



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Improving social protection and promoting employment - Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Burkina Faso, Cambodia and Honduras
Mode of Evaluation: Final
Date of Evaluation: June 2013
ILO Administrative responsibility: ILO Geneva Office
Technical Area: Employment, Social Protection
Evaluation Management: Ms. Karuna Pal, Social Protection Department, ILO
Evaluation Team: José Francisco Pacheco Jiménez
Project Start: November 2009
Project Code: INT/09/06/EEC
Donor: European Community (€2,500,000 (90.3%) and ILO (€269,124)
Key Words: integrated approach, social protection, employment

Background and context

The 2008 Global Financial and economic crisis negatively affected the social conditions of countries all over the world. Contrary to the situation in developed countries where social protection plays a key role in the mitigation of those negative effects, in most developing countries social protection systems and labor markets usually have minimal capacity to increase coverage and protect vulnerable families during economic downturns. It is in that context that the ILO/EC project *Improving social protection and promoting employment* was conceived. The initiative was defined as a joint effort between the ILO and the European

Commission with the purpose to assist the beneficiary countries in the formulation of integrated social protection and employment promotion policy based on national consensus, in line with the institutional commitments identified in the ILO's Decent Work agenda, the European Consensus on Development and the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

The overall objective of the project was *to promote integrated social protection and employment policies based on national consensus*. The project was intended to be an input in the process of national social protection and employment policy formulation. The specific objectives were defined in the following terms: **Specific objective 1:** Development of national plans to extend social protection and to promote employment demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of both a basic social protection package and coordinated inclusive employment strategies. **Specific objective 2:** Promotion of an international campaign and platform for awareness-raising and exchanges of good practice in social protection and employment.

Present situation of the project

The project ended in December 2012 with the implementation of the ILO/EC Interregional Conference held in Brussels in December, 2012. At the moment of its closure, the project had produced 13 different publications (diagnosis and policy documents) and 18 social dialogue activities in the three countries. All the countries

had a final document with “*elements for the formulation of a social protection extension and employment promotion integrated policy*”, being this one of the critical inputs for the future preparation of national social policy.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The initial planning identified nine critical activities as the building blocks of the project. These activities went from the establishment of National Tripartite Steering Committees in each of the pilot countries to the development of diagnostic studies and planning tools, the preparation of a draft action plan and knowledge transfer activities. The project included four expected results: a diagnosis of the corresponding national social protection and employment sectors, a draft national action plan prepared through social dialogue and based on the integrated social protection-employment promotion approach, national capacity building, knowledge development and transfer and the dissemination of knowledge generated through several channels. Government officials of relevant institutions in social protection and employment areas (mainly the ministries of Labour, Social Security, Employment, Finance, Planning, Health and Education) and civil society groups (particularly trade unions and employers organizations) were the main target groups of the project. Final beneficiaries were identified as lower income households, unemployed and vulnerable groups.

Methods of evaluation

The final independent evaluation aims at examining the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved through an assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the outcomes achieved. The evaluation includes all the activities developed by the project between November 2009 and December 2012. It was conducted between December 4th and April 17th. The primary clients of the evaluation are the ILO and the EC. The process of data collection comprised two moments. The first moment refers to the attendance at the Interregional conference in Brussels and the ILO headquarters in Geneva while in a second moment the consultant paid field visits to Honduras and Burkina Faso

between February and March. Two local consultants, one in Cambodia and one in Burkina Faso, also worked in the information collection process. The data was collected using a *standardized questionnaire* that was complemented with an extensive review of the documents prepared under the project, the minutes of the ILO/EC Steering Committee and some basic quantitative information regarding budgeting aspects.

Main findings and conclusions

The evaluation concluded that, in general terms, the ILO-EC project was a well-designed initiative that took advantage of an international situation (the financial crisis) and identified an area of critical importance for the socioeconomic development of developing countries. The project was pertinent and relevant to the development priorities of the pilot countries. The project achieves the objectives defined in the design. But, besides the successful completion of activities and the preparation of several reports, the project was important because it promoted social dialogue, increased the level of awareness about the role of social protection and employment policies and provided the basis for future policy initiatives. This brought the social protection-employment promotion issue back to the priorities of the policy agenda and generated an increasing awareness regarding the importance of developing coherent national policies.

The available documental evidence is clear about the existence of design and implementation issues that may require further discussion and review in future projects. The evaluation highlights the importance of paying attention to the following aspects: the project design should be undertaken jointly with local stakeholders (at least with other ILO offices and EU delegations); the objectives and expected outcomes can be the same for all the pilot countries but the activities should be country-specific; projects should identify performance indicators to monitor follow-up; pilot country selection criteria should be more specific, not using broad standards as the ones applied to this project; there should be a mechanism in place to introduce changes in the design in a more flexible way. In addition,

despite the enhanced awareness, not all the actors fully understood how to link social protection extension and employment promotion, being this an area where ILO and EU should continue efforts to improve the capacities of the technical staff and the authorities in the conceptual and methodological scope of the integrated approach.

Despite the positive role of the National Steering Committees SC in the promotion of social dialogue, the participation of some key stakeholders was limited to a minor role, mostly assistance to workshops. This was the cases, for instance, for the Ministry of Social Development of Honduras and the Social Security Office in Burkina Faso, who claimed having had limited participation in the discussion of the outputs. Despite this claim, this evaluation found that the composition of the SC was a country-specific decision while the documental evidence at hands confirmed that part of the problem was the unstable participation of many institutions during the set of workshops. In particular, not always the same officials attended all the activities, and this finally distorted the effective involvement of those stakeholders.

