the target villages, but that **this population does not include all “informal, agrarian workers”**, and particularly **seasonal workers**, which are an unstable population, **often younger than farm owners**, and that often migrates to Thailand for better income opportunities. There is a need to develop mechanisms that reach this population, tallied in the thousands of workers, and whose social security and occupational safety and health needs remain unattended.<sup>11</sup>

8. *Were there any observable changes, e.g. in terms of personal and organizational capacity, behaviour, mindset etc., in areas of workers’ organization and empowerment in accessing social protection and labour rights?*

**Regarding labour rights, including social security**, most participants interviewed could explain basic labour rights related to labour contracts, social security, and safe working conditions. However, some participants had knowledge about working hours but struggled to explain details about social security, labour rights, and minimum wage. Notably, participants showed a good understanding of safe working conditions in coffee farming.

**Regarding the application of OSH measures**, participants refer an increasing use of personal protection equipment (PPE) and preventative measures. Training has led changes in work practices to prevent OSH hazards, as people have learned about the hazards associated with the use of chemicals and the risk of accidents due to use of old equipment or unsafe working conditions.

Regarding the **strengthening of productive groups and support for the standardization of farmers’ production**, the project formed 18 new farmer groups and strengthened 3 previously

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<sup>11</sup> The evaluation confirmed during the focus groups with villagers, that both coffee and tea farm owners commonly recruit workers for harvesting activities. Coffee farm owners typically hire workers for annual harvesting, offering a wage of 2,000 LAK per kilogram of coffee. Workers can usually collect between 80-100 kilograms of coffee per day. On the other hand, tea farm owners recruit workers for half-month harvesting periods, paying wages ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 LAK per kilogram of tea. Workers in tea farms typically collect around 10 kilograms of tea per day. It was noted that all workers receive a similar wage rate, with the total income depending on the amount of coffee or tea collected. The wage is negotiable between the farm owner and the worker, with workers often requesting higher wages when the prices of coffee or tea increase, as well as considering the living costs. This flexible wage negotiation system allows for adjustments based on market conditions and the workers' needs. In general, farm owners commonly provide care for workers when they are sick or unwell. However, a prevalent issue is the lack of formal contracts for the workers. As a result, workers often bear full responsibility in cases of job-related accidents. This lack of contractual protection leaves workers vulnerable and without proper recourse in the event of workplace injuries or incidents. A study by UNCTAD (2013) estimated that during the peak harvesting period in 2010 the arabica harvest in Bolevan plateau employed about 375,000 days-worker, whereas robusta production required 470, 520 days-worker.

existing ones. Likewise, SoLaR supported the formalization of a Tea Cooperative in Paksong. The LFTU and implementing partners/ CSOs worked to build the capacity of productive groups through various trainings on collective bargaining and group management.<sup>12</sup>

Coffee and tea farmers benefitting from the project have a good understanding and currently apply bargaining to price negotiations with buyers. However, collective bargaining remains underutilized, as they do not use collective bargaining to negotiate wages and have made **limited progress in enhancing workers' rights**: The labour market is regulated by the scarcity of hands on one side, and low wages in the other. And **seasonal workers** often prioritize income over working conditions.

The project also provided equipment to productive groups, such as machinery for tea processing and grass cutting (coffee). This is highly valued by project participants.<sup>13</sup>

*“They (farmers) know now about marketing, how to do collective bargaining, they are better in negotiation now, they know and work in groups, like in cooperatives. Cooperatives have been here for a while: Before families usually worked from themselves, but now they work for cooperatives, and they can set a better price. Each person will call others when selling and they will maintain the same price.”*

**Lao Coffee Association representative**

Regarding **gender equality**, the evaluation team collected some evidence on attitudinal change in target communities. According to participants in FGD, women's strategic gender needs, including land rights, decision-making power, equal pay, and access to credit, are respected in the community and household. Women can make decisions alongside men regarding work and finances on the coffee farm. Additionally, there are female members in the village office, indicating a level of inclusivity and recognition of women's roles in decision-making processes and community governance. Also, according to participants, women's practical needs, such as healthcare, income opportunities, housing, basic services, food distribution, and leisure activities, are satisfied in the community and household. There is gender equality in meeting these practical needs, but there was a previous understanding that household work was

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<sup>12</sup> However, an important number of tea and coffee farmers do not join cooperatives and production groups because of the rigorous, export-related quality control requirements of the same, with which they cannot comply (e.g., management of pesticides, etc.). Thus, they set for a lower price from middlemen and local buyers.

<sup>13</sup> Other projects/agencies, such as Winrock's CLEAN project, the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Bolaven Plateau Coffee Producers Cooperative (CPC), have also provided similar inputs to communities in target zone.

primarily for female members. The introduction of SoLaR has likely influenced a shift in these perceptions and practices. Participants who received training from the SoLaR project on addressing gender-related inequalities have implemented changes in their lives. They have shared knowledge within their community, promoted gender equality in the workplace, and transformed household dynamics by supporting each other in work responsibilities. They have learned that household responsibilities are for both female and male members.

*9. How has the project contributed to the changes?*

Through funding, TOT and other project activities, SoLaR has contributed to improve the capacity and outreach of trade union workers to promote decent work conditions in target communities of the Bolaven plateau. LFTU provincial and district offices have increased their knowledge and capacity TOT to promote labour rights and occupational safety and health in the agrarian sector. Through their support to LSSO, they have become actively involved in promoting registration in social security.

With SoLaR technical support and funding, the Lao Social Security Organization and its branch offices (provincial and district SSO) have improved their operational capacity at target provinces and districts. The project has contributed to building the capacity of social security officers to communicate effectively with farmers; helping expand local SSO coordination networks with other relevant organizations (e.g. FTU, ARC) and local communities; improving the outreach of local SSO by expanding the offer of services to the village level through mobile registration. Additionally, the Lao Social Security Office is transferring the equipment for operating mobile services to the provincial office, ensuring that these may become part of the regular operations of provincial and district SSO. Provincial and district leaders and heads of village have contributed to the successful implementation of this system.

With project funding and technical support, the Agriculture Research Centre of Southern Laos (ARC), with support from Lao Coffee Association (LCA), have conducted OSH training of trainers for FTU, CSO and village authorities, developed village-level campaigns, and carried out coaching and monitoring to local trainers. Through the Vision Zero Fund Programme, the ILO had worked before SoLaR in Champasak, developing local agencies capacity to promote OSH prevention with EU funding.

Meaying Huamjai Phatthana (MHP), a SoLaR implementing partner, used the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to promote gender equality and empowering women and to train local

stakeholders, including provincial and district Federations of Trade Unions (FTUs) in each target province and district, as well as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as Phan-Thin Social Enterprise (PTSE) and the Association to Support the Development of Peasant Societies (ASDPS), and village authorities, are trained by ARC and MHP respectively on OSH and GALS. After training, these trainers are expected to conduct further trainings at the village level.

FTU and CSO have carried OSH and GALS training for project participants and facilitated the formation of tea/coffee farmer groups, conducted needs assessments, and strengthened existing tea/coffee farmer groups in target villages.

The project's work with employers/ companies and the Lao Coffee Association has contributed to increase awareness of workers on OSH at enterprise level, as well as to promote employers' compliance with labour law. Employers have a better understanding of the National Social Security Fund and OSH.

*10. Is there any evidence indicating that these changes and the improved capacity contributed to advancing the promotion and protection of labour rights and decent work of the target populations, i.e. informal workers in agriculture, in the target areas?*

The project has contributed to advance the promotion and protection of labour rights and decent work of the target populations (informal, agricultural workers).

According to SoLaR monitoring records, registration in social security increased from 640 people to 1,446 by end of June 2024 (project target: 800 people), of which 408 female and 1,038 male workers. The enterprise scheme registration passed from 601 to 1,091 workers (project target: 700), while the voluntary scheme passed from 39 to 355 workers (project target: 100). (please see in Annex 5 the breakdown by gender in the monitoring update as of June 25, 2024). This is confirmed by the data provided by the endline study, which found that from 2022 to 2024, social security coverage among tracked households (voluntary scheme) increased from 5% to 32%, and that female participants see more benefits from social security and have decided to enrol at a higher rate (15% vs. 6%).

Additionally, SoLaR's monitoring data indicates that 12,612 people (6,519 female, 6,093 male) people in the target districts of Bolaven Plateau increased their understanding of NSSF, OSH, and gender issues.<sup>14</sup> This is supported by the results of the endline study, which found that after

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<sup>14</sup> Project's monitoring data shows that in total 38,647 people were reached by social security awareness raising activities.



participation in project activities 66.42% of respondents in interviewed households had a better understanding of social security.

Information collected through FGD by the evaluation team suggests that farm workers have incorporated the knowledge gained from the SoLaR OSH training into their work practices by consistently utilizing safety clothing and equipment. This indicates a positive change in their approach to preventing OSH hazards, as they have adopted a more proactive stance towards ensuring their safety while carrying out their tasks.

*“The people have more knowledge on the equipment, machines that help with our work, new technologies, new machines, make us work easier and wearing goggles, safety glasses, prevent accidents, and PPE that protect us from chemicals. Companies use chemicals, but with special suits workers have more options. We went to 7-8 villages. We want this to continue, them to learn, many of the villagers do not know about goggles and the effects of chemicals. We need to reduce the risk and promote their health.”*

**Paksong trade union representative**

As highlighted before, the evaluation team received statements from farmers that after project interventions production groups/ farmers had improved productivity and bargaining capacity.

*“Machines? Three units to grow tea. Engine power electricity to support it. Tree cutters and two drying machines, boots, helmets and other safety equipment. Driers are very important to be able to export to China.<sup>15</sup> For us the project was like going from crawling to walking.”*

**Paksong Tea Promotion Cooperative representative**

The project improved the participation of women in the community and agricultural work, awareness of their rights and increased participation in leadership positions. According to SoLaR’s database, by late June 2024 the number of informal workers who received gender-responsive technical and leadership training was 242 (project target: 100), and 23 women moved into leadership and administrative roles in communities and workplaces (project target: 20).

*“Equality has improved a lot. Now women participate in meetings and are leaders. In work, family members help each other. Now men and women help each other a lot. We see solidarity.”*

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<sup>15</sup> Most of the processing equipment was funded by another ILO project, funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency, while SoLaR coordinated the distribution from the seller and the Japan-funded project to the farmers, ensuring that SoLaR target farmers were benefitted.

*In the past women will work in the production process, but not be leaders. Women would be in household chores. Not in leadership. Now groups accept women as members.”*

**Lakkhao community member**

There is no disaggregated information on the effect of the project on people with disabilities (PWD), and particularly victims of unexploded ordinance (UXO). PWD in agricultural settings tend to remain home. The evaluation team found no evidence that the project provided special attention to this population.

Given that the project concentrated its efforts on plot owners at target communities, and that the seasonal workers population is in essence young and unstable, the needs of this population were not the focus of the project. Thus, the need for this population to access to decent work conditions, including social security, acceptable working conditions, adequate pay and OSH conditions, remained unattended by the project and government, union and CSO stakeholders. A new phase of the project should study the best ways to include this population among its beneficiaries and contribute to improve their working conditions.

*11. To what extent were partnerships enhanced?*

Partnership among diverse organizations allowed the project to coordinate national and local efforts and provide a holistic response to improve access to social security and OSH and promote gender equality. At structural level, this was backed/ reflected by annual meetings of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC, national level) and the Provincial Stakeholder Working Group (PWG), which met every six months, and at least every 12 months, before every PAC meeting. Partnerships promoted coordination among local authorities at provincial level and national institutions.

*“In the PWG group, as provincial FTU we are the host; in the PWG we follow up the project, the participants are local SSO, ARC, LWU and FTU; we have worked together as common practice. A MOU came from central government, the provincial governor also signed, so LFTU signed and asked other units to help.”*

**Salavan province FTU head**

SoLaR project implementing partners (MHP, ASDSP, PTSE) allowed CSO to actively engage with local stakeholders to provide services and support project implementation.

*“Solar project has enhanced our capacity; we work with similar objectives. We can adjust what we learned, to our peasant association. The farmers we work with are the same we had worked before. We brought the new information we received from SoLaR project to them.”*

**ASDSP representative**

Implementing partners’ representatives highlighted that the amount of the budget for three years, received through Oxfam was adequate, but the duration of the project was too short. Implementing partners met with and received periodic advice from the ILO on the implementation of activities and the use of the budget. Implementing partners reported periodically to Oxfam / ILO.

SoLaR project enhanced the knowledge and capacity of implementing partners, both in labour rights and gender equality issues.

*“Social protection is new for us. We used to do forest protection. SoLaR responds to what we need. Specially through its attention to gender-related issues.”*

**MHP representative**

In their turn, the CSO partners have positively influenced communities and local organizations through their knowledge of the field and by helping establish and empower groups and improve their management capacity. By working in collaboration with local authorities, especially district and provincial trade union representatives, they delivered training on social protection, labor rights, and collective bargaining to groups after receiving themselves TOT from ILO and Oxfam. CSO worked closely with MHP, which oversaw mainstreaming of gender-related action into the groups, empowered women leadership and raised awareness at community level. CSO partners helped groups improved their productivity and develop a strategy to improve their access to markets.

*12. To what extent has the project interventions helped change the dynamics relationship/interaction among the key stakeholders, such as between central and local levels of government, between government and social partners, and between government and civil society, to provide improved and more accessible services to informal economy workers in the two targeted sectors?*

SoLaR project contributed to generate improved trust among central and local levels of government and an improved understanding of province/ district needs by the central level of LSSO. The project also contributed to an increased coordination between government agencies and trade unions, at province/ district level, which facilitated the link with village authorities/ heads of communities and the provision of training and services to villagers.

*“We have more work, we learn about our roles and responsibilities better, talk about plans and policies. In the past some people did not understand this. We tend to work together when the project sends staff here. I complement the project for this achievement.”*

**Paksong TU representative**

*13. What were the benefits/challenges that the partners have experienced in the implementation that affect project successes?*

Implementing partners faced several challenges during the development of project activities:

- The time taken to sign an initial MOU between the government of Lao PDR and Oxfam delayed the effective start of project activities for almost one year.
- The COVID pandemic slowed project implementation at the beginning of the same. Implementing partners had to adjust their planning for the post-COVID period and this delayed the implementation of some activities.
- Difficult transport and accessibility conditions during the rainy season impede carrying out activities in target communities during the same.
- The long distance to some communities and the difficult conditions of roads also affects stakeholders' accessibility to the communities.
- Farmers limited availability for training events and other activities, particularly during the harvest season, affect participants' attendance to project events. In the case of women, some do not attend because they are occupied in household chores.
- Language barriers affect participants' comprehension (some villagers are speakers of dialects, different to Lao). While participants have knowledge of labour rights, occupational health and security, and social security, there are variations in their comprehension of Lao Social Security benefits and procedures. A future phase of the project should give attention to ethnicity-related issues.
- Reaching young workers, who often migrate to Thailand.
- Instable attendance to activities: Changes in group composition, from one year to the next one. Farmers' organizations representatives change from one meeting to the next, of only a few come to the events.

Some factors affect negatively the registration in local SSO by villagers:

- The primary challenges for rural workers to access and maintain membership in the SS system is the seasonal character and low-income level. Rural workers feel that they may be unable to pay their dues given their uncertain economic situation.

