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Occupational Safety and Health Training-of-Trainers for Labour Inspectors of the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization of the United Arab Emirates

QUICK FACTS

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Administrative Office: ROSA

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Evaluation manager: Vitalii El Danii

Evaluation consultant(s): Nahla Hassan

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Key Words:

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The 'OSH ToT for Labour Inspectors of the MoHRE of the UAE' project aimed to empower the MoHRE by building its institutional capacity to enhance the effectiveness of labour inspection and maintain safe and healthy workspaces in all sectors of the economy. The project also aimed to position UAE as a regional leader in its practices, know-how and techniques in the field of labour inspection and OSH. It focused on providing practical training to the MoHRE labour inspectors and other staff, in collaboration with the ILO International Training Centre in Turin (ILO-ITC),² improving the skills that enable them to perform effective inspections, detect non-compliance and effectively manage non-compliance cases. The project was implemented between 7 June 2023 and 30 September 2024 with a total budget of US\$ 300,033 funded by the Government of the UAE.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The objective of this final evaluation was to examine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and potential impact of the project. It identified strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy and implementation, as well as lessons learned and good practices. The thematic scope of the evaluation covered the project's overall performance in line with its planned two outcomes and four outputs, and integrating ILO's cross-cutting themes. The evaluation covered the whole duration of the project from June 2023 to September 2024 at the national level in the UAE. The primary clients are the ILO ROAS, the ILO-ITC, the Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and OSH Branch, employers and MoHRE.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation systematically used the standard criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee, through 10 Evaluation Questions. A participatory approach was employed, data collection included Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with ILO ROAS, ITC, and MoHRE officials. Human Rights and Gender Equality were mainstreamed into the evaluation, adhering to the ILO Guidance Note on Integrating Gender Equality in M&E.³ Ethical considerations were prioritized, ensuring independence,

confidentiality and security of information throughout the evaluation process

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The 'OSH TOT for Labour Inspectors of the UAE MoHRE' project contributed to the ILO P&B outcomes for 2022-2023 and 2024-2025 and to the UN cooperation priorities in the UAE. By strengthening labour inspection and OSH capacities, the project was aligned with the ILO's Strategic Compliance Model, the two fundamental conventions on OSH, as well as the SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. The project design focused on compliance with international and national labour laws, however the training content lacked sufficient tailoring to UAE-specific labour market and employment issues. The absence of a formal, up-to-date needs assessment also limited its relevance and applicability to the MoHRE inspectors' capacity gaps and needs of their daily jobs. According to the project team, the need for an assessment was discussed with the MOHRE during the design phase, but it declined. Topics like forced labour and human trafficking, not prevalent in the UAE, were included, while other key issues like worker rights and long-term compliance were excluded. As such, the training programme was partially relevant and responded only to the less controversial labour challenges, though some adjustments were later made by ILO in consultation with MoHRE.

Coherence

The project demonstrated coherence with the broader ILO and Government of the UAE collaboration efforts and remained aligned with broader policy-level technical cooperation and advocacy, but no project-specific synergies were identified with other interventions by ILO or other development partners in the country within the lifetime of this project.

Effectiveness

The project has achieved its intended outcomes and outputs by building capacities of 30 MoHRE labour inspectors, excluding one who had dropped out (4 out of 30 are women), 31 of whom (100 percent) got certified. Over the eight weeks between July 2023 and May 2024, the training provided around 60 presentations, 40 practical exercises on labour inspection and OSH following the ILO

compliance model, in addition to inspectors' soft skills. The Turin-based training modules offered a dynamic and interactive learning environment and more exposure for trainees with hands-on exercises and international best practices. This contrasted with the UAE-based training, which lacked the same level of interaction and engagement, however, field visits to construction and industrial sites in UAE, although limited, were deemed extremely useful by participants.

While the training content was of strong scientific and theoretical content, there was a gap in its contextualization to the local context in UAE and insufficient practical components in its provision, coupled with a clear discrepancy in the trainers' performance and quality of delivery, hindering effectiveness. Almost all trainees found that some trainers lacked sufficient field experience and interactive training delivery approaches, which was further compounded by frequent substitutions due to changes in the implementation schedules by ILO, which at times were no longer convenient for them. This is despite the clarification made by the project team underscoring that most of the sessions were delivered by the ITC and highly qualified current and former ILO specialists. Specifically on inspection, which was mostly conducted by the ITC, some participants felt that the programme was too basic, especially for experienced labour inspectors. Contrarily, in OSH, the majority lacked fundamental knowledge, and one additional week was added to the programme's design as a remedial measure, all of which, could have been avoided had implementation been preceded by a capacity needs assessment, but this was not approved by MOHRE during the design phase. Integration of human rights, gender equality and inclusion principles were adequately embedded within the training modules, aligning with ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work. Yet, there is room for further emphasis on their practical application in inspection.

Efficiency

The project experienced delays in coordinating workshop schedules between the ILO and MoHRE, delays occurred during the month of Ramadan and the addition of one week of training to focus on OSH, all of which necessitated a no-cost extension until September 2024. The project implementation was cost-efficient with a budget of USD 300,033, primarily allocated to training costs and operational expenses. Savings, achieved by reducing reliance on external



consultants, were used to enrol MoHRE officials in ITC training courses, enhancing the overall programme quality.

