



Evaluation Summary



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Shan State: Peace, reconciliation and development through community empowerment (PRD) – Final evaluation

Quick Facts

Country: Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Final Evaluation: 31 July 2019

Evaluation Mode: Independent

Administrative Office: ILO – Myanmar

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Keywords: Peace, child labour, child soldier,
children rights, community development, conflict
resolution, training, skills development,
employment, decent work, gender equality, youth,
infrastructure, and capacity building.

Background & Context

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

The “Shan State: Peace, Reconciliation, and Development through Community-Empowerment” (PRD) programme was a four-year (March 2015-March 2019) intervention to promote the inclusion of community voices in Myanmar’s national peace process.

The programme was based on an overarching theory of change (ToC) that “ceasefires have made possible efforts in the empowerment of conflict-affected communities and such empowerment can make a measurable contribution to peace, reconciliation and development at the local level.” The programme was delivered by a Consortium of organisations comprised of Aids Support Group (ASG), the Foundation for Local Development (FLD) / Ethnic Peace Resources Project (EPRP), the Maggin Development Consultancy Group (MDCG), Save the Children (SC) and the ILO. The ILO was the coordinator of the Consortium. The five partners worked with a variety of stakeholders in different areas in Shan North, East and State-wide and supported 104 villages.

The PRD three specific objectives were following: (i) To provide opportunities for communities and local actors, including women and children, to be engaged in the peace and reconciliation process, supporting inclusive peace processes; (ii) To support all stakeholders to create a safe and protective environment that supports effective and sustainable reintegration of children affected by conflict, and; (iii) to facilitate participatory development in conflict-affected communities based on community Empowerment.

Present Situation of the Project

Currently, the programme has ended and has achieved most of its expected outputs. However, the majority of beneficiaries mentioned that their needs were only partially addressed and that the 4-year intervention was too short to be sustainable.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The four main purposes of this independent final evaluation were: “(1) to assess the impact and sustainability and identify factors that enable the sustainability, particularly of the national stakeholders in Myanmar; (2) to demonstrate accountability to the key stakeholders and donor; (3) to enhance learning within ILO and among key stakeholders; and (4) to inform similar interventions in the future”. This evaluation covered all interventions under the programme from 15 March 2015 to 14 March 2019 and the focus of the final evaluation looked at the intervention since April 2017. The final evaluation covered all the geographical areas of the programme – security permitting for field visits. The primary clients of the evaluation findings are the programme management team and the ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar, the Consortium partners, and ILO technical departments. Secondary parties making use of the results of the evaluation include the EU and tripartite constituents.

Methodology of evaluation

Different evaluation tools were combined to ensure an evidence-based qualitative and quantitative assessment. The evaluators emphasized on cross-validation of data through triangulation and an assessment of plausibility of the results obtained. The methodological mix included document review, semi-structured individual interviews, semi-structured interviews of focus groups and a short survey. Data was gathered from different sources, by different methods for each of the evaluation questions, and findings were triangulated to draw valid and reliable conclusions. Data was disaggregated, at a minimum, by sex and by other dimensions where available. Conclusions and recommendations were based on evaluation findings (deductive reasoning).

Main Findings & Conclusions

(A) Relevance and strategic fit

Based on the revised intervention logic, the programme responded overall well to beneficiaries’ needs.

However, the majority of beneficiaries mentioned that their needs were only partially addressed. The programme was relevant to the donors’ priorities and policy and implementing partners’ needs, and built on the comparative advantage of all Consortium partners. The intervention logic was adapted due to the faltering peace process and intensified fighting in Shan State after the mid-term evaluation. Several groups of stakeholders would expect ILO to provide both continuous technical assistance and conduct more consultations with government.

(B) Effectiveness (including effectiveness of management arrangement)

The programme achieved most of its output targets despite a complex context and unforeseen roadblocks. The programme faced serious constraints related to the peace process faltering and the intensified fighting in Shan State. Stakeholders were mostly somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with programme results. The programme was successful in empowering communities. The intervention’s participatory approach was in general well received but could have been strengthened during project design. The majority of programme interventions were conducted in silos by Consortium members. Quarterly meetings were useful to share updates. Most mid-term review recommendations were addressed except for strengthening quality programme management. Consortium members seized various opportunities to engage other stakeholders notably in community dialogues and multi-stakeholder meetings. The programme made efforts to collect output data more regularly after mid-term reviews but did not collect all the outcome-level data based on the monitoring plan. Quality programme management, better communication and coordination would have allowed the programme to achieve better results and be “greater than the sum of its parts”.

(C) Efficiency

The resource allocation allowed to achieve almost all expected outputs despite delays in funding. More budget allocated to community based organisations (CBOs), communities, local staff and programme monitoring would have been instrumental to achieve better results responding to beneficiaries’ needs. Based on the way the Consortium was structured, there was no strong coherent implementation approach among Consortium partners. All Consortium partners confirmed their strong interest in undertaking activities

more collectively, capitalizing on complementary approaches and fostering diversity.

Project resources were leveraged with other related interventions on a demand-basis. There was no national coordination platform between organizations conducting peace building interventions at the time of the evaluation. Management arrangements as well as communication across the programme were not perceived as optimal.

(D) Sustainability

While local CBOs and communities were grateful for the assistance received, a vast majority of interviewees mentioned that the intervention was too short to be truly sustainable in particular in such context. The programme was very effective in establishing national/local ownership but the duration was too short to make it possible to sustain the effort. All stakeholders mentioned their willingness to continue project activities.

