Asian Regional Child Labour (ARC) Project

EVALUABILITY REVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE ILO PROJECT "ARC" FUNDED BY THE UK FCDO

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Introduction

Since 2017, as per the ILO Government Body decision, projects such as ARC, which have budgets over USD 5 million, must undergo two mandatory evaluability assessments: an evaluability appraisal conducted by the Evaluation Unit (EVAL) which forms part of a broader M&E appraisal during the clearance of the project proposal; and an evaluability review (ER) within one year of start-up. According to EVAL Guidance Note 1.3 on 'Procedure and tools for evaluability', the ER must cover:

- The project's log frame approach to identify the logic between the activities, outputs, objectives and risks/assumptions.
- The quality of the risk analysis at the project design stage, and assessment of importance and likelihood which sets the framework for subsequent monitoring during implementation.
- The causal logic and results-level linkages between the DWCP/CPO and the project. Suggestions for improvements should be made as needed.
- The definitions, key questions, methodological approach and initial preparations made, including baseline measures, by the project to assess its effectiveness and impact.
- The monitoring and evaluation capacities of key partner organizations for each project, in addition to the resources and management arrangements for implementing the M&E plan.
- Good practices and also specific improvements that should be made to the M&E system, giving specifics for acting upon these recommendations.

The ARC project inception phase took place between May and December 2019, with project activities beginning in January 2020 and soon affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which hindered the recruitment and onboarding of project staff. In this context, a Project Management and Monitoring System (PMMS) was elaborated, and the development of a M&E framework was commissioned to an external consultant. However, delays in the recruitment of a project M&E officer, who joined the team in August 2021, hindered the evaluability review at an early stage, and it was decided to conduct the review in the framework of the mid-term evaluation. Moreover, the initial monitoring framework was dominated by indicators intended to inform ex-post evaluation rather than regular monitoring, and the M&E officer put in place a set of monitoring practices based on work plans and milestones. The system in place comprises:

- Overall M&E:
    o Monthly review meetings against the work plan
- Differentiated M&E per activity type:
    o Studies: ex-ante review of TORs and study designs
    o Consultation and trainings: reports with number of participants, agenda and outcome
    o Capacity building programmes: pre and post evaluation

- o Grass root activities: a separate a M&E framework developed for partners, including a baseline or a needs assessment done before the intervention, and quarterly reporting according to pre-defined formats.
- o Meetings with national counterparts: press releases, advocacy products and letters to governments are compiled.
- o Missions conducted by project staff: mission reports

Examples of overall monitoring and activity monitoring have been provided by the project team for the elaboration of the review that follows.

1. Intervention logic, risks and assumptions

Question	Rating*
1.1 Has the situation been properly analysed?	iii
1.2 Are the programmes/ project's overall objective clearly defined?	iii
1.3 Does the document contain a strategy or Theory of Change for dealing with the problem?	ii
1.4 Does the document contain satisfactory immediate objectives / project outcomes?	iii
1.5 Are assumptions, risks and mitigations adequately identified?	iii
1.6 Partnerships for sustainability of results	ii

* The ratings are intended to raise attention to potential problems: i. Unsatisfactory quality ii. Satisfactory quality iii. High quality iv. Not relevant to project. Comments below indicate how improvements can be made.

Comments

1.1. The problem addressed, child labour, has been clearly stated in the ProDoc and measured with the best data available. Stakeholders are identified in the project document, and so is the final target population. A baseline study was conducted in January 2022.

1.2. The project's overall objective is clearly defined: "Reduced vulnerability to child labour and enhanced protection of children from exploitation in selected regions of each country". This is clearly aligned to SDG 8.7 and the ILO's mandate.

1.3. The project does have a ToC based on push factors and pull factor that together result in the economic exploitation of children and consistently proposes a holistic approach to child labour eradication. The ToC also makes explicit risks and assumptions. However, the casual connections between project results featured in the ToC and incidence of the pull and push factors are not made explicit. In this respect, arrows usually used in ToC diagrammes to show causal relations between the various layers of the intervention logic are used in this case to frame project effects under project outcomes or components.