- Long distance from villages to the local SSO is also a barrier for sustained registration. While mobile registration offers some assistance it is not yet consistently available. Additionally, some individuals may have the option to use a banking application for payments, but not everyone has access to or familiarity with such applications. A future phase of the project may consider establishing village volunteers on social security, who could help follow up from time-to-time workers' claims, contribution payments and registration.
- Also, villagers are often very unsatisfied with the health services provided by government hospitals<sup>16</sup>, although they believe that, in the long run, they can benefit from services such as pensions, and women join local SSO because of pregnancy benefits. To improve the delivery of health services to workers affiliated to SS, a future phase of the project may consider promoting the establishment of coordination mechanisms at local level between SSO and provincial/ district health authorities/ hospitals.

## 5.5 Efficiency of Resource Use

*14. How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated, used, and leveraged with other complementary interventions to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives and results?*

SoLaR did an efficient use of the funds allocated for its implementation. For example,

- ILO and Oxfam have a good working relationship. Oxfam has its own financial tracking system for the grants to CSOs and LFTU and follows the ILO system for reporting to ILO.
- The allocation of funds among implementing partners was adequate. Both ILO and Oxfam have good relationships with LFTU, LSSO and CSO, and the CSO have good relationships with local SSO, FTU and farmers.
- Although the outcomes of the project are ambitious and staff workload is important (given the limited number of staff assigned to cover all technical and geographic obligations of the project), SoLaR managed to deliver most of its planned activities. The ILO Project manager and national coordinator are positions funded at 50-60% time, and the financial officer was not funded by the project. The ILO pooled-in funds from other projects in the ILO Social

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<sup>16</sup> Often, there may be an hospital in the area, but it is far away from the villages. In some cases, project participants attempted to use the Social Security Organization (SSO) member card at the hospital, but the district hospital did not accept its use as there was no operational SS unit in the hospital. The hospital informed them that they needed to purchase medicine outside the hospital as it was not available there, despite the belief that the hospital should have had the necessary medication.

Protection unit to cover positions at 100%. The latter produced synergy with other ILO projects working at policy level.

- The effective time for effective implementation of project activities was reduced by the 12-month delay in government signing a MOU with Oxfam. Thus, only 21 months were left for project implementation from the originally planned 33-month period. Notwithstanding the above, the project was able to achieve most of its expected results.
- SoLaR leveraged support from other organizations, such as Winrock's CLEAN project <sup>17</sup>, mainstreaming contents on OSH in CLEAN sponsored trainings. CLEAN also allowed for two TOT workshops (for 20 people) on SS and OSH, to be conducted by SoLaR staff on their budget in other non-SoLaR areas/ provinces.
- The project received technical support from the ROAP Decent Work Team specialists (e.g., on social protection, collective bargaining training, etc.).
- The project "inherited" excellent awareness raising material (brochures, etc.) from the Vision Zero Fund project, which was utilized to generate its own material.

*15. Have the project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? If not, why?*

The start of activities was delayed until the government of Lao PDR signed a MOU with Oxfam. Implementation speeded up after this period. Later, the project's M&E system helped ILO and Oxfam identify areas of (s)low implementation by partner CSO and elaborate remediation plans. By June 2024 most project activities had been delivered.

ILO received funds from EU in two tranches: At project start and after the first 18 months of project. The EU had some delay in providing the second tranche of funding, during which time, the staff was funded by other projects and activities were anyway temporarily paused due to the rainy season. Stakeholders feel it takes a lot of time to get the money from ILO in their hands.

*16. What steps were taken to mitigate the problems?*

The initial delay in starting project activities was handled through the rescheduling of project activities/ modified planning.

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<sup>17</sup> The CLEAN project (*Creating Linkages for Expanded Agricultural Networks*) ran from 2017 to 2023 and worked on building the capacity of coffee producers and improve their productivity, by providing training and technical assistance on how to produce/ roast higher end coffee.

Regarding administrative processes, ILO and Oxfam carried out financial planning training with partners. ILO staff explained to partners the financial management requirements and related templates.

The project now requires cash advances to carry out its work. ILO Office provides this as cash in hand to participants, but that is risky. Recently, it has started using digital payment, using BCEL bank's mobile app, to participants' accounts. Given that every transaction must be approved by the Regional Director and Finance Unit in ROAP, the Regional Office tries to do operations with three weeks in advance. When there are money requests with short notice, the government will advance funds/ petty cash (up to 60% of costs) to cover the costs of one or two meetings.

At a certain moment, there were doubts among ILO project staff that the staff contracts would be extended in time due to delays in receiving the second tranche and ILO's policy of not advancing funds for projects, including both for contract extensions and activity implementation. . The staff – Project Manager – was extended from another project funds.

## 5.6 Impact

*17. Have the Social Protection and OSH delivery systems and services become more accessible for, and more responsive to the specific needs of informal economy men and women workers (including small scale farmers, waged workers, employees in plantation and processing facilities in the target areas?*

SoLaR project is a small, direct-action program, focused on three southern provinces of Lao PDR, with direct participants numbered in the hundreds. Its sphere of impact is mainly concentrated in the 34 target communities and province and district level organizations (local SSO, FTU, ARC, coffee and tea production groups, companies), with which it interacted.

As stated before, as result of SoLaR efforts, Lao PDR social security and OSH delivery systems and services have become more responsive to workers' needs, particularly those of informal, male and female agricultural workers, and other labourers working at plantations and processing facilities in the coffee and tea sectors. Registration in social security has risen among both male and female small-scale farmers and company employees, and the population in target communities and productive groups/ enterprise has become more aware of OSH hazards and their prevention. However, the effects of the project on informal, seasonal workers, the poorest in the agricultural sector, remains improbable.

*18. Was there any specific government action on social security or/and OSH, or any support extended to workers/stakeholders in the coffee or/and tea sector, following the project interventions?*

LSSO has adopted the mobile registration system as an institutional procedure, and after the pilot in Vientiane and its replication in the target provinces, it is transferring the responsibility for the implementation of the same to the southern provinces' SSO. With the mobile team, local SSO can now outreach their services to the villages. Additionally, there is a new SSO in Paksong. The LSSO is foreseeing to expand the system to other new provinces.

ARC and FTU have strengthened their capacity to deliver training in OSH for agricultural workers. They foresee to continue providing this service to rural workers, although in the case of FTU further implementation of services will be probably restricted due to budgetary constraints (please refer to the section on sustainability).

The SoLaR project should be understood as part of a panoply of strategies employed by ILO to advance decent work in Lao PDR and contribute, among others, to the improvement of working conditions, social security, OSH and gender equality in the country. SoLaR focus its efforts on informal workers in the agricultural sector (e.g., coffee and tea), but ILO's DWCP objectives and scope of activities in Lao PDR are broader. Within this context, the ILO and Oxfam, as cooperation institutions, have carried out specific studies<sup>18</sup> aimed at informing the debate on SS legal reform and provide input and recommendations to the current review by Lao PDR government of the country's Social Security Law. Furthermore, by June 2024, the ILO has produced a technical note on a comparative analysis of the Social Security Law, using Convention 102 as a framework. This document has not yet been published.

In this wider context, while SoLaR project has formulated technical studies and recommendations that may feed the dialogue on improvements to Lao PDR SS policy, its major contribution seems to be its demonstrative character of possible improvements through the piloting of a mobile registration system.

*19. What could have been done, or done more to realistically improve access, quality, and coverage?*

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<sup>18</sup> E.g., ILO's research report on "Understanding informality and expanding social security coverage in the Lao People's Democratic Republic" (2024), ILO's "Mid-term Review (MTR) of the National Social Protection Strategy" (2024) and Oxfam's "Promoting Informal Workers' access to the Lao Social Security Fund" (2021)



Lao PDR's agriculture is the economic sector where a higher percentage of informality and higher poverty rates are found. In this context and in general terms, improving access, quality and coverage to these population, should be based in the following axes<sup>19</sup>:

- Lower the barriers of access to the system, by providing outreach services for registration and payment in the local SSO. The mobile registration system proposed by SoLaR is a first step in this direction, but it should be accompanied by a reduction in the requisites/ paperwork for enrolling in the system.
- Increase awareness raising campaigns in rural communities, about the benefits offered by LSSO, with support of workers' organizations.
- Improve the quality of the services offered by LSSO, and particularly those related to (access) to health services/ hospitals. Farmers are often unsatisfied with the health services provided by government hospitals. Improving health services may be a reasonable action to be taken by government to increase and retain new registrations in LSSO.
- Introduce mobile, preventative health services (primary health attention, medical and dental check-ups, referrals), that provide free care for the rural poor at communities.
- Reduce, through partial or total subsidies, the costs of enrolment for the poorest segments of Lao agricultural workers, and particularly, those under seasonal employment and insufficient income.
- Ensure a gradual increase of mobile registration services and of new registrations in social security: Calibrate the size of new enrolments, so that they do not surpass LSSO's and hospitals' capacities to provide effective services
- Alternatively, the government of Lao PDR, in collaboration with the production groups, could explore registering group members into the NSSF using their mutual funds.

*20. Are there any unintended effects of the interventions (including on the Gender equality and women empowerment)?*

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<sup>19</sup> Some of these alternatives are beyond the scope of the SoLaR project and should be implemented/ funded by the Lao PDR authorities.

The evaluation did not find any relevant unintended effects of the interventions, apart from the fact that collective bargaining knowledge was used to advance the commercial position of farmers, more than to improve labour relationships and the interests of waged workers.

The evaluation team received statements from several stakeholders highlighting that women now participate more in communities, and that local authorities/ government gives now more attention to women, to protect them. The evaluation team could not confirm these statements.

## 5.7 Sustainability

*21. Are there any project results (e.g. the sustainable mechanisms and structures for social protection established by the project, improved local partners' capacity) that will be continued, replicated, or scaled up by national partners?*

Most project interventions developed through trainer-of-trainers methodology, regarding SS, OSH, collective bargaining and gender equality could be replicated in the future by local SSO, FTU, ARC and other organizations that participated in the same.

The mobile registration and payment system will be continued by LSSO at local level, and possibly expanded to include new regions.

However, representatives of most of the organizations participating in the project stated that in the absence of project's financial support, it would be difficult for them to continue implementing activities, or at least, they will become less frequent, the outreach capacity of these institutions being greatly affected.

National and provincial/ district level organizations would like the project to continue. Being a pilot project, they think that it had a short duration. They hope the project lifetime will be extended.

*"If the project ends, government may adapt but without income it is difficult to solve problems. The current economic crisis has made things more difficult. If the project does not continue it will be difficult for SSO to expand, although the project has provided a good model that could be replicated in other places."*

**ASDSP representative**

*"We have a plan to continue but it may not be implemented because we have a limited budget. If possible, we would like the project to continue, because we are getting stronger and growing. If we do not have the budget, it will be worrisome."*

**FTU Salavan province representative**

## *22. How can the sustainability of the Action be enhanced?*

The project lacked an exit strategy. In a next phase it should develop one and prepare local stakeholders to continue project activities on their own and develop and follow up their own sustainability plans, with specific milestones/ targets.

Apart from continuing to build the capacity of organizations' members through training, project activities should include strengthening local organizations' strategic planning capability and helping them in identifying activities/ sources of income that may provide funding for the continuation of project's action. For example, the Ministry of Planning and Investment provides funding for small and medium enterprises; if coffee and tea producer groups could operate in a larger scale and respond to the standards of this programme, they could access funding. Local organizations should be encouraged by project staff to develop and implement their own plans.

Local organizations from different districts shall be encouraged to meet periodically at province level to exchange experiences and coordinate and share resources. Government, through LSSO, should allocate funds for use by local FTU, ARC and local SSO, for training in communities, promotion of labour rights, OSH, and registration in the local SSO.

## *23. What are the lessons and pilot activities that can potentially be continued in a possible second project phase, in other agricultural sectors and geographical areas?*

Tea and coffee cover a small percentage of the working population. Rice and other crops may be more relevant from a demographic point of view. The project may consider working at the same time with workers in various of these sectors. From a geographic point of view, the project should expand to other provinces in the north to extend its impact.

In a new implementation phase, project implementers should search to create synergies with other projects working on agricultural development, to mainstream the promotion of labour rights, including SS and OSH, within the work of the latter.<sup>20</sup> Pension and other benefits of social security, beyond health services, should be highlighted more in awareness raising campaigns.

With support of LSSO's trained national mobile team, local staff in each target-province could be trained to extend the project's successful mobile registration and pay system to other regions. Occupational safety and health concerns should be addressed in a similar way, with

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the program already offers opportunities for synergies with the DGD Programme: *Improved Social Protection and Labour Rights for Women Workers in ASEAN's Agri-food Sector*.

support of ARC staff and FTU members. In addition to farm owners, farm seasonal workers should be included as target population for training in OSH and access to SS.

Collective bargaining training and practice should be focused more on wages and working conditions.

Activities aimed at strengthening of productive groups (such as training and provision of productive machinery) should be included as part of the projects' set of interventions. If the project continues working exclusively on export-oriented crops, it may additionally explore including a supply chain verification approach, thus linking more explicitly support for access to EU and other buyers to producers' compliance with social security and OSH.

In a next phase, project staff should put particular emphasis on the development of an exit strategy and the follow up of local organizations' sustainability plans, including the allocation of budget resources from central to local levels.

## **5.8 Tripartism, ILS, Social Dialogue, Gender Equality and Non-discrimination; Communication and Visibility**

*24. Have Gender equality, disability inclusion, and women empowerment been advanced in the target communities, as a result of the interventions? If so how and to what extent?*

The evaluation team did not find evidence that disability inclusion was treated as a project priority.

The project helped advance gender equality and women empowerment in the target communities by reducing gender gaps in the access to social security and OSH and promoting increased women' participation in leadership positions in the community. As result the number of women occupying leadership positions grew. Female farmers enrolled in higher numbers in social security, with a higher proportion of female participants signing up compared to males. The project highlighted the gender-related difference with regards to OSH, women being more exposed to use of chemicals, and men being more exposed to heavy-lifting and other physical hazards.

As per villagers' and authorities' statements collected during the evaluation, gender equality and inclusion were also reflected in the interaction of genders at community and household level, promoting a more egalitarian and cooperative relationship model among men and women. Women's voices are now heard and respected as equal in many communities.

*“In the past they (villagers) did not promote women participation, women rested within the family. Now we have inspectors, and they hire women to do this role. We observed changes in the 10 pilot villages. More women participate in meetings, and they wish to join social security. And we see improvement in the family too, how they support each other. In the past men tend to say that certain tasks were not their job.”*

**Laongam FTU representative**

Notwithstanding the above, changes in gender relationships is an issue that takes long time to occur and generalize, modifying local culture and passing from one generation to the next, so SoLaR’s outcome should be consider a positive first step in this direction. Likewise, the endline study found that in some target villages, particularly those in remote areas populated by ethnic minorities, with non-Lao-Thai speaking populations, gender inequality persists. The endline study also found some relationship between gender differences and the physical accessibility to villages. Those nearer to main or paved roads showed higher levels of development, improved access to basic social services, income opportunities and “a more balanced dynamic” regarding domestic power between men and women, than and those located at more remote places. Conversely, the latter showed gender inequality, affecting women’s access to social security. It is yet to determine if these differences depend more on culture/ ethnicity than on underdevelopment due to lesser accessibility, or if they are related to both issues.

