



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation
Office

Independent Final Evaluation

Improving labour relations for decent work and sustainable development in the Myanmar garment industry (ILO-GIP)

Quick Facts

Country: Myanmar.

Final Evaluation: 17 May 2020

Mode of Evaluation: Independent Final Evaluation

Administrative Office: ILO Liaison Office for Myanmar

Technical Office: INWORK, ILO, Geneva

Evaluation Manager: Mr. Dzung Bui Van, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, ILO Country Office for Viet Nam, Hanoi.

Evaluation Consultant: Theo van der Loop (International Consultant)

Programme End: 31 May 2020.

Programme Code: MMR/16/01/MUL.

Donor & Project Budget: Jointly funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Hennes & Mauritz (H&M) and Marks & Spencer (M&S); Total project budget: US \$ 2,486,437.

Keywords: Industrial Relations, Decent Work, Social Dialogue, Poverty Reduction, Empowerment of Women, and Garment Industry.

Background & Context

Project Description, Objectives and Institutional Arrangements

The present Evaluation Report is mandated by the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Independent Final Evaluation of the ILO-GIP project. This project aims to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the empowerment of women in Myanmar by improving labour relations and social dialogue in the garment sector. Therefore, the project aims to achieve five immediate objectives (IO) and 17 Outputs in the LogFrame of December 2017.

The ILO-GIP is jointly funded by Sida, H&M and M&S with a total budget of US \$ 2,486,437, amounting to 77% public funds and 23% private funds. It is implemented in collaboration with the

main local industry stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MoLIP), the Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar (IWFM), the Myanmar Industries, Craft and Services Unions Federation (MICS) and the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA). The project is also liaising with relevant other garment sector initiatives such as the EU funded Smart Myanmar project and the Aung Myin Hmu (AMH) project. At the enterprise level, the project is implemented in 20 garment factories, including 10 factories which supply to H&M and 6 to M&S.

ILO-GIP is implemented by a team of 3 technical staff based in Yangon. Administrative supervision is done by the ILO Liaison Office (LO) for Myanmar and technical backstopping by INWORK, Geneva. The ILO DWT team in Bangkok and ILO Geneva provide technical support where required. A Project Advisory Committee was planned in the PRODOC but did not materialize. An internal Mid-Term Evaluation was done in the third quarter of 2018.

Objective and Methodology of the Evaluation

The main overall purpose of the present Final Independent Evaluation is to promote accountability to ILO key stakeholders and donors, and to enhance learning within the ILO and key stakeholders. It was conducted between February and June 2020. The findings will be used to improve design and implementation of future relevant projects/programs. The main objective of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, validity, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, i.e. the six 'Evaluation Criteria', and to document lessons learnt and possible good practices. Two other important areas of focus, not mentioned in the ToR, have been identified in the inception period of the present evaluation, i.e. the alignment of the ILO-GIP project objectives and outputs with the requirements under EU's Everything But Arms (EBA) trade preference, and an investigation of the project set up as a Public Private Development Partnership (PPDP).

The scope of the evaluation covers all interventions the ILO-GIP has implemented under the project from the start until the time of the final evaluation and it covers all the geographical coverage of the project in Yangon. The cross-cutting concerns of gender equality and non-discrimination, promotion of international labour standards, tripartite processes and constituent capacity development are specifically addressed in this evaluation.

The Methodology for the evaluation consists of a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collected, including interviews with key stakeholders and Focus Group Discussions in Myanmar as well as observations, critical reflection and triangulation of information acquired. The field mission to Myanmar took place from 10 to 18 March 2020, and it was cut short a few days because of the then rapidly developing global COVID-19 crisis. The Data Collection Worksheet in Annex 4 developed in the Inception Report identifies 25 Evaluation Questions which are summarized below under 'Findings'. In terms of limitations, this specific assignment involves a challengingly large number of 25 evaluation questions 46 including sub-questions) and of activities identified in the LogFrame (56). These limitations were mitigated respectively by focusing on the six main evaluation criteria, and by focusing on those activities that are underlined by the different stakeholders during the interviews and adjusted with the desk study

Main Findings & Conclusions

The findings are presented in this section according to the six Evaluation Criteria distinguished throughout this report. The overall **Relevance** of the ILO-GIP project has been very high from the beginning in 2016 especially in light of the then feeble institutional capacities of both workers and employers' organizations; the scarce recognition of labour rights; poor working conditions; and gender inequities that exist in the Myanmar garment sector. The project strategy and approach levels are consistent with the needs and priorities of the current and long-term development needs of Myanmar and with those of the beneficiaries and the tripartite constituents. The project donors indicated the particularly high relevance of the approach taken by the project. ILO-GIP is also aligned to the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Myanmar, to three Sustainable Development Goals as well as to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Lastly, the ILO-GIP project has a clear focus on issues that are part of the requirements for the EU-EBA trade preferences, including the fundamental principles and rights at work.

