



# Evaluation Summaries

## *ILO/Japan Asian Regional Programme on Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women (EEOW) Cambodia and Viet Nam*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** Cambodia and Viet Nam  
**Final Evaluation:** Aug 2008  
**Mode of Evaluation:** Independent  
**Technical Area:** Gender  
**Evaluation Management:** Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)  
**Evaluation Team:** Annemarie Reerink  
**Project Start:** 1 January 2007  
**Project End:** 31 August 2008  
**Project Code:** RAS/06/13/JPN  
**Donor:** Japan (US\$ 600,000)  
**Key Words:** Gender, Equal Opportunity

### Background & Context

#### **Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure**

The ILO/Japan Asian Regional Programme on Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women (EEOW) aims to contribute to the national efforts to alleviate poverty and promote gender equality in the world of work through socio-economic empowerment of women. After a first phase (2002-2006) was completed in Cambodia and Vietnam, a second phase of twenty months officially started in January 2007, with the aim of replicating good practices in gender mainstreaming, participatory approaches, and women's socio-economic empowerment throughout existing national programmes. The

development objective of the second phase of the project was to contribute to national efforts in poverty alleviation and promotion of gender equality in the world of work.

The immediate objectives were to:

- Strengthen the institutional capacity of relevant national and local government, mass organizations, and civil society organizations in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating gender-sensitive policies and programmes and in cooperation with labour and gender networks to promote gender equality in the world of work.
- Support the application of gender and labour legislation and policy development to apply gender mainstreaming and participatory approaches in employment promotion and poverty reduction policies and programmes for adoption at local, provincial and national levels.
- Strengthen local support systems for and with women in communities in poverty and make them sustainable through the participatory design and implementation of the project-exit strategy and networking in EEOW project sites.

#### **Present situation of project**

The programme ended in August 2008 with a closing workshop where the project team and counterparts discussed the evaluation's conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations, and developed action plans

to continue and replicate EEOW good practices.

### **Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation**

The final evaluation was carried out towards the end of the second phase of the EEOW project. The main purpose of the evaluation was to improve knowledge concerning promotion of gender equality and economic and social empowerment, with a view to improved design and implementation of future projects by the ILO, ILO constituents, and other implementing partners.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

An external evaluator had access to both primary and secondary sources of information. The evaluator carried out a desk review prior to her visits to project staff, selected implementing partners and beneficiaries in Cambodia between 30 June and 5 July and in Vietnam between 13 and 18 July 2008.

The evaluation focused on both the results of the project and the process of implementation and gathered qualitative information from a range of project partners and beneficiaries through individual interviews and through focused group discussions with beneficiaries. For both groups of informants, a list of open-ended questions was used.

## **Main Findings & Conclusions**

In both countries, the project was generally well managed with timely and effective backstopping, and had good relations with government counterparts and implementing partners. Collaboration with other projects enhanced its impact in terms of greater numbers of participants and more effective use of resources. Both the excellent training materials on gender equality developed through the EEOW project and the expanded pool of trainers and resource persons with capacity to promote gender equality, gender mainstreaming and participatory approaches provide good building blocks for future

initiatives towards gender equality by the Government and social partners.

In Vietnam, thanks to a more favourable institutional environment and higher levels of human resource development, the second EEOW phase has been able to enhance the achievements of the first phase and to achieve significant additional outputs. Project activities on capacity building and ensuring sustainability of commune-level women's clubs have allowed government officials at all levels to learn – both at a theoretical and a practical level – how to design, monitor and evaluate activities aimed at integration of gender and participatory methods. While much remains to be done to encourage results-based policy making, the project has successfully created awareness of the need for policy-makers to ensure that policies are informed by the realities of intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level.

On the other hand, the EEOW Cambodia country chapter did not fully achieve its objectives because of the generally low level of human resource development in Cambodia, the difficult institutional environment (institutional boundaries, weak governance, as well as low levels of gender awareness), and staffing problems. The project's activities were implemented in relative isolation from each other, with little attention to the ways in which participants and implementing partners could be stimulated to learn from each other or the ways in which activities could complement each other. This situation was made worse by the changes in project staff in the middle of the second phase, as well as the absence of an ILO country office with a senior manager who could have offered direct guidance on a day-to-day basis as well as policy advice.

## **Recommendations & Lessons Learned**

### **Main recommendations and follow-up**

#### *Immediate Objective 1*

- All ILO projects with a substantial element of capacity building should incorporate training on participatory approaches, to

promote effective delivery of training and responsiveness of participating organisations to their intended beneficiaries.

- ILO offices and projects should continue to invest time and resources in the usage and updating of existing training materials on gender equality and related topics as well as in the development of new materials as needed.
- All ILO projects should establish strong collaboration with gender projects of ILO (and other UN agencies where appropriate) and with their counterparts on promotion of gender equality by utilizing the training materials on gender equality and related topics developed by (or in collaboration with) EEOW.
- Involve senior management officials in capacity building to support application of new skills by technical officers.
- Place greater emphasis in project design and implementation on opportunities for government officials, NGO staff and leaders of self-help groups and women's clubs to exchange information and experiences on gender equality promotion in poverty alleviation and employment policies and programmes.

#### *Immediate Objective 2*

- Promotion of gender equality requires inter-disciplinary action. Officials should work across institutional boundaries, to share experiences and to offer mutual support for gender mainstreaming.

#### *Immediate Objective 3*

- Implementing partners should pay more attention to the impact of having men join women's groups.

### **Important lessons learned**

#### *A. Capacity building*

- There is a need for consistent use of a training needs assessment as well as systematic follow up activities.
- Capacity building activities for government officials should take place at a time when they have not yet completed the planning process for the next year's

activities and budget to allow training participants to request time and financial support from their superiors to put into practice their new skills.

- Participatory approaches can promote more effective delivery of training and greater responsiveness of participating organisations to their intended beneficiaries.
- Making available a small pool of funds for adding additional days to existing training courses (implemented by counterparts) allows training participants to better apply their new skills.

#### *B. Integrating gender and participatory methodology*

- The importance of providing central and provincial level officials with practical examples of approaches and evidence that they are successful at village level cannot be overstated.
- Good practice materials should be developed in an appropriate format that responds to the needs of the intended audience.
- Gender mainstreaming policies require follow-up resources in order for them to lead to actual gender mainstreaming throughout national policies and programmes.

#### *C. Ensuring sustainability of community-level empowerment strategies*

- Combining activities focusing on economic empowerment with those focusing on promoting gender equality is a powerful tool to demonstrate how women living in poverty can overcome multiple disadvantages.
- Helping women in rural areas to establish and manage business associations is an important step towards economic empowerment.
- Discussion about possible approaches for building sustainability of self-help groups is a necessary step but is in itself not sufficient to ensure such sustainability.