*25. To what extent has the targeted workers and duty bearers/service providers been sensitized about, more capacitated on Gender Equality?*

Gender equality training was provided to men and women from provincial and district government offices, trade unions, CSOs, and farmer groups. Using the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) tools, participants were trained on how to visualise the different situations, problems and needs of women and men. Training covered topics such as gender-responsive social protection and occupational safety and health (OSH) and women's leadership. TOT courses build the capacity of these institutions. According the endline report, by June 2024 at least three FTU GALS trainers are available in each district, apart from additional trainers from among CSO. These trainers have sufficient skills to provide GALS training to villagers, and some have already conducted training activities on their own.

*26. Have the project interventions in relation to gender equality and GBV contributed to advance the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of economic, social, and cultural rights of the targeted groups?*

The evaluation found little evidence on the project's effect on gender-based violence. Respondents in FGD were reluctant to talk about the issue and mentioned that there did not know about such cases occurring in their communities. Thus, the evaluation could not confirm information on this matter.

Respondents mentioned that, conversely to the past, gender relationships were more equitable, and that women now had a say in community affairs. In some communities, women were appointed to work in positions priorly only attributed to men, such as coffee auditors during the harvest season. It is however not realistic to expect, after 21 months of effective project implementation, a major shift in cultural attitudes and major shifts in the economic, social or cultural situation of participants. Changes at community level take time to mature and give fruit. The project was a first step in that direction, but new or further mapping/ power analysis may help provide more detailed information on the real extent of these changes.

*27. How has the project created conditions to facilitate and advance social dialogue?*

The project advisory committee (PAC) and Project stakeholders' working group (PWG) are the formal spaces where tripartite constituents meet to discuss project advancements. The tripartite nature of the ILO allowed SoLaR project to link, at local level the efforts of government and trade unions, local authorities, CSO, and employers, in view of improving rural workers' access to social security and OSH in the coffee and tea sectors.

Organizations shared training spaces and had the possibility to interact and share their points of view. FTU support to local SSO and to ARC, in carrying out, respectively, social security and OSH trainings at community level, has helped foster social dialogue and establish a common endeavour on these issues at local level.

The ILO provides technical assistance and holds a permanent dialogue with government authorities (MOLSW) to contribute with recommendations to the reform of social security legislation and the advancement of labour rights for all in Lao PDR.

*28. How and to what extent has social dialogue advanced the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of economic, social, and cultural rights of informal economy workers in the two sectors in the Lao PDR?*

SoLaR also contributed to generate a trustful relationship between the government of Lao PDR and the implementing partners/ CSO, in the promotion of labour rights. This was reflected in an improved accessibility to local SSO by informal workers of the coffee and tea sectors. Apart from the annual meetings of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), the project promoted periodic dialogue with several institutions. The implementing partners met with LSSO in Vientiane or met at the MOLSW to convene with employers. ILO and Oxfam's recommendations and indicators feed the incipient social dialogue on these matters and are a first step in view of strengthening the protection of labour rights in the country.

*29. Has the project contributed to support the Government of Lao PDR to improve implementation/enforcement of the relevant international labour rights and standards that were ratified by Lao PDR?*

Since 1964, Lao PDR has ratified 12 ILO conventions: 7 fundamental conventions (out of 10), one governance (priority) convention (out of 4), and 4 technical conventions (out of 177). Lao PDR has not ratified the Social Security (minimum standards) Convention, 1952 (no.102) nor the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184).

In this context, it is very relevant that in July 2022, Lao PDR ratified the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981(No. 155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187). This has put the issue of occupational safety and health at the center of government authorities' attention. The SoLaR project, which started immediately by that time, constitutes a significant step in promoting the implementation of international rights and standards ratified by the country. SoLaR's parallel focus on social security, another major Lao PDR government concern, should hopefully lead to further implementation of relevant international labour standards.

*30. To what extent has the project ensured donor visibility in alignment with donor's guidelines and contributed to the project's communication and visibility plan?*

SoLaR developed a successful communication strategy that ensured visibility of its activities and achievements before key stakeholders, at community, district, province and national level. It comprised diverse types of activities, such as social media campaigns, use of videos on different project components/ activities and on "most significant change", periodic participation in public events (such as the International Coffee Day and International Tea Day, and celebration of Labour Day and OSH Day), press notes, participation in symposiums and seminar, presentations in radio programs, dissemination of brochures and banners, annual donor field visits, etc. In

doing so it not only ensured visibility for the project but for the donor, whose sponsorship of the same is highlighted in all communication products.

*“Excellent on communications and visibility, the best I had.”*

**European Union representative in Lao PDR**

## 6. Conclusions

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The SoLaR project has attained, and in certain cases exceeded, its expected outputs and it has contributed to improve access to and registration in the social security system, and to strengthen knowledge and practice with regards to OSH hazards, among male and female informal workers in the coffee and tea sectors in three southern provinces of Lao.

The SoLaR project is highly relevant to both ILO’s normative and tripartite mandate and to Lao PDR constituents’ priorities and needs. The project coordinated some of its activities with other international cooperation initiatives in the targeted sectors/ targeted geographic area.

SoLaR helped advance gender equality and women empowerment in the 34 target communities by reducing gender gaps in the access to social security and OSH and promoting increased women’ participation in leadership positions in the community. SoLaR contributed to strengthen farmer group’s organizations and help them standardize their production. The project also promoted collective bargaining, although it was mainly used later by farmers to negotiate with coffee and tea buyers rather than for wage setting.

The project provided support to coffee and tea farmers belonging to the informal sector, with relevant success. In a future implementing phase, it would be useful to establish effective means to extend social security services and OSH activities to informal seasonal workers in these and other sectors.

SoLaR was implemented in an efficient manner, and it managed to compensate initial delays related to government administrative issues.

Raising awareness and increasing access to social security for tea/coffee farmers is a long-term process. There is relevant demand for training in OSH in the targeted sector and provinces and in other sectors and provinces in the country. The project needs more time to consolidate and expand its work.



Currently, the achievements attained by SoLaR offer limited sustainability in the absence of an exit plan. It would be advisable to extend the support provided by the donor, to fund an extension or new phase of the project.

## 7. Lessons Learnt and Good Practices

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### 7.1 Lessons Learnt <sup>21</sup>

- a. Duration of interventions: Increasing the coverage of social security systems and occupational safety and health practices is a long-term commitment that requires continuous action and investment by government agencies.
- b. Inclusion of seasonal workers: Special efforts/ means need to be developed to promote the registration of informal seasonal workers in social security and improve their knowledge on OSH.
- c. Accessibility to rural communities/ participants: It is important to organize outreach activities based on farmers schedules/ availability and on the limited accessibility to communities during the rainy season.
- d. Health sector engagement in delivery of services to member of social security: Villagers expressed their concern about bad quality of attention at hospitals, as well as their social security cards not being accepted by staff at small health centres and hospitals. It is important to ensure that health staff is sensitized by SSO.
- e. Economic empowerment: It is important to increase the capacity of farmers to enrol in social security. Increasing productivity through adequate equipment and improving access to markets helps boost income and thus supports registration in social security.
- f. Setting up of activities should be carried out on a more regular basis, as it takes time to organize activities and the participants may change/ new participants incorporate as beneficiaries, and some people may need to refresh the information received.

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<sup>21</sup> The lessons learned from an evaluation are an external perspective based on available data and analysis. Other lessons learned may emerge, albeit the validation of lessons learned being part of the use of an evaluation.

## 7.2 Good Practices

- a. The holistic approach employed by the project, which combines various relevant labour-related issues, such as access to social security, occupational safety and health, and collective bargaining with advancing gender equality in the workplace and at community level.
- b. The integration, through diverse components, of a wide range of stakeholders, (UN/ILO and NGO/Oxfam, tripartite, CSO, communities) as implementers and beneficiaries, creating a framework for synergies and coordination.
- c. The piloting of mobile registration and payment services within the LSSO, which increased the accessibility to these services.
- d. A comprehensive visibility strategy, which included diverse means and topics, and helped convey, in an effective way, information on project's achievements and activities.

## 8. Recommendations

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### 8.1 Addressed to the European Union (donor)

#### **Recommendation 1: Design and fund a new phase of the SoLaR project for an additional minimum period of 36 or 48 months**

Increasing accessibility for social security registration and OSH prevention in Lao PDR's agricultural sector would benefit if the SoLaR project were expanded for an additional implementation phase, based on activities like the ones implemented during the current project.

This would allow SoLaR to consolidate its achievements to date, expand its interventions to other agriculture-related sectors and provinces, and implement a sustainability strategy in anticipation of its end.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
European Union	High	Short term	Additional funding for new phase of project

## 8.2 Addressed to the ILO and Oxfam

### **Recommendation 2: Include among the priority targets of the new project phase those informal workers who do not own land and work as seasonal labour in agriculture**

Informal seasonal agricultural labourers are among the poorest groups in Lao PDR, working without a contract, with scarce protection of their rights, and little or none access to social security and protection from occupational safety and health hazards. Often, these workers bring their family as “help” to work with them. A new phase of the project should address part of its efforts to the plight of these disfavoured workers and their families.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
ILO and Oxfam	High	Short term	New project budget

### **Recommendation 3: Partner with other major international cooperation projects to mainstream the promotion of labour rights and gender equality within these projects’ agenda.**

Other international cooperation organizations implemented activities during the SOLAR project period, including the CLEAN project (2019-2023), the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)-funded integrated rural development project (2021-2025), and the CPC. The ILO and Oxfam should coordinate more closely with these and other agencies to avoid the overlapping of interventions, create synergies and mainstream the promotion of labour rights and gender equality among the target populations of the same. These could include: The US Department of Agriculture, the Agence Française de Cooperation, the Korean International Cooperation Agency.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
<i>EU, European partner organizations, ILO &amp; Oxfam</i>	Medium	Short term	New project budget

### **Recommendation 4: Incorporate activities in other languages, including communication in local media, to improve outreach to ethnic minorities.**

Carry out advocacy and training activities in other local languages apart from Lao, to foster an increased uptake of activities by ethnic minorities and facilitate the understanding of contents. Include communication in local languages at local media level as part of the strategy.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
ILO & Oxfam	Medium	Medium term	New project budget

**Recommendation 5: Design, implement and monitor an exit strategy since the beginning of the new phase of the project.**

In case that a project extension is awarded by the donor, ILO and Oxfam should design clear exit strategies for each component of the project, including clear milestones and responsibilities. This could also involve engaging more local authorities whose mandates align with the element's goals. For example, Agriculture Officers could be involved in OSH and group formation, and the Lao Women's Union could be involved in gender-related development work

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
ILO & Oxfam	High	Short term	New project budget

**8.3 Addressed to the Government of Lao PDR**

**Recommendation 6: Provide partial or total subsidies on the cost of enrolment and contributions to social security for the poorest segments of Lao agricultural workers, and particularly, those under seasonal employment and insufficient income.**

Given massive poverty among agricultural labour, social assistance or government-subsidized social security contributions may be required to provide protection for the most disfavoured groups of agricultural labourers.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
MOLSW, government of Lao PDR	High	Medium term	Lao PDR national budget

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: Terms of Reference

#### Terms of Reference

#### **Independent Final Evaluation of the Reducing vulnerability in Lao PDR: Advancing social protection and labour rights and entitlements in the coffee and tea sectors of Lao PDR (SoLaR) Project**

##### **1. Background of the Project**

Majority of the workers and households engaged in the coffee and tea sectors in Lao People's Democratic Republic's Bolaven Plateau are in informal and vulnerable employment, often as unpaid contributing family work. The work is— seasonal but helps to and earn extra incomes. Employed workers are usually without proper employment contracts and social security coverage. Labour rights violations, hazardous working conditions, violence and sexual harassment are not uncommon.

Funded by the European Union and jointly implemented by ILO and Oxfam, the SOLAR project aims to promote decent work in these sectors and promote the realization of labour rights, including with respect to OSH and access to social protection for all, particularly for informal workers in agriculture. It operates in Bolaven Plateau, which is responsible for 95 per cent of Lao coffee production and supplies markets in Asia, Europe and North America. The project supports the government and civil society to promote labour rights and improve access to social security and occupational safety and health (OSH) for coffee and tea workers in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

##### **2. Objectives of the project**

**Development Objective:** Workers, particularly informal workers and women, in the Lao coffee and tea sectors have improved access to social protection coverage and occupational safety and health, realizing their respective labour rights.

**Specific Objective 1:** Extended and improved social protection and OSH delivery system and services at district level for women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors.

**Specific Objective 2:** Women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in three contiguous districts of the Bolaven Plateau of Lao PDR are organized and empowered to promote and protect their labour rights

##### **3. Key partners**

This project is implemented by ILO and Oxfam, and co-implemented with several national implementing partners (including: (1) Lao Social Security Organisation, (2) Lao Coffee Association, (3) Paksong Tea Promotion Association, (4) Lao Federation of Trade Unions, and (5) civil society organisations: (i) Association to Support the Development of the Peasant Societies (ASDSP), (ii) Maeying Huamjai Phattana (MHP), and (iii) Phan-Thin Social Enterprise (PTSE). Other key stakeholders are cooperatives; the Agricultural Research Centre of southern Laos; and provincial, district and village authorities.

#### **4. Project management team set-up**

a. The project team consists of:

##### **ILO**

- One Technical Expert and Programme Manager based in Laos who serves as technical lead and takes routine management and other decisions with technical backstopping from the Senior Social Protection Specialist, Social Dialogue and Collective Bargaining Specialist, CO Director and ILO Coordinator in Laos.
- ILO National Project Coordinator based in Laos, to support the international programme manager.

Technical backstopping for the project and overall guidance on social protection is provided by the Senior Social Protection Specialist throughout the entire project duration, together with other DWT specialists based in Bangkok, particularly Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations Specialist.

##### **OXFAM**

- Programme Manager responsible for strategic management of the Oxfam-led components of the Action, in coordination with ILO
- Programme Coordinator in charge of the daily coordination of activities and monitoring of third parties
- Programme Finance Officer and Finance Manager
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Coordinator
- National Gender Coordinator to support the GALS roll-out and mainstreaming
- Social Protection Advisor (International position based in Brussels)

b. The project also has a National Project Advisory Committee (PAC) at the national level. The PAC was established to oversee, coordinate and monitor the Action implementation. PAC is co-chaired by the Vice Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Vice President of LNCCI, Vice President of LFTU and EU. The Technical Secretariat of the PAC is co-chaired by the Director General of the LSSO and ILO. While EU would co-chair every PAC meeting, other development partners are invited to the annual PAC meetings.

c. At provincial level, Provincial Stakeholder Working Groups provide coordination at the provincial level in Champasak, Sekong and Salavan.

## **5. Stakeholders and target groups**

The project is primarily implemented at the grassroots level and with strong participation of local authorities, organisations and individuals. The project implementation areas include the three contiguous districts of the Bolaven Plateau: Paksong in Champasak Province, Thateng in Sekong Province, and Lao Ngam in Salavan Province.

The key target group and direct beneficiaries of this Action is 400 women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in the Bolaven Plateau of southern Lao PDR. The target group of 400 workers comprises:

1. an estimated 160 informal group members (8 informal worker groups with an average of 20 workers per group) reached through community-level activities led by Oxfam, LFTU, ASDSP and Phan-Thin;
2. estimated 240 Association members, of which, 180 are reached through the Coffee Association and 60 through the Tea Association.

