



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation
Office

Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as tools for Peace in Myanmar

Final evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries:	Myanmar
Final Evaluation:	July 2016
Evaluation Mode:	Independent
Administrative Office:	ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar
Technical Office:	ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar
Evaluation Manager:	Alexa Hough
Evaluation Consultants:	Ana García-Femenía & Thet Hnin
Project Code:	MMR/13/12/EEC
Donor(s) & Budget:	EU 1,200.000 USD
Keywords:	forced labour, fundamental and principles rights at work

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

With the holding of elections in 2010 and the transition of the country towards a more open environment, the ILO and the Government of Myanmar agreed to a structured plan of action to

implement a comprehensive joint strategy with the objective of achieving the elimination of all forms of forced labour by 2015 signed as an MOU in 2012. Building on the engagement in Myanmar over the past decade and taking into account the most recent developments in the country, the ILO focused on the promotion of full respect for and application of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Myanmar as a means to ensure practices of forced labour no longer continue.

This rights-based foundation is the basis for addressing the developments made in the national peace process, as well as economic reforms introduced by the government in line with the priorities laid out in the Action Plan. By addressing fundamental rights, it was envisaged that the country's reconciliation and development would be more in line with a fundamental respect of rights, and thus more inclusive of the needs of all the country's constituents.

The Project aims to support the consolidation of the peace process through a holistic approach which seeks to address past, and prevent future, human rights abuses through the operation and extension of the Forced Labour Complaints Mechanism, the enhanced respect for International Labour Standards and national law and the promotion of the application of national an ILS in the SEZ's. The action intends to work with stakeholders in the peace process to build the foundation to a more cohesive society where

human rights are better respected and vulnerable communities are offered economic development opportunities and can benefit from the opening of the Myanmar economy.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, performance, delivery and outcomes undertaken by the project against its intended goals. It also examines achievements, good practices and lessons learnt from the project in order for the ILO and the relevant technical Ministries, and social partners to identify key areas which may be replicable and areas where further support and attention may be required.

The evaluation findings and recommendations should be used as basis for better design and management for results of future ILO activities in Myanmar. The evaluation also supports public accountability of the Government of Myanmar, ILO and the donor, the European Union.

The clients and users of the evaluation are the ILO Liaison Office for Myanmar, Regional office and HQ; the Government of Myanmar, and social partners as well as the Delegation of the European Union to Myanmar.

The scope of the evaluation has been all activities implemented by the project during the current project period (August 2014 to June 2016). The evaluation has covered project sites in Mawlamyine (Mon State), and Thilawa (SEZs).

Methodology of evaluation

The principles and approach adopted for the evaluation have been in line with established guidelines set forth in the ILO Guidelines for Results-Based Evaluations. ILO adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards on evaluation as well as to the OECD/DAC evaluation quality standards.

A master list of key evaluation questions contained within the terms of reference has been included in the Evaluation Matrix, designed as the centre piece of the evaluation methodology, and serving as the basis for developing the data collection tools. The evaluation Matrix reflects in detail the approach for data collection and how the evaluation

questions have been answered. The evaluation has integrated gender equality as a cross-cutting concern throughout its methodology and all deliverables. Therefore, specific questions on gender have been included in the evaluation matrix for each evaluation criterion and for relevant indicators, following ILO evaluation guidelines.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project shows a high degree of relevance insofar as it advances the ILO's agenda on forced labour in Myanmar. It has contributed to the operations of the Forced Labour Complaints Mechanism and to the objectives laid out in the *Strategic Action Plan on Forced Labour*, signed by the government in 2012. The fact that forced labour was perpetuated in the country for decades has much farther-reaching consequences, as forced labour now makes up part of the country's cultural context. Forced labour therefore remains a top-priority item for ILO assistance in Myanmar.

The project design sought to address the various interests set forth by the donor and the ILO for itself. In the end, the design proved to be overambitious, characterised by a theory of change that may have been very clear to those responsible for the initial design but has not proven sufficiently solid to ensure its understanding by all the stakeholders. This means, first of all, that stakeholders will interpret the project in their own way, placing emphasis on one or another of the specific objectives according to their own interests, rather than taking a more global approach. It has also led to management and leadership challenges.

