



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

Evaluation Unit

## Reducing vulnerability to bondage in India through promotion of Decent Work

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** India, Tamil Nadu State

**Mid Term Evaluation:** December 2011

**Mode of Evaluation:** Independent Evaluation

**Technical Area:** Forced Labour

**Evaluation Management:** Jajoon Coue,  
DWT-Bangkok

**Evaluation Team:** Sandhya Kanneganti

**Project Start:** June 2008

**Project Ends:** November 2013

**Project Code:** IND/11/02/CAN - also:  
GLO/06/58/UKM; GLO/06/59/NET;  
INT/04/67/IRL;

**RBSA:** A27005325605

**Donors:** Canada USD 600,000

**Keywords:** Forced labour, vulnerability to  
bondage, debt bondage, decent work.

### Background & Context

#### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Reducing vulnerability to bondage in India through promotion of decent work (RVBIPDW) Project is an area and sector based bonded labour prevention and elimination project. The Immediate Objective

(Purpose) of the project is “to reduce vulnerability of workers to bondage situations in brick manufacturing and rice mill sector in Tamil Nadu by achieving a significant improvement in living and working conditions for women and men workers and their family members”.

The main means of action is to improve *social protection and welfare* of vulnerable workers and their family members through convergence of government schemes; Improve *recruitment and employment practices* by devising new and transparent practices for the recruitment and contracting of migrant workers; Improve *working conditions* by strengthening the capacity of workers and employers to undertake social dialogue for resolution of workplace issues; and fourthly *empowerment of workers and rights based awareness education* enabling them to organize themselves and engage in collective bargaining.

The ILO Project Team, headed by National Project Manger (NPM) directly implements the Project through sub contracts with Implementing Partners (IPs). The State Project Advisory Committee (SPAC), headed by the Principal Secretary, Department of Labour &

Employment provides the overall guidance. The Decent Work Team – India (DWT-India) in partnership with Government of India (GoI) and Government of Tamil Nadu (GoTN) provides the required support. The Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL), ILO provides the technical back stopping support.

### **Present situation of project**

The Project interventions led to greater convergence and coordinated effort in enhancing coverage under the existing Government social protection programs for the migrant labour in the brick kiln and rice mill sectors. In brick kiln sector the migrant labour organised themselves into a Labour union which needs further support to strengthen itself.

### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

The purpose of the independent evaluation is to review the project design, its strategy, relevance, implementation issues, and achievement of objectives. It is to cover all project activities, and look at the role of different stakeholders in project implementation and sustainability of project interventions, and makes recommendations addressed at ILO, GoTN and GoI.

The principal clients for this evaluation are the project management, ILO constituents in India and in Tamil Nadu, AP, Orissa and UP, ILO New Delhi, ILO RO Bangkok, ILO technical unit (SAPFL), CODEV, EVAL and the project donors.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation involved desk review of the project documents and progress reports, minutes of key meetings of the SPAC, MIS reports of Implementation Partners, stakeholder consultations through Focussed Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, etc. and field visits to project districts. These

were the major data sources used for analysis. The rationale for selection of target sites for evaluation and field visits (both source and destination districts of migrant labour), conducting FGDs and KIIs was to get maximum insight from stakeholders into project implementation, activities and achievements.

## **Main Findings & Conclusions**

The project has a tremendous relevance to the ground realities and a strategic fit with the state and national development framework. The project facilitated development of a new approach to recruitment of migrant workers that needs pilot testing in the brick kiln and rice mills sectors.

The convergence approach ensured access to several ongoing government welfare programs and social security schemes to 47% of the target group under the Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board for brick kiln workers and under the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Welfare Board for the rice mill workers. There is evidence of improved workplace facilities and strengthened capacity of stakeholders to address the root causes of bonded labour.

Employers in brick kiln sector played a critical role in improving the living conditions at the workplaces, provided better housing, day care centres for children, safe drinking water, first aid kits with trained personnel, contributed towards provision of noon meals to children educated at worksite schools, resulting in significant reduction of child labour in brick kiln areas and for enrolling workers in welfare boards. More important the Employers Association adopted a code of conduct.

The National Trade Unions and their Joint Federation has played an important role in sensitising and educating the workers on their legal issues and labour rights and facilitated them to form their own workers organisation at least in one sector – brick kiln sector. The Workers are currently pursuing their charter of demands with the employers and government.

