



Evaluation Summaries

RBSA Evaluation on equality and decent work promotion for Asian women through prevention of human trafficking, protection of domestic workers and gender capacity building

Quick Facts

Countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Lao PDR, Nepal, Indonesia, Philippines, Timor Leste, and Thailand

Final Evaluation: June 2010

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Decent work and gender equality

Evaluation Management: RO-Bangkok

Evaluation Team: Lisa Stearns

Project End: 30 June 2010

Project Code: RBSA Evaluations for multiple projects

Project budget total: US\$2,199,046.00

Keywords: Domestic worker, human trafficking, gender mainstreaming, gender equality

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) is a major funding innovation introduced in 2008-2009 as a means to soften the impact of zero real budget growth within the ILO. It remains a mechanism subject to scrutiny. It is hoped that this evaluation will be a constructive contribution to that ongoing review.

Characteristics of the RBSA mechanism are as follows:

- It is based on voluntary contributions from Member States
- It addresses priorities that flow from the Strategic Policy Framework and Programme and Budget
- It enhances the capacity to deliver on Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) outcomes
- It is fully integrated with extra-budgetary resources

The RBSA is designed as a flexible mechanism, although donors have the option of “light earmarking” to connect the use of their donation to regional or thematic priorities. This evaluation concerns programming done on the basis of Norwegian RBSA contributions earmarked for gender equality, including action against forced labour and trafficking.

The ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) in co-operation with the Gender Bureau received \$2.2 million, approved 10 December 2008, to implement a project on “Equality and decent work promotion for Asian women through prevention of human trafficking, protection of domestic workers, and gender capacity building” (hereinafter referred to as the G-RBSA).

The geographical coverage of the project included East, South, and South-east Asia.

Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Lao PDR, Nepal, Indonesia (including Timor-Leste), Philippines, and Thailand received allocations.

Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

According to the terms of reference, the purpose of this evaluation is to assess the following:

- the extent progress has been made in achieving G-RBSA outcomes
- the extent G-RBSA results have fed into the DWCP outcomes in participating countries and facilitated knowledge development and sharing at the regional level
- the extent outputs have been produced
- the extent that outputs have contribute to achieving the identified DWCP outcomes in the selected countries and at the regional level
- the effectiveness and challenges to date of the RBSA funding mechanism

The evaluation focuses on the G-RBSA's contribution to the DWCP outcomes identified by participating countries, taking into consideration the indicators of achievement or milestones. It further takes into account all interventions, geographical coverage and the whole period of the G-RBSA funded component, considering external factors that have impacted on the delivery of the outputs.

In an evaluation of this nature, with many countries involved and, in each, many projects in different thematic areas, a great many facts and issues emerge. Many of the activities in each country deserve individual, in-depth, evaluations whether to illuminate the fullness of their creativity or to cast a more penetrating light on their limitations. This report would sacrifice utility, however, should each activity be systematically evaluated, nor was there time within the scope of this evaluation for the breadth of stakeholder interaction or project-site contact that would be necessary for thorough country-level programme evaluations. This is an evaluation of a regional project. Country-level activities are examined with a focus on their contribution to the regional

project in light of the G-RBSA, Regional, Sub-regional, and DWCP outcomes prioritized.

The principal clients for the evaluation are ROAP-Bangkok, relevant country offices, project management, GENDER, PROGRAM, EVAL, and the donor.

Methodology

The evaluation manager is Ms. Pamornrat Pringsulaka (ILO-ROAP). The independent evaluator is Lisa Stearns (independent consultant).

Main Findings & Conclusions

The evaluation is based on a desk study and the results of an evaluation mission. Of the 10 countries with projects funded by the G-RBSA four were selected for the evaluation mission. Discussions took place in China 12-16 April, in the Philippines 19-21 April, in India 21-24 April, and in Thailand 26-30 April. Conference calls were held with ILO staff in Indonesia, Lao PDR and Cambodia on 29th and 30th April. Fieldtrips were necessarily limited, but 1-day field trips were arranged in China and India. These were useful opportunities to see projects functioning in context. Preliminary findings were presented at a debriefing held with ILO management in Bangkok at the end of the evaluation mission.

Summary Findings and Conclusions

Despite challenges faced in introducing a new funding modality, the delivery rate for RBSA programmed technical work globally has already been assessed at 77% for the first biennium.¹ This evaluation finds that the ROAP G-RBSA also achieved an overall high delivery rate on prioritized outcomes.

The mechanism's flexibility enabled response to political openings among constituents through which ILO technical assistance was able to reinforce not only DWCP outcomes but also fundamental and cross-cutting principles of the Organization such as support for Worker Organizations, and gender

¹ ILO Programme, Financial and Administration Committee, Report GB.307/PFA/2, Geneva, March 2010

mainstreaming. An impressive legacy has been left of institutional interventions facilitated, networks built, skills imparted, and materials distributed which will strengthen DWCP and Regional outcomes.

