



Evaluation Summary



International
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Independent Mid-Term Evaluation

Application of Migration Policy for Decent Work of Migrant Workers

Quick Facts

Country: *Bangladesh.*

Mid-Term Evaluation: *2 September 2019*

Mode of Evaluation *Independent Mid-Term*

Administrative Office: *ILO Country Office for Bangladesh (CO-Dhaka)*

Technical Office: *Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT), Geneva*

Evaluation Manager: *Ms. Lkhagvademberel Amgalan, National Project Manager at the ILO CO for China and Mongolia.*

Evaluation Consultant: *Theo van der Loop (International Consultant)*

Programme End: *December 2021.*

Programme Code: *BGD/15/01/SDC.*

Donor & Project Budget: *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC): USD 7,549,417, including Government of Bangladesh in-kind support: US\$ 296,377.*

Keywords: *Migration Policy, Migrant Workers, Legal Framework, Decent Work, Bangladesh.*

Background & Context

Background and project description

The present Evaluation Report is mandated by the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Independent Mid-Term Evaluation of the project entitled “Application of Migration Policy for Decent Work of Migrant Workers”, or in short Migration Policy project. It is a five-year project (with the total approved budget of USD 7,549,417) that is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and is implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The project builds on the achievements of and lessons learnt from the previous project implemented by ILO and funded by SDC on labour migration (2011-2015). The *objective* of the project is that ‘men and women migrant workers will benefit from safe migration and decent work’ and contribute to the sustainable economic and social development of Bangladesh. This development objective is achieved through two

outcomes: Men and women migrant workers are better protected through improved policy; and Public and private institutions contribute to safe migration and decent work for men and women migrants. These two outcomes are further specified into 6 outputs and 80 activities. The project mainly aims to work on building capacity of the relevant in-country government officials, labour wings in selected migrant recipient countries and manpower recruiting agencies and developing policies and frameworks to enable these actors to function well for better and protected migration.

Objective and Methodology of the Evaluation

The MTE’s purpose is to review and assess progress and achievements of the project against its planned objectives and outputs by using OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) and recommend modifications for improvement. The Data Collection Worksheet in Table 1 identifies no less than 30 Evaluation Questions. The scope of the evaluation encompasses all activities and components of the project during the whole duration from its inception until 31 December 2018 and includes all geographical coverage of the project in Bangladesh. Regarding the methodology, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data have been used, including interviews with key stakeholders and Focus Group Discussions with staff of the relevant ministries, tripartite constituents, the donor, other international and UN organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders, as well as observations, critical reflection and triangulation of information acquired. The evaluation integrates gender dimension, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as cross-cutting concerns throughout the methodology, deliverables, and final report of the evaluation. The clients and users of the independent evaluation include the national tripartite constituents, the partners of the project, the donor, PSC and PCC, as well as the ILO management at country, regional and Headquarters levels. The results of the midterm evaluation will also guide the project management in planning implementation of the second half of the project.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The *Relevance and Validity of Design* of the Migration Policy project are actually two different criteria. The *relevance* for the people and for the country of Bangladesh has been very high from the beginning as it was intended to address labour migration policies for the large number of Migrant Workers abroad as well as for the Returnees. In addition, all stakeholders interviewed have indicated explicitly that the focus on Migration Policy is very relevant for Bangladesh at this stage, and most stakeholders also stressed that the relevance is still as valid as before if not even higher. The *project design* and its underlying theory of change provided a logical and coherent framework but in the course of time this got diluted because of the disjoint in periods of the PRODOC/TAPP and the SDC-ILO Agreements, as well as because of a lack of simultaneous and coordinated updating of the various M&E tools. As a result, the Log Frame covers the full five-year period, and at present it is difficult to establish what should have been achieved until December 2018.