## **6. Purpose, objective and Scope of the Evaluation**

The main purpose of this final independent evaluation is to promote accountability to ILO key stakeholders and donor, and to enhance learning within the ILO and key stakeholders. The findings will be used to improve the design and implementation of future relevant projects/programs. Knowledge and information obtained from this evaluation will contribute inputs to the design of a future project expanding and adapting SOLAR activities. The evaluation will also contribute to strengthening local governance and building accountability of the government of Lao PDR, civil society organisations and the ILO.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are:

(1) to assess the project:

- relevance,
- coordination, complementarity and added value
- validity of design (intervention logic), monitoring and learning
- coherence,
- efficiency,
- effectiveness,

Cross-cutting issues (Gender equality and non-discrimination)

- Communication and visibility

- impact and sustainability

(2) to develop recommendations to carry forward the objectives and progress of the Action within the existing two sectors and three districts, as well as their extension in other agricultural sectors and localities, and particular implications and lessons for the EU's wider engagement in the agriculture sector of Lao PDR until 2027;

(3) to identify lessons learnt, good practices, innovative approaches, recommendations for future direction /implementation of the European Union, ILO, including those related to social protection, gender equality, asocial dialogue, tripartism, management and implementation of activities.

### **Scope of the evaluation**

The scope of the Evaluation is guided by the main objective and the specific objectives as outlined in the above section as per the European Union grant contract. The Independent Final Evaluation will cover the period from 15 November 2021 to 14 August 2024. The geographical coverage of the evaluation will include all geographical locations where project operates. The period to be evaluated encompasses the entire project period from design to implementation. Meetings will be held in Vientiane, Champasak, Sekong and Salavan provinces. Meetings with ILO Specialists and project team during the inception phases will be organized virtually.

The evaluation will integrate gender equality and disability as cross-cutting concerns throughout the methodology, deliverables and final report of the evaluation. To the extent available, the evaluators should review secondary data and information disaggregated by sex, gender, ethnicity and people living with a disability. It is important to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the project's strategy related to gender equality and the inclusion of people living with a disability. All this information should be included in the Inception Report and draft and final Evaluation report.

### **7. Clients and users of the evaluation:**

- Project team (ILO and Oxfam) and ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR
- ILO Country Office and DWT – Bangkok specialists and Programme Officer
- Government of Lao PDR, workers' and employers' organizations (at national, provincial and district levels)
- Implementing Partners and CSOs at the provincial, district and village levels
- Donor – EU Delegation to Lao PDR and European Commission as the contracting authority
- ILO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP)
- Other relevant ILO policy departments (including SOCPRO), branches and programmes

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be shared and discussed with members of the National Project Advisory Committee and Provincial Stakeholder Working Groups during the stakeholder validation workshop.



## **8. Evaluation criteria and Key evaluation questions**

### **Evaluation criteria**

The evaluation will address the overall European Union and ILO evaluation concerns including relevance, validity of design, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, Tripartism, social dialogue, Gender equality and non-discrimination.

Suggested key evaluation questions are mentioned below. Given the purpose of the evaluation, the evaluator may suggest additional questions – in consultation with the evaluation manager. Any fundamental changes to the evaluation criteria and questions should be agreed between the evaluation manager and the evaluator, and reflected in the inception report.

### **8.1. Suggested Evaluation Questions**

The evaluation should address the questions below. Other aspects can be added as identified by the evaluator in accordance with the given purpose and in consultation with the evaluation manager and project stakeholders. Any fundamental changes to the evaluation criteria and questions should be agreed between the evaluation manager and the evaluator, and reflected in the inception report.

The evaluation team shall examine the following key issues:

#### **a) Relevance**

*The extent to which the intervention objectives, design and approach continue to respond to beneficiaries, country, and partners/institution/donors' needs, policies, and priorities, and is expected to continue to do so if circumstances change (or have changed).*

- To what extent had the intervention's objectives and design continued to respond to tripartite constituents', beneficiaries', donor's, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, as well as the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Lao PDR and Country Programme Outcomes?

#### **b) Validity of intervention design**

*The extent to which the design is logical and coherent.*

- Is the project design and the log frame (outcomes, outputs, activities) relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground? Does it address the stakeholders' needs that were identified? Does the project design and log frame adequately provide for participation of ILO constituents (employers and workers) in project activities?
- How relevant and useful are the indicators and means of verification described in the project document and the M&E matrix for assessing the project's progress, results and impact? Are the means of verification appropriate?

**c) Coherence**

*The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.*

- To what extent had other interventions and policies supported or undermined the project interventions, and vice versa? Are there possible ways to maximize synergies and improve collaboration with new or existing actors?

**d) Effectiveness:**

*The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups?*

- How had the project contributed to the changes in the social protection and OSH system and services at the district and provincial levels, in the targeted districts of the three provinces, both directly and indirectly?
- Were there any observable changes, e.g. in terms of personal and organizational capacity, behavior, mindset etc., in areas of workers' organization and empowerment in accessing social protection and labour rights? How had the project contributed to the changes? Are there any evidences indicating that these changes and the improved capacity contributed to advancing the promotion and protection of labour rights and decent work of the target populations, i.e. informal workers in agriculture, in the target areas? What could have been done, or done more to strengthen the contribution?
- To what extent were partnership enhanced? Had and to what extent had the project interventions helped change the dynamics relationship/interaction among the key stakeholders, such as between central and local levels of government, between government and social partners, and between government and civil society, to provide improved and more accessible services to informal economy workers in the two targeted sectors? What were the benefits/challenges that the partners have experienced in the implementation that affect project successes?

**e) Efficiency of resource use**

*The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.*

- How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated, used and leveraged with other complementary interventions to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives and results? Have the project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? If not, why? What steps were taken to mitigate the problems?

**f) Impact**

- Have there been improvements in the access of informal economy workers to the Social Protection and OSH delivery system and services? Have the systems and services become more accessible for, and more responsive to the specific needs of informal economy men and women workers (including small scale farmers, waged workers, employees in plantation and processing facilities in the target areas? Were there any specific government support extended to workers/stakeholders in this sector following the project interventions? What could have been done, or done more to realistically improve access, quality, and coverage?
- Are there any unintended effects of the interventions (including on the Gender equality and women empowerment)?

**g) Sustainability**

- Are there any project results (e.g. the sustainable mechanisms and structures for social protection established by the project) that will be continued, replicated, or scaled up by national partners? How can the sustainability of the Action be enhanced? What are the lessons and pilot activities that can potentially be continued in a possible second project phase, in other agricultural sectors and geographical areas?

**h) Tripartism, social dialogue, Gender equality and non-discrimination**

- Have the Gender equality and women empowerment been advanced in the target communities, as a result of the interventions? If so how and to what extent? What could have been done, or done more to improve Gender equality and inclusiveness to promote inclusive development? To what extent has the targeted workers and duty bearers/service providers been sensitized about, more capacitated on Gender Equality?
- Have the project interventions in relations to gender equality and GBV contributed to advance the protection, promotion and fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights of the targeted groups? And how can these be improved?
- How had the project created conditions to facilitate and advance social dialogue? How and to what extent had the social dialogue, advanced the protection, promotion and fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights of informal economy workers in the two sectors in the Lao PDR? And how can the social dialogue be improved to serve the objective?
- Had the project contributed to support the Government of Lao PDR to improve implementation/enforcement of the relevant international labour rights and standards that were ratified by Lao PDR? What could have been done, or done more to improve the implementation/enforcement of ratified ILO conventions?

**ANNEX 2: Evaluation Matrix**

Issue Areas to Explore During the Evaluation	Document Review	ILO - OXFAM	Govt Agencies	Employers' Organizat	Workers' Organizat	CSO	EU, other agencies	Workers	Monitoring Data, Endline
<b>Relevance and Strategic Fit</b>									
1. To what extent have the intervention's objectives and design continued to respond to tripartite constituents', beneficiaries', donor's, country, and partner/institution needs, policies (including the National Social Protection Strategy, issued in 2020), and priorities, as well as the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Lao PDR and ILO Country Programme Outcomes?	X	X	X	X	X		X		
<b>Validity of Intervention Logic</b>									
2. Is the project design and the log frame (outcomes, outputs, activities) relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
3. Does the project design and log frame adequately provide for participation of ILO constituents (employers and workers) in project activities?	X	X		X	X				
4. How relevant and useful are the indicators and means of verification described in the project document and the M&E matrix for assessing the project's progress, results, and impact?	X	X							X

<b>Coherence</b>									
5. To what extent have other interventions and policies supported or undermined the project interventions, and vice versa?	X	X	X				X		
6. Are there possible ways to maximize synergies and improve collaboration with new or existing actors?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
<b>Effectiveness</b>									
7. How has the project contributed to the changes in the social protection and OSH system and services at the district and provincial levels, in the targeted districts of the three provinces, both directly and indirectly?	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
8. Were there any observable changes, e.g. in terms of personal and organizational capacity, behaviour, mindset etc., in areas of workers' organization and empowerment in accessing social protection and labour rights?	X	X			X	X		X	X
9. How has the project contributed to the changes?		X			X	X		X	X
10. Are there any evidence indicating that these changes and the improved capacity contributed to advancing the promotion and protection of labour rights and decent work of the target populations, i.e. informal workers in agriculture, in the target areas?		X	X		X	X		X	X

11. To what extent were partnerships enhanced?		X	X	X	X	X			
12. To what extent has the project interventions helped change the dynamics relationship/interaction among the key stakeholders, such as between central and local levels of government, between government and social partners, and between government and civil society, to provide improved and more accessible services to informal economy workers in the two targeted sectors?	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
13. What were the benefits/challenges that the partners have experienced in the implementation that affect project successes?	X	X				X			X
<b>Efficiency of Resource Use</b>									
14. How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated, used, and leveraged with other complementary interventions to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives and results?	X	X				X	X		Financial data
15. Have the project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? If not, why?	X	X	X	X	X	X			
16. What steps were taken to mitigate the problems	X	X	X			X			

<b>Impact</b>									
17. Have the Social Protection and OSH delivery systems and services become more accessible for, and more responsive to the specific needs of informal economy men and women workers (including small scale farmers, waged workers, employees in plantation and processing facilities) in the target areas?		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
18. Was there any specific government action on social security or/and OSH, or any support extended to workers/stakeholders in the coffee or/and tea sector, following the project interventions?		X	X		X			X	
19. What could have been done, or done more to realistically improve access, quality, and coverage?		X	X	X	X	X			
20. Are there any unintended effects of the interventions (including on the Gender equality and women empowerment)?		X	X		X	X		X	X
<b>Sustainability</b>									
21. Are there any project results (e.g. the sustainable mechanisms and structures for social protection established by the project, improved local partners' capacity) that will be continued, replicated, or scaled up by national partners?		X	X	X	X	X			X
22. How can the sustainability of the Action be enhanced?		X	X	X	X	X		X	

23. What are the lessons and pilot activities that can potentially be continued in a possible second project phase, in other agricultural sectors and geographical areas?	X	X	X	X	X	X			
<b>Tripartism, ILS, Social Dialogue, Gender Equality and Non-discrimination; Communication and Visibility</b>									
24. Have Gender equality, disability inclusion, and women empowerment been advanced in the target communities, as a result of the interventions? If so how and to what extent?	X	X			X	X		X	X
25. To what extent have the targeted workers and duty bearers/service providers been sensitized about, more capacitated on Gender Equality?	X	X			X	X		X	
26. Have the project interventions in relation to gender equality and GBV contributed to advance the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of economic, social, and cultural rights of the targeted groups?		X			X	X		X	X
27. How has the project created conditions to facilitate and advance social dialogue?		X	X	X	X				X
28. How and to what extent had the social dialogue, advanced the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of economic, social, and cultural rights of informal economy workers in the two sectors in the Lao PDR?		X	X	X	X				



29. Has the project contributed to support the Government of Lao PDR to improve implementation/enforcement of the relevant international labour rights and standards that were ratified by Lao PDR?	x	x	x						
30. To what extent has the project ensured donor visibility in alignment with donor's guidelines and contributed to the project's communication and visibility plan?	x	x					x		

## ANNEX 3: Documents and Other Information Reviewed (provisional list)

### 1. Internal documents

- Project document
- Project inception report
- EU ROM report and agreed follow up
- Midterm internal reflection report
- Quarterly update reports:
  - 2022 (Q3 & Q4)
  - 2023 (Q1, Q3 & Q4)
  - 2024 (Q1)
- Annual progress report June 2023
- Budget/project financial status report (PJ report), as of 20 June 2024
- Approved budget, part of EU-ILO Contribution Agreement
- Activity reports and photos taken on project activities
- Stories of select partners and beneficiaries
- Field mission reports
- Note on and Agenda of PAC meeting
- Logframe signed ILO-EU
- Updated logframe June 2023
- Project workplan
- List of project target villages
- List of stakeholders
- Baseline survey final report (January 2023; TOR, study plan, report, tools and raw data)
- Endline survey draft report (July 2024; TOR for endline survey)
- MOUs among ILO, OXFAM and different parties
- Policy brief on informal workers' access to LSSF (June 2021)
- Solar project webpage
- Solar project photos on social protection activities (several files)
- Solar project communication products (brochures, banners, etc.)
- Several videos on project activities
- Review of the Social Security Law (amended version) 2018 of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, ILO 2024

## 2. Published Legislation, Reports and Studies

Chaleunsinh, C. Aguin J.F., & Phommexay, P. (2021). Promoting Informal Workers' access to the Lao Social Security Fund. Oxfam-Lao Office, Lao PDR.

ILO (2022) Lao People's Democratic Republic - Decent Work Country Programme - (2022-2026)

Lao National Assembly. (2013). Labor Law. Lao National Assembly, Lao PDR.

Lao National Assembly. (2018). Social Security Law. Lao National Assembly, Lao PDR.

Lao National Assembly (2021). 9<sup>th</sup> Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025)

Merttens, F., Chaleunsinh, C-, Habib, W., Jasper, P., Umer Naeem, U., and Wahyudi, R., (2024), Understanding informality and expanding social security coverage in Lao PDR, ILO

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. (2020). National Social Protection Strategy: Vision 2030 and Goal 2025. Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao PDR

Oxfam. (2023). Promoting Informal Workers' Access to the Lao Social Security Fund through the VSS: A Study in 2020 Using Evidence from Four provinces. Oxfam-Lao Office, Lao PDR.

President of Lao PDR. (2018). Decree of President of Lao People's Democratic Republic No: 213/President Office. President Office, Lao PDR.

Samavong, C. and De, L., (2024) Report of the Mid-Term Review of the National Social Protection Strategy in the Lao People's Democratic Republic; ILO

Senyavong, P., Chalernkhun, S., & Senyavong, S. (2023). A Gender-Responsive of Advancing Social Protection and Labour Rights in the Coffee and Tea Sectors in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Oxfam-Lao Office, Lao PDR.

