



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: “Knowledge Sharing on decent work and the informal economy in the context of poverty reduction”

Quick Facts

Countries: Inter-regional

Final Evaluation: January 2006

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Policy Integration Department

Evaluation Management:

Evaluator: Luis L. Zegers

Project Start: May 2003

Project End: October 2006

Project Code: INT/03/M57/UKM

Donor: The United Kingdom (475,000 US\$)

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project is rooted in the tripartite conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2002, “Decent Work and the Informal Economy” and the immediate follow-up work carried out by ILO’s higher management as well as by HQ, field staff and constituent representatives. During the same period, decent work and informal economy related projects launched through technical collaboration between the Department for International Development (DfID) and the ILO offered an opportunity to learn, reduce gaps, resolve overlapping efforts and strengthen the ILO’s ability to measure impact on poverty reduction. DfID thus offered a contribution to the ILO to introduce a knowledge sharing component amongst four DfID-funded projects.

These covered various geographical areas of Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe and would generate knowledge and replicable experiences at macro, meso and micro policy levels through structured interventions in municipal services, improvement of living conditions, poverty eradication, gender equality, jobs for the poor, market access, policy, governance and representation, youth and other vulnerable groups and the informal economy at large.

Present situation of project

The first challenge was to introduce a global knowledge sharing component led by the ILO’s Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION) into four projects that had already been planned independently from one another. The first six months of the project required considerable efforts to bring together field-projects and HQ staff from key departments. A model of change was produced and improved during the following two years. Newly generated knowledge and experience were documented and diffusion trials tested through workshops, a knowledge fair and personal and electronically-aided communication. At the time this evaluation took place, although not strictly institutionalised, an increasingly dynamic group of committed professionals from various structures, disciplines and geographical settings had been created, providing the ILO with a distinctive opportunity and the potential to scale up knowledge sharing as one of the key elements of success in the new millennium.

Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation was done in relation to the efficiency (actual performance against planned action), effectiveness, impact, relevance to (a) poverty reduction, (b) strengthening the ILO's internal knowledge-sharing, sustainability and future linkages, gender-sensitivity of the project as well as lessons learned and recommendations.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation process was three-fold: a desk review of the project history, an assessment of the appropriateness of project design and an assessment of the knowledge-sharing process introduced in the context of the four DfID-funded projects on the informal economy. In addition to the desk review, the assessment method included a survey amongst 104 selected staff members on the project implementation process and impact, interviews of key field and HQ-department staff directly involved with the project implementation process and the evaluator's attendance as an observer at the end-of project workshop.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The evaluation collected and analysed a considerable amount of information which led to the following conclusions:

The planning objectives, according to the initial project formulation, are rather general and it was difficult to measure performance against planned actions with precision, although the number of outputs is considerable. The effect of having a knowledge-sharing project coordination team of committed staff imbedded within the Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION), organising active sharing among HQ and field staff, and coordinating the flow of knowledge-sharing, had a great impact on the success of the project.

The realisation of the need to institutionalise knowledge-sharing as a global institutional service of the ILO to its constituencies and staff is critical for the future of ILO's performance in a continuously changing world

that is moving the labour market away from its traditional operational environment.

The knowledge-sharing nature of the project contributed significantly to the improvement of the four DfID-funded field-projects on decent work and the informal economy in the context of poverty reduction as well as strengthening ILO's internal sharing within the context of the projects and related HQ departments.

Gender sensitivity was fully integrated into the implementing team interactions and their exercise of knowledge sharing. Specific activities related to the field-projects are being evaluated separately.

Sustainability will depend on the institutional approach the ILO will take in relation to the four field-projects and on the application of the lessons learnt and the recommendations stemming from this evaluation.

Overall, the project provides a thorough base of experience and learning to guide the implementation of an institutional response to the findings and the current need for knowledge-sharing and knowledge-management throughout the Organisation.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

Based on the current global socio-economic developments, knowledge-sharing within the organisation, its constituents and partners, is a must for the ILO to continue to honour its mandate.

To ensure effective knowledge-sharing, a knowledge management service organised within the ILO is required conforming to standard requirements for quality management systems to ensure quality of research, knowledge generation, storage, retrieval, packaging, delivery and measurement of results.

The outcome of implementing this recommendation would provide the ILO with integrated knowledge databases linked with library services, research outcomes, project results and informal new knowledge; a network of communities of practice on operations towards the achievement of each

ILO operational objective and inFocus activities, and a knowledge management service assuring a global knowledge-sharing process flow, validity of data, information and knowledge, and continuous renewal of knowledge databases.

Important lessons learned

Knowledge sharing

One of the initial lessons learnt was to realise how difficult it is to identify sources of up-to-date knowledge in an organisation like the ILO and how challenging it is for the ILO to put knowledge sharing in practice, while at the same time realising the need for such development throughout the organisation.

The need for a specific programme of knowledge sharing requires the leadership of competent staff with the appropriate experience. Such a programme would strengthen ILO's corporate culture, reinforce staff's confidence in sharing knowledge, asking questions and learning, as well as improve project and programme management processes.

One of the most important lessons is having realised the need to establish a knowledge baseline inventory and to build indicators for the flow of knowledge on each domain. This may require considerable effort and external technical support in disciplines that are not necessarily the expertise of the ILO, but are essential to consolidate its transformation into a fully knowledge-based institution.

Informal economy

Knowledge sharing is not the mainstream in ILO's projects addressing the informal economy, and should be firmly set up within its structures.

There is a strong demand of field-projects for tools and expertise on formulating national policy on the informal economy and strategies on poverty reduction, decent work and social dialogue.

Many of the approaches designed to influence change in relation to the target groups have proven to be successful entry points for further development within the informal economy of countries where initial field-projects have taken place.

Process management

The triangular operational scheme (field-project, Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION), Technical unit) proved very effective to draw expertise from the most adequate sources. This way appears to be significantly more effective than the traditional field/technical unit relationship, while not disregarding its value in its own right.

The knowledge sharing role played by the Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION) proved to be most effective, but sometimes misunderstood by internal units. In fact the Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION) Department's role added value to the relationship and at times created a relationship that otherwise would not have existed. The Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION) Department played a key role in sharing knowledge, in spite of limited managerial resources in staff time, limited amount of technological support and limited training received by staff.

An institutionalized knowledge sharing programme would add to ILO's capabilities, help to elaborate applicable approaches; create synergy; facilitate interaction and respect amongst specialists; open ways for effective interactions within the organisation and for the relations with stakeholders and the rest of the world; and trigger motivation towards continuous improvement.