The project aligns with the Vision 2021's Goal Three for Bangladesh, "To become a poverty-free middle-income country" and it also supported the GoB to achieve its long-term plans, including the Seventh Five Year Plan 2015-2020. The project is also assisting Bangladesh's efforts to meet the SDGs, in particular Goal 10 (Target 10.7) and Goal 8 (Target 8.8). The project is also aligned with the UN Development Framework (UNDAF, 2017-2020). The GoB also plays a clear role at the global level, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) hosted recently the Multi-stakeholders Consultation on the implementation of the Global Compact of Migration (GCM).

The project has been working to contribute to the implementation of strategies and policy frameworks of Bangladesh, but the changing of the legal and policy framework is a long-term process involving many rounds of consultations. In the 8 years since the start of the first SDC-funded phase in 2011 two Acts have been passed which is quite a decent time to get that done. The project is also clearly aligned to ILO's Programme & Budget (P&B) and Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), as well as to the Swiss Government's Global Strategy for Migration and Development in Asia and the Middle East 2015-2019; in addition, in SDC's new national programme started in 2018, the topic of 'Migration' is one of only three pillars.

The project design as laid down in the PRODOC did generally take into account specific issues of gender equality. The two overall project outcomes each specify 'Men and Women migrant workers' and the PRODOC has a separate section on

Gender Equality. The PMT includes a dedicated Gender Focal Point, although the functions are quite vast for an NPO to dedicate only 25% of time to gender. Partly because the gender focal point left the project already in September 2018, a number of these tasks could not be undertaken systematically. Much less attention was paid to non-discrimination concerns and to the inclusion of people with disabilities; for example, these issues are not mentioned at all in the PRODOC, while in the Final Progress Report (FPR) of April 2019 only one delivery was mentioned under Output 1.1. In addition, more attention will be needed to the ways in which one can reach the potential MW in the rural areas. Significantly, 95% of the Recruiting Agencies who are members of BAIRA are based in Dhaka, leading to an important role for middlemen in the rest of the country.

The Indicators in the Performance Plan labelled A through N (see Annex 7) are generally SMART and often sex-disaggregated. However, this plan could have been a good benchmark were it not that it has not been updated since August 2017. A comprehensive Baseline study was undertaken, including a survey of 2,500 migrant workers (of which 750 women) spread over the country. With respect to Risk Management, it was found that the project's Log Frame and PRODOC elaborately captured the risks and assumptions and analysed them adequately. The main risk of the project was found to be that the achievement of the project's objectives is dependent of the sustained government's commitment and resource allocation.

In terms of *Effectiveness*, considerable progress is reported despite delays in the effective full implementation of the project especially due to staff recruitment/retaining issues. Progress was especially substantial under output 1.1, which contributed to approvals of important regulations to further strengthen and operationalize the legal and policy framework. A number of more specific important achievements are listed in Section 3.2. Several key success factors were identified by the MTE, including the fact that the PMT is located in the MEWOE, the usually very good participation from the Government when requested for their support, and the fact that one NPO is a MEWOE staff on secondment.

The Final Progress Report (FPR) on the 2016-18 Phase of the project reported that a full 100% of the indicator targets were even achieved but this estimation was found to be too optimistic (see e.g. Annex 8). The main constraints identified by the MTE include: a longer than average project approval time taken by the GoB; long periods in which the project was operated with skeleton staff; relatively frequent staff turnover of key officials in

the MEWOE; lack of resources on the side of implementing partners; and the relatively long time it takes for Acts, policies and rules to be definitely adopted.

The MEWOE has been very closely involved in the implementation of the project from the beginning. This was in particular also facilitated by the fact that the project was a continuation of the 2011-2015 phase, as well as that the Ministry provided again for office space expediting communication between project and key ministry staff. The other tripartite constituents (BEF and NCCWE) have also been involved in the project in different activities and consultations. Overall, through a range of actions, the project has reached about 440 institutions (see also Annex 9). The key stakeholders interviewed during the field mission of the present MTE are generally very satisfied with the quality of tools, technical advice, training and other activities delivered by the project. Several specific measures were taken by the project to address issues relating to Gender equality and these have been listed in Section 3.2. The effectiveness of such measures leaves somewhat to be desired in terms of the number of female beneficiaries reached which remains below 20%, and the project really needs to make an effort in this respect.