The **Validity of Design** is overall not fully satisfactory. While the project design is in itself

mostly logical and coherent, there are some substantial flaws with an (over-)ambitious design, the lack of a theory of change and the almost complete absence of the Government (MoLIP). This was partly due to the fact that the design was not an easy process, taking a relatively long time with the involvement of different stakeholders. The project design was also not very realistic in the sense that three years would not be sufficient for the longer-term goals embedded in the five Immediate Objectives. The project set up as a Public Private Development Partnership (PPDP) was an interesting one, and worked out well in most respects; in fact, the intervention of H&M and M&S to convince their suppliers to join ILO-GIP's training programmes turned out to be a necessary condition for the project's progress and achievements. At the same time, the MTE (2018) identified a potential conflict of interest that might negatively influence the employers' and national owned factories' willingness to join in ILO-GIP. Ownership was quite low among MGMA and MoLIP, while it has been gradually increasing for the trade unions. The gender needs and interests were clearly addressed in all five immediate objectives, while the second one is even exclusively directed at the empowerment of women workers, viz. a twin-track approach. The monitoring and evaluation arrangements planned in the PRODOC were implemented only partially, especially because the project took long to actually start up and then priority was given to move forward as quickly as possible with the activities themselves.

In terms of **Effectiveness**, it was concluded that the planned activities have in large majority taken place which is in itself a significant achievement. The project has taken clear action on most of the 14 Recommendations of the MTE (see Annex 5). The substantial achievements in the area of training are summarized through the five types of training delivered (see Table 2) which were generally much appreciated by beneficiaries and stakeholders. In addition, some useful partnering by the ILO-GIP project has facilitated these trainings, in particular through the delivery of training by local service providers. Several other important achievements are the extensive library of training tools, the Gender Equality Assessment ('Weaving Gender') and the Gender Profiles, the WCC-Toolkit, the formation of OSH committees in all 20 factories, the two research studies undertaken jointly with MGMA, and the production of informative and educational videos.

The ILO-GIP project suffered from a relatively large number of constraining factors often resulting in delays, while the important achievements described above were in particular made possible by several success factors, such as the crucial role of H&M

and M&S stimulating their suppliers to participate. In addition, the PPDP project set-up was in the end crucial for the effectiveness of the ILO-GIP project because factories were often joining the project as advised and stimulated by their buyers. Flexibility and creativity were shown by the project team to design various measures to timely address the problems or delays encountered. Stakeholder participation of the social partners can at best be described as partial: while the commitment of the two trade unions has clearly increased since the start of the project, the reluctance of the MGMA to squarely join project activities continued until today, partly as a result of their reluctance to deal with trade unions.

With respect to *Efficiency*, it was found that the resources were mostly used in an efficient manner but that on some occasions it could have been better managed. At the same time, there do not seem to have been many clear-cut options at hand to cut costs while still delivering the same level of achievements and outcomes. The expenditures indicated quite a balanced spending pattern with 40% for staff and 43% for activities, and the yearly expenditures provide a logical pattern (Table 3). Considering the wide coverage of the project combined with the large quantity of the interventions, as well as the overall complexity of the project's context, the staffing for its implementation seems to be less than sufficient in the technical areas. Since the planned activities were in majority completed and additional activities were undertaken, and since the financial resources were almost all spent in 2020, it could be concluded that the delivery was to a certain extent timely although a substantial no-cost extension was required and there were issues of trainings being overrepresented in the later phases of the project.

The ILO-GIP project has laid a basis for improving labour relations in the future which is a first necessary step towards a contribution to broader and longer-term *Impact* and decent work goal in Myanmar. The project has mainly worked with beneficiaries in 20 garment factories and with workers' and employers' organisations and local service providers, most of whom learned for the first time about labour relations, social dialogue, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and productivity through ILO-GIP. The specific impact achieved vis-à-vis the 17 outputs in the LogFrame is satisfactory with the majority of outputs (75%) at least partly achieved (Table 5). The project contributed to a certain degree to improved industrial relations especially in the 20 factories involved in the project and among the two trade unions as was illustrated with quotes from beneficiaries interviewed (including representatives in WCC's).