(E) Impact

A positive unintended effect was the strong positive change in the mindsets of beneficiaries regarding their ability to build their new lives and/or contributing to their communities and a peacebuilding environment. The negative unintended effect was that while beneficiaries acquired such strong motivation, the fact that the programme stopped while not being yet sustainable created dissatisfaction or sadness. The intervention would require a second phase to consolidate achievements and facilitate the sustainability of actions. For this to happen, there would be a need for improved programme management. At the time of the evaluation, the programme had not achieved sufficient critical mass to trigger long-term effects on gender equality. The PRD programme contributed to peace, reconciliation and development related objectives facilitating the path from conflict to peacebuilding, and to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(F) Special aspects to be addressed

Some synergies and collaboration between the programme and other initiatives took place on a demand-basis without creating longer term impact. Community dialogues and linking government, employers and employees allowed communities to share their concerns, notably with key leaders. The programme offered opportunities for dialogue on forced labour, under-age recruitment, and other

issues. The programme primarily focused on the balance of women and men in project activities.

Conclusion 1 on relevance and strategic fit

The PRD programme provided useful technical assistance to beneficiaries but only responded partially to beneficiaries' needs in such complex environment. The programme scope did not systematically address beneficiaries' needs holistically. Some initial programme objectives were no longer relevant in the context of Shan State's faltering peace process and intensified fighting in the North. The programme successfully brought on board Consortium partners with complementary areas of expertise and technical experience without capitalizing on ILO's expertise in strategically managing large programmes.

Conclusion 2 on effectiveness

The PRD programme was overall successful in conducting a considerable number of project activities, reaching out to more than 150'000 beneficiaries across 104 villages in Southern, Northern and Eastern Shan State. The programme achieved most of its expected outputs despite a challenging context. Due to its large number of activities and limited coherence, more focus was given to output than outcome results, affecting the overall quality of the programme. The majority of Consortium members would have preferred to operate more as a programme (rather than as distinct projects working in silos) supported by quality programme management to best serve beneficiaries. Stronger involvement of government and Members of Parliament would have been instrumental to achieve even better results. The programme adopted a participatory approach that was well received, in particular for initial needs assessments, and could be improved during project design. In general, programme design and management, monitoring, coordination, communication, advocacy, budget allocation and management and the lack of smooth operations were not satisfactory to many interviewees in all groups of stakeholders.

Conclusion 3 on efficiency

While the resource allocation covered a large amount of project activities, revising the budget allocation for more in-depth technical assistance would allow to better respond to beneficiaries' priority needs (with a "less is more" approach). Sufficient budget and resources would also need to be allocated to regular multi-stakeholder meetings. Leveraging more

programme resources with other interventions in the area would have strengthened programmatic impact. The issue related to the inability of smaller Consortium partners to pre-finance activities to close the gap before funding release was not solved, although the issue was stressed as urgent during mid-term reviews. Pre-funding issues and the rejection of the no-cost extension request notably caused the programme to end with underspent budget. There were important remaining needs on the ground at the time of the evaluation.

Conclusion 4 on sustainability

The overall one-off technical assistance approach and 4-year duration of the programme did not provide a solid ground for sustainability of programme interventions. Some programme interventions included exit strategies. Other interventions did not have an exit strategy and a solid business model to maintain and further develop activities. The programme provided numerous useful trainings across Shan State, notably allowing recipients to multiply them and/or utilize these skills in similar projects. While vocational training was useful for participants, the intervention lacked a systematic and consistent post-training follow-up to ensure concrete results leading to employability, employment opportunities and small business creation.

Conclusion 5 on Impact

While it was too early to assess the programme impact, there were early signs of positive change in mindsets in communities facing hardship, and whose voice was not heard, at the time of the evaluation. As beneficiaries and local partners were strongly engaged in the intervention, the end of the programme after only 4 years created an adverse impact as they felt left with considerable challenges at an early time of implementation. A second phase or a similar intervention would allow to provide further support to beneficiaries, capitalizing on emerging PRD good practices, and improving technical assistance based on lessons learned.

Conclusion 5 on Special aspects to be addressed

Stronger coordination among interventions on peace building operating in the area would avoid losing opportunities of strengthening the impact of their work. Promoting social and international labour standards would require continuous efforts not only at the ground level but also involving more and building mutual trust

with key leaders. Gender-related biases would need more time and closer outcome-based monitoring to be successfully tackled.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

- **Recommendation 1** proposes to ILO and Consortium members to adopt a “less is more” approach that is more holistic when designing a similar intervention to provide more in-depth and sustainable technical assistance to beneficiaries – setting up synergies among Consortium members and with other existing programs, supported by key leaders.
- **Recommendation 2** proposes to ILO and Consortium members to improve communication and coordination among all organizations, (with a clear common understanding of roles and responsibilities, expectations and procedures), responsive management, budget allocation, knowledge transfer and regular updates.
- **Recommendation 3** proposes to ILO, Consortium members and PRD project staff to improve programme management, strategic planning, programme / project design, monitoring (including regular data collection at both output and outcome levels), knowledge of procedures, knowledge sharing and support to all Consortium and partner organizations.
- **Recommendation 4** proposes to ILO, Consortium members, PRD project staff and programme key stakeholders to conduct regular multi-stakeholder platforms for conflict-affected communities, with a distinct focus on women and youth, who are empowered and engaging with conflict parties under the auspices of the peace process.
- **Recommendation 5** proposes to ILO, Consortium members, PRD project staff ILO and partner organizations to further integrate gender issues in the programme, reviewing the gender framework design and implementation and tracking outcome gender-related data.