



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
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Office

## Strengthening of Workers' Organizations in the Arab Countries through Economic, Social and Legal Literacy - Final Evaluation

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Oman, Yemen*

**Final Evaluation:** *February – May 2015*

**Mode of Evaluation:** *Independent*

**Administrative backstopping:** *DWT/ROAS-Beirut*

**ILO Technical Backstopping Office:** *MIGRANT*

**Evaluation Manager:** *Torsten Schackel*

**Evaluation Consultant:** *David Spooner*

**Project End:** *31 July 2015*

**Project Code:** *RAB/11/02/USA*

**Donor & Project Budget:** *U.S. Dept. of State - US\$ 2,475,050*

**Keywords:** *Workers organizations, Capacity Building*

### Background & Context

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

The purpose of the project is to develop the capacity of workers' organizations in the Arab region to participate effectively in policy debates, influence public decisions, and defend workers' rights and interests.

The objectives of the project are:

- 1) Strengthening the institutional capacity of workers' organizations;
- 2) Strengthening the technical capacity of workers' organizations; and
- 3) Supporting workers' organizations in advocacy on fundamental principles and rights at work.

The project supported workers' organizations in enhancing their internal democracy and independence through various methods, and

providing technical support and policy advice. As a result, workers' organizations would be better equipped to engage in social dialogue, be more democratically representative of the workers in their respective countries and better equipped with knowledge and skills to engage in policy discussion.

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

The scope of the final evaluation is from the project start (September 2011) until the time of this evaluation and covers all countries in which the project is implementing activities. The evaluation examines the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, potential impact and sustainability of the project. The evaluation assesses whether the project has achieved its stated objectives, produced the desired outputs, and the extent to which it realized the proposed outcomes. This evaluation identifies strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy, and implementation as well as lessons learned with recommendations for consideration in the design of future interventions.

#### Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation has been conducted from February to May 2015 and comprised field visits to Lebanon, Jordan, Oman and Bahrain, and multiple phone interviews with key informants.

The work plan for the evaluation comprised:

- Review of relevant documentation
- Interviews with ILO programme

management, coordinators and technical experts, project partners, beneficiary organizations, consultants, relevant authorities and other key informants. Consultations took place in the form of physical meetings and, where this was not feasible, by phone communication.

- Debriefing/validation meeting with ILO to present the findings of the evaluation and solicit feedback, additional information and clarifications.
- Preparation of a draft report, finalization of the report based on comments from ILO.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

### *Relevance & Design*

The project approach remains highly relevant to the current trends and patterns of workers' issues. As the project progressed, it was affected by an increase of direct and indirect government pressure on reformed and new independent unions. At the same time, broader conflicts and crises in the region increased levels of insecurity and fear in workplaces and communities. The strategy for the project was to promote and support change in the sense that where existing organizations were compromised and not willing to embrace reform, the project would provide assistance to workers in establishing alternative trade unions. This was a major break with previous international support in the Arab region to unions that were often too close to governments and/or political parties. This new approach remains entirely appropriate, and fits the ongoing trends and patterns of workers' issues in the region.

On the other hand, the project objectives are clearly aligned with the ILO Global Programme and Budget Outcome 10 (Workers capacity and representation), as well as ILO DWCPs where they are in place (Jordan, Oman, occupied Palestinian territories), with the constituents objectives, and fitted well with the donor priorities at the time of its inception.

The project fully aligns with the existing Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP), contributes to regional outcomes on enhanced

capacity of workers organizations in terms of representativeness and independence. It links to Outcome 10 (workers' representation) of the Strategic Framework and to the ILO Global Programme and Budget (P&B). It also aligns to have fitted well with donor priorities at the time of its inception.

There is generally a coherent and logical correlation between objectives, outcomes and outputs. The correlation between the original outcomes and outputs and those of the revised proposal for the project extension were not entirely clear. A consolidated single framework would have been useful.

### *Effectiveness*

The core work of **Objective 1** was to consolidate internal democracy, representativeness, freedom and independence of workers organizations. Action plans with trade unions were developed in all targeted countries. New workers' organizations were established in Jordan and Lebanon, bylaws of workers' organizations in Lebanon and Oman were revised, and general assemblies were conducted in Oman, Bahrain and Jordan without external interference. Initially promising work in Yemen was forced to be curtailed because of the security situation.

In addition, the project had an important role in the preparation of the Founding Congress of the ITUC Arab Region (ATUC) in 2014, providing a direct challenge to ICATU, which had lost all credibility.

The most important element within **Objective 2** was the implementation of a comprehensive training programme, which achieved considerable success in Lebanon, Jordan, Oman and Bahrain, and to a lesser extent in Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt). In all countries, trainers received training in educational methodology and techniques and in some of the key issues. Although there was no measurement of the increased capacity in terms of skills and knowledge, to a lesser or greater extent, the unions report having the capacity to develop and deliver their own training programmes. Furthermore, there is clear evidence of impact on the participating unions

regarding internal democracy practices, collective bargaining, and gender equality.

On the other hand, the establishment of the Labour Education and Research Network for the Arab Region did not materialize beyond the construction of a basic list of resource people.