The three SOs show an unequal degree of effectiveness. SO1 and SO3 demonstrate a limited degree of effectiveness. The fragility of the peace process had a noticeable effect on SO1. As regards the SEZs, it seems to be too early to work on CSR issues. Moreover, the office has not adopted a clear and effective strategy to find the appropriate counterparts there. Of the three objectives, SO2 – linked to the ILO's long-standing work – shows the greatest effectiveness as progress has been achieved

in enhancing respect for ILS and national laws, including gender dimensions thereof.

It was particularly difficult for the project to combine two targets that, despite sharing some elements, varied enough to have necessitated different project-management strategies: conflict areas (addressed in specific objective 1) and SEZs (addressed in specific objective 3). In the case of SO1, this was owed, among other things, to the fragility of the peace process. In the case of the SEZs, the project proved to be too early. The office will need a stronger structure in relation to FPRW to address CSR in the SEZs, since it will have to deal with employers and workers (eventually unions) there.

The project has been very effective in raising awareness on forced labour issues through the dissemination of various materials in the languages of ethnic groups. The language used in the material is a very simple and effective way to transmit the message they want to convey. Particularly effective is the partnership established by the project with two CSOs in the Mon State: the Mon Education Department and the Mon Women Organisation. In the case of the Mon Education Department, trainers' participation in project activities has a multiplier effect that benefits the Department's students, as school teachers are able to share information with students and parents that prevents forced labour in future generations. The partnership with Mon Women Organisation helped to address gender equality.

There were major deficiencies in project efficiency, due primarily to a lack of suitable human resources. Project staff was already committed to other functions before the project was incorporated into the office's operations, which resulted in understaffing. Project staff's total dependence on the everyday operation of the office, and their lack of autonomy with respect to the management of the same, prevented the project from being carried out properly and consequently limited its effectiveness.

The benefits that the project provides in terms of awareness raising and training with respect to the

FL and FPRW concepts may be sustainable, given that they have fostered changes in the mindsets of participants by building stakeholders' capacity to respect rights. However, institutional frameworks have not been ensured that help enhance the sustainability of the project's actions.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

The ILO Office in Myanmar should continue to lend its support to the fight against forced labour. The fact that forced labour was perpetuated in the country for decades has much farther-reaching consequences, as forced labour now makes up part of the country's cultural context. Forced labour therefore remains a top-priority item for ILO assistance in Myanmar.

An overall assessment of the new role that shall correspond to the country's ILO Office in light of the new political context is advisable. Its participation in the peace process, to be agreed with the government, must be clarified in particular. In any event, the preparation of the office's transition to a regular ILO Office, in which the various aspects of a tripartite mandate are taken into account, seems advisable.

A project of these characteristics, with involvement in the peace process and the SEZs, should be less ambitious in its design and limit its expectations to the ILO's areas of control to ensure the project effectiveness is not affected. The overall design of the project should also be improved. This modesty in the initial approach must therefore be reflected in a Logframe that is more tailored to the feasible expectations. There is also room for improvement as regards planning and communication both within the ILO Office and in its relations with other stakeholders and the donor. Improving monitoring and reporting mechanisms both internally in the ILO and externally for the donor is particularly advisable.

In order to further the fostering of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the office must

strengthen its structure. In particular, it must incorporate support activities for both employer and employee organizations, making the most of the country's recent democratic openness and the legalization of unions. This is also recommended if working with the SEZs in the future is intended.

It is advisable to continue the work undertaken as regards training and raising awareness on forced labour issues – regardless of the ups and downs of the peace process – with both the groups currently in power (government, village administrators, employers, etc.) and with future generations. In this regard, exploring channels for working alongside the country's educational institutions is recommended with a view to introducing training and components related to International Labour Standards in the various curricula. This would prove conducive to the sustainability and impact of the ILO Office in Myanmar both with regard to the fight against forced labour and the promotion of FPRW. It is also advised that alternative tools for raising awareness be explored, using audiovisual media in particular and in conjunction with the media.

The project should ensure that it has a suitable M&E system in place. A project with these characteristics and this sort of funding must have an M&E officer from its outset, both for project monitoring and to gather information that can be used for accountability and learning purposes.

Given the difficulties that the project experienced in terms of efficiency, it is advisable that donors to future projects of this sort consider the possibility of placing a Chief Technical Advisor at the helm of the project. This figure could be directly accountable to the donor, and would be responsible for suitable communication with the donor through reporting and follow-through.