



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

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Office

## *Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and Labour Relations in Export Oriented Industries in Bangladesh – Final evaluation*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Bangladesh*

**Final Evaluation:** *March 2016*

**Evaluation Mode:** *Independent*

**Administrative Office:** *CO Dhaka*

**Technical Office:** *Declaration*

**Evaluation Manager:** *Jajoon Coue*

**Evaluation Consultants:** *Katerina Stolyarenko & Arafat Khan*

**Project Code:** *BGD/13/05/NOR*

**Donor & Budget:** *Norway (US\$2,513,126)*

**Keywords:** *Fundamental principles and rights at work, Export oriented industries, Workplace cooperation, Ready-made garment sector, Workers Rights, Trade Union Rights*

### Background & Context

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

The project “Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and Labour Relations in Export Oriented Industries in Bangladesh” (FRLR project) seeks to promote labour rights and sound industrial relations in export-oriented sectors of the national economy, such as the shrimp processing, shoe and leather sectors.

The immediate objectives of the FRLR project are:

- 1) workers and employers in the RMG, shrimp processing and shoe & leather industries will have a better knowledge and understanding of labour rights – in law and in practice;
- 2) workers and employers and their representatives are better equipped to engage in meaningful dialogue and labour relations on workplace issues of mutual importance;
- 3) governmental authorities and labour courts, in particular the IRI, the MoLE, labour courts and the BEPZA, will have an improved capacity to perform core functions and mandates;
- 4) support the implementation of occupational safety and health (OSH) improvement measures and the National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety, in particular its “practical activities”.

#### **Present Situation of the Project**

The FRLR project duration was revised 3 times, i.e. from 12 months to 30 months; however, the actual implementation took place only during 17 months (August 2014-December 2015). The project budget utilization rate constitutes 95.9 per cent as of December 31, 2015.

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

**Purpose:** The final project evaluation focused on relevance and validity of the project design, achievements related to the immediate objectives, emerging impact of the key activities implemented, assess the potential for the sustainability of project interventions and lessons learned.

**Scope:** The final evaluation covers the FRLR project implementation starting from September 2013 to December 2015.

**Clients:** The principle audiences for this evaluation are The project management, ILO (ILO Dhaka Office, DWT-India, and Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific-ROAP, and GOVERNANCE department at HQ), the Government of Bangladesh and social partners in Bangladesh, and the donor.

## Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation had a participatory character and was based on a mixed-method approach. Data collection procedures included:

- a) *desk review* of relevant documents related to the Project and other sources (more than 60 documents have been reviewed).
- b) *field visit to Bangladesh* (Dhaka, Khulna, Tongi) during January 3-13, 2016.
- c) *interviews with key informants* from executing agency, Government representatives, employers and workers organizations, national implementing partners and donors (in total, 42 interviews were conducted).
- d) *focus group discussions with employers and workers trained or assisted by the project* (in total, 5 focus groups were conducted with 64 employers and workers trained or assisted by the project).
- e) *observations* (site visits to the refurbished IRI Training Center in Khulna, not-refurbished IRI Training Center in Tongi and one medium-sized factory in Khulna from shrimp processing sector).

One of the major limitations to the methodological approach identified by the evaluation team is time constraints for consultations and discussions with relevant stakeholders during field mission. During the short timeframe (8 working days) available for the field work, it was not possible to contact all project beneficiaries, which inevitably limited the quantity of data collected and the depth of analysis.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

**Validity of project design:** The project design was generally valid, although quite ambitious in terms of scope, budget and duration. All components of the project (labour rights, workplace cooperation, labour law reform, OSH) are interlinked, and important pre-

requisites for promotion of decent work agenda in Bangladesh. In some areas of the logical framework, however, there is space for improvement.

**Relevance and strategic fit:** The FRLR project enjoyed a high relevance as the project's subject matter – freedom of association and collective bargaining – remain contentious issues in Bangladesh, especially at the level of the export-oriented industries and EPZs. The project would have better ownership if conducted needs assessments among all tripartite partners including workers and employers organizations at the design and implementation phases.

**Project progress and effectiveness:** The project was effective where it did deliver. The Project achieved most of the set targets under IO2-IO4, while the expected results exceeded the set targets under IO1. In all, while not being able to meet all its intended outputs, the available data (qualitative and quantitative) strongly suggest the project's progress towards meeting its objective.

**Efficiency of resource use:** Resources have been allocated strategically and used for the most part efficiently to achieve outcomes. With the interest to achieve demonstration and learning around the activities at the individual and enterprise levels, the project effectively allocated greater resources towards training and capacity building activities as compared to awareness raising or physical renovation. However, the FRLR project suffered substantial delays in implementation.

**Effectiveness of management arrangements:** Planned project management structure was only partly effective as lacked project staff both technical and administrative. Human resources at various levels of the ILO were engaged in project implementation and contributed toward achieving most of intended outputs, with balanced use of national, international and ILO specialists. The FRLR project had weak project governance structure and insufficient level of coordination and communication with Constituents throughout project implementation, while strong collaboration was established with other ILO projects from RMG and Shrimp sectors. In general, there was a lack of awareness about the FRLR project among stakeholders both on national and local levels.