A flexible mechanism allowed multifaceted, responsive programming designs

Apart from the regional coherence of Decent Work for Domestic Workers (DWDW) campaigns, the design of each country-level project was distinct and multi-faceted. The validity of this dispersion was facilitated by the fact that safe migration programming throughout the region had set the stage. It is more challenging to assure quality control over a plethora of smaller projects, but over-all, this design flexibility was used consistently with purposes envisioned for the G-RBSA and with results consistent with prioritized DWCP outcomes.

Enhanced participation in international standard-making

G-RBSA was particularly useful as a tool by which ILO leveraged convening power to mobilize a high regional participation in the ILC standard setting process. In all participating countries a consultation process was supported in which constituents were motivated, civil society included and domestic workers empowered. This effective use of ILO's convening power produced a visible role in the region for ILO's global standard making process. Of the 13 governments from Asia Pacific Region that responded to the L&P Questionnaire in time, 6 were G-RBSA participants.² This level of participation is likely to have been lower in the absence of ILO's initiative.

Contributions to new domestic awareness and policy change

² Note that the Cambodia Government also submitted a L&P Questionnaire after the final deadline. It was not, therefore, included in the ILO official count, but the Office did analyse the Cambodian Govt response.

The DWDW campaigns increased popular awareness by increasing accurate, locally applicable, information about trafficking and domestic workers for the media, constituents and advocacy organizations. The ILO-Asia website created for the DWDW campaign has potential significance beyond the life of the G-RBSA and beyond the Region. These contributions of G-RBSA have played an effective role in getting policy acceptance of the labour dimensions of human trafficking as well as continuing the campaign to move anti-trafficking policy from a focus on punishment toward prevention and service provision. Policy successes included new legislative initiatives, advocacy to pass pending legislation, improved enforcement of local legislation benefiting domestic workers, and promotion of government action plans for the prevention of trafficking.

Empowering domestic workers

Activities directly empowering domestic workers through combinations of training, organizing, and mobilizing were some of the most potentially transformative work engaged by the G-RBSA. Identity, dignity, and hope are some of the outputs for the stakeholders involved – in addition to outputs consistent with DWCP outcomes on sustained livelihood and safe migration. This work is also the most vulnerable in terms of sustainability. Domestic workers themselves have energy and will for self-help but their work conditions present barriers to collective action. The G-RBSA has raised expectations among this community; not always with clear plans for how to sustain inclusion and capacity building.

Data collection still weak

In areas of domestic work, trafficking, and sexual harassment advocates still labour under the difficulty of persuading authorities without adequate local data. To address this need, G-RBSA commissioned useful research in China, India, and Thailand to map existing literature and/or survey law reform options. Only in Cambodia, however, was new baseline data collected.

Gender Capacity Building

There is agreement in the Region regarding the need to support processes for gender mainstreaming in institutions, as well as to develop the skills necessary to apply ILO and other gender mainstreaming tools. Translations and adaptations of materials, as well as training and practical application opportunities promoted ILO tools such as PGA, GEMS, GMPDME and GAD checklists. If mainstreaming tools are to be effectively applied and followed up then the assistance of experienced professionals is needed to backstop the work of informed gender focal points. A pilot effort to build a local network of gender experts was another G-RBSA contribution. The impact and efficiency of these sub-projects is only measurable by monitoring medium and long-term changes within targeted organizations.

Earmarking

In the Asia Pacific Region the specific G-RBSA earmarking was easily accommodated within DWCP priorities. Domestic workers' protection, and prevention of trafficking are central to the equality and non-discrimination as well as the safe migration DWCP outcomes that are already priorities in the Region.

Gender specialists were also unanimous in pointing out that gender mainstreaming is now sacred litany but that it remains exceedingly difficult to leverage funds to address the sore lack of competent gender specialists without whom organizations cannot apply gender mainstreaming tools or monitor gender mainstreaming implementation.

Nevertheless Country Offices were keenly aware that with geographic earmarking Africa stands to win. With thematic earmarking, Country Offices are concerned that there will be fewer resources for those country mandates that are seldom prioritized by donors, e.g. labour market governance, and skills development. Furthermore, some interlocutors fear that earmarking may exacerbate what they perceived as increasing difficulty in local fundraising since the introduction of the RBSA mechanism.

Satisfaction of long-term goals with short-term resources

It is difficult to accomplish long term planning goals with short-term resources. DWCPs are long term agendas. On average, the G-RBSA supported functional programming for not more than a year. The Region tackled this dilemma most successfully where G-RBSA funds were used to:

- Fill a niche in an ongoing programme suffering from budgets too tightly calculated to accommodate the risks encounter;
- Bridge programmes that were likely to receive new funding;
- Engage with co-funders positioned to keep the course; or
- Create synergies for autonomous action via ILO convening power.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations

The ILO might review its self-profiling policy. Its unique institutional access affords it a special role in the development community; a role in which it has contributed much more than what is regularly credited to it. Better information flow would respond to persistent donors' concern for delivery capacity.

