



Evaluation Summary



International
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Developing the capacity of Employers' Organizations in the Arab Region to contribute to job-rich growth through effective policy and social dialogue – Final independent evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Republic of Lebanon, Sultanate of Oman, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Republic of Yemen,

Final Evaluation: October 2016

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Administrative Office: ILO Regional Office for Arab States

Technical Office: ACT/EMP

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Project Code: RAB/12/50/NOR

Donor & Project Budget: Royal Government of Norway (US\$ 1,110,000)

Background & Context

Project Background

The project was intended as a one-off 18-month boost to strengthen Employer Organizations (EOs) in the Arab States so that they could advocate accurately for national policies to overcome constraints on businesses and create decent work opportunities in their respective countries. Project Objectives were:

Objective 1: “To provide participating national employers and business organizations (Hereafter “Chambers”) with a clear understanding of their basic roles and responsibilities in an emerging and new context” (Improved governance and structural reform).

This would be achieved by a “chambers literacy” programme to “outline the basic roles and expectations of Chambers in the emerging dispensation” and “provide them with the tools to achieve the kind of organizations (that) will be necessary”. [This mirrored a “trade union literacy” approach being used by a parallel project for Workers Organizations (WOs) in the region.]

Objective 2: “To capacitate these organizations ... to develop pro-active national policy agendas, to create employment through enterprise policies, and to equip them with the capacity to engage in effective policy and social dialogue” (Improved policy capacity).

This would be achieved by an Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises and Employment (EESEE) “tool box” which by combining comparative international data and local business surveys would equip Employers' Organizations (EOs) to pin-point their country's particular constraints on business and employment growth. The EESEE tool was an internationally comparative collection of data on the business, political, social, and legal environment of a country drawn from existing surveys (World Bank, Economist Intelligence Unit) plus a questionnaire survey of local business executives.

Evaluation Purpose

The final independent evaluation was to examine the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, potential impact and sustainability of the project, and assess the extent to which it met its objectives, produced its indicated outputs, and achieved its outcomes. It would therefore examine the project design, strategy, implementation and lessons learned.

Main Findings

Relevance

The project is certainly relevant to the ILO Programme and Budget Outcomes and to the Country Programme Outcomes of the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) of the participating countries. It fits within a number of the overarching themes of the UNDAF in each country.

Design

The original design lacked an orientation towards tripartism: “social dialogue” was interpreted as communication between EOs and their governments.

Usefully in the summary of the first capacity assessments social dialogue was seen as including trade unions though this did not translate into further implementation. Trade unions do not enjoy widespread acceptance in this region but, given the project’s focus on employment, it was a weakness in design that there was no place for dialogue with them, or (where, they were lacking or marginalized), with civil society groups that understood the productivity needs of workers including the self-employed.

A gender perspective was mentioned in the design, but not elaborated further. Disadvantage based on disability, ethnic difference, or rural and remote location was also not included in the original design.

The ROAS staffing difficulties and consequent delays in the project, made it necessary to apply to the donor for approval to extend the project's closing date. Two further extensions were granted which included modifications to the project design but these modifications lacked sufficient indicators to assess how the outcome would now be achieved.

To maintain a results-driven project, more specific targets and means of verifying changes in EO activities (or at least the circumstances likely to bring them about) were needed than those provided by the project in the revision it made of the original project document design.

As the project developed, the continued use of a formal Technical Cooperation Progress Report (TCPR) would have given clarity about which EO structural changes or new EO policy activities were seen to be achieving the project outcomes.

Effectiveness

Objective One: To provide participating national employers and business organizations ...with a clear understanding of their basic roles and responsibilities. (Governance and Structural Reform). This objective has been partially achieved.

- Six capacity assessments were carried out.
- Eight training events were held, including: Effective Employers Organization (3), HR Policies and ILO standards (1) Child Labour (1), Social Security and Labour Law (2), Advocacy Lobbying and Communication (1); Social Dialogue and Collective Bargaining (1)
- EO personnel from Jordan attended 5 of these trainings, oPt attended 5, Oman attended 4, Yemen attended 3, and Lebanon attended 1.
- Communications strategy advice was given to two EOs (Jordan and Oman), technical training was provided to individual EO officers: in Occupational Safety and Health to officers in Jordan, Lebanon and oPt, and in customer data base software to officers in Lebanon, Jordan and Oman.
- Preparations were made for a skills needs audit in Oman and for Socially Responsible Economic policies in Lebanon.

Objective Two: To capacitate these organizations to develop pro-active national policy agendas, to create employment through enterprise policies, and to equip them to engage in effective policy and social dialogue. (Policy Reform and Advocacy). This objective has been partially achieved.

Some policy reports were produced, and in-country initiatives taken that had the potential to assist EOs to produce and advocate for further policy positions:

- The “Whole of Palestine Approach” taken to combine training for residents of Gaza as well as West Bank, and inclusive of women-run businesses
- In Lebanon the embedding of Customer Relations Management skills in ALI and its launch of a policy framework for a “Socially Responsible Industrial Sector in Lebanon”
- In Jordan and Oman the start of a professional communications strategy and, as in Palestine, the consolidation of OSH technical skills.
- Oman’s further work on a tourism skills survey, and Palestine’s further work on labour law reform.

