Evaluation Summary

International Labour Office

Evaluation Office

Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) – Final Evaluation

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Timor-Leste's Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) programme is a six-year, USD $11.8 million Private Sector Development project with a core purpose to contribute to employment creation and income generation. BOSS was implemented by ILO from January 2011 to December 2016, with initial funding of USD $7,920,395 by Irish Aid and an additional USD $3,909,165 of funding provided by the New Zealand Aid Programme starting in 2013.

The BOSS project's **Development Objective** is: Contributing to the generation of pro-poor economic development and quality employment for women and men by spurring growth of micro and small enterprises (MSEs). This was expected to be achieved through the following immediate objectives:

- **Immediate Objective 1:** Increased business opportunities for MSEs in target sectors and districts.
- **Immediate Objective 2:** Nation-wide access to enhanced and innovative market/need orientated business development services (BDS).
- **Immediate Objective 3:** Increased SEAPRI (State Secretary for Private Sector Support and Promotion) commitment and capacity to mainstream gender in all policies, programs and activities.

Present Situation of the Project

The BOSS project period ended December 2016.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

A final evaluation was conducted by MarketShare Associates (MSA) from late November 2016 to

February 2017. Drawing from a desk review, interviews and group discussions with key stakeholders, the evaluation examines the BOSS program on five key areas: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. MSA assessed the BOSS programme against each of the five key evaluation categories on a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being highest).

Methodology of evaluation

This evaluation utilised a variety of methods to address the evaluation questions in order to assess the overall project according to the OECD results-based evaluation criteria. Methods included the following:

- A desk review of key project documentation supplied by the project office in Dili. The purpose of the desk review was to identify initial issues requiring further analysis and investigation during field research.
- Interviews with the project team based in Dili, including the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) and project staff.
- Interviews with project stakeholders, implementing partners and other key actors. This included one-to-one meetings Timor-Leste, group discussions, and phone interviews with stakeholders not present in Timor-Leste at the time of field data collection. Logistical support from the BOSS project team to arrange the interviews.
- Field visits to project sites in selected locations identified by the CTA and the evaluator. Field visits were undertaken with logistical support from ILO.
- A stakeholder workshop in Dili at the end of field work to present preliminary findings and elicit further stakeholder input. Preparation of the stakeholder workshop, including invitation and other administrative arrangements were provided by the BOSS project team.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance

Evaluation Criteria: **Relevance**	Score (1 = low, 5 = high)	Evaluation Summary

| Project clarity and logic | 3.5 | The project was appropriately designed and informed by needs assessment, but the scope was overly broad for the available resources, and iterative design of program logic was not utilised to maximise relevance over time. |
| Alignment with ILO, partner, and beneficiary interests | 5 | BOSS was intentionally and thoroughly designed to align with the strategies and priorities of its stakeholders, and results are relevant to those priorities. |

Effectiveness

Evaluation Criteria: **Effectiveness**	Score (1 = low, 5 = high)	Evaluation Summary
Translating outputs to outcomes	4	Outcome and output targets were largely met and in many cases exceeded, with few shortfalls. The per sector targets were modest relative to BOSS's scope, though, and analysis of the deeper market impacts of the project was lacking.
Adaptive Management	4	Individual interventions were managed in a highly adaptive way, and learning was a prominent characteristic of the project's culture. Adaptive management was not systematised at the overall program level, though, and program-level strategic reviews and revisions across interventions were not a regular feature of project processes. Iterative design of the causal logic at the intervention level would have been more conducive to intentional and well-documented adaptive program management.

Efficiency

Evaluation Criteria: **Efficiency**	Score (1 = low, 5 = high)	Evaluation Summary
Value for Money and additionality	5	The BOSS scope of interventions was ambitious, and results were achieved despite relatively limited resources. Evidence suggests that much of what happened as a result of the BOSS project

		would not have occurred without it in the same timeframe.

Impact

Evaluation Criteria: **Impact**	Score (1 = low, 5 = high)	Evaluation Summary
Achieving long-term outcomes	3	Immediate Objective achievements contributed modestly towards impact at the Development Objective level, but impact targets were not set and methods for establishing plausible attribution of higher-level impacts to the project were not defined.