From an administrative standpoint, the ILO played an essential role by contributing to the project in 4 areas: the ILO/EC trademark provides confidence on the quality of the work; the project was based on policy approaches developed by the ILO (integrated approach, Decent Work); the project made intensive use of policy tools developed by the ILO (Social Budgeting, SPER¹ and RAP²) during the workshops; and ILO technical and administrative staff heavily supported the implementation. Some management problems, however, appeared in the course of the project. First, the CTAs found difficult to manage it due to the centralized format of the project (distance command from Geneva) and the absence of at least a list of basic indicators to follow-up progress. Second, despite some basic efforts, the relationship with other international agencies was limited to sporadic (but useful) interventions in the development of specific products. Third,

¹ Social Protection Expenditure and Performance Review

² Rapid Assessment Protocole.

the operational framework in which the EU operates seems to be very rigid to the type of projects that the ILO promotes where national results and outcomes depend on the priorities and will of national governments and stakeholders (such as concerning national policy development). In the specific case of this project, changes to the logframe were proposed in line with the recommendations made by the ROM but they were not accepted by the ILO-EC Steering Committee in October 2011. Finally, not all the local stakeholders were convinced that the ILO has full clarity concerning the integrated approach and how both employment and social protection policies can be coordinated. It was said that the ILO still promotes two bodies of policies (one for employment and one for social protection) even though the target population is basically the same. This introduces an element of confusion among local authorities.

Recommendations and lessons learned

The report proposes the following recommendations:

Social dialogue should be maintained and strengthened but with some changes. There is an increasing need to expand the range of participation in the SCs to include other relevant representative institutions and agents that belong to the social protection realm, in line with the new approach. Also, the ILO/EC should promote the approval of local regulations to give the SC a permanent nature far from the electoral and political waves that affect developing countries from time to time.

Efforts should emphasize institutional strengthening in countries before proceeding with policy preparation. Considerable institutional bottlenecks affected the implementation of project activities and eventually restricted the achievement of more outcomes. It seems important, in the future, **to build strong national institutions.** The report recommends paying more attention to two critical factors for the success of future policy development: information systems and administrative/organizational processes. Also, it may be important to support the consolidation of social protection and employment institutional process so linkages exist and, in this way, an integrated approach can be effectively developed.

Continue the capacity building program. The sustainability of many of the project results depends on the existence of a group of government officials and civil society persons who clearly understand the integrated approach and/or are able to implement specific assessment to formulate appropriate policies. Therefore, it is essential to **build strong national capacities** through the implementation of training plans that reinforce the understanding of the links between social protection and employment.

Multi-country projects should move towards a more decentralized execution. An alternative model consists of a structure where the CTA in Geneva defines a single methodological framework and provides the required backstopping support. Then, local coordinators follow the framework but have enough degree of freedom to adapt the logframe to the country conditions.

Introduce changes to the administrative framework in which this type of project operates. The EU administrative framework needs to be more flexible because, as it currently works, it does not grant enough degree of freedom to introduce (sometimes critical) changes to the project.

Adequate preparation of the countries to formulate integrated policies pass through a full clarification of the project inside the ILO. For the ILO, one recommendation is the strengthening of its own role as regulation and normative entity, by the development of a clear concept of the link between employment and social protection. Some opinions pinpoint to the fact that, currently, the ILO employment promotion programs are designing activities to improve the access to employment no matter what happens with respect to social security coverage and vice versa. This situation, it was said, is a bad signal to political stakeholders in the different countries because it may be saying that the entity itself does not have full clarity of the approach it is promoting.

Lessons learned compendium:

The new integrated approach reveals a series of advantages that, if materialized, may help countries to improve the process of policy formulation and enhance the expected results and impacts on the population. However, the

new approach put on the table a series of topics for debate. One of these topics refers to the scope and work of the Tripartite Commissions. The experience shows that, under a new policy approach as the one supported by the project, the institutional framework in which it relies should also experience important changes. Specifically, if the integrated approach promotes a broad concept of social promotion, then the scope of the social dialogue should also be expanded in order to incorporate all this range of groups and institutions that are now part of the concept.

Problems with the institutional settings in low-income countries make difficult the implementation of the policy tools presented as part of this project during the training workshops. New simplified tools and a full reformulation of the existing information systems will contribute to advance toward enhanced institutional capacity to do more complex analyses.

Regarding project management, general indicators exist but some opinions indicated that country-specific metrics should exist because the internal conditions vary considerably from country to country. For future efforts, the lesson is that even if the scale of the project is small or the nature of its outputs is qualitative, each project should have a small set of relevant indicators, including OVI coefficients. Future initiatives should be aware of a series of issues before planning the calendar of implementation: the likelihood that something will go wrong (*risk assessment*), the time allocated to administrative issues (personnel and hiring of consultant) and the level of flexibility the project management guidelines offer in case any variation is required.

One of the factors that affected the late implementation of the project was the slow reaction of the first CTA to the unexpected conditions in the countries. The experience calls for the need to review the recruitment process and the requirements to fill positions of similar nature.

Finally, more advocacy and training on the linkages between social protection and employment is needed in order to design new interventions or new activities.