



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: Technical Coordination and Knowledge Sharing of the Theme “Gender Equality in the World of Work”

Quick Facts

Countries: Inter-Regional
Final Evaluation: January 2006
Mode of Evaluation: Independent
Technical Area: Gender Equality
Evaluation Management: GENDER
Evaluation Team: Ms. Mandy Macdonald
Project Start: March 2004
Project End: December 2005
Project Code: INT/04/M53/NET
Donor: Netherlands (380,000 US\$)

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The technical coordination and knowledge sharing project of the theme ‘Gender equality in the world of work’ (TCKS) was set up within the Gender Equality Theme of the ILO/Netherlands Partnership Programme (ILO/NPP), a substantial technical cooperation programme funded by the Dutch government in the biennium 2004–05. The project provided technical support, coordination and knowledge management and sharing to the other 13 projects in the gender equality theme cluster, which were either devoted specifically to gender equality and women workers’ rights issues or had specific budget allocations for mainstreaming gender equality in the project cycle. The purpose of the technical

coordination and knowledge sharing project was to contribute to an integrated and consistent way of mainstreaming gender issues in the implementation and monitoring of the 13 projects; to ensure that the ILO shared policy objective of gender equality was integrated into the core themes of the ILO/NPP; to contribute to strengthening the capacity of ILO constituents and labour market institutions to promote gender equality in their respective mandates and programmes; and to serve as a knowledge base on gender equality initiatives and provide technical support and good practices to the projects under the ILO/NPP in their efforts to promote gender equality.

The anticipated results of the project, as expressed in its immediate objectives, were that at the end of the project, the ILO constituents, ILO staff and other partners involved in the NPP gender equality projects would have increased capacity to support poverty alleviation policies by integrating gender sensitive planning into their cross-sectoral development programmes and projects on basic rights, employment, social protection and tripartism; and that the ILO constituents and ILO staff would have access to and use the expanded and improved gender mainstreaming knowledge base and thereby contribute to the ILO shared policy objective.

Present situation of project

The TCKS played its most active role in the theme in the early stages of planning and

project design, when it assisted all the projects to develop a gender mainstreaming strategy on the basis of a gender analysis, making it relevant not only to the thematic area addressed but also to other donor priorities such as basic education. Its role in later stages, with regard to individual projects, tended to be reactive rather than proactive, with its proactive role being carried out through reporting functions and participation in knowledge sharing events and fora.

Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

This evaluation examines how successful the TCKS has been in supporting the other projects in the Gender Equality Theme cluster and in promoting and facilitating the sharing of knowledge between them and beyond them in the ILO.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation is based on a review of available project documentation and interviews with relevant staff. Documents were collected from HQ and by email. No field visit was carried out. At the time of writing, several of the projects had not yet submitted their final reports, so these have not been included in the evaluation.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The TCKS proved an effective monitoring mechanism for the Gender Equality Theme, and the monitoring and reporting tools it designed were seen by projects as one of its most valuable contributions. The success of reporting in the cluster was aided considerably by the fact that reporting on gender was itself resourced and that the gender budget allocations justified the TCKS in requiring reports on gender activities.

The TCKS has shown that the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality (GENDER) has great potential as a systematic and accessible knowledge and information base on gender equality in the world of work. The collection and dissemination of tools and materials, however, needs to be complemented by active promotion of knowledge sharing on gender

issues through related events, capacity building and networking.

Projects were frequently unclear about the role or even the identity of the TCKS project. GENDER needs to establish its own identity as a knowledge sharing resource on gender, avoiding confusion with other entities and projects in the ILO while maintaining a mutually synergetic relationship with them.

On the other hand, the sympathetic and collaborative way in which the TCKS has been implemented has given GENDER greater perceived legitimacy and has to some extent changed attitudes towards it, so that it is increasingly seen as a source of support rather than 'the gender police'.

The Gender Equality Theme projects show that gender equality is mainstreamed into technical cooperation activities much more effectively, efficiently, and sustainably if it is specifically resourced.

However, the resources provided need to be adequate and timely. Reasonable time must be made available for projects to design proposals that are gender-responsive from the start. Funds must be disbursed in time to allow projects to carry out their planned activities. Sustained access to dedicated gender expertise in the project, or at the very least in the region, is vital.