The project results did certainly contribute to the identified SDGs and their related targets in particular to Goal 10: the revised legal and policy framework, the strengthened services for migrant workers, the enhanced complaint resolution, the piloting of a 'Recruitment Cost Survey' with the BBS, the capacity building of Labour Attachés, the enhanced negotiation capacity concerning BLA/MoUs, and the establishment of a 'Call Center' at the Bangladesh Mission in Jeddah. The project has generally increased the awareness of key stakeholders on the contents of and the reporting on the different SDG targets and indicators relevant to the Decent Work Agenda. Regarding ILO's International Labour Conventions on migration, the four most relevant ones have as yet not been ratified by the GoB. Overall, the GoB has ratified 35 Conventions.

The project has managed the practice of knowledge management, lessons dissemination and visibility of project branding with a skeleton staff and without a dedicated communications officer relatively well, although the project's website would benefit from a more dynamic approach and more visual contents.

With respect of *Efficiency*, the MTE has found that the resources have been used in a relatively efficient manner which is based on opinions voiced in the stakeholder interviews and on observations. Of the total budget of 3.47 million USD, a

substantial part was not spent (23%) and returns to the donor. The largest part of the expenditures was for actual activities, i.e. subcontracts, seminars and trainings with over 46% (see Table 2). About 30% of the total expenditures was spent for the project team, which is not a high percentage for projects of this size implemented by the ILO. The largest category of expenditures is for 'Subcontracts' (35%) which were spread over each of the six outputs and included 24 national subcontracts (in BDT) and 5 international ones (in USD) which accounted for some 57% of all subcontracts (see Table 4 for a detailed overview). Looking at the total expenditures per project year, the level was quite low in the first year, i.e. 2016 (see Table 5), especially because the approval from the GoB took longer than expected. Expenditures increased substantially in 2017, but the majority was done in 2018 (56 %). On the whole, the project managed the finances well, with clear yearly Technical and Financial Progress Reports to the donor.

The project has certainly received adequate support from the Government, in particular from the MEWOE and its departments/bureaus, but also from MoLE, BBS and the other tripartite partners. The project has also received substantial support from the regional Labour Migration Specialist in ILO-DWT in Delhi, while PARDEV and MIGRANT in Geneva and ROAP in Bangkok provided support for specific activities. The project leveraged partnerships with other UN agencies, such as IOM and UN Women, and has made strategic use of coordination and collaboration with selected other, related initiatives to increase its effectiveness, such as the DFID funded Work in Freedom (WiF) project implemented by ILO in seven countries and the skills projects implemented by the ILO (the EU-funded Skills21 and the GAC-funded B-SEP). An important forum for donor coordination is the so-called 'Migration Working Group' chaired by SDC jointly with ILO and IOM. They held their fifth Meeting in November 2018. The project also contributed to Global and Regional Dialogues such as the GCM and GFMD (MoFA) and the CP and the ADD (MEWOE). Bangladesh is co-chairing the CP Working Group dealing with recruitment.

In itself the project management processes have worked well in delivering project outputs and results, but the problem was that roughly the first and the last half year of the project period the Project Management Team (PMT) had to work with a skeleton staff. The primary project governance structure was the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the Project Coordination Committee (PCC) but these committee have met only twice and thrice respectively during the entire project period. The MTE found that this is not sufficiently efficient and that at least every half year a PSC as

well as a PCC meeting should be held. Concerning reporting, the GoB requires monthly and quarterly updates, the ILO requires regular reporting on DWCP and P&B, while the donor requires annual Progress and Financial Reports, which were all mainly submitted in time. Resources dedicated to outputs aimed specifically at women specific actions and mainstreaming of gender amount to a total of almost US\$ 480,000, or about 7% of the project budget, which the MTE considers to be rather on the low side.