The overall the effectiveness of project implementation seems to be positive, especially seen from the perspective of achievement of all immediate objectives. However, the weak project structure, especially the institutional mechanism in implementing the project reveals a mixed picture. The presence of a project coordinator supporting the Implementation Partners ensured wide range of consultations in identifying sector and area specific issues and intervention strategy. If there was greater strategic ownership of the project, Memorandum of Agreement between the ILO and Government of Tamil Nadu (GoTN), issue of overarching guidelines from State level and greater involvement of GoT in project implementation it would have ensured more effective results.

The financial resources for the implementation of activities appear to be adequate. The uncertainty of fund flow and the intermittent nature of financial commitment for the project seem to have resulted in project interventions not being implemented in a consistent and continuous manner. The ILO Project Team's resources seem to have been overstretched with too many responsibilities and too few team members.

A high proportion of project beneficiaries are the socially excluded and discriminated social groups like the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Most Backward

Classes (MBCs).. It is evident that the project outcomes benefited both male (53%) and female (47%) workers, especially in social security coverage under Workers Welfare Boards (WWB). Women workers were linked to the SHG movement. Trainings were held women workers legal rights, maternal health & child care, etc. 36% of the office bearers of the Sakhti Union of brick kiln workers and mastries are women. Considering that alcoholism is very common among male workers, street plays were organized in the workplaces to create awareness about till effects of alcohol and work place discipline.

Considering the contribution of the brick kiln industry to overall employment and productivity to the construction sector in the State, the complexity and deep rooted inequities in labour recruitment practices, the exploitative working conditions, the State Government needs to play an effective institutional role in sustaining and scaling up the good practices of the project by committing appropriate human resources and financial commitment.

The RVBI project has potential to influence policy relating to prevention and abolition of bonded labour system in India. Inputs were provided to the National Task Force on Bonded Labour setup by the MOLE, GoI and to the Sub Group on child labour and bonded labour for the mid-term review of the XI Five year Plan.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

### **Main recommendations and follow-up**

1. ILO needs to take a call on the whether to deepen its work in Tamil Nadu by extending the current project period or move on to other States who are reportedly showing keen interest in replicating the model. Or it can do

- both depending on the resources it is willing to commit.
2. In designing similar projects in future, ILO should ensure greater role in project implementation for the local State Government and limit its (ILOs) role to providing technical support.
  3. ILO Project team should develop an exit strategy for its disengagement or limited engagement in Tamil Nadu and the resources it will provide during the transition period. Inter alia it should support GoTN to develop a road map and action plan to take forward the project interventions, especially in the brick kiln sector.
  4. Department of Labour and Employment, GoTN in turn should issue overarching policy guidelines on the agreed road map and action plan for taking forward the project interventions.
  5. GoTN should extend the project interventions to cover all brick kiln districts so as to enhance productivity in the sector by regulating recruitment practices and improving working conditions in the brick kilns within the purview of the existing laws.
  6. GoTN should take up a campaign for registering all brick kiln workers by making it mandatory for the employers to employ only registered worker in their chambers. A continuous sensitization and capacity building of various government agencies and employers in this sector will go a long way in reducing vulnerability to bondage in this sector.
  7. It is recommended that the implementation processes of the Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board (TNCWWB), especially relating to registration, claim settlement etc. should be modified to become more migrant labour friendly.
  8. Tailor made financial services may be developed and access to the same facilitated by GoTN to the migrant brick kiln workers to

address the vicious cycle of high advance and low wages and perpetual indebtedness.

9. Government of India should put in place a mechanism for implementing the recommendations of the National Task Force on Bonded Labour including bringing greater definitional clarity in defining bonded labour, convergence based project for prevention and rehabilitation; creation of corpus fund at Centre, etc.
10. Government of India could develop a program similar to the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) for addressing issues relating to debt bondage in identified sectors, providing funds to support activities like special enumeration, formalizing agreements between the employers and workers, and enhancing social protection coverage, etc.
11. GoI should help the State governments put in place a robust implementation architecture for its Workers Welfare Boards in general and specifically for the Construction Workers Welfare Boards.
12. The Employers' Association and the National Trade Unions should continue their engagement in the brick kiln and if possible in the rice mill sector, so as to facilitate registration, enhance access to welfare benefits, improve working conditions, and organization of migrant labour.