1.4. Project outcomes and outputs clearly state the final situation to be achieved and the target groups that will benefit

1.5. Risks and assumptions are identified for each project output, and they have been explicitly presented in the project ToC and logframe.

1.6. Although key partners are identified in the ProDoc and involved in project implementation, work plans for 2022-23 there is room for activities intended to sustain knowledge dissemination and further knowledge production.

Recommendations on intervention logic, risks and assumptions

- • It is recommended that the ToC be reconstructed in order to better show the causal links that inspire the intervention logic, and to facilitate a participatory review of the project ToC. The

ToC reconstruction could be made in the context of the mid-term evaluation as part of the project assessment against the relevance criterion.

- It is recommended that work plans for 2022-23 include a sustainability plan focused on further knowledge production and dissemination.

2. Quality of indicators, baselines, targets and milestones

Question	Rating*
2.1 Are indicators appropriate proxies for the IOs?	ii
2.2 Are indicators of quality?	ii
2.3 Is Baseline information collected for each indicator?	iii
2.4 Are targets established for each indicator?	iii
2.5 Are milestones identified for each indicator?	iii
2.6 Can data be disaggregated to support performance reporting on areas of special interest for the ILO?	ii

* The ratings are intended to raise attention to potential problems: i. Unsatisfactory quality ii. Satisfactory quality iii. High quality iv. Not relevant to project. Comments below indicate how improvements can be made.

<u>Comments</u>

2.1. All project indicators have clear logical connections with the output / outcome they are associated with. However, in the case of Outcomes 2 and 3, some of them are too ambitious; some output indicators refer to outcomes or impacts, and some outcome indicators refer to impacts. In these instances, the indicators cannot be used to measure project delivery but they could be incorporated in other layers of the logframe and ToC. Those are listed in the table above and commented on in the following paragraphs.

Indicators that refer to a different layer of the intervention logic

Outcome/Output	#	Indicator
OUTCOME 2. Laws and policies consistent with international standards enforced and National Plans of Action (NPAs) against child labour implemented	2.0.a	Number of laws/policies on CL revised/aligned with International standards (B,I,N,P)
Output 2.1 Ratification of ILO conventions and revision the NPA and the hazardous work list through advocacy	2.1.a	Proposed revisions to child protection laws (B,I,N,P) and increase in budget allocation to combat CL (N)
Output 2.1 Ratification of ILO conventions and revision the NPA and the hazardous work list through advocacy	2.1.b	Adoption/revision of list of hazardous work according to ILO R190 (B,P)
Ouput 2.3 Strengthening the delivery mechanisms of social protection programs so that they are accessible to vulnerable families.	2.3.a	Trend in proportion of vulnerable families in target areas accessing social protection/poverty alleviation programmes (all Countries)
Output 2.4 Advocacy with MoE to eliminate barriers to access to compulsory schooling upto the min age for employment and adapt TVET to labour market demand	2.4.b	Rising trend in compulsory school registration and attendance rates of children from marginalised groups (A,I,N,P,B)
OUTCOME 3: Holistic approach to tackling WFCL developed, applied and proved successful in selected regions of each country	3.0.c	Commitments by different levels of governments to replicate in other regions of the country strategies developed to reach SDG 8.7 (I,N,B,P)
Output 3.2 Community-level child labour monitoring systems operated by civil servants, elected representatives, social partners and community volunteers	3.2.c	Proportion of child labourers identified that are withdrawn and reintegrated into school or protected from occupational hazards

The indicator associated with Outcome 2, and its target and sources, refers to the adoption of legislative changes while the project can only ensure the identification misalignments and related policy changes. However, the actual change in laws and policies could be used as an impact indicator. This also applies to budget increase and formal modifications in the list of hazardous work. Within that same outcome, increased school enrolment rates and increased social protection coverage in target groups are also impact indicators, which could accompany the main impact indicator (Number of children prevented from entering or withdrawn from WFCL), while, at the output level, they could be slightly modified in order to reflect the project direct effects: number of children reintegrated into school in the framework of the project, and number of families linked to social protection schemes with the project support.