Impact Orientation

The project established a foundational capacity for labour inspection and OSH within MoHRE by training 30 inspectors, equipping them with the capacities and skills to promote peer learning and enhance overall competency within the UAE labour inspection system. The project has empowered these inspectors to play a pivotal role in embedding best practices and newly acquired skills throughout the labour inspection system. As national trainers and a newly developed human resource, they represent an important asset for the UAE labour inspection system as they remain within the country, they can contribute to continuous training cycles, serving as national experts - instead of often foreigner expats- within the UAE and potentially supporting other GCC countries through knowledge transfer and regional collaboration. While too early to assess, there are signs reflecting that inspectors are modestly applying newly acquired skills. Although the project partially met MoHRE's expectations, for example in the contextualization of the content, practicality of the context and performance by trainers, gaps remain in integrating UAE-specific legal frameworks and employment initiatives into the training content. A greater emphasis on practical sessions and field visits emerged as an important element necessary to address inspectors' specific needs and practical application of skills gained.

Sustainability

The likelihood of sustainability of the ILO training programme is reinforced by the empowerment of 30 labour inspectors, with 26 certified to disseminate knowledge to 400 of their peers. This built internal capacity in MoHRE aligns with UAE's goal of reducing reliance on external consultants, fostering ownership and ensuring progress towards higher compliance in labour inspection and OSH practices. To enhance sustainability prospects, there is a need to adopt structured follow-up mechanisms, mentorship programmes, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, particularly for female inspectors. At a broader level, the consultant underlines that addressing gaps in the UAE's labour policies and frameworks is crucial to embedding labour rights, gender equality and lasting improvements in labour inspection.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: In future programming, enhance the relevance and applicability of the ILO training programme to the specific-country context and customize its content to the specific needs of the target group of labour inspectors. Conduct up-to-date situation analysis of the labour market and employment landscape in the UAE, necessary to align the topics of the training programme with the country's labour laws and regulations, legal frameworks and sectoral risks. Likewise, conduct capacity needs assessments of the MoHRE labour inspectors to map out the skills, knowledge, and technical gaps, the results of which shall inform the development of modular training structures to ensure the varying capacity levels of labour inspectors are considered.

Recommendation 2: Establish a rigorous trainer selection and evaluation mechanism to ensure that adequately qualified trainers are employed across all training sessions. Place emphasis on the selection of experienced trainers that assures they are all proficiently knowledgeable about region-specific local labour contexts, have practical field experience in labour inspection and OSH compliance and are adept at advanced training delivery approaches. A mechanism could be established with identified selection criteria, continuous evaluation and feedback about trainers' performance, weaknesses and strengths. Additionally, efforts to reduce trainer turnover must be considered through accurate timelines and maintaining a directory of alternate similarly qualified trainers.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen field-based interactive learning methods and practical applications within the ILO training programmes; especially the UAE-based ones, which had proven effective when used in the programme. The training structure should be carefully designed engaging participants with interactive and engaging learning methodologies to include more field visits, practical exercises, simulations, role-play and case studies, which when were used as an integral part of the programme had proven

more effective. It should incorporate hands-on sessions that reflect inspectors' daily challenges, thus bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the UAE context.

Recommendation 4: Establish structured continuous learning and support methods for sustained impact of the enhanced capacities of the inspection system and OSH standards in the UAE. Implement a structured continuous on-the-job and follow-up programme that includes peer-to-peer learning, mentorship programmes and periodic skill refresher sessions for inspectors, especially focusing on female inspectors. In addition to establishing exchange and knowledge sharing platforms that foster collaboration, enabling inspectors to share experiences, challenges and solutions. Generally, a wider scope intervention is needed to provide high-level policy support for the establishment of a national OSH policy and strategic framework for sustained improvements.

Main lessons learned and good practices

- 1- Best practice 1: The complementarity between soft skills and technical topics in the design of the training programme provided by the project to the MoHRE labour inspectors, who in turn, will cascade the training down to 400 inspectors. By fostering both technical proficiency and strong interpersonal skills, the ILO's training programmes graduate inspectors who can address both the technical and human aspects of labour inspection.
- 2- Best practice 2: The mix between the UAE-based and Turin-based training components and the integration of field visits into the ILO training programme provided by the project to the MoHRE labour inspectors. This is a good practice because the MoHRE inspectors participating in the ILO training programme had the chance for a higher exposure of best practices and experiences of other countries. Field visits, while limited were beneficial for the practical hands-on experience and

should be expanded as a best practice in future programmes.

- 3- Lesson learned: While knowledge about international labour standards is essential for labour inspectors, deeper alignment with and understanding of country-specific legal frameworks, labour issues and risks is crucial to ensure the relevance and practical application of capacity building gains. The content of the training programme provided by ILO to the UAE MoHRE inspectors did not sufficiently cover the country's specific internal laws and frameworks governing the labour market nor did it cover key employment initiatives. As such, the programme design and implementation were only moderately relevant to the inspectors' needs. Contradictory, based on feedback from the ILO project team, the programme included sessions on the national legislation, but the participants claimed then that they there was no need to be trained on the legislations they have been dealing with for years.
- 4- Lesson learned: In specialized capacity building programmes, trainers' selection is a critical factor in the quality and success of the delivery. In the training programme provided by ILO to MOHRE