Efficiency

Staffing and Timing

The project was originally planned to run from June 2012 to December 2013, but it experienced two major staffing delays. The ILO ROAS Employers’ Specialist (ES) who began involvement with the project and did a pilot of the EESEE programme in Oman in 2011, was transferred to another office in the third quarter of 2012. The next ES was appointed in September 2012 but resigned in January 2013.

Treating the ES as the Project Manager was efficient in terms of use of the finance available, but contributed to the perception by constituents that this project was not a specific initiative but part of ILO’s ordinary activities.

Partly because of the earlier delays, some training programmes were seen as being put together at relatively short notice and delivered to some participants whose level of awareness of the issues, or their status in the EO, might not reflect the needed authority or competence to act effectively on them.

The project staff attempted to operate flexibly within these obstacles and those in the region generally.

Impact and Sustainability

The lack of a clear identity for this project in the second half of its existence meant that its activities were likely to

be indistinguishable from general activities that ILO pursues to strengthen its EOs.

Some of those interviewed claimed not to know that the project existed, and in one case, made a severe criticism, which proved to relate to a separate dissatisfaction with ILO over the DWCP process.

There was impact in specific cases that had the likelihood of being sustainable, notably the take-up in Lebanon of a socio-economic strategy for business, in Oman an audit of skill development needs in the tourism industry, and in Palestine progress on advocacy over the minimum wage and other law changes. In Jordan and oPt, there was greater inclusion of SMEs in EO partnerships (including family and women-managed enterprises). In Lebanon and Jordan there was effective training of technical staff (in OSH and member servicing tools).

Professional submissions were prepared, but largely by ILO staff or consultants and therefore not necessarily ensuring the sustainability of the capacity within the EO to produce further policy papers.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Revisit project capacity assessments and stakeholder interviews.

Carry this out twice: six months, and then one year, from the end of the original project. See if, in hindsight, the analysis and priorities would now be different. If no progress has been made in defined areas, establish why. Where other stakeholder agencies were consulted in the preparation of the original capacity assessments, check if they have identified improvements or see continued capacity deficits.

Recommendation 2: Improve the earlier analyses, by focussing on the obstacles to enterprise growth within the total business environment.

Identify where the motivation can be best mobilized to address the capacity deficits in the EOs, including dialogue gaps with the necessary partners.

Involve in the consultation: representatives of government, workers, civil society, and other interests: research institutes, business journalists,

donors and other agencies engaged in comparable projects.

Recommendation 3: Revisit, promote and adapt Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises and Employment (EESEE) tool kit.

Clarify where each Employers' Organization sees the principal external and internal obstacles to their ability to represent their members' interests.

ILO ROAS, with ITC or ACTEMP Geneva, to give presentations on the updated EESEE tool kit, using each country's identified business challenges as the entry point to examining which features of the EESEE tool kit can be introduced to meet the EO's short and long term challenges.

Recommendation 4: Plan strategically for "small wins" as well as larger objectives in overcoming business obstacles.

Continue to identify difficulties experienced by Employers' Organizations in moving from a "reactive" to a more "proactive" role with their governments.

Review *all facets of government* to identify opportunities for short term "small wins" (i.e. early feasible victories) that can build EO's profile as a long-term authority on business needs and policies.

Ensure that external expertise supporting the modernization of advocacy techniques is carried out with outsiders understanding local practices and traditions of influence and governance.

Recommendation 5: Build a regional reference group of the region's EO CEOs to identify common Enabling Environment issues and the corresponding support needed for EOs.

Engage regional EO leaderships in better advising ROAS in how ILO can help them while providing the EO leadership with a vehicle to exchange information and skills between themselves. See this as a high status group.

Recommendation 6: Develop further the potential for team work between ROAS specialists to build tripartism in each country.

Set up a standing team of RO director with ES, WS and NORMES specialist meeting regularly. Produce a

proactive strategy, regularly reviewed (and forming a required heading in mission reports.

Recommendation 7: EO Board members undertake regular training at least annually.

This should include induction training and refresher training to strengthen strategic and policy planning, and understand their separate roles from that of EO executives.

Recommendation 8: Focus on training that leads to accreditation.

Training should motivate trainees and give career rewards. Examine how all ILO training events can be linked to an accreditation pathway in a local, regional or international higher learning institution.

Recommendation 9: Ensure training opportunities are matched to the appropriate people.

Take a collaborative goal of "growing" key individual staff and EO leaders so that their potential is developed across a range of skill sets. Work collaboratively with Employers Organizations to ensure that training is delivered to those with the greatest potential and motivation to make use of it.

Recommendation 10: Work creatively to ensure observable inclusion practice

Make a reality of inclusion agendas, learning how these can enhance productivity in business and representativeness in government advocacy.