



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation
Office

Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in the Maldives – Final Independent Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Maldives

Final Evaluation: June 2015

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Administrative Office: CO-Colombo

Technical Office: FUNDAMENTALS, DWT
New Delhi

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Project End: 30 June 2015

Project Code: MDV/10/01/USA

Donor & Project Budget: US Department of
Labor (US\$ 640,000)

Keywords *governance, labour administration, economic and social rights, freedom of association, right to strike, institutional framework, institutional capacity building, collective bargaining, trade union rights, labour relations, employers and workers organizations*

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project was designed in the wake of the accession of the Maldives to the ILO. Its

purpose was to improve the application of fundamental principles and rights at work. Three immediate objectives were agreed. (1) Developing a revised legal framework that implements international labour standards, protects fundamental labour rights, in particular freedom of association and collective bargaining, establishes dispute resolution mechanisms, defines the right to strike and promotes labour-management cooperation. (2) Reforming the labour law administration at central and selected atoll levels for more effective service provision, including clearer functions, better working procedures, improved mechanisms for labour law implementation, particularly labour inspections and dispute resolution, improving the Employment Tribunal's capacity and better co-ordination. (3) Strengthening independent workers and employers organizations to engage in sound workplace cooperation and labour-management relations, participate in social dialog, improve working conditions and enhance productivity.

The project structure consisted of a national coordinator, backstopped by ILO staff from HQ, DWT-New Delhi, and CO-Colombo, and supported with international short-term experts. Specific work included legal drafting, as well as organizational development and training, notably for the Labour Relations Authority and the the Employment Tribunal, and training for workers and employers organizations. Most of the activities focused on the capital city, Malé,

because labour market structures had to be set up from scratch at central level first.

Present Situation of the Project

The evaluation occurred just prior to project closure. At the time of publication of this summary, the project has been closed.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purposes of this final evaluation were to fulfil the accountability to the donor, to serve as internal organizational learning and for improvement of similar projects in the future. The evaluation was to assess the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved as per project logical framework, and whether the extent to which the project partners and beneficiaries have benefited from the project and the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation. The evaluation also aimed at identifying lessons learnt and possible good practices, and developing recommendations that can be followed up by key constituents and also ILO.

Primary stakeholders of the evaluation were project management, ILO (ILO CO-Colombo, DWT India, ROAP and FUNDAMENTALS Branch at HQ), the Government of the Maldives and USDOL, and the tripartite constituents and other parties involved in the execution of the project.

Methodology of evaluation

Time for the evaluation was very constrained. Therefore, the main methodological elements consisted of a desk review of program documents, meetings with available stakeholders during a field visit to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, based on semi-structured interviews (following the standard project evaluation criteria set), triangulation of observations in the field, as well as informed

judgment. Additional interviews followed the field visit in order to broaden the information collection and to obtain additional angles on the findings from the field.

Jointly assessing the results of the project by the tripartite stakeholders in the Maldives, based on a facilitated process and an evaluation grid rooted in quality management, helped to achieve a common understanding of the level of achievement of results.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project was fully relevant to the different processes supported in the target country as well as to ILO and USDOL higher-level strategies. Relevance of project design was ensured both by ILO specialists and the ILO Country Office. Yet there were very divergent perceptions of relevance among the tripartite stakeholders in the Maldives, ranging from welcoming to hostile, which had negative impact on project effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.

The project will not be able to ensure sustainability of achievements without further assistance beyond project duration. The project has not been effective in delivering its planned outcomes, even if many planned and useful outputs have been delivered. Only under one of the three outcomes have outputs been put to use.

The major reason for the lack of success in reaching defined outcomes related to the design of the project which was based on a relatively high number of assumptions that were not tenable ("killer assumptions") relating to ownership and participation. While readiness of government to participate was influenced by a change in government, employers resisted implementation from the outset.

Basing the project strategy on a high number of assumptions has also led to responsibility for

achieving project outcomes not been properly assumed ("externalized outcomes").