## 3. Relevant Evaluation and Policy Guidelines

ILO Policy Guidelines for evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. [http://www.ilo.ch/eval/Evaluationpolicy/WCMS\\_571339/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.ch/eval/Evaluationpolicy/WCMS_571339/lang--en/index.htm)

Code of conduct form [http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS\\_206205/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_206205/lang--en/index.htm)

Checklist No. 3: Writing the inception report

[http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS\\_165972/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165972/lang--en/index.htm)

Checklist 5: preparing the evaluation report

[http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS\\_165967/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165967/lang--en/index.htm)

Checklist 6: rating the quality of evaluation report

[http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS\\_165968/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165968/lang--en/index.htm)

Template for lessons learnt and Emerging Good Practices

[http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS\\_206158/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_206158/lang--en/index.htm)

Guidance note 7: Stakeholders participation in the ILO evaluation

[https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS\\_165982/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_165982/lang--en/index.htm)

Guidance note 4: Integrating gender equality in the monitoring and evaluation of projects

[http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS\\_165986/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165986/lang--en/index.htm) Template for evaluation title page [http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS\\_166357/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_166357/lang--en/index.htm)

Template for evaluation summary <http://www.ilo.org/legacy/english/edmas/eval/template-summary-en.doc>

UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

ILO Handbook on “How to design, monitor and evaluate peacebuilding results in employment for peace and resilience programmes” [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms\\_712211.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_712211.pdf)

UNWomen Gender responsive evaluation <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/good-practices-in-gender-responsive-evaluations-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2431>

## **ANNEX 4: List of Participants in Key Informant Interviewees and Evaluation Fieldwork Itinerary/ Schedule**

Interviewees	Organization	Position	Place and Date
Mr. Kenichi Hirose	ILO DWT Bangkok	Social Protection Specialist	Online, June 25
Mr. Arun Kumar	ILO DWT Bangkok	Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations Specialist	Online, June 27
Mr. Oktav Pasaribu	ILO DWT Bangkok	Deputy Director, DWT and CO	Online, June 24
Ms. Jittima Srisuknam	ILO DWT Bangkok	Programme Officer	Online, July 1
Mr. Viengprasith Thippasouda	ILO CO	National Coordinator	Online, June 26
Ms. Karla Leitzke	EU	Attache on Governance/Operations Manager	Online, June 26
Mr. Khambone PHASOUK	AFD	PRCC Coffee North Project Team Leader	Online, July 8
Ms. Chansatith Chaleunsinh	Independent Consultant	Baseline and Endline Consultant	Online, June 27

Ms. Loveleen De	ILO	Project Manager	Vientiane: July 1
Ms. Noutthong Alounthong	ILO	National Project Coordinator	Vientiane: July 1
Mr. Khamphy Khammavong	OXFAM	Social Protection PM	Vientiane: July 1
Mr. Sungkey Chalernkhun	OXFAM	National Project Coordinator	Vientiane: July 1
Ms. Bouahom Phommachanh	LSSO	Deputy Director General	Vientiane: July 1
Mr. Phetsamone Soukthaveephone	LSSO	Deputy Director General	Vientiane: July 1
Ms. Dongduane Chanthavong	LSSO	Head of PR	Vientiane: July 1
Ms. Veomany Khamphay	LSSO	Head of Planning	Vientiane: July 1
Mr. Kolaka	Phan Thin Social Enterprise	Project Manager	Vientiane: July 1
Ms. Noutchaly	Phan Thin Social Enterprise	Technical Officer	Vientiane: July 1
Mr. Khamchan Sivanhthong	LFTU	Deputy Director General	Vientiane: July 2
Ms. Daovading Phirasayphithak	LNCCI	Deputy Secretary General	Vientiane: July 2
Dr. Sisaliao Svengsuksa	ASDSP	President	Vientiane: July 2
Mr. Chansampone Phouttavong	ASDSP	Director/Coordinator	Vientiane: July 2
Mr. Phylavanh Nasoukhoun	ASDSP	Technical	Vientiane: July 2
Ms. Vansy Sanyavong	MHP	Director	Vientiane: July 2
Mr. Phetsavanh Chanthathon	Provincial Office LSSO + PWG	Head of Office	Champasack Province: July 3
Mr. Anoukone Saysamoud	Provincial Office LSSO + PWG	Technical Officer	Champasack Province: July 3
Mr. Vongnakhone Seangsavong	Provincial Office LFTU	Head of Labor Protection division	Champasack Province: July 3
Mr. Sengchan Khammountha	Lao Coffee Association	Vice President	Champasack Province: July 3
Mr. Sengthong Manixep	Paksong Tea Promotion Cooperative	President of Association and cooperatives	Paksong District: July 4
Mr. Bounnueng Kimmany	Paksong Tea Promotion Cooperative	Vice President of Association and cooperatives	Paksong District: July 4
Mr. Sivixay Sibounhueng	Agricultural Research Centre of Southern Laos (ARC)	Head of office	Paksong District: July 4
Ms. Souliphone Sidavong	Agricultural Research Centre	Division Head	Paksong District: July 4

	of Southern Laos (ARC)		
Mr. Saly Keovongphan	Local Office of Federation of Trade Unions	Office Head	Paksong District: July 4
Mr. Phoumee Phetchamphone	Sekong Provincial Social Security Office	Office Head	Sekong Province: July 5
Ms. Hatmanyda Lattakhoun	Sekong Provincial Social Security Office	Technical Officer	Sekong Province: July 5
Ms. Latsamee Seangsanga	Provincial Office of Federation of Trade Unions	Head of Labor Protection Division	Sekong Province: July 5
Mr. Vanalomme	Office of Federation of Trade Unions	Deputy Office Head	Thateng district: July 5
Mr. Kamsouk Phommatham	Provincial Social Security Office	Office Head	Salavan Province: July 9
Ms. Thippakao Sihathep	Provincial Social Security Office	Technical Officer	Salavan Province: July 9
Ms. Sida Vongborkham	Provincial Office of Federation of Trade Unions	Head of Labor Protection Division	Salavan Province: July 10
Mr. Khamphume Inthalard	District Social Security Office	Technical staff	Laongam district: July 9
Mr. Somsay	District Social Security Office	Technical staff	Laongam district: July 9
Ms. Souphee Doungpunya	Office of Federation of Trade Unions	Office Head	Laongam district: July 10

## ANNEX 5: Solar Project Logframe with targets and results (updated by July 25, 2024)

Results chain	Indicator	Baseline (July 2022)	Current value (June 2024)	LOP Target (August 2024)	Source
<b>Overall objective:</b> Workers, particularly informal workers and women, in the Lao coffee and tea sectors have improved access to social protection coverage and occupational safety and health, realizing their respective labour rights.	<b>I1.</b> Number of additional workers in three districts of Bolaven Plateau registered with LSSO. Total: Female: Male: Enterprise scheme: Female: Male: Voluntary scheme: Female: Male:	Total: 640 Female: 244 Male: 396 Enterprise scheme: 601 Female: 222 Male: 379 Voluntary scheme: 39 Female: 22 Male: 17	Total: 1,446 Female: 408 Male: 1,038 Enterprise scheme: 1,091 Female: 214 Male: 877 Voluntary scheme: 355 Female: 194 Male: 161	Total: 800 Female: 320 Male: 480 Enterprise scheme: 700 Female: 280 Male: 420 Voluntary scheme: 100 Female: 40 Male: 60	- PSSO records
	<b>I2.</b> Number of additional people in target districts of Bolaven Plateau with increased understanding of NSSF, OSH, and gender issues. Total: Male: Female:	Total: 0 Male: 0 Female: 0	Total: 12,612 Male: 6,519 Female: 6,093	Total: 5,000 Male: 2,500 Female: 2,500	- Project monitoring reports - IP activity reports and post-activity evaluations

<p><b>Specific objective 1:</b> Extended and improved social protection and OSH delivery system and services at district level for women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors.</p>	<p><b>I3.</b> Number of improvements in service delivery implemented or piloted at the district level.</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Mobile social security office</li> <li>ii. Worker Information Centres</li> <li>iii. New DSSO at Paksong</li> </ul>	<p>3</p>	<p>- Project monitoring reports</p>
<p><b>Specific objective 2:</b> Women and men workers in the coffee and tea sectors in three contiguous districts of the Bolaven Plateau of Lao PDR are organized and empowered to promote and protect their labour rights.</p>	<p><b>I4.</b> Number of organized groups in three districts of Bolaven Plateau.</p>	<p>51</p>	<p>72</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Paksong: 3 new coffee groups, 1 tea cooperative</li> <li>ii. Thateng: 10 new groups &amp; 2 improved groups</li> <li>iii. Laongam: 5 new groups</li> </ul>	<p>70</p>	<p>- LFTU records and CSO monitoring reports</p>
<p><b>Output 1.1:</b> Measures piloted and promoted to improve the implementation of Social Security and Labour Laws at local level, by provincial</p>	<p><b>I5.</b> Number of local social protection promoters trained in the target districts.</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>34</p> <p>1 promoter (village head or deputy village head or group leader) per village</p>	<p>34</p>	<p>- Project monitoring reports - IP activity reports</p>



and district Labour and Social Welfare Offices and Social Security Offices.	<b>I6. Number of core OSH trainers.</b> Total: Female: Male:	Total: 2 Female: 1 Male: 1	Total: 24 Female: 9 Male: 15	Total: 12 Female: 6 Male: 6	- Project monitoring reports - IP activity reports
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<p><b>Output 1.2:</b> Recommendations developed for longer-term strengthening of enabling policy and institutional frameworks at national and subnational levels with respect to social protection and labour rights and entitlements, including OSH, particularly for informal workers.</p>	<p><b>I7.</b> Number of collective platforms, processes and events supported by the Action to strengthen collaboration and develop recommendations.</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Support to Social Security Law reform process through policy, normative and technical studies, and evidence-based feedback.</li> <li>ii. Joint ILO, WIEGO, ECCDA and IWVA research to make tailored strategies to expand NSSF coverage, also inputting to the legal reform.</li> <li>iii. ASSA International Seminar, which facilitated mutual learning amongst ASEAN member states, November 2022.</li> </ul>	<p>3</p>	<p>- Project monitoring reports</p>
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			iv. National Symposium on Social Protection, 31 July 2024, which will facilitate central-local and international learning and cooperation.		
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	<p><b>I8.</b> Number of gender-responsive recommendations developed to inform long-term policy and institutional change in social protection to meet the needs of informal workers.</p>	0	<p>5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Strengthening women’s participation in community events, by sensitizing men on distributing household activities and care work fairly, and providing opportunities for women to join events.</li> <li>ii. Equal pay for work of equal value, regardless of gender.</li> <li>iii. Equitable access to social security benefits by developing mechanisms to facilitate women's registration and</li> </ul>	3	<p>- Technical reports produced by ILO, Oxfam, and CSOs</p>
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			<p>regular contributions, taking into account their relatively informal and irregular incomes and household responsibilities.</p> <p>iv. Strengthening care economy and increasing funding for universal social protection, especially non-contributory benefits and benefits for mothers, children and caregivers.</p> <p>v. Promoting women's economic empowerment, through participation in management and</p>		
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			administration of cooperatives and farmer groups.		
<b>Output 2.1:</b> Increased awareness of the benefits of registration with the LSSO among women and men coffee and tea workers in the targeted districts.	<b>I9.</b> Number of additional people in the target districts of Bolaven Plateau who are reached by social security awareness raising activities. Total: Female: Male:	Total: 0 Female: 0 Male: 0	Total: 38,647 Female: 18,980 Male: 19,667  This includes IP activities and social media campaigns.	Total: 20,000 Female: 10,000 Male: 10,000	- Project monitoring reports - IP activity reports and evaluations

	<p><b>I10.</b> Number of initiatives completed to strengthen the basis for ongoing efforts beyond the Action to improve workers' access to social security and OSH.</p>	0	<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Mobile social security office and expansion to other districts and provinces</li> <li>ii. Worker Information Centres</li> <li>iii. TOTs on several topics</li> <li>iv. Incentive Initiative Programme for village heads and group leaders</li> </ul>	3	<p>- Project monitoring reports</p>
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<p><b>Output 2.2:</b> Increased capacities of mass organizations, informal workers' organizations, farmers' organizations, CSOs, Lao Coffee Association, and small and medium producers to effectively advocate for the social protection and OSH rights and needs of coffee and tea workers.</p>	<p><b>I11.</b> Number of initiatives to strengthen advocacy capacities of stakeholders.</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. ARC's TOT on OSH in the coffee sector</li> <li>ii. ARC's TOT on OSH in the tea sector</li> <li>iii. ILO's TOT on social protection</li> <li>iv. Oxfam's TOT on social protection and gender</li> <li>v. MHP's TOT on power mapping and gender-responsive social protection</li> <li>vi. Phan-Thin's TOT on social security for village and group leaders</li> </ul>	<p>3</p>	<p>- Project monitoring reports</p>
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	<p><b>I12. Number of advocacy initiatives completed.</b></p>	<p>0</p>	<p>15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. International Coffee Day at Vientiane and Luang Prabang, 2022</li> <li>ii. International Coffee Day at Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Paksong, 2023</li> <li>iii. International Coffee Day at Paksong and Laongam, 2024</li> <li>iv. High-level MOLSW and EU visit and International Tea Day at Paksong, 19 May 2023</li> <li>v. Live talk show on Lao Youth Radio, 2022</li> <li>vi. Social media campaign and Coffee Day</li> </ul>	<p>15</p>	<p>- Project monitoring reports</p>
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			<p>challenge on Lao Youth Radio, Oct 2023</p> <p>vii. ILO and Oxfam's celebration of Labour Day, 2022</p> <p>viii. ILO and Oxfam's celebration of Labour Day, 2023</p> <p>ix. ILO and Oxfam's celebration of OSH Day, 2023</p> <p>x. Social media promotion of 3 'Most Significant Change' videos</p> <p>xi. Social media promotion of SOLAR beneficiary and activity videos</p> <p>xii. 11 SOLAR Human Interest Stories</p> <p>xiii. Joint video campaign by ILO, Oxfam, WIEGO, and CSOs on improving access</p>		
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			<p>xiv. to social security for home-based workers</p> <p>xiv. Social medial engagement on Human Rights Day, 2023</p> <p>xv. National Symposium on Social Protection, 31 July 2024</p>		
<b>Output 2.3:</b> Informal women workers are better organized and prepared for stronger leadership, management and governance in the coffee and tea sectors.	<b>I13.</b> Number of informal women workers who received gender-responsive technical and leadership training.	0	242	100	- Project monitoring reports - IP activity reports
	<b>I14.</b> Number of women who moved into leadership and administrative roles in communities and workplaces.	0	23	20	- Endline survey

## ANNEX 6: Interview Guides

### Introduction to the Interview Guides

Interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders will be based on qualitative questions that will be open-ended, that is, the respondents will provide their responses in his/her own words, so to get in-depth information about their perceptions, insights, attitudes, experiences, or beliefs regarding the project.

Interviews/focus groups will also be useful to follow-up with questions the evaluation team may have after analysing data from other evaluation methods such as document review. The evaluation team members may ask the same question to different individuals or informant categories to compare their responses and analyse how these individual differences may reflect on the project.

**The items included on the interview guides are exhaustive, but generic.** As the interview guides are intended to help the evaluation team develop semi-structured interviews/focus groups, they **will be adapted depending on each context** and set of interventions; **the profile and attitudes of the respondent; and the results of previous interviews** with other stakeholders; in order to help better focus each interview.

### Introduction to the interview

Thank you for participating in this interview. My name is **<insert name>**. I am conducting, together with my colleague **<insert name>** the Evaluation of the ILO - OXFAM-implemented SoLaR Project, aimed at advancing social protection and labour rights and entitlements in the coffee and tea sectors of Lao PDR. This project is financially supported by the European Union Delegation in Lao PDR.

The purpose of this interview is to help us better understand the project, its results and effects in Lao. In order to do so, we would like you to respond to some questions, **based on your experience and perspective.**

Your answers will be treated with the strictest **confidentiality.**

The evaluators will ask the respondent to introduce him/herself and his/her role/participation in the project

Do you have any questions before we begin?

