



Evaluation Summary



International Labour Office

Evaluation Office

Support to Trading Partners including GSP+ Beneficiary Countries to effectively implement International Labour Standards and comply with Reporting Obligations

Quick Facts

Countries:	<i>Global: Cabo Verde, Mongolia, Pakistan, Thailand, Panama, Paraguay</i>
Final Evaluation:	<i>Feb 2020</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office	<i>NORMES</i>
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Project Code:	<i>GLO/15/27/EUR</i>
Donor(s) & Budget:	<i>European Commission (DEVCO), USD 1,176,126</i>
Keywords:	GSP+, Fundamental Conventions, ILS and their supervisory mechanisms

Background & Context

Global Context Overview

In 2016, the European Commission (EC) agreed to fund a two-year initiative implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that focused on providing support to European Union trading partners, including the Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (GSP+) beneficiary countries, to effectively implement international labour standards (ILS) and comply with reporting obligations. The project aimed to improve the application of the eight Fundamental ILO Conventions in six beneficiary countries of the GSP+ scheme (Cabo Verde, Mongolia, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay and Thailand), with a view toward reducing and progressively eliminating discrimination, forced labour, child labour, and violations of freedom of association.

The GLO/15/27/EUR project ran between August 2016 and January 2019, and had five areas of Expected Results (ER), common to all implementing countries:

- *ER1: Enhance the capacity of the selected countries to increase their compliance with their reporting obligations regarding the ILO's*

Fundamental Conventions

- *ER2: Improve or enrich the output of the country-level reporting process through active and effective tripartite participation*
- *ER3: Increase tripartite institutional capacity through replicable ILS training*
- *ER4: National curricula on ILS are available and taught at national training institutions*
- *ER5: Application of fundamental ILS is strengthened through initiatives and action by tripartite constituents, parliamentarians and judges (at the central and local level)*

Independently of the common set of ERs at the global level and the similarity among some general type of activities, the project allowed enough flexibility for countries to focus on specific issues/ILO Conventions that were of particular interest for each country.

Evaluation Purpose and Scope

The evaluation of the GLO/15/27/EUR project was designed to serve three main purposes: accountability, organizational learning and contributing to strategic planning. The goal of this independent evaluation was to assess: the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project across the major outcomes; project performance as per the foreseen targets and indicators of achievement at output and outcome levels; strategies and implementation modalities chosen; partnership arrangements; constraints and opportunities; and to provide lessons to improve the performance and delivery of future project results.

To perform the duties above, the Evaluator carried out a thorough desk review of relevant documents related to the GLO/15/27/EUR project as well as a series of Skype interviews with ILO staff in Geneva, Brussels and the relevant Regional or Country Offices in charge of project

implementation, as well as with representatives of the donor, tripartite constituents and other stakeholders in the project target countries.

The evaluation sought to determine how well the project and the target member-countries of Cabo Verde, Mongolia, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay and Thailand achieved the outcomes planned in their respective project log frames, as well as how they were achieved and under what conditions.

Main Findings & Conclusions

A. *The project was successful in achieving its main objective: Improving the timeliness and quality of target countries' reporting on the Fundamental Conventions to the ILO supervisory bodies. By 2019, all countries addressed by the project had submitted all requested reports to the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR). Linking trade benefits to compliance with ILO Fundamental Conventions, as proposed in GSP+, is a promising path to help tripartite constituents address the implementation of their obligations and reporting to ILO supervisory bodies.*

B. *The project was relevant to the needs of ILO constituents in each country and other local stakeholder and coordinated, where possible, its actions with other ILO projects and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in each country. The project model was a flexible, multi-country intervention that was managed in a decentralized manner, in which outcomes were tailored to specific country needs.*

C. *The project design was ambitious, as it tried to articulate ILO's mandate with limited resources available from the donor and varied priorities and needs of an increasing array of stakeholders in six countries around the world, in some of which the ILO had no local office. Given these constraints, the project's timeframe and resources were insufficient with regards to*

constituents' needs and the requests for technical assistance received by the ILO from local stakeholders.

D. Notwithstanding the above, the project was very efficient in mobilizing additional resources and achieving most of its outcomes on the basis of rather modest resources. Moving the project forward under these conditions was only possible due to the support provided by ILO's Regional and Country Offices, the synergy established with other ILO projects, and the recognition of ILO's unique role by all countries' tripartite stakeholders.

E. The project was very relevant and offered an interesting vehicle for the application of both ILO's social dialogue and normative mandates. Social dialogue work was at the core of the project design and theory of change, and it was consistently applied in all countries, promoting ownership among stakeholders. Involving other stakeholders in a "tripartite +" scheme was a useful strategy to strengthen the case for countries to comply with the implementation and reporting on ILS. Normative integration work focused on promoting labour law reform and regulations and policy development in various countries, as well as on the harmonization of federal and provincial regulations. Normative implementation work was mainly addressed through the capacity building of key stakeholders (labour inspectors, judges, union members, middle management in enterprises) and the establishment of tripartite and/or inter-ministerial mechanisms to follow up on the implementation of ILS.

F. Building the capacity of stakeholders is an effective means to empower them into further autonomous action, but it is a process that takes time before results may become sustainable. Given the short timeframe of the project, most of its normative implementation work may not be sustainable in the long run. Tripartite constituents would need additional support from ILO to institutionalize project achievements and to scale-

up or replicate its results. Countries' reporting to ILO supervisory bodies would need periodic technical support from the ILO in order to make project results more sustainable.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this evaluation and follow from both the lessons learned and the conclusions.

Recommendation 1: Sustainability – Implement a follow-up programme to support the sustainability of results in selected target countries (e.g. establish follow-up visits to some of the project target countries at least twice per year, during the following two years).

Recommendation 2: Project Design - Consider a longer timeframe for project implementation (e.g. four years should be the minimal timeframe for implementing this kind of project).

Recommendation 3: Project Design – Allocate human resources according to project implementation needs (e.g. consider including at least a full-time coordinator in each target country where the project works and a full-time project manager).

Recommendation 4: Project Design – Make the allocation of financial resources commensurate with the project's complexity and operational needs (e.g. allow for a greater amount of funds in support of tripartite partners' initiatives on ILS in each country).

Recommendation 5: Project Design – Consider focusing on projects of regional scope (e.g. addressing the situation of ILS in two or three countries in one specific region of the world).

Recommendation 6: Project Design – Consider developing projects with a more focused thematic scope (e.g. addressing the situation of compliance

with one or two Fundamental Conventions in a limited number of countries).

Lessons Learned and Good Practices

Lessons Learned

The evaluation identified some lessons learned, which were drawn from some of the challenges as well as the positive results obtained by the project.

a. Projects focusing on social dialogue and normative work (e.g. integrating norms into the institutional environment) need longer timeframes to see sustainable results. Legal reform and the institutionalization of cooperation mechanisms among stakeholders need longer periods of time to bear fruit. In the case of