Sustainability

Evaluation Criteria: **Sustainability**	Score (1 = low, 5 = high)	Evaluation Summary
Sustainability addressed and achieved	4	Sustainability was earnestly addressed in the project design, implementation, and exit strategy. Gaps and constraints exist, though, that could be a threat to the sustainability of some BOSS results.

Conclusions

The BOSS project should be viewed as an overall success as it was designed and resourced. It is important, however, to keep BOSS's achievements in perspective, as major challenges remain in the areas of program intervention.

- **Relevance:** The evaluation finds the BOSS project focus to have been highly relevant to the context. The project design sacrificed depth of impact, however, for breadth of interventions.
- **Effectiveness:** The BOSS program has been effective in meeting its targets. In all three areas represented by the project's Immediate Objectives, more progress is needed and major challenges remain.
- **Efficiency:** BOSS has converted its resources into meaningful results reasonably efficiently. BOSS allocated a marked portion of its budget to technical assistance for capacity building, which is justified when considering the facilitation approach used by the project.
- **Impact:** BOSS achievements contributed to the project's stated higher-level aspirational impacts, but broad impact on economic growth and quality employment is not demonstrated.
- **Sustainability:** Not all of what has been accomplished through BOSS will be sustained, but capacities, incentives, and resources exist for institutions and market actors to continue to champion initiatives started under the project.
- **Gender issues:** BOSS successfully ensured that gender was systematically considered in both project design and project management, and project results reflect this priority. The project also had significant influence on government prioritization of women in economic development.
- **Tripartite issues:** The evaluation did not reveal any major difficulties engaging the tripartite constituents.
- **Lessons learned and emerging good practice:** Quite a few lessons, some more significant than others, can be extrapolated from the findings and conclusions detailed in this report. Annex 8 details two lessons learned and one emerging good practice examples.

sustainability - extracted from the full report executive summary.)

Recommendations

Recommendations

Based in the findings from this evaluation, the following recommendations are made to ILO and its tripartite constituents:

1. Ensure that projects are "evaluation ready" to maximize learning from an external evaluation. Above all, this requires a process of documentation throughout the project period with a final evaluation in mind, following a general principle that every project aims to contribute to the body of knowledge in development. The ideal scenario would involve recruiting the external evaluator to be engaged in a limited way throughout the project's life cycle, so as to ensure the appropriate data is being generated to support evaluation.
2. Similarly, ensure that monitoring and evaluation is appropriately resourced for the scope and complexity of the project.
3. Key terminology for any project should be clearly defined, particularly for objective statements and

indicators. Data collection and analysis methodologies should also be clearly defined.

4. Specific intervention-level causal frameworks – in the form of more detailed results chains – could be defined out of a program-level causal framework that provides clear links between more micro-level progress and macro-level achievements. Regular program-wide strategic review meetings should examine whether the logic of intervention-level results chains holds up, and whether changes need to be made to the intervention-level logic, program-level logic, or both.

5. An ex-post evaluation, at least one year after project end, may be prudent to better understand the lasting impacts of BOSS. The methods of this evaluation were limited to document review and targeted qualitative interviews, and the project's own M&E was limited in its budget, methods, and staffing. To understand whether impacts have been sustained or even scaled – for example through imitation – requires that some time has passed.

6. IADE should plan to subcontract a firm to upgrade the MIS at regular intervals. With the appropriate consultations with the MIS users (IADE), the firm should be able to iterate the system from end to end as the needs and use cases change over time.

7. Insofar as BOSS stakeholders are able to continue supporting cattle sector development, a focus on breeding centres and, separately, fattening camps could bring important market functions to sustain growth and incentivise entry into the sector by household cattle owners.

8. Follow on BDS initiatives could improve options and increase outlets for the private sector to access needed business development services by working to embedded them within the value chain. Trainings would then be specifically relevant to that value chain and also be accessible to poorer producers. IADE capacity could be built to identify opportunities to embed BDS within value chains and then work with market actors to develop the appropriate services.