## Tool 1 – Guide for Key Informant Interview (KII) - ILO Representatives

Approximately 60 minutes

**Stakeholders:** ILO ROAP (Deputy Director, Programme Officer) and ILO Decent Work Team for East-Asia (Social Protection Specialist, Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations Specialist), ILO CO for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao: National Coordinator

Approximately: 90 minutes

a) Interview No.		Name of Interviewer	
b) Date and time of interview			
c) Location			
d) Respondent(s) Name(s)			
e) Organization			
f) Position/ Title(s)			
g) Sex of Respondent(s)			

### Preface

- 1) What has been your role in the design/implementation of **the ILO's SoLaR project?** 2)
- 2) How long have you been in this role?
- 3) Were there particular aspects of the project that you were involved in? What aspects?

#### g) Relevance

*Extent to which the intervention is responsive/ adapted to stakeholders' evolving needs and priorities.*

1. To what extent had the intervention's objectives and design continued to respond to tripartite constituents', beneficiaries', donor's, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, as well as the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Lao PDR and Country Programme Outcomes?

#### h) Validity of intervention design

*The extent to which the design is logical and coherent.*

2. Is the project design and the log frame (outcomes, outputs, activities) relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground? Does the project design and log frame adequately provide for participation of ILO constituents (employers and workers) in project activities?

#### i) Coherence

*The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.*

3. To what extent have other interventions and policies supported or undermined the project interventions, and vice versa? Are there possible ways to maximize synergies and improve collaboration with new or existing actors?

**j) Effectiveness:**

*The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups*

4. How has the project contributed to the changes in the social protection and OSH systems and services at the district and provincial levels, in the targeted districts of the three provinces, both directly and indirectly?
5. To what extent were partnership enhanced?
6. To what extent have the project interventions helped change the dynamics relationship/interaction among the key stakeholders, such as between central and local levels of government, between government and social partners, and between government and civil society, to provide improved and more accessible services to informal economy workers in the two targeted sectors?

**k) Efficiency of resource use**

*The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.*

7. How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated, used and leveraged with other complementary interventions to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives and results?
8. Can you provide examples of optimization of resources? (human, time, expertise, funds)?
9. What kind of guidance and support did the project team received from the DWT at ROAP?
  - Which ILO Specialists have been working alongside the project?
  - How would you assess the collaboration and support? What could be improved? What could be strengthened?
10. How efficient were the management and accountability structures of the project?

**l) Impact**

*The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.*

11. Have there been improvements in the access of informal economy workers to the Social Protection and OSH delivery system and services?

12. What could have been done, or done more to realistically improve access, quality, and coverage?

**g) Sustainability**

*The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

13. Are there any project results (e.g. the sustainable mechanisms and structures for social protection established by the project) that will be continued, replicated, or scaled up by national partners? How can the sustainability of the Action be enhanced? What are the lessons and pilot activities that can potentially be continued in a possible second project phase, in other agricultural sectors and geographical areas?

**i) Tripartism, social dialogue, international labour standards, gender equality and non-discrimination communication and visibility**

14. Have the Gender equality, disability inclusion, and women empowerment been advanced in the target communities, as a result of the interventions? If so, to what extent?
15. How has the project created conditions to facilitate and advance social dialogue?
16. How and to what extent has the social dialogue, advanced the protection, promotion and fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights of informal economy workers in the two sectors in the Lao PDR?
17. Has the project contributed to support the Government of Lao PDR to improve implementation/enforcement of the relevant international labour rights and standards that were ratified by Lao PDR?

## **Tool 2 – Guide for Key Informant Interview (KII) - ILO & OXFAM Project Staff**

[Interviews with ILO and OXFAM staff are to be done separately]  
Approximately, up to two interviews of 90 minutes for each organization

- ILO Staff: Project Manager; National Project Coordinator
- OXFAM Staff: Social Protection PM; National Project Coordinator

Approximately: 90 minutes

h) Interview No.		Name of Interviewer	
i) Date and time of interview			
j) Location			
k) Respondent(s) Name(s)			
l) Organization			

m) Position/ Title(s)	
n) Sex of Respondent(s)	

## Preface

- 1) What has been your role in the design/implementation of **the ILO's SoLaR project**?
- 2) How long have you been in this role?
- 3) Were there particular aspects of the project that you were involved in? What aspects?

## Relevance

*Extent to which the intervention is responsive/ adapted to stakeholders' evolving needs and priorities.*

1. To what extent have the intervention's objectives and design continued to respond to tripartite constituents', beneficiaries', donor's, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, as well as the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Lao PDR and Country Programme Outcomes?

## Validity of Design

*The extent to which the design is logical and coherent.*

2. Is the project design and the log frame (outcomes, outputs, activities) relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground?
3. Did the project design establish a clear strategy to respond to the conditions and issues detected?
  - How were risks identified?
  - What risk mitigations were in place at the onset? Did that change over time?
  - Were there issues /challenges that arose during implementation that were not accounted for at the onset? What are they and how did the project deal with it?
4. Does the project design and log frame adequately provide for participation of ILO constituents (employers and workers) in project activities?

## Coherence

*The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.*

5. To what extent have other interventions and policies supported or undermined the project interventions, and vice versa?
6. Are there possible ways to maximize synergies and improve collaboration with new or existing actors?
  - Are there other entities / organisations working on similar issues?
  - How has the project collaborated with them?



- Any lessons learned from this collaboration?

## **Effectiveness**

*The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across group.*

7. How has the project contributed to the changes in the social protection and OSH system and services at the district and provincial levels, in the targeted districts of the three provinces, both directly and indirectly?
8. Were there any observable changes, e.g. in terms of personal and organizational capacity, behaviour, mindset etc., in areas of workers' organization and empowerment in accessing social protection and labour rights?
9. How has the project contributed to the changes?
10. Is there any evidence indicating that these changes and the improved capacity contributed to advancing the promotion and protection of labour rights and decent work of the target populations, i.e. informal workers in agriculture, in the target areas? What could have been done differently to increase results?
11. To what extent has the project interventions helped change the dynamics relationship/interaction among the key stakeholders, such as between central and local levels of government, between government and social partners, and between government and civil society, to provide improved and more accessible services to informal economy workers in the two targeted sectors?
12. were there any unforeseen challenges or obstacles that impacted the effectiveness of the project and how were these addressed?
13. To what extent were partnerships enhanced?
14. To what extent was the monitoring and evaluation framework appropriate and useful in assessing the project's progress?
  - How was the M&E system developed? How does it work? (who collects data, consolidate information, verify the information received, keeps records and reports results/ provide feedback)
  - What were the most useful parts of the M&E system?
  - How was the M&E system used to ensure achievement of results?

## **Efficiency of Resource Use**

*The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.*

15. How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated, used, and leveraged with other complementary interventions to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives and results?
16. Can you provide examples of optimization of resources? (human, time, expertise, funds)?
17. Have the project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? If not, why?
18. What steps were taken to mitigate the problems?

19. How could resource allocation and use be improved in future projects?
20. What kind of guidance and support did the project team received from the DWT at ROAP?
  - Which ILO Specialists have been working alongside the project?
  - How would you assess the collaboration and support? What could be improved? What could be strengthened?
21. How efficient were the management and accountability structures of the project?

## Impact

*The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.*

22. Have the Social Protection and OSH delivery systems and services become more accessible for, and more responsive to the specific needs of informal economy men and women workers (including small scale farmers, waged workers, employees in plantation and processing facilities) in the target areas? Could you provide specific examples/ stories on the impact that the project has had on individuals or/and communities?
23. Was there any specific government support extended to workers/stakeholders in this sector following the project interventions?
24. What could have been done, or done more to realistically improve access, quality, and coverage?
25. Are there any successful interventions that may be particularly scalable to other regions or sectors within Lao PDR?
26. Are there any unintended effects of the interventions (including on the Gender equality and women empowerment)?
27. Specifically, what contribution did the project make towards achieving its long-term objective and outcomes? What are the tangible results (**not outputs**) of the project in the areas of:
  - Increasing coffee and tea sector workers' knowledge of social security, OSH, and labour rights?
  - Improving coffee and tea sector workers' access/ registration to social security and OSH systems?
  - Improving government systems and staff capacity to sensitize and enrol workers in social security and improve their access to OSH?
  - Improve (trade union members', employers', CSO staff's) capacity to...?
    - Promote workers' registration in social security schemes
    - Advocate for the effective adoption of OSH preventative measures by workers and employers in the coffee and tea sectors
    - Engage in social dialogue and collective bargaining
    - Promote gender equality in the workplace, workgroups and cooperatives, advance the strategic gender-related needs of women, prevent violence and sexual harassment against women

- Improving Lao PDR government's social security and OSH policies, mechanisms, and the country's legislative framework, in line with the ILO relevant conventions?
- Strengthening preventative measures implemented by companies and farmers regarding occupational health hazards in the coffee and tea sectors?
- Strengthening the capacity of project stakeholders (workers, employers) in the coffee and tea sectors to prevent, manage and control potential occupational hazards in the workplace, including the use of PPE?

## **Sustainability**

*The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

28. If the project ended today, are there any project results (e.g. the sustainable mechanisms and structures for social protection established by the project) that will be continued, replicated, or scaled up by national partners? Are the capacities developed in local organizations ready to be replicated in the future?
29. How can the sustainability of the project be enhanced?
30. What are the lessons and pilot activities that can potentially be continued in a possible second project phase, in other agricultural sectors and geographical areas?
31. Does the project have an exit strategy?

## **Tripartism, ILS, Social Dialogue, Gender Equality and Non-discrimination; Communication and Visibility**

32. Have gender equality, disability inclusion, and women empowerment been advanced in the target communities, as result of the interventions? If so how and to what extent?
33. To what extent has the targeted workers and duty bearers/service providers been sensitized about, more capacitated on Gender Equality?
34. Have the project interventions in relation to gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) contributed to advance the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of economic, social, and cultural rights of the targeted groups?
35. How has the project created conditions to facilitate and advance social dialogue and promoted the use of collective bargaining?
36. How and to what extent has social dialogue in the project advanced the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of economic, social, and cultural rights of informal economy workers in the two sectors in the Lao PDR?
37. Has the project contributed to support the Government of Lao PDR to improve implementation/enforcement of the relevant international labour rights and standards that were ratified by Lao PDR (e.g. ILO conventions)?
38. To what extent has the project ensured donor visibility in alignment with donor's guidelines and contributed to the project's communication and visibility plan?

## **Tool 3 – Guide for Key Informant Interview (KII) - ILO & OXFAM Project Staff**

[European Union and AFD staff]  
Approximately 60 minutes

- EU Staff: EU Attaché on Governance, EU Programme Manager (joint interview)
- Agence Francaise de Développement: PRCC Coffee North Project Team Leader

Approximately: 90 minutes

o) Interview No.		Name of Interviewer	
p) Date and time of interview			
q) Location			
r) Respondent(s) Name(s)			
s) Organization			
t) Position/ Title(s)			
u) Sex of Respondent(s)			

### **Preface**

- 1) What has been your role in the design/implementation of **the ILO's SoLaR project**?
- 2) How long have you been in this role?
- 3) Were there particular aspects of the project that you were involved in? What aspects?

### **Relevance** (ONLY FOR EU staff)

*Extent to which the intervention is responsive/ adapted to stakeholders' evolving needs and priorities.*

1. To what extent have the intervention's objectives and design continued to respond to EU expectations and government, unions', enterprises', and workers' needs and priorities?

### **Validity of Design** (ONLY FOR EU staff)

*The extent to which the design is logical and coherent.*

2. Are the project design/ activities relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground?  
Which are the key contextual factors (organizational, social, economic) that should be take into account when implementing labour rights projects in the Lao context?

### **Coherence**

*The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.*

3. To what extent have other interventions and policies supported or undermined the project interventions, and vice versa? (ONLY FOR EU staff)
4. Are there possible ways for the SoLaR project to maximize synergies and improve collaboration with new or existing actors?
  - Are there other entities / organisations working on similar issues?

- How has the project collaborated with them?
  - Any lessons learned from this collaboration?
5. How could the SOLAR and PRCC project develop a synergy for improving life security of local coffee farmers? (ONLY for PRCC staff)

**Effectiveness (ONLY FOR EU staff)**

*The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across group.*

6. How has the project contributed to the changes in the social protection and OSH system and services at the district and provincial levels, in the targeted districts of the three provinces, both directly and indirectly?
7. Was the EU Delegation involved in a timely manner (through reporting or participation in project-related events) in project implementation?
8. Have project results satisfied the EU Delegation expectations on the same? What could have been done differently/ in a better way

**Efficiency of Resource Use (ONLY FOR EU staff)**

*The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.*

22. Have the project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? If not, why?
23. What steps were taken to mitigate the problems?
24. Apart from funding, what other kind of guidance and support did the project team received from the EU?

**Impact (ONLY FOR EU staff)**

*The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.*

11. As result of the project, have the Social Protection and OSH delivery systems and services become more accessible for, and more responsive to the specific needs of informal economy men and women workers (including small scale farmers, waged workers, employees in plantation and processing facilities) in the target areas?
12. What are the overarching lessons learned from project implementation in the Lao coffee and tea sector that could inform future interventions, especially regarding strategy adjustments or replication in other sectors or regions?
13. What is your perception on project's innovations and their potential to serve as a model for future initiatives?

**Sustainability (ONLY FOR EU staff)**

*The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

14. How can the sustainability of the project be enhanced?
15. What are the lessons and pilot activities that can potentially be continued in a possible second project phase, in other agricultural sectors and geographical areas?

16. What would be your recommendation regarding strategies to enhance the project’s long-term impact and sustainability?

**Tripartism, ILS, Social Dialogue, Gender Equality and Non-discrimination; Communication and Visibility (ONLY FOR EU staff)**

- 17. Have gender equality, disability inclusion, and women empowerment been advanced in the target communities, as result of the interventions? If so how and to what extent?
- 18. How has the project created conditions to facilitate and advance social dialogue and promoted the use of collective bargaining?
- 19. Has the project contributed to support the Government of Lao PDR to improve implementation/enforcement of the relevant international labour rights and standards that were ratified by Lao PDR (e.g. ILO conventions)?
- 20. To what extent has the project ensured donor visibility in alignment with donor's guidelines and contributed to the project's communication and visibility plan?