The project to a certain extent reflects a lack of strategies for dealing with new member countries of the ILO. ILO mechanisms and routines are well developed for those countries that have been members all along or developed their capacities over time. However, there is no strategy for "greenfield" developments.

Management arrangements generally were effective, however, it may possibly be more effective to deploy international project coordinators in a situation where a country is completely new to the ILO (with lack of sufficient funding or higher cost, possibly, limiting this option).

The ILO has had difficulties in making itself and its tripartite approach properly understood in the Maldives. There are several reasons for this, including different terminologies and possibly a politicized perception of the ILO because from the viewpoint of important stakeholders in the Maldives the accession of the country to the ILO is largely associated with a specific presidency.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

1) ILO needs to ensure that, the relevance is properly assessed from the perspectives of all constituents and stakeholders. Where there are significant discrepancies for project design, and strategies, these discrepancies need to be drawn up before or during the early stages of implementation.

2) An analysis of assumptions as well as strategies for dealing with assumptions is of key importance for ensuring feasibility (and constitutes good practice). Testing and monitoring of assumptions is required during implementation and ideally prepare mitigation measures or strategies in advance ("Plan B") in

case assumptions do not materialize as expected.

3) All projects concerned with governance, legal reform, and structural changes certainly need to consider the potential effects of changes in government on achieving project outcomes.

4) Changes of socio-political and legal systems require time, anywhere in the world. A project period of 3-4 years (often resulting from medium-term expenditure planning) is usually insufficient to change systems even in a friendly environment.

5) Ways need to be found to systematically assist new members of the ILO in developing their legal systems and organizational structures to match or respond to ILO standards, e.g. guideline for staff responsible or assigned to new member countries.

6) An advocacy role in a new member country constitutes a different setting than technical or administrative representation of the ILO and would call for an international coordinator. Once the country has sufficient experience in dealing with the ILO, a switch to national coordinators will be efficient because the share of advocacy work is bound to decrease and the technical and administrative content to increase. As the cost of international coordinators is significantly higher than the cost of national coordinators, this will not easily be financed out of available budgets, and respective funds need to be made available from other sources.

7) Managing small countries out of larger Country Offices is not very effective while basic systems still need to be built and a general understanding for the role and work of the ILO is still lacking. Permanent ILO presence is of utmost importance in order to be able to respond ad hoc to any new governance related processes and maintain close relationships with tripartite stakeholders. Following project closure, it would therefore be

important to maintain a permanent representative of ILO in the Maldives, possibly integrated at UNDP's office. Respective funds need to be made available.

8) Effectiveness of management arrangements can be significantly enhanced by verifying the concrete availability of specialists to directly contribute to projects during the project planning stage, and obtaining commitments for participation prior to the launch of the project.

9) ILO needs to be more active to build and expand contacts with the employers in the Maldives both because of their strong influence in the political sphere and because their understanding of the benefits of working with the ILO needs to be significantly enhanced.

10) ILO should consider more actively supporting processes of change and cooperation by organizing highest-ranking visits from ILO headquarters.

Lessons Learned:

1) A project period of 3-4 years (often resulting from medium-term expenditure planning) is usually insufficient to change systems even in a friendly environment.

2) Sound analysis at the outset of a project is necessary and ILO usually invests sufficient resources in analyzing the context before launching a project.

3) Proper coordination between different ILO units may be a precondition for ensuring the joint management of human resources. Awareness of project planners right from the project planning stage should go a long way in solving such problems, by reviewing staff availability beforehand.

4) The project underestimated the amount of time required to achieve outcomes by assuming that the introduction of legal system changes, development of proper procedures, and training would be sufficient to fundamentally change administrative practice.

5) Planners need to make sure that time frames are sufficient for achieving the intended outcomes. Additional funding from other sources should be secured to continue the work should be part of the tasks to be accomplished by the project team and the responsible ILO offices, in coordination with ILO Geneva.