> **Commented [SI1]:** Thank you for pointing out the same. We have faced this challenge and have inserted milsetones to make it more SMART. As we were not supposed to change the outcomes (as instructed by FCDO), we are finding ways to measure the desired outcome.

Output Indicator 3.2.c on children withdrawn from WFCL could be used to measure success in Outcome 3 (the application of holistic approaches to WFCL in concrete areas) rather to follow up on the implementation of monitoring systems, which should be reported as the number of functioning systems and degree of satisfaction by participants in monitoring systems (Indicators 3.2.a and 3.2.b). On the other hand, the current indicator of Outcome 3, which has to do with the replicability of the area approach to WFCL, refers to ==project impact as it goes beyond the boundaries of the project budget direct targets.==

2.2. Some indicators are not specific enough as to clarify how they are to be measured, as per the following table.

Indicators that are not precise enough / measurable

Outcome/Output	#	Indicator
OUTCOME 2. Laws and policies consistent with international standards enforced and National Plans of Action (NPAs) against child labour implemented	2.0.a	Number of laws/policies on CL revised/aligned with International standards (B,I,N,P)
Output 2.1 Ratification of ILO conventions and revision the NPA and the hazardous work list through advocacy	2.1.a	Proposed revisions to child protection laws (B,I,N,P) and increase in budget allocation to combat CL (N)
Output 2.1 Ratification of ILO conventions and revision the NPA and the hazardous work list through advocacy	2.1.b	Adoption/revision of list of hazardous work according to ILO R190 (B,P)
Ouput 2.3 Strengthening the delivery mechanisms of social protection programs so that they are accessible to vulnerable families.	2.3.a	Trend in proportion of vulnerable families in target areas accessing social protection/poverty alleviation programmes (all Countries)
Output 2.4 Advocacy with MoE to eliminate barriers to access to compulsory schooling upto the min age for employment and adapt TVET to labour market demand	2.4.b	Rising trend in compulsory school registration and attendance rates of children from marginalised groups (A,I,N,P,B)
OUTCOME 3: Holistic approach to tackling WFCL developed, applied and proved successful in selected regions of each country	3.0.c	Commitments by different levels of governments to replicate in other regions of the country strategies developed to reach SDG 8.7 (I,N,B,P)

2.3. A baseline study was conducted and baseline information is included in the project logframe for all relevant indicators.

2.4. Targets are specified for all indicators and they are set by adding amount of change desired to baselines.

2.5. The indicator framework includes milestones at outcome level

2.6. In general terms, the indicator framework is not sensitive to gender and people with disability. This could easily be overcome by disaggregating indicators referring to final beneficiaries (children and

families) and project partners by gender and disabilities. The following is a list of such indicators that could be at least disaggregated by gender, while some of them (for instance, those emerging from the case management portal) could also specify the outreach to children with disabilities.

