



Evaluation Summaries

Promoting Decent Work and Gender Equality in Yemen

Quick Facts

Countries: Yemen
Final Evaluation: February 2009
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Technical Area: Gender
Evaluation Management: ILO Regional Office for Arab States
Evaluation Team: Muna Khalidi, PHD
Project Start: June 2006
Project End: September 2008
Project Code: YEM/06/50/NET
Donor: ILO and the Netherland Government (NICP)
Keywords: Gender, decent work and gender equality

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The International Labour Organization (ILO) in partnership with the Netherlands Government (NICP), in 2006, embarked upon a second phase of the project “Promoting Decent Work and Gender Equality in Yemen” – (YEM/06/50/NET). The Project’s main aim was “*to improve women’s employability and gender equality in policies and programs as they apply to labour force participation in addition to raising awareness on decent work and gender equality among women and men workers in Yemen*”; it was implemented through the Directorate General of Women Workers (DGWW) at the Ministry of Social

Affairs and Labour (MOSAL) and through the Directorates of Women Workers at the MOSAL Labour Offices in the five Yemeni Governorates of Sana’a, Hodeida, Taiz, Aden, and Mukalla. The Project was also designed and implemented in partnership with the main social dialogue partner institutions: the General Federation of Yemeni Workers’ Trade Unions and the Yemen Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, as well as the National Women’s Committee and the Yemeni Women’s Union.

An independent evaluation of this second phase was undertaken between July and September 2008 as the Project was in its final stages and in preparation for launching into its exit strategy and complete handover to DGWW and MOSAL. As such the evaluation focused on the following two issues:

- The institutional role played by DGWW in coordinating national efforts for the promotion of decent work and gender equality including a specific emphasis on raising awareness on women and men’s equal rights to terms and conditions of decent work, and
- The sustainability of the strategic building blocks put in place by the Project’s activities for the work of DGWW in MOSAL, ILO’s social partners and the existing national women’s machinery

Objective 1: Capacity Building

Over the years of the Project’s life, capacity building has been a main pillar of activities and of strength for the entire Project, allowing

for growth and solid development. In terms of capacity building, the Project managed to implement a significant number of activities at both the Central and Governorate levels. Those activities were designed to be part of a ‘holistic’ capacity building strategy and addressed both individual technical as well as the organizational skills of DGWW and the five DWWs in the Governorates targeted by the Project. The Project also spent considerable effort in building the DGWWs capacity to play an effective coordination role both with other Directorates within the Ministry as well as will the national partners and stakeholders.

Objective 2: Raising Workers’ Awareness on Their Rights and Responsibilities within Yemeni Labour Law

While the basic and ground-laying work on this training component was established and solidified during the first phase of the Project (identification of needs, development and production of materials, training of trainers, and training of workers), it is during Phase II that the achievements began to increase and multiply, reaching increasing numbers of workers and of establishments, such that it is estimated that to date more than 20,000 workers have been trained across the five Governorates. Of those approximately 39% are female.

In addition, collaborative relations with work establishments have increased and become more well-established as it was recognized that more focus needs to be placed on ensuring more buy-in and positive engagement by employers. The Project was successful in getting establishment owners and employers to begin to know more about the training and its objectives; and as they became aware of the positive benefits of the program, they became increasingly reassured that there is no “hidden agenda” to incite workers to rebellion, but rather to improve knowledge about both rights and obligations.

During Phase II, there was also a lot of effort spent on further improving and upgrading the

training skills of trainers, through close supervision, additional workshops and the introduction of more adult-learning methodologies and participatory training techniques. This has resulted in an improvement in the quality of trainer and therefore of training and learning outcomes. In addition, additional trainers from the GFYWTU were trained as trainers, who are now carrying out the same training activities in work establishments.

In terms of materials, the booklet on Rights and Obligations has been a major success as evidenced by the increasing demand for it. The booklet was revised during Phase II to redress some of the gaps found in the original production. The demand for the booklet has continued to rise, and the Evaluator during field visits and interviews was constantly told about its high quality and high value, being especially appreciated for its simplicity, comprehensiveness, and clarity. Other materials have been reprinted and continue to be used and to be very well received.

Objective 3: Policy Advocacy Platform

During the first phase of the project, this component was not accorded as much focus as other issues (especially capacity building, coordination, and training). Most of the work that was undertaken towards engagement in policy advocacy dialogue was more “preparatory” in nature, establishing the foundations for more intensive involvement. The evaluation of the First phase, in fact, recommended that the Project in its second phase place more attention on this crucial component, aiming at providing policy support by decision makers to the changes needed to improve the situation of Yemeni working women. Hence, during this Second Phase, and realizing the importance of policy-advocacy work in changing perceptions and changing the working context for women, DGWW and the Project team, launched into a more focused program of action. This started with the identification and recruitment of a national expert to draft a “policy brief” on health. Armed with the policy brief and the discussion

booklet, intensive work in the health sector began, reaching approximately 900 (male and female) workers in the various Governorates.