The *Sustainability* envisaged by the PRODOC was very much hinged on the full participation in the project of the workers' and employers' organizations, and as we have seen in the above this has been achieved only partially whereby the complete absence of the usually influential and steering Project Advisory Committee (PAC) is exemplary. Still progress has been made and it would be very unfortunate if the efforts would stop here. The project does not have an explicit exit strategy apart from the activities and documents that were developed since January 2020 as preparations for a possible Phase II and the project will provide follow-up until the end of May 2020. However, now is the time to decide which unit within ILO will take the lead after that. A possible follow-up intervention could be done either through a GIP Phase II, or through the starting of the consultation process with the Myanmar Tripartite Constituents about a possible introduction in Myanmar of the joint ILO and IFC Better Work (BW) programme. It would be only logical if such a future intervention would partner with the other main garment sector interventions, i.e. EU SMART and CARE/AMH. The very first crucial step is to build trust with as well as among the tripartite constituents by having individual and plenary consultations. An analysis was made in this report of the interest in a possible new intervention among the main stakeholders (Table 6). From this analysis it was concluded that most stakeholders would welcome BW to Myanmar provided sufficient consultations take place in particular with the tripartite constituents and provided there are special components on capacity building for all three constituents as well as for the nationally owned factories.

Recommendations

- 1) Continue activities on improving labour relations, social dialogue and gender equality as this is no less relevant now than it was at the design stages of the ILO-GIP project and try to combine this with emergency bridging programmes to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis for the (laid-off) workers and for the factories as has been proposed by some of the social partners and as currently is being developed jointly by GIZ and ILO-GIP, while other donors have also expressed interest in such programmes. As the ILO Director-General Guy Ryder recently stated: "Workers and businesses are facing catastrophe, in both developed and developing economies. We have to move fast, decisively, and together. The right, urgent, measures, could make the difference between survival and collapse."

- 2) Follow more closely the ILO template for a Project Document (PRODOC) in follow-up interventions, and include a Theory of Change, a clear M&E Plan, an appropriate Risk Matrix regularly updated, an Exit Strategy, and make sure that the Immediate Objectives are reachable within the project period.
- 3) Involve always the official ILO counterpart from the side of the Government (viz. ministries of labour/Employment) in any follow-up intervention and strive for enhanced ownership in the relevant department(s); this will in particular also enhance the leverage of the intervention vis-à-vis the employers' and workers' organisations to join consultative structures such as a project steering committee.
- 4) Enhance cooperation between ILO and other interventions in particular through the proposed One ILO Approach, which has been tried and tested in Ethiopia.
- 5) Make sure that the size of the project team in follow-up interventions is appropriate to the amount of work proposed in the PRODOC as in the case of ILO-GIP a three-person project team had to manage 56 activities in addition to Finance, M&E, Communication and Knowledge Management.
- 6) Pay more attention to a well-developed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan established from the inception phase of a follow-up intervention by employing an additional national staff member for M&E and Knowledge Management from the start of the project.
- 7) Continue the important work undertaken by ILO-GIP related to Gender Equality via a twin-track approach in a follow-up intervention and include attention for the new ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work as well as for Women's Voice (representation and leadership).
- 8) Nominate a unit and a person within ILO who will be in the lead to develop a follow-up phase and who will take over from the CTA of the ILO-GIP project on June 1st, 2020 when the ILO-GIP project closes.
- 9) Initiate as soon as possible the consultations with the Tripartite Constituents (bilaterally and/or plenary for example through the NTDF) on a follow-intervention either through a GIP Phase-II or by introducing the joint ILO and IFC programme 'Better Work' in Myanmar, and gradually include in these consultations the other stakeholders identified in the present report such as the nationally owned factories, internationally owned factories, Brands/Buyers and Donors (see Table 6).

Lessons Learned and Good Practices

From the experience gained by evaluating the ILO-GIP project in the present report two Lessons Learned (**LL**) and two Good Practices (**GP**) have been compiled as follows:

LL1: Stakeholders' participation of all three Tripartite Constituents, including the Government (a Ministry of Labour or Employment), in the project design and in the implementation result not only in Ownership but also allows for leverage vis-a-vis the other constituents.

LL2: The Public Private Development Partnership (PPDP) Model used in this project has advantages and disadvantages which should be managed well especially concerning the different roles played by international private companies.

GP1: The Twin-Track strategy on Gender Equality based on the comprehensive Gender Equality Assessment is a Good Practice that should be replicated (GEA, entitled 'Weaving Gender').

GP2: The collaboration between ILO-GIP and the local service provider Aung Myin Hmu (AMH/CARE International) resulted in the mainstreaming of Industrial Relations issues into the existing national training programme of AMH.