Outcome/Output	#	Indicator
Development Objective/IMPACT: Reduced vulnerability to child labour and enhanced protection of children from exploitation in selected regions of each country	0	Number of children prevented from entering or withdrawn from WFCL due to better implementation of laws and policies and/or direct project interventions
Output 1.1 National level surveys on child labour, disaggregated by gender, age group and worst forms developed and implemented	1.1.b	Proportion of statistical personnel trained in data collection and analysis of CL trends that retain key messages of the training (N,B,P)
Output 2.2 Capacity for law enforcement and implementation of NPAs enhanced	2.2.a	Proportion of trained officials (B,N,I,P) & social partners (A,M)contacted after six months applied new learnings from the trainings
Ouput 2.3 Strengthening the delivery mechanisms of social protection programs so that they are accessible to vulnerable families.	2.3.a	Trend in proportion of vulnerable families in target areas accessing social protection/poverty alleviation programmes (all Countries)
Output 2.4 Advocacy with MoE to eliminate barriers to access to compulsory schooling upto the min age for employment and adapt TVET to labour market demand	2.4.b	Rising trend in compulsory school registration and attendance rates of children from marginalised groups (A,I,N,P,B)
Output 2.5 Strengthen the capacity of Stakeholders (Government , CSOs, Platforms) to work together at the regional level for child labour elimination	2.5.a	Number of stakeholders supported to participate in the fifth global conference
Output 2.6 Advocacy with business and Min of trade and commerce to eliminate CL from supply chains	2.6.a	Number of officials present and enterprises represented in meetings disseminating assessment/survey reports (N,B,P,I,A)
OUTCOME 3: Holistic approach to tackling WFCL developed, applied and proved successful in selected regions of each country	3.0.b	Proportion of families of child labourers in targeted zones do not have child labourers (all Countries)
Output 3.1 Research results used to raise public awareness on CL	3.1.a	Proportion of ward/panchayat/local members involved in CLM and its awareness. (all countries)
Output 3.1 Research results used to raise public awareness on CL	3.1.c	Number of child advocates of solutions to CL (N,I,B,P)
Output 3.2 Community-level child labour monitoring systems operated by civil servants, elected representatives, social partners and community volunteers	3.2.c	Proportion of child labourers identified that are withdrawn and reintegrated into school or protected from occupational hazards
Ouput 3.3 Facilitation of local government initiatives to address the causes of child labour to create child labour free zones	3.3.a	Proportion of vulnerable families benefitting from new initiatives (all countries)

<u>Recommendations on quality of indicators</u>

- For output indicators referring to policy change (legislation adopted or modified, budget increased), it is recommended that less ambitious indicators be added in order to capture more immediate project effects, such as identification of regulation misalignment or other policy gaps.
- For other output indicators that refer to impact on children and families, (number of children prevented from entering or withdrawn from WFCL), it is recommended that some slight modifications be introduced in order to reflect the project's direct effects: number of children reintegrated into school in the framework of the project and number of families linked to social protection schemes with the project support.
- It is recommended that data on indicators referring to final beneficiaries (children and families) and project partners by gender and disabilities be collected in a way that allows for

disaggregation by gender and to inform on inclusion of people with disabilities. This level of disaggregation should be available in the case management portal and in records on project participants.

3. Means of verification/measurement and methodologies

Question	Rating*
3.1 Does the document propose the appropriate combination of annual reviews, mid-term and final evaluations?	iii
3.2 Does an M&E plan exist to conduct monitoring and evaluation in a systematic manner?	iii
3.3 Are the data collection and analyses methods in the M&E plan technically adequate?	ii

* The ratings are intended to raise attention to potential problems: i. Unsatisfactory quality ii. Satisfactory quality iii. High quality iv. Not relevant to project. Comments below indicate how improvements can be made.

<u>Comments</u>

3.1. M&E practices include annual technical reports, a mid-term and a final evaluation. Additionally, the project team conducts differentiated activity-based M&E activities which are described in the introduction.

3.2. The project includes a M&E framework and Project Management and Monitoring System (PMMS) which introduced monthly working plans and reviews. As explained in the introduction, M&E in practice is based on this monthly review which gathers the project team at regional and national level.

3.3. With regards to the sources listed in the project logframe, two sources stand out for their reliability and for the relevance of the information provided. One is the online portal for on-line reporting and management of CL cases, which stands out as a project output that at the same time informs on several project outcomes and eventually has an impact on final targets. The others are the observations and requests made by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) related to Conventions 138 and 182, which inform on progress made towards policy alignment.

Other sources of information foreseen in the initial M&E framework are being discarded as there has been a shift towards sources related to project activities that rely on the project team and partners, rather than sources that inform on policy change and rely on national counterparts. The former sources include reports provided by implementing partners and regulated in monitoring frameworks that form part of implementing agreements, minutes of meetings with key stakeholders, etc.