## Tool 4 – Guide for Key Informant Interview (KII) – LSSO, LFTU, LNCCI & ARC Staff

[Interviews at province level may be done jointly or separately, depending of the activity]  
 Approximately, 60 to 90 minutes for each organization

- **LSSO staff** – National level: Deputy Dir. Gen, Head of PR, Head of Planning  
 Provincial or district Level: Office Head, Deputy
- **LFTU staff** –National level: Deputy Director General; Provincial or district Level: Office Head
- **LNCCI staff** – National level: Deputy Secretary Gen
- **ARC staff** – Provincial Level: Division Head and trainers
- **LCA:** Vice President
- **Paksong Tea Association:** Head

Approximately: 90 minutes

a) Interview No.		b) Name of Interviewer	
c) Date & time of interview			
d) Province	<input type="checkbox"/> Vientiane <input type="checkbox"/> CPS <input type="checkbox"/> SK <input type="checkbox"/> SRV		
e) District	<input type="checkbox"/> Paksong <input type="checkbox"/> Laongam <input type="checkbox"/> Thateng		
f) Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> LSSO <input type="checkbox"/> DoLSW <input type="checkbox"/> LFTU <input type="checkbox"/> LNCCI	<input type="checkbox"/> ARC <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee association <input type="checkbox"/> Tea association	
g) Name and position of interviewee(s)			

h) Sex of Respondent(s)	
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**Preface**

- 1) What has been your role in the design/implementation of **the ILO’s SoLaR project**?
- 2) How long have you been in this role?
- 3) Were there particular aspects of the project that you were involved in? [in the case of national stakeholders: “...that you were cognizant of?”] What aspects? (mark/ select those relevant to the interviewee)
  - Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
  - Project Stakeholders Working Group (PWG)
  - TOT training on social security, OSH labour rights
  - Improving government agencies capacity to increase access to social security/ OSH
  - LSSO mechanism to improve registration of at province or district level
  - Training to workers or farmers groups mem members on strengthening of organization, social dialogue, collective bargaining
  - Training workers and companies/ farmers’ groups on OSH
  - Awareness-raising campaigns on social security, labour rights, OSH
  - Activities to promote gender equality in the workplace, advance the strategic gender-related needs of women, prevent violence and sexual harassment against women
  - Pilot collective bargaining agreement in the coffee sector.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Relevance**

*Extent to which the intervention is responsive/ adapted to stakeholders’ evolving needs and priorities.*

4. Did the activities in which you/ your organization participated (as per above) responded to your organization’s needs and priorities? How so?
5. Did the activities in which your organization participated (as per above) responded to the needs and priorities of participants/ ultimate beneficiaries (informal and formal workers, women and men, farm producers, government staff, companies). To whom particularly and how so? [ASK THIS QUESTION REPETeadly, FOR EACH ACTIVITY THAT WAS SELECTED ABOVE]
6. **Gender lense:** Did the activities in which your organization participated (as per above) respond to the specific needs and priorities of women participants, particularly regarding access to social security, occupational safety and health (OSH), and labor rights? **How were these needs addressed differently from those of men?**

**Validity of Design**

*The extent to which the design is logical and coherent.*

7. Where the project goals/ expectations realistic to the situation on the ground? How so?
8. Did the project promote the active participation of its beneficiaries? (workers, farmers, employers, government officers, companies)

### **Coherence**

*The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.*

9. Where you or your organization involved in other similar activities (regarding social security, OSH, labour rights) with a different project/ organization during the same period of implementation of the SoLaR project?
10. If yes, which one?
11. Did the SoLaR project have any interaction/ cooperation with that of other initiatives/ organizations?

### **Effectiveness**

*The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across group.*

9. Would you say that the activities in which you/ your organization participated, were successful? Why (not)?
10. How has the project contributed to capacity building in your organization/ group?
11. How has the project contributed to the improvement in the social protection and OSH system and services at the national, provincial and / or district levels?
12. Is there any evidence that workers, union members, farmers and other beneficiaries are more knowledgeable of social security, OSH and labour rights? Which?
13. Is there any evidence that the project contributed to help LSSO/ ARC become more responsive/ proactive to coffee and tea sectors workers' needs? Which?
14. Is there any evidence that the project has contributed to advance women empowerment in the target communities, as result of the interventions? If so how and to what extent?
15. Is there any evidence indicating that the project contributed to advancing the promotion and protection of labour rights and decent work of the target populations, i.e. informal workers in agriculture, in the target areas? Which? Is there any difference among informal or migrant workers, people with disabilities, women workers, and formal male workers?
16. Would you say that the project has been successful in increasing registration in social security by workers in the coffee and tea sectors?



17. What were the benefits/ challenges that the partners have experienced in the implementation that affect project successes? To what extent were partnerships enhanced?
18. ONLY FOR NATIONAL LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS: To what extent has the project interventions helped improve the dynamics relationship/interaction among the key stakeholders, such as between central and local levels of government, between government and social partners, and between government and civil society, to provide improved and more accessible services to informal economy workers in the two targeted sectors?

### **Efficiency of Resource Use**

*The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.*

22. Where project activities implemented in a timely manner?

### **Impact**

*The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.*

23. What would you say has been the general impact of the project in the coffee and tea sectors regarding: (please highlight if there is any difference between the coffee and tea sectors)
- Workers' knowledge on social security, labour rights and OSH
  - Access to/ registration in Social Protection system
  - Preventative actions by workers on Occupational Safety and Health hazards
24. Specifically, how have the three issues above affected/ benefited:
- Women workers
  - Informal workers
  - Small scale farmers
25. Can you provide examples of how the project has specifically benefited women in terms of improved knowledge of social security, labor rights, or/and OSH, as well as enhanced participation in workers' organizations and collective bargaining?
26. What would you say has been the general impact of the project in the coffee and tea sectors regarding: (please highlight if there is any difference between the coffee and tea sectors)
- Improvement of government agencies' capacity (LSSO, ARC) to continue implementing similar interventions on their own
  - Improvement of workers' organizations capacity to participate in social dialogue, defend labour rights and develop collective bargaining
  - Improving farmers' groups and companies' capacity to prevent and manage OSH hazards in the coffee and tea sectors

- Promoting gender equality in the workplace, advance the strategic gender-related needs of women, prevent violence and sexual harassment against women
27. What would you say has been the general impact of the project regarding the improvement of Lao PDR government’s social security and OSH policies, mechanisms, and the country’s legislative framework, in line with the ILO relevant conventions? [ONLY FOR NATIONAL LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS]
  28. Has the project contributed to support the Government of Lao PDR to improve implementation/enforcement of the relevant international labour rights and standards that were ratified by Lao PDR (e.g. ILO conventions)? [ONLY FOR NATIONAL LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS]
  29. What could have been done, or done more to realistically improve access, quality, and coverage of social security and OSH?
  30. Are there any unintended effects of the interventions (including on the Gender equality and women empowerment)?
  31. What are the overarching lessons learned from the project that could inform future interventions, especially regarding strategy adjustments or replication in other sectors or regions?

### Sustainability

*The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

32. If the project ended today, are there any project results (e.g. the sustainable mechanisms and structures for social protection established by the project) that will be continued, replicated, or scaled up by national partners? Which?
33. How can the sustainability of the project be enhanced?

## Tool 5 – Guide for Key Informant Interview (KII) – Implementing Partners: ASDSP, MHP, PTSE

Approximately, 60 to 90 minutes for each organization

- **ASDSP staff** – Director
- **MHP staff** – Coordinator
- **PTSE staff** – Director and Technical Officer

Approximately: 60 minutes

i) Interview No.		j) Name of Interviewer	
k) Date & time of interview			
l) Province	<input type="checkbox"/> Vientiane <input type="checkbox"/> CPS <input type="checkbox"/> SK <input type="checkbox"/> SRV		
m) Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> ASDSP <input type="checkbox"/> MHP <input type="checkbox"/> PTSE		

n) Name and position of interviewee(s)	
o) Sex of Respondent(s)	

## Preface

- 1) What has been your role in the design/implementation of **the ILO's SoLaR project**?
- 2) How long have you been in this role?
- 3) Were there particular aspects of the project that you/your organization were involved in? What aspects? (mark/ select those relevant to the interviewee)
  - TOT training on social security, OSH labour rights
  - Improving government agencies capacity to increase access to social security/ OSH
  - LSSO mechanism to improve registration of at province or district level
  - Training to workers or farmers groups mem members on strengthening of organization, social dialogue, collective bargaining
  - Training workers and companies/ farmers' groups on OSH
  - Awareness-raising campaigns on social security, labour rights, OSH
  - Activities to promote gender equality in the workplace, advance the strategic gender-related needs of women, prevent violence and sexual harassment against women
  - Pilot collective bargaining agreement in the coffee sector.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Relevance

*Extent to which the intervention is responsive/ adapted to stakeholders' evolving needs and priorities.*

1. Did the activities in which you participated (as per above) responded to the needs and priorities of participants/ ultimate beneficiaries (informal and formal workers, women and men, farm producers, government staff, companies). To whom particularly and how? [ASK THESE QUESTION REPETeadly, FOR EACH ACTIVITY THAT WAS SELECTED ABOVE]
2. How has the project contributed to capacity building in your own organization?

## Validity of Design

*The extent to which the design is logical and coherent.*

3. Is the project design and the log frame (outcomes, outputs, activities) relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground? Why (not)?

## Coherence

*The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.*

4. Did the SoLar project have any interaction/ cooperation with that other initiative/ organization?
5. Are there possible ways to maximize synergies and improve collaboration with new or existing actors?
  - Are there other entities / organisations working on similar issues?
  - How has the project collaborated with them?
  - Any lessons learned from this collaboration?

### **Effectiveness**

*The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across group.*

6. Would you say that the activities in which you/ your organization participated, were successful? Why (not)?
7. How has the project contributed to the changes in the social protection and OSH system and services at the national, provincial and / or district levels?
8. Were there any observable changes, e.g. in terms of personal and organizational capacity, behaviour, mindset etc., in areas of workers' organization and empowerment in accessing social protection and labour rights? How has the project contributed to the changes?
9. Is there any evidence that workers, union members, farmers and other beneficiaries are more knowledgeable of social security, OSH and labour rights? Which?
10. Is there any evidence that the project contributed to help LSSO/ ARC become more responsive/ proactive to coffee and tea sectors workers' needs? Which?
11. **Gender focus:** To what extent has the project contributed to advance women empowerment in the target communities?
12. **Gender focus:** To what extent have women in the targeted sectors been empowered to participate in social dialogue, collective bargaining, and decision-making processes related to labour rights and workplace safety?
13. Is there any evidence indicating that the project contributed to advancing the promotion and protection of labour rights and decent work of the target populations, i.e. informal workers in agriculture, in the target areas? Which? Is there any difference among informal or migrant workers, people with disabilities, women workers, and formal male workers?
14. Would you say that the project has been successful in increasing registration in social security by workers in the coffee and tea sectors?
15. What were the benefits/ challenges that your organization experienced in the implementation of the project that affected the outcome? How were these issues addressed?

## **Efficiency of Resource Use**

*The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.*

16. What were challenges that your organization experienced in the implementation that affect project successes?
17. How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated, used, and leveraged?
18. Can you provide examples of optimization of resources? (human, time, expertise, funds)?
19. Have the project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? If not, why?
20. What kind of guidance and support did your organization receive from the ILO and OXFAM?
21. Are you satisfied with the partnership established with ILO and OXFAM? Why so?
22. How would you assess the collaboration and support? What could be improved? What could be strengthened?
23. How efficient were the management and accountability structures of the project? Were there administrative issues difficult to address? Which?
24. To what extent was the monitoring and evaluation framework appropriate and useful in assessing the project's progress?
  - How was the M&E system used to ensure achievement of results?
  - How many male and female informal workers, farmers, union members and other type of participants were benefitted by your organization/ per type of activity? Can you provide copy of your M&E information for review?

## **Impact**

*The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.*

25. What would you say has been the general impact of the project in the coffee and tea sectors regarding: (please highlight if there is any difference between the coffee and tea sectors)
  - Workers' knowledge on social security, labour rights and OSH
  - Access to/ registration in Social Protection system
  - Preventative actions by workers on Occupational Safety and Health hazards
26. Specifically, how have the three issues above affected/ benefitted, in a different manner:
  - Women workers
  - Informal workers
  - Small scale farmers
27. Can you share any gender-disaggregated data or evidence demonstrating changes in women's knowledge, skills, or access to social protection systems and OSH services as result of the interventions?
28. What would you say has been the general impact of the project in the coffee and tea sectors regarding: (please highlight if there is any difference between the coffee and tea sectors)

- Improvement of government agencies' capacity (LSSO, ARC) to continue implementing similar interventions on their own
  - Improvement of workers' organizations capacity to participate in social dialogue, defend labour rights and develop collective bargaining
  - Improving farmers' groups and companies' capacity to prevent and manage OSH hazards in the coffee and tea sectors
  - Promoting gender equality in the workplace, advance the strategic gender-related needs of women, prevent violence and sexual harassment against women in target communities
  - Promoting non discrimination of people with disabilities in target communities
29. What could have been done, or done more to realistically improve access, quality, and coverage?
30. Are there any unintended effects of the interventions (including on the Gender equality and women empowerment)? For example, has the project had a positive or/and negative effect on gender dynamics in the workplace or community? How so?

## Sustainability

*The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

31. If the project ended today, are there any project results (e.g. the sustainable mechanisms and structures for social protection established by the project) that will be continued, replicated, or scaled up by national partners?
32. How can the sustainability of the project be enhanced?
33. What are the pilot activities that can potentially be continued in a possible second project phase, in other agricultural sectors and geographical areas?
34. What are the overarching lessons learned from the project that could inform future interventions, especially regarding strategy adjustments or replication in other sectors or regions?

## Tool 6 – Guide for Focus Group Discussions

### 1. General Features of Focus Group Discussions

**Total number of FGD and Participants:** A total of 8 FGD, with 96 participants (48M / 48F) organized accordingly to the following information:

Target Groups	Sex		Age		Work Status	
<b>12 participants per FGD... / Distributed as follows:</b>	M	F	X < 30	31 or +	Informal	Waged

a. <b>Tea and coffee</b> workers that participated in training on collective bargaining <i>[Paksong district; villages: KM33, KM35 and KM36]</i>	6	6	-	-	-	-
b. Workers living in <b>tea</b> production villages that received information in campaigns on OSH <i>[Paksong district; villages: KM35, KM36 and KM45]</i>	6	6	6	6	-	-
c. Workers registered at LSSO through mobile social security registration service <i>[Thateng district; villages: Donesa, Takiao, Kokphoungtai]</i>	6	6	-	-	6	6
d. <b>Coffee</b> farmers that participated in OSH training <i>[Thateng district; villages: Kongtayoun, Lakkhao and Houydamyai]</i>	6	6	6	6	-	-
e. <b>Coffee</b> villagers/ workers that participated in GALS training <i>[Thateng district; villages: Thongvai, Nongkan, Kokphoungneua]</i>	6	6	-	-	6	6
f. Workers registered at LSSO through mobile social security registration service <i>[Lao Ngam district; villages: Laonha, Dong, Nongjua, Phakkoud, Phuakyai]</i>	6	6	-	-	6	6
g. District authorities from the trade unions, Labour Social Welfare Office, and Agriculture and Forestry Office that participated in GALS training <i>[Lao Ngam district]</i>	6	6	-	-	-	-
h. Participants in organizational support and production standards meeting ( <b>Coffee</b> production group) <i>[Lao Ngam district; villages: Laonga, Nambeang]</i>	6	6	-	-	-	-

- Informal = Seasonal = Migrant worker
- Waged = Salaried, self-employed farmer

The **location** (e.g. province/ district/ villages of origin of participants) **and the dates of FGD** are listed in Annex 4 of the Inception Report. The **meeting venue** is to be arranged by SoLaR staff (meeting place in each district?). Materials: Flipchart, markers, paper tape, post-it.

**Duration of FGD:** 90 minutes

## 2. Structure of FGDs

- a. Introduction of the FGD facilitator, FGD purpose, duration and relevant guiding topic(s).
- b. Presentation of participants (name, age, work status, village of origin)
- c. Guiding Topic relevant to each FGD:
  - i. Awareness and access to social security (*for participants in FGD c. and f. Mobile social security registration*)
  - ii. OSH in the tea and coffee sector (*for participants in FGD b. Campaigns on OSH; and d. Training on OSH*)
  - iii. Gender equality (*for participants in FGD e. Workers in GALS training; and g. Authorities in GALS training*)
  - iv. Labour rights / collective bargaining (*for participants in FGD a. Training in collective bargaining*)
  - v. Organizational support and production standards (*for participants in FGD h. Organizational support and production standards*)

The facilitator will primarily focus on the topic above which is relevant to each group.