In terms of **Sustainability**, the exit strategy of the project is based on implementation in a phased manner whereby the 2016-2018 phase in particular supported the Government of Bangladesh in the area of reform of the legal and policy framework, and the 2019-2021 phase will build on this foundation. The MTE finds that this could indeed be effective and realistic if the Rules developed or required for the different Acts are actually implemented. It is advised to follow the Good Practice established by the B-SEP project funded by GAC and implemented by the ILO of organizing a “Sustainability Workshop” about 4 to 5 months before the project ends.

A certain degree of Ownership has developed within the MEWOE which was enhanced not in the least by the fact that from the beginning most interventions were designed jointly with this and other Ministries. An important initiative was taken by the MEWOE to establish a ‘Social Dialogue’ with all the relevant stakeholders on the MoUs and BLAs. Such and other project contributions should be seen as evidence of ‘ownership’ on the side of the Ministry. In addition, the Ministry clearly is aware that the urgent task ahead now is the implementation of rules and is taking responsibility for the publication thereof. Among the social partners a feeling of ownership is developing, and suggestions are put forward by both organisations to enhance its impact. Among the other implementing partners and stakeholders, feelings of ownership are more restricted to the specific activities in which they are involved directly. Gender mainstreaming has generally taken place, however, it was found that the efforts in this respect should be considerably stepped up in the 2019-2021 Phase, as is the case with subjects related to non-discrimination and people with disabilities. The project’s knowledge and experience on SDGs and relevant targets seem to have been transferred to the national partners, but substantial efforts are still needed in the 2019-2021 phase especially on reporting on the progress of SDGs and their respective targets.

In terms of general **Impact**, the project has made very clear contributions to the development of the

long-term policy framework on labour migration with the Rules for the 2013 OEMA Act, the new WEWB Act of 2018, and the Action plan of the EWOE Policy. This has built a foundation needed to arrive at a direct impact on men and women migrant workers to benefit from safe migration and decent work and, thereby, to contribute to the sustainable economic and social development of Bangladesh. Section 3.5 also identified several activities which potentially could have a more direct impact on the lives of the men and women migrant workers.

Significant changes took place in the area of institutional strengthening, support services and national level data on migration. The legal mandate of the MEOWE to provide welfare services including to the returned migrants was established. The WEWB Act 2018 was adopted to enhance and expand the social protection of migrant workers and their family members. The awareness about the importance of having national level data on labour migration was acknowledged. The recruitment agencies association, BAIRA, indicated that they and their members are interested to ensure ethical recruitment, although most members did not respond to a specific request to that effect. The Government has shown its commitment to ensure social security for the migrant workers by initiating the process of adopting mandatory insurance schemes. Special attention was also given towards skills development, skill upgradation and certification, so that the national objective of increasing the share of skilled migrant workers can be achieved. The background research on data integration and migration information management systems enhanced the interest among the policy makers to develop an integrated system.

The Overarching Conclusion of the MTE is that the project certainly remains highly relevant for Bangladesh as well as for the donor and other international frameworks (including SDGs and GCM), and that its design was valid and logical but lacked subsequently in coordinated monitoring. In terms of effectiveness it is concluded that a series of important achievements were made especially related to Outcome 1 and its Output 1.1, while partial progress is made on outputs 1.2, 2.2 and 2.4 (while progress on 2.1 and 2.3 could not be assessed). The project has provided value for money with subcontracts and other activities accounting for the largest budget category (46%) and with project staff for just 30%, although it was less efficient that almost a quarter could not be spent. Conducting regular PSC/PCC meetings should be given full attention, while concerning the gender dimension it must be underlined that the project should step up its efforts in the next phase. In terms of sustainability, the phased exit plan could indeed work provided the necessary acts and rules

are developed and actually implemented and this could be enhanced if the emerging ownership at the MEWOE can be sustained. According to the MTE's findings, the majority of the achievements would not have been possible without the project. There has been a clear impact on men and women migrant workers in several areas, such as strengthened complaint mechanism, sensitized RA on fair recruitment, enhanced institutional capacities for improved service delivery, and improved Pre-Departure training