The project has also produced knowledge products and thematic briefs; however there is scope for considerable improvement in their dissemination and use for raising awareness and policy debate.

It has proven difficult to assess the stated intended outcomes of **Objective 3**, which were introduced only in the final year of the project. In terms of support provided to workers organizations in advocacy on FPRW, it is not clear whether an action plan was developed. A study on the role of unions in advocating for social protection was conducted, however the strategy and position on social security and informal economy was not concretized as of yet. In addition, advocacy material on FPRW were produced, however dissemination was still limited.

### ***Efficiency & Management arrangements***

The original decentralized model for national officers was not successful. In addition to challenges of insufficient competence and capacity, they became overwhelmed with administrative work and mediation between the Beirut team and their respective federations.

It is not clear whether the Advisory Committee had a significant role in helping to steer the project forward, and whether its composition was the most effective in providing good quality advice.

The project was imaginative and innovative in its close collaboration with other ILO initiatives, which introduced an efficient cost-sharing in a substantial number of events and activities. This included cooperation with ILO-ACTRAV, ILO-COOP, ILO-MIGRANT, the ILO-ROAS Gender Unit, ITC (Turin), and the PROWD and MAGNET projects.

### ***Impact and sustainability***

There is no system in place to measure the impact of the project at the end. In fact, even

when indicators are reached, they do not allow for measurement of results, and how they impact on the development objective is not established.

Despite this, it is noticed from the practices of the targeted workers organizations that the project has had some positive impact on their capacity to defend workers' rights and promote their interests, despite some major shifts and reversals in the political context and, to a varying extent, from country to country. In many cases, training and support resulted in strengthened governance of the organizations (through amendment of constitutions), as well as the practice in some cases of successful collective bargaining over terms and conditions with employers. Furthermore, workers organizations implemented training programmes as a result of the TOTs received. Results however were less tangible when it came to capacity in policy debates, advocacy, FPRW, and labour law reforms.

It can be noted on the project strategy that, despite problems of external interference, weak democratic governance of trade union structures, restrictive labour laws and absence of many other elements of FPRW, which had been prevalent in the region for decades, the project attempted to address these problems and introduce reform in a relatively very short space of time.

Concern for sustainability has been a core factor throughout the project, particularly concerning the future sustainability of the democratic and independent unions supported through project activities. This has included the development of the training capacity of the unions to deliver programme beyond the life of the project; financial sustainability through improved collection and management of union dues; political sustainability through labour law reform to enable legal registration and recognition of democratic unions; and the sustainability of collective bargaining and participation in tripartite negotiations through improved economic and legal literacy.

However, little or no attention was given to ensuring linkages and support from the relevant Global Union Federations at a sector level,

capable of providing long-term support after the end of the project or other supportive ILO intervention. The unions are still at an early stage of development, and require further support to reach full sustainability, as recognized by the project team and the midterm evaluation, and a continuation of the work of the project is therefore vital for a further period.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

### Main recommendations and follow-up

1. Consider the continuation of the project in an amended form or the development of the work in a new project, as an essential priority to ensure sustainability.
2. Capitalize on democratic and independent unions in those countries where progress is possible by targeting support to these institutions.
3. Promote, develop and implement a program that aims at reforming ‘historic’ unions and their relationships with governments.
4. Facilitate regular discussion on strategy and policy in support of democratic trade union development in the region.
5. Focus capacity-building on organizing skills and sustainability.
6. Continue to strengthen the participation of women.
7. Establish a coherent dissemination plan of publications, studies, and advocacy material.
8. Improve project design to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

### Important lessons learned

1. Projects that seek to strengthen workers’ organizations free from legal constraints or external interference should ensure that the support is sustained and rigorously defended if external pressure persists in opposition to FPRW. Project design should take into account the possible need for continued supportive intervention beyond the time-frame of the project itself, whether for newly formed or reformed older trade union structures.

2. The need to provide support for workers’ organizations free from legal constraints or external interference is not limited to any one region alone. Although each region has its own characteristics, projects supporting the capacity of workers’ organizations should include the use of successful (and unsuccessful) examples of methods and experiences from other regions, and should facilitate and encourage inter-regional dialogue between workers’ organizations.
3. There are major differences in policy, approach and strategy held between different institutions of the international democratic trade union movement in the promotion of FPRW in the region. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of workers’ organizations are hampered by lack of coordination and, in some cases, contradictory actions by trade union institutions and partner agencies. The ILO has unique status and authority to provide an open space for constructive dialogue and consultation, and seek consensus wherever possible in support of democratic trade union development.
4. The dissemination of project materials is an essential means of multiplying the impact of the project and maximizing the number of beneficiaries. Project design should include the conversion of technical material into popular workers’ education resources, using mass media, social media as well as traditional print and online publications. Project design should also include the translation of materials into other languages, for dissemination outside the region, where appropriate.
5. Projects designed to increase the capacity of workers organizations in promoting and defending FPRW need to recognize the important role of and engage with sectoral unions, national sectoral federations, and the Global Union Federations in providing sustained and long-term support to trade union development, alongside the national centres and their international federation structures.