By allocating dedicated resources to gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality in its TC projects, the ILO ensures that gender mainstreaming activities are undertaken visibly and accountably. The allocation to projects of funds earmarked for gender-related activities obliges them to report on the use of those funds and to plan gender activities into their project cycle.

Gender budget allocations, gender-specific projects and women-specific projects are all different strategies of gender mainstreaming. Which strategy is used should depend on the gender needs identified in the problem analysis and the constraints imposed and opportunities offered by the external context in which the project is implemented.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

Expand the scope of the gender equality budget allocation mechanism to cover all projects under future ILO/NPPs, with Gender Equality Theme coordination project working closely with the coordination projects of other themes to manage this process coherently.

Set up an effective mechanism to track the financial administration of gender budget allocations, based on analysis of their use by this group of projects. Build capacity on gender budget tracking.

Incorporate gender equality considerations, including quantitative and qualitative gender indicators, into all projects from concept note stage onwards.

Adequately resource core activities of gender mainstreaming (gender analysis, collection of sex-disaggregated data, equitable representation etc.).

Ensure that there is gender expertise “on the spot” throughout all projects.

Revise and improve the ILO/NPP reporting format with respect to gender mainstreaming and hold capacity building on gender-responsive reporting and monitoring.

Disseminate and promote throughout the ILO the enhanced knowledge base on gender equality and mainstreaming generated by the Gender Equality Theme, including good practices and tools. Design a mechanism for tracking use of gender tools so as to enable assessment of the relative value and appropriateness of different tools in different contexts.

Explore ways in which cross-fertilization and mutual learning (between countries, projects, sectors) on gender can be promoted, including communities of practice, refinement of web-based tools, etc.

Organize a specific knowledge-sharing event on gender issues, as a way not only of promoting knowledge sharing, but of establishing GENDER’s identity as a knowledge base.

Examine and clarify the relationship between the Gender and Employment Helpdesk and the TCKS and their specific areas of competence.¹

Important lessons learned

Gender-sensitive project proposals are not prepared overnight. The rushed proposal process forced people to make overambitious proposals (since there was no time to be judicious about what to include) while at the same time trying to be honest about their aims. Given the resistance to gender mainstreaming that still persists among ILO staff and other stakeholders, if a project takes on gender goals which it then cannot meet, it confirms hostile prejudices about the value and ‘doability’ of gender mainstreaming.

Realistic goals need to be set. The timeframe for implementation of the projects was admittedly short, and while some project holders complained that this did not give them time to implement properly, it could also be argued that some were too ambitious in their objectives. Project holders need to learn to design objectives and plan project implementation to fit the time and other resources available

ILO Gender Specialists are clearly the most important points of reference for gender-related Technical Cooperation projects in the regions. However, gender consultants may need to be contracted to fill gaps and for special purposes, such as developing training materials or carrying out evaluation and reporting exercises. Selecting consultants with the right level of expertise is obviously crucial to the quality of output, hence the importance of ILO backstopping (e.g. by GENDER) in the identification of appropriate consultants for particular tasks. However, consultants need to have knowledge and experience of the ILO and how it works, including in the regional context, as well as issue-related expertise.

In common with gender equality and all cross-cutting issues, knowledge sharing depends for its effectiveness on adequate and sustained inputs and resources (financial, human, time).

¹ The Gender and Employment Helpdesk was another ILO/NPP funded project

If material is being sent out ‘passively’ to projects, it needs a gender specialist at the receiving end to be able to filter, interpret, and decide what to use/disseminate.

Knowledge sharing was used extensively during project planning, but once the many project activities had begun it was much harder for staff to continue on it working actively, including monitoring for reporting purposes.

Innovative techniques such as the Virtual Forum often have the least impact initially. They need time and possibly training to take root. People’s ability or willingness to cope with advanced technology is less a gender question than a generational one. Often the simplest methods of knowledge sharing are the most effective.

Cross-linkages between countries with very different gender equality situations are highly fruitful, giving opportunities to see what works in each case and to develop culture-specific gender knowledge (which can then be disseminated). The important lesson here is that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ route to gender equality.

GENDER needs to establish its own identity with regard to these projects and to KS on gender, avoiding confusion both with the Gender & Employment Helpdesk and with other KS entities and projects in the ILO while maintaining a mutually synergetic relationship with them.