Based on the success of the work in the health sector, two additional sectors with high levels of women workers' participation were identified: Education (teaching being one of the professional deemed "socially acceptable" for Yemeni women to engage in) and Agriculture Public Sector Employees. Additional funding was sought and secured (through the Embassy of the Netherlands) and, two national sectoral experts were identified and recruited to draft policy brief for Education and Agriculture, while concurrently DGWW developed two additional sector-specific discussion booklets.

Objective 4: Media Platform

The Media component of the Project was also not accorded the same weight as the other more basic components during Phase I, and the evaluation of that phase also recommended the strengthening and consolidation of that component. As the Project launched into Phase II, it was realized that while a solid group of print journalist had been sensitized to issues of decent work and gender equality, the Project's reach into the audio-visual media remained weak. This was of special concern since in the rural areas of Yemen. TV is the most far-reaching and effective mass-media venue. The Project identified and recruited a national expert to develop a new media strategy for DGWW with an emphasis on strategies and options for reaching the audio-visual media.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The "Promoting Decent Work and Gender Equality in Yemen" Project implemented by the ILO through the DGWW, addressed a real and felt need within Yemeni society for the promotion of women's work, the creation of better working conditions, and the improvement of the perceptions of working women in Yemen. The Project- Phase II has met its stated goals of providing information to workers on their rights and obligations, of

contributing to the policy debate in the country, and of providing a media platform and watchdog to monitor the image of working women.

The conclusion of the evaluation of the first phase of the Project, that "in its vision and approach, and the methodology by which it has been implemented, the project is an example of 'good practice'" remains valid, given that the approach has been sustained throughout the life and expansion of the Project, and had permeated all components and activities. The Project in its second phase strengthened its position and role as a "catalyst" for the mainstreaming of gender by the various partners and agencies, providing the technical and programmatic support needed for those agencies to translate their commitment into real programs.

In fact, it can be concluded that the credibility gained by ILO from the ability of the Project to build and enhance institutional capacities among the various constituents and the solid coordination of all project activities with relevant national stakeholders, as well as the social dialogue platforms used to design, implement and monitor project activities have contributed significantly to the recent launch of the Decent Work Country Program in Yemen for 2008-2010.

What remains at the core is the issue of sustainability of the program, including its growth and consolidation into an integral program of the Ministry and its spread into increasing sectors and additional geographic locations within Yemen. This is largely an issue of securing funding, especially medium- and long-term funding which would allow for growth, reflection, innovation, experimentation and ultimately improvements.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

- **Maintain a low level of support for capacity building:** ILO through the DWCP and through the Regional

Office should consider continuing to offer capacity building and training support to DGWW and DWW staff through inviting them to participate in planned activities and through playing a facilitator role.

- **Lobbying for funding on behalf of DGWW:** ILO should consider playing the role of lobbyist on behalf of the DGWW and DWW teams with MOSAL order to help them secure funding. This is especially relevant within the context of the Yemeni Government's adoption of the DWCP strategy and the recent launch of a national DWCP unit and program in Yemen.
- **Financial support of production of materials:** ILO should consider the possibility of providing a limited amount of funding for a limited amount of time to be earmarked specifically for the production and re-production of additional publications and educational materials that would support the backbone programs of DGWW.
- **Marketing:** DGWW needs to develop a coherent "marketing" strategy and plan of action to promote its programs, skills and expertise. The current high credibility as well as the expressed good will should be tapped into and pursued in order to secure further financial support to maintain the unit and its activities into the future. Marketing efforts, however, should aim further than just the continuation of programs and should also be geared toward the promotion of DGWW in general as a resource center and a reference point for all issues related to women's employment and work in Yemen.
- **Strengthen collaborative links:** DGWW should continue to explore ways and means to strengthen its ties and collaborative links with some of the other key Directorates at MOSAL such as Health and Safety and Labour Inspection. This would serve the

purpose of further institutionalizing the concepts of Decent Work and gender equality and would strengthen the positions and credibility of all involved Directorates. DGWW also needs to strengthen collaborative links with YCCCI and GFYWWTU. Joint planning and programming would be a positive strategy to expand the experience and success of the Project into more and more workplaces and to reach increasing numbers of male and female workers.

- **Replication:** ILO needs to consider replicating the success of this project in other countries of the region, especially emphasizing the role of capacity building at the individual and institutional level and the importance of a "culture" of integration and coordination. The project could be showcased and lessons could be learned from its experiences in order to replicate solid national capacity building initiatives that are at the same time highly professional and offering a high quality product, while also adopting a unique management approach rooted in respect, collaboration and institutional building, even though these require patience and time