1. Web platforms with significant potential to contribute to the regional knowledge base including the Asia-Pacific platform on Domestic Work should be maintained, expanded, and profiled as significant ILO contributions to global consciousness raising on key decent work policy issues.
2. Regional and Country Offices should be given reasonable time between the announcement of RBSA bids and proposal deadlines to ensure consultation with participating Country Offices.

3. RBSAs should not be tied to biennium cycles but rather to a more relevant administrative framework.
4. Some system of recording RBSA expenditures on country-level activities including the contributions of co-funders should be devised.
5. RBSA programming priorities and project design decisions should continue to be taken at the Regional level in consultation with the Country Offices.
6. Where the multiplicity of activities funded by an RBSA is as diverse geographically and thematically as was the case with G-RBSA, evaluators should be given the time to conduct in-depth result-based-management evaluations of a limited number of individual activities. This would contribute to ensuring accountability for the whole design
7. Where there appear timely and fertile political settings for regionally integrated ILO initiatives that are consistent with common elements of DWCPs, they should be given priority in RBSA allocations.
8. Where RBSAs invest successfully in innovative initiatives during an international standard setting process, every effort should be made to identify general budget resources, ongoing project funds, or new RBSA funds to maintain a reasonable level of technical assistance for continued national involvement.
9. Effort should be made to fund at least one regional, multi-stakeholder, knowledge-sharing event after the June 2010 ILC to consolidate regional DWDW experience and stimulate continuity for initiatives underway.
10. Sustainable initiatives to support gender-mainstreaming should be cognizant that training in ILO gender mainstreaming tools needs to be planned together with opportunities for trainees to apply the tools and follow-up the recommendations that result. In order to facilitate this process the development of local gender expertise should be integrated into gender-mainstreaming programmes.
11. Where initial G-RBSA 2008-2009 investments have produced promising results in terms of stimulating domestic worker organizing, and developing educational opportunities for domestic workers and migrants, all effort should be made to provide reasonable follow-up.

LESSONS LEARNED

This project is nearing its end and with the unpredictable size and focus of future RBSA allocations, only very generic management recommendations are likely to be relevant:

Lesson 1: RBSA and ILO Profile

A short-term, sometimes-earmarked, funding mechanism like the RBSA does not solve the ILO's need for long-term investment in the decent work agenda. Over-reliance on such mechanisms can exacerbate a characteristic of the ILO upon which a number of the interlocutors commented: ILO has become known for setting the conditions for policy or institutional change over the long term, creating excellent materials to serve those

processes, then leaving the field to others like the World Bank or EU. It is unfortunate that because of short programming horizons, mature outcomes are not always fully associated with the ILO, and therefore levers for accessing the resources needed to continue good work are lost. Ultimately an increase in regular ILO budgets is what is needed to realize the long term goals of decent work. Recommendations 1 and 2 follow from this lesson.

Lesson 2: RBSA needs streamlined procedures

The RBSA mechanism has administrative teething problems that must be worked out. Delay in delivery of funds, insecurities regarding timeframes for planning, and unpredictable earmarking complicate results-based-management. Recommendations 3-5 follow from this lesson.

Lesson 3: RBSA - decentralized programming

To maximize efficient and effective outputs with a flexible funding mechanism like RBSA, Regional and Country Offices are best positioned to undertake project planning but accountability must be ensured. Recommendations 6 and 7 follow from this lesson.

Lesson 4: G-RBSA success in capitalizing on a political moment

The G-RBSA has demonstrated particular impact in expanding regional participation in an international standard making process. It has also demonstrated that such participation can be an incentive to constituents, and leverage for domestic advocacy groups, to work toward domestic law and policy reform in the area under global review. Recommendations 8-10 follow from this lesson.

Lesson 5: Enhanced local gender expertise is needed to implement gender-mainstreaming commitments

UN agencies, ILO social partners, and many civil society organizations have made public commitments to mainstreaming gender equality principles. There is strong interest

among these communities in learning to apply ILO gender-mainstreaming tools. While these tools are generally “user friendly”, learning them requires practice in application and follow-up: practice that must be facilitated by experienced gender specialists if systemic impact is to be maximized. The recognition of gender experts and their role is part of the consciousness raising process. In addition, local networks of gender experts are needed as a resource to ensure the sustainability of gender-mainstreaming initiatives. Recommendation 11 follows from this lesson.

Lesson 6: Domestic workers and immigrants can be empowered to mobilize for their own rights

Domestic workers and immigrants, although often working in situations that do not favour the development of collective action, or self-improvement, are poised to work collectively for their rights if encouraged. They will also respond to educational offerings that enhance their work prospects if such offerings are appropriately organized. Ethical issues are raised, however, by lifting hopes and aspirations without sustained capacity to follow-through on initiatives. Recommendation 12 follows from this lesson.