Finally, some indicators refer to the project's effects on the media and the discourse of policymakers and it is foreseen through the project records. These are very interesting effects that can precede policy changes which cannot be captured in the timeframe of the project, but the data collection method does not seem robust enough. While keeping records on specific speeches or news aligned to the project logic, these anecdotal sources of evidence could be accompanied by computerized content analysis that measures the frequency of key words related to the influence that the project intends to exert on policymakers and stakeholders. In this respect, the project has incorporated a communication strategy that recommends a different monitoring framework be put in place. Such a framework foresees indicators such as the number of citations in the media or the number of media articles reflecting key issues pertaining to the ARC project, in addition to a survey to be conducted by a research agency, but this has not been incorporated in the overall indicator framework.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- It is recommended that the new data collection tasks put in place by the project team be included in the logframe and linked with concrete indicators.
- It is recommended that some elements of the monitoring framework for the communication strategy be incorporated into the overall M&E framework of the project. The use of citation analysis, computerized content analysis and internet metrics could be considered to measure the effects of the project on the discourse of policymakers, media and civil society, and such techniques could be tested during the mid-term evaluation.

4. Infrastructure, human and financial resources

Question	Rating*
4.1 Is the budget for the evaluation properly expressed in the project budget?	iii
4.2 Are there adequate financial resources in the evaluation budget?	iii
4.3 Are there adequate human resources?	iii
4.4 Are organizational arrangements for M&E efficient?	iii

* The ratings are intended to raise attention to potential problems: i. Unsatisfactory quality ii. Satisfactory quality iii. High quality iv. Not relevant to project. Comments below indicate how improvements can be made.

4.1. The evaluators have not had access to a detailed budget but project documents refer to 4% of the budget being dedicated to M&E activities.

4.2. This is a relatively large portion of the budget considering general practice in development cooperation, which tends to limit evaluation to 2% and often integrates monitoring activities in overall management and indirect costs.

4.3. The project counts on a M&E officer. Several external consultancies have been contracted to reinforce the M&E system.

4.4. Organizational arrangements made for M&E seem efficient. These include monthly meetings focused on work plans (activities and outputs), two meetings a year focused on progress towards expected outcomes, specific monitoring frameworks for implementing partners and learning calls.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- Although the infrastructure and human and financial resources dedicated to M&E are considered of high quality, in line with Section 3, it is recommended that the technical resources available for monitoring the communication strategy and informing on its impact on elements such as the media, policymakers' discourse and internet conversation by civil society actors be clarified.

5. Partners' participation and use of information

Question	Rating*
5.1 Was the proposal designed in a participatory manner?	iii
5.2 Was information from previous evaluations used to design the proposal?	iii
5.3 Is there a plan for evaluation reporting and dissemination?	ii

* The ratings are intended to raise attention to potential problems: i. Unsatisfactory quality ii. Satisfactory quality iii. High quality iv. Not relevant to project. Comments below indicate how improvements can be made.

5.1. Partners' participation in the project design is not mentioned in the ProDoc, although ILO and the donor have shown flexibility in adapting the design once the project team was set up and exchanges were made at country level.

5.2. Information from previous project evaluations is not included in the project design, with the exception of a reference to the document 'Rehabilitation of CL in India: Lessons learnt from the evaluation of NCLPs' in an annex. However, the ProDoc contains a complete assessment of the beneficiary countries' alignment to the relevant conventions.

5.3. Neither the M&E framework, the PMMS, nor the monitoring section of the ARC Communication Strategy, Parking include a plan for evaluation reporting and dissemination, but the ToR of the mid-term evaluation do foresee a stakeholder workshop within the data collection phase.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- It is recommended that work plans include participatory activities in which the results of M&E activities are shared with project partners and stakeholders. At the end of the project, one of these workshops could review the project ToC in light of the actual achievements and changing circumstances in order to inform future project design.