**Impact orientation and sustainability:** The Project has showed the positive short term and medium term

impacts at individual, enterprise, institutional and policy levels through contribution to better understanding of labour rights, workplace cooperation, OSH; improving the enabling environment for social dialogue through advocacy and other measures; improving technical capacities of national partners. More visible and tangible results were achieved under shrimp processing sector, less under RMG and Shoe & Leather sectors due to different sizes of the sectors. The ILO ensured mainly financial sustainability of project's results by obtaining of further funding to continue work; meanwhile insufficient attention was paid for enhancing institutionalization of project activities by social partners.

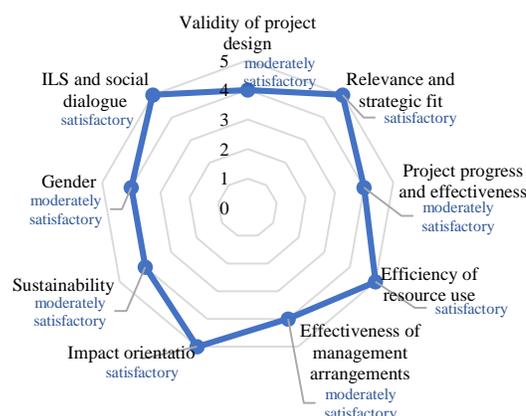
**Gender:** Gender issues were considered only partially during the design and implementation of FRLR activities in terms of: 1) collecting gender disaggregated data for all its capacity building activities; 2) targeting over 65% of woman workers in targeted sectors through workers education program; and 3) hiring women staff members.

**ILS and social dialogue:** The FRLR project promoted application of ratified by Bangladesh ILO Convention No 87 and No 98, while a bipartite dialogue was encouraged through promotion of workplace cooperation.

### Conclusions

The Norway funding was important as allowed the ILO through the FRLR project to continue the work on labour rights issues in highly challenging context and built the foundation for social dialogue in Bangladesh. The FRLR project was innovative as for the first time in Bangladesh workers education programme has been carried out, novel concept on workplace cooperation has been introduced, awareness on labour rights and obligations has been raised, complaints handling mechanism has been launched. The FRLR project was instrumental in forming a basis for reform agenda in the country and future continuation of the work on social dialogue on more advanced level. The project document set up a broad work agenda with limited time. It also demanded to work with multiple stakeholders on complex technical and political issues such as the legal reform and the promotion of labour rights, workplace cooperation and occupational safety and health in the export-oriented sectors and EPZs. In spite of these challenges, the project carried out a vast number of planned activities.

### Overall assessment of the project against evaluation criteria



## Recommendations

### Main recommendations and follow-up

The main recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. ILO Dhaka should ensure involvement of Constituents in project planning and design to secure the national ownership of project activities and sustainability of the results and outcomes.
2. ILO Dhaka should consider introduction of the practice of development theory of changes for its interventions, which would explain logical path from activities/outputs through intended outcomes/objectives to anticipated impacts.
3. ILO Dhaka should start to focus more on strategic strengthening of institutional capacity of Constituents and their internal governance structures to ensure their sustainability in the long-run.
4. ILO Dhaka should ensure strong governance structure under each its project and regular interactions with Constituents on project implementation.
5. ILO Dhaka should ensure allocation of sufficient number of staff for effective implementation of projects.
6. ILO Dhaka should improve reporting to donors with making more clear articulation which results were achieved with which donors funding.
7. ILO Dhaka should encourage better women's participation in its interventions (1) through a quota, (2) by advocacy at senior management

levels in tripartite organizations, (3) by inviting members of the women's movement to participate, (4) by requiring women's representation in tripartite bodies, (5) by raising awareness about women's labour rights and non-discrimination thereby highlighting the reasons for encouraging women's participation.

8. ILO Dhaka should facilitate the development of a comprehensive capacity development training strategy for ILO Dhaka which includes standards and monitoring mechanisms for all aspects of services provided including training evaluation, materials development and dissemination, and services support such as for information systems.
9. ILO Dhaka should consider using a factory-based approach for future worker education programmes as it will allow to cover larger number of workers, contribute to formation of TUs and introduce change agents within the sector.
10. ILO Dhaka should focus more on raising awareness about labour rights and obligations and capacity building among young generation in Bangladesh.
11. In order to sustain the momentum evolved by the FRLR project and seek greater impact for the subsequent projects in the field of FRPW, ILO Dhaka and its Constituents should seek to expand engagement with other actors, including other line ministries relevant to the decent work agenda, local governments and academia.

### **Important lessons learned**

- a) An important lesson learned of the FRLR project is the need for realistic time frames and goals when planning interventions related to FPRW and social dialogue. Legal, administrative and institutional changes take time, and the initial duration of project was too short, and goals too ambitious, to achieve intended results. Therefore, technical assistance offered in the field of social dialogue and FPRW should be planned for a longer period of time, possibly in the form of a programme rather than projects, to allow for the generation of lasting results and impact.

- b) In an environment that lacks awareness of FPRW and social dialogue, the international labour standards and collective bargaining, freedom of association, the media may come in as an important transmission belt in reaching out for many more people that any project can do. A media component appears to be a must for all the projects of this type.

### **Good Practices**

Third-party monitoring of large-scale worker education training programme were highlighted as an effective means for (1) formation of a comprehensive database of trainees with full contact details participated in worker education programme and its convertible into ILO central database through online data portal, (2) measurement of trainings relevance for workers and level of improvement in knowledge and skills and (3) identification of organizational capacities of trade union organizations.

*See the full report for all recommendations, lessons learned and good practices.*