Recommendations

- 1) Continue activities on legal and policy reform related to labour migration issues as it is no less relevant now than it was at the inception of the Migration Policy project. Make also sure there is clear alignment between the interventions in a possible next phase and the developing priorities of the forthcoming GoB's 8th Five-Year plan.
- 2) Adjust the Log Frame for the next Phase (2019-2021) as it was designed for five years and it is difficult to extract the specific targets, milestones and indicators for this phase.
- 3) Work together with the MEWOE and its organizations and selected partners to truly build upon the achievements of the previous phases (2011-2015 and 2016-2018), to enhance the implementation of the laws and rules and to accelerate the progress of organizational reform and the setting up of the right mechanisms and systems as well as tools and resources needed to support the work of the Ministry centrally and at the division and district levels and in the labour wings abroad.
- 4) More attention needs to be paid to the inclusion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in selected activities and consultations especially also because MoFA has such a close relationship with IOM, and ILO and IOM need to continue to work on sustaining their cooperation.
- 5) Continue to closely involve the social partners and explore capacity building for the different trade union platforms especially the NCCWE (which due to its status as a Committee cannot be as such contracted by the ILO).
- 6) Undertake a quantitative study on effectiveness and efficiency of the project at the end of 2020 or beginning of 2021 so that it can feed into the final evaluation in a timely manner, in particular make sure that the study is fully completed and agreed upon among the key stakeholders before the Final Independent Evaluation starts.
- 7) Review and streamline the project management arrangements through the PSC and PCC in such a way that at least every half year a PSC as well as a PCC meeting will be held. Reorganize the structure of the meetings in

order to enhance discussion and dialogue among the stakeholders.

- 8) Maintain attention for the complementarity among donor and other development partner interventions in the labour migration area in order to avoid overlap and gaps, in particular, through the Migration Working Group and through maintaining relations with other projects in this area.
- 9) Improve the project's website through a more dynamic approach and by including more visual contents.
- 10) Investigate ways in which one can reach the (potential) Migrant Workers in the rural areas and explore the role of the middlemen or 'Dalal' thereby for example through piloting the regularization of middlemen through registration at the UPAZILA levels.
- 11) Monitor and update continuously the phased exit plan in order to keep track of the development and implementation of the required acts and rules and organize a 'Sustainability Workshop' well before the end of the project (following the example of the ILO B-SEP programme in Dhaka).
- 12) Enhance attention and specific budget lines for issues related to gender equality, non-discrimination and disability inclusion (including of returnees). Play a more pro-active role in SDC's Gender Platform and start preparing the six-monthly reports on gender equality (included in the ToR for the Gender focal Point). For disability inclusion involve the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) and selected NGOs.

Lessons Learned and Good Practices

From the experience gained by evaluating the Migration Policy project in Bangladesh in the present report 2 Lessons Learned (LL) and 3 Good Practices (GP) have been compiled as follows:

LL1: The ILO should be more alert on the early recruitment, the retaining and the (temporary) replacement of project staff in order to avoid having to return substantial parts of the budget to the donor.

LL2: The project period agreed in the Project Document (PRODOC) and in the Technical Assistance Project Proposal (TAPP) of the Government of Bangladesh should be exactly the same as those relating to the Agreement(s) between ILO and the donor.

GP1: The close working relationships with the main partner-Ministry, the MEWOE, form a Good Practice to be replicated elsewhere under certain conditions.

GP2: The contributions of the project to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute a good practice to be elaborated in other (ILO) projects as well.

GP3: The long-term commitment of donors and partners is a very good practice leading to incremental results.