In case participants' interventions are completed well before the assigned time (e.g. 30 -45 minutes left), the facilitator may include another topic in which participants may have received information/ training/ other support from the SoLaR project (e.g. ask participants in FGD h., additionally to the main topic of the group, about their knowledge/ practice of OSH or social security, and the exposure they have had to project activities (campaigns, trainings) on these topics.

### **3. Content of Guiding Topics**

#### **Topic I: Awareness and access to social security**

##### **1. Awareness and Access to Social Security**

- a. Check how many of the participants know and can explain about Lao Social Security, benefits and procedure. If some of them do not know, facilitator explain them briefly and answer some questions they may have.
- b. Ask how many participants have received information from the local social security office staff regarding social security. How did they receive this information? Was the information provided clear for them?
- c. Ask from participants if one or more members in their family who is/are registered in social security. Since how long ago is this? How did they enroll in SS?
- d. Ask how many participants are registered in SS.
- e. How many of them registered in the past three years? How/ through whom was this done?
- f. What are the benefits they obtain from SS? Have they used them already?
- g. Are they satisfied with the services received?
- h. What could be improved regarding SS?
- i. What are the difficulties to access/ remain registered in the SS system?



- j. Do women have the same opportunities than men register in the SS system?

**Note from OXFAM, regarding items g and h above:** Please take into account, especially for those participants that are new registrations in the SSO, that they may not yet experienced getting services from SSO, especially health care services, retirement benefits, etc.

**Topic II:** OSH in tea and coffee sector

- a. Ask participants which are the main hazards the confront in their work in the coffee and tea sector, that may lead to occupational accidents or illness.
- b. Are there differences between women and men regarding OSH hazards?
- c. Check if in the past 12 months the participants/their family members/their workers ever experienced work-related injury or sick either in tea or coffee sector.
- d. What are the main reasons for unsafe working conditions?
- e. What would be needed to be done for improving the safety and health of workers?
- f. Have they received specific information on OSH from any source/ organization? Which?
- g. Have they participated in any awareness-raising campaign or training concerning OSH?
- h. Did this le to any changes in the way they organize their work, in order to prevent OSH hazards?
- i. What kind of preventative measures have they taken, if any, to mitigate the risk of OSH hazards in their workplace?

**Note from OXFAM:** “Please make clear when translating words like “awareness-raising” (and others) in Laos; this might be a difficult word in our context here”.

**Topic iii:** Gender Equality

- a. What do participants like and dislike the most about being men and women within household?
- b. What do participants like and dislike the most about being men and women in the workplace (tea/coffee farm)?
- c. Are working conditions (worktime, pay, status, tasks, workload) equal for both men and women?
- d. Which are the inequalities that affect negatively women?
- e. Are women’s strategic gender needs (land rights, more decision-making power, equal pay and greater access to credit) respected at their community or/and household?
- f. Has there been any changes in women’s participation in community activities, before and after the project?
- g. What would be needed to improve women’s access to greater level of equality?
- h. Are women’s practical needs (water provision, health care provision, opportunities or earning an income to provide for the household, provision of housing and basic services and distribution of food, leisure activities) satisfied at their community or/and household?
- i. What would be needed to improve women’s access to these basic needs?
- j. Do participants know about domestic violence in their communities?

- k. Do participants know about gender-related harassment in their workplace?
- l. What could be done at community or workplace level to address these issues?
- m. Have participants received information / training from the SoLaR project or other organization (which?) regarding how to improve / address gender-related inequalities?
- n. How has this training been useful / helped produce any change in their lives? Please provide examples, at community, workplace and household level, if any.

**Topic iv: Labour Rights and Collective Bargaining**

- a. Check how many of the participants know and can explain about labour rights or ever attend dissemination meeting on labour law. Provide them some basic information on labour contract, working hours, minimum wage, access to social security and safe working condition.
- b. Ask how tea and coffee workers are more often recruited.
- c. What are the most common unfair treatment to the workers?
- d. What have you learned from the project about how to affirm/ defend your labour rights?
- e. Check what is the knowledge participants have about collective bargaining. Can they describe the CB process?
- f. Do they find CB applicable to the reality of the coffee/ tea sector? What are the main challenges/ difficulties to apply CB in the coffee/ tea sector?
- g. Have they had the opportunity of putting it to practice?

**Topic v: Organizational Support and Production Standards**

- a. Which are the main issues that tea/ coffee producers face to organize and improve their production standards.
- b. Have participants received specific support to strengthen their organization and improve their production standards?
- c. Which kind of support and by whom?
- d. Can they briefly explain the learning acquired/ recommendations received with regards to these issues?
- e. Have they taken steps to put these recommendations into practice?
- f. Which are the main challenges that producers face to strengthen their organization and establish production standards?

## ANNEX 7: Lessons learned

### Reducing vulnerability in Lao PDR: Advancing social protection and labour rights and entitlements in the coffee and tea sectors of Lao PDR (SoLaR)

Project DC/SYMBOL: LAO/21/01/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Dwight Ordóñez and Viriyasack Sisouphanthong

Date: 13 August 2024

*The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.*

<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT</b>	1. Consider long-term interventions when working on social security and occupational safety and health issues
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b> (link to specific action or task)	Duration of interventions: Increasing the coverage of social security systems and occupational safety and health practices is a long-term commitment that requires continuous action and investment by government agencies.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Before starting a project, it is important to assess the long-term commitment of local stakeholders
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	Project implementers, relevant government agencies (Lao Social Security Organization)
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	Limitations in government available resources may affect in the sustainability of interventions
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	Continued commitment contributes to ownership.
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b> (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Prepare in advance and monitor the implementation of an exit plan for the project.

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Name of Evaluator: Dwight Ordóñez and Viriyasack Sisouphanthong

Date: 13 August 2024

*The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.*

<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT</b>	2. Need to include seasonal workers when promoting social security registration or/and the application of occupational safety and health practices
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b> (link to specific action or task)	The project concentrated its efforts on farm owners at target communities. Special efforts/ means need to be developed to promote the registration of informal seasonal workers in social security and improve their knowledge on OSH.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Seasonal workers are in essence a younger and unstable population. The needs of this group were not the focus of the project. The needs of this population to access decent work conditions, including social security, acceptable working conditions, adequate pay and OSH conditions, remain unattended.
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	Implementing partners, relevant government authorities (LSSO), trade union, CSO.
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	It is more difficult to identify / track this population, as it often moves from one zone to another.
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	This group often owns no land and is among the poorest and less protected sectors of agricultural workers.
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b> (staff, resources, design, implementation)	The ILO would need to develop an initial assessment of this mobile population, to assess that best way to engage with it.

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*The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.*

<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT</b>	3. Need to adapt outreach activities to farmers' schedules and limited accessibility
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b> (link to specific action or task)	Accessibility to rural communities/ participants: It is important to organize outreach activities based on farmers' schedules/ availability and on the limited accessibility to communities during the rainy season.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult transport and accessibility conditions during the rainy season impede carrying out activities in target communities during the same.</li> <li>• The long distance to some communities and the difficult conditions of roads also affects stakeholders' accessibility to the communities.</li> <li>• Farmers limited availability for training events and other activities, particularly during the harvest season, affect participants' attendance to project events. In the case of women, some do not attend because they are occupied in household chores.</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	Implementing partners, government agencies, trade union
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	Failure to provide attention to this issue may result in reduced engagement of project participants
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	N/A
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b> (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Need to organize logistics and schedule of activities, particularly training sessions and meetings, accordingly to the above.

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<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT</b>	4. Need to improve engagement of health sector staff in the delivery of services to workers affiliated to social security
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b> (link to specific action or task)	Workers' poor opinion about the quality and availability of public health services may result in reduced registration or dropout from social security system. It is important to ensure that health staff is sensitized by SSO, so that they provide adequate and timely services to workers.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Villagers express their concern about bad quality of attention at hospitals, as well as their social security cards not being accepted by staff at small health centres and hospitals.
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	Implementing partners, government agencies and health services providers (LSSO, staff at health centres and hospitals)
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	Poor quality of healthcare delivery may result in reduced registration of workers in social security system
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	N/A
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b> (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Need to promote coordination at local level, between Social Security organizations and government health care providers.

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<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT</b>	5. The economic empowerment of farmers may lead to sustainable participation in social security system
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b> (link to specific action or task)	By promoting an increase in productivity and the economic empowerment of farmers, projects may strengthen farmers' capacity to enrol and remain in social security systems.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Better access to markets improves farmers' income and available resources and helps them prioritize their social protection needs. A similar outcome is generated by improving workers' access to occupational safety and health preventative means: Less accidents leads to improved productivity.
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	Producer groups and cooperatives, CSO
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	N/A
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	Increasing productivity through adequate equipment and improving access to markets helps boost income and thus supports registration in social security.
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b> (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Link social security and OSH-related projects to improvements in agricultural processes/ assets and increased productivity.

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Date: 13 August 2024

*The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.*

<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT</b>	6. Organize activities with farmers and communities on a regular basis
<b>Brief description of lessons earned</b> (link to specific action or task)	Setting up of activities should be carried out on a regular basis, as it takes time to organize activities and the participants may change/ new participants incorporate as beneficiaries, and some people may need to refresh the information received.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Some participants in the evaluation highlighted the uptake of activities/ trainings was affected by changes in participants enrolment and dropout. They suggested that the frequency and number of project activities remained insufficient.
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	Implementing partners, direct participants in activities.
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	N/A
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	A more intensive schedule/ repeated rollout of activities may result in an increased engagement of participants at communities
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b> (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Design and budget for a greater number/ frequency of activities at local and community level



## ANNEX 8: Good Practices

### Reducing vulnerability in Lao PDR: Advancing social protection and labour rights and entitlements in the coffee and tea sectors of Lao PDR (SoLaR)

Project DC/SYMBOL: LAO/21/01/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Dwight Ordóñez and Viriyasack Sisouphanthong

Date: 13 August 2024

*The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.*

<b>GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT</b>	1. The holistic approach employed by the project
<b>Brief summary of the good practice</b> (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The project design and implementation combined various relevant labour-related issues, such as access to social security, occupational safety and health, and collective bargaining with that of advancing gender equality in the workplace and at community level and improving productivity among producers' groups.
<b>Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability</b>	The multidimensional feature of poverty, lack of protection, informality and gender-inequality among agricultural workers called for a response that combined various axes and topics, making it relevant to a variety of stakeholders among the rural poor. The project had different kinds of appeal for different kinds of stakeholders (women, small farmers, cooperative and company-related workers), and this enticed increased community engagement.
<b>Establish a clear cause-effect relationship</b>	Working on different parallel or complementary issues made the project relevant, for different reasons for diverse kinds of stakeholders (SSO staff, trade union members, villagers, other).
<b>Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries</b>	Please refer to table 1 in the project evaluation report. Multiple target groups.
<b>Potential for replication and by whom</b>	Multidimensional response projects can be replicated by implementers provided that the different components and weight of interventions is adequately identified in the project's Theory of Change.
<b>Upward links to higher ILO Goals</b> (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Several of the project components (social security enrolment, OSH prevention, promotion of gender equality in the workplace, collective bargaining, work with producers groups to increase productivity) align with different elements of the Lao DWCP and the P&B strategy for 2022-23.
<b>Other documents or relevant comments</b>	Please refer to theory of change in project document.

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*The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.*

<b>GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT</b>	2. Integration of a wide range of stakeholders in project implementation
<b>Brief summary of the good practice</b> (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The project integrated, through its diverse components, a wide range of stakeholders, (UN/ILO and NGO/Oxfam, tripartite, CSO, communities) as implementers and beneficiaries, creating a framework for synergies and coordination.
<b>Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability</b>	An important feature of the SoLaR project is the way in which it managed to interact with and promote synergies among government agencies, trade union, CSO and the private sector. Whether through trainings, awareness raising initiatives or implementation of activities, the project actively <b>promoted social dialogue</b> and convened a wide range of stakeholders behind the common goal of improving rural workers' access to social security, OSH and labour rights.
<b>Establish a clear cause-effect relationship</b>	Project implementation was made possible due to the mediating role assumed by local organizations, including trade union and government agencies.
<b>Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries</b>	Several representatives interviewed by the evaluation team highlighted the way in which, beyond the formal character of PAC and PWF meetings, cooperation and synergy among organizations contributed to the positive outcome of the project.
<b>Potential for replication and by whom</b>	A future phase of the project should consider continuing using this synergic dynamic to attain similar results.
<b>Upward links to higher ILO Goals</b> (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Social dialogue and cooperation among tripartite constituents are the basis of ILO's mandate.
<b>Other documents or relevant comments</b>	N/A

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<b>GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT</b>	3. Mobile registration and payment services within the LSSO
<b>Brief summary of the good practice</b> (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The project piloted the implementation of a mobile registration and payment system within the LSSO, increasing the accessibility to these services at community level and established a model, replicable by LSSO, who adopted the initiative as its own.
<b>Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability</b>	Difficult transport and accessibility conditions during the rainy season, together with long distances to some communities and difficult conditions of roads hamper communities' access to social security offices. Mobile registration and payment services is a relatively low-cost option that allows to increase registration and which is easily replicable, provided there is a commitment to institutionalize the service where and as needed.
<b>Establish a clear cause-effect relationship</b>	The offer of social security registration services at community level had an immediate effect on enrolment
<b>Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries</b>	This intervention helped increase in a significant way the enrolment of farmers at targeted communities
<b>Potential for replication and by whom</b>	The Lao Social Security Organization, and any other SSO in the region
<b>Upward links to higher ILO Goals</b> (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	The referred good practice is aligned with ILO P&B objective 8.2 ("measures to enable social protection systems to be sustainable and provide adequate benefits") and outcome 2 (on social protection) of the Lao Decent Work Country Programme.
<b>Other documents or relevant comments</b>	N/A

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*The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.*

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	4. A comprehensive visibility strategy
<b>Brief summary of the good practice</b> (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The project’s communications and visibility strategy are comprehensive and included diverse means and topics, and helped convey, in an effective way, information on project’s achievements and activities.
<b>Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability</b>	SoLaR developed a successful communication strategy that ensured visibility of its activities and achievements before key stakeholders, at community, district, province and national level. It comprised diverse types of activities, such as social media campaigns, use of videos on different project components/ activities and on “most significant change”, periodic participation in public events (such as the International Coffee Day and International Tea Day, and celebration of Labour Day and OSH Day), press notes, participation in symposiums and seminar, presentations in radio programs, dissemination of brochures and banners, annual donor field visits, etc. The kind of activities developed by the project are easily replicable.
<b>Establish a clear cause-effect relationship</b>	The project’s visibility strategy, together with its training and other activities made it known and appreciated among villagers and local communities.
<b>Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries</b>	The visibility strategy helped the project position itself before other development cooperation actors and the government of Lao. It also helped inform and sensitize participants about social security, OSH, labour rights, gender equality and other relevant topics. During the evaluation participants could identify key elements/ messages provided by the program.
<b>Potential for replication and by whom</b>	During a new phase, implementers would replicate/ continue the visibility strategy. During the evaluation, there were calls by some provincial SSO staff to intensify/ replicate awareness raising activities more frequently.
<b>Upward links to higher ILO Goals</b> (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO’s Strategic Programme Framework)	The diffusion of information on social security, OSH and labour rights is highly consistent with ILO’s mandate and its part of ILO’s Strategic Programme Framework.
<b>Other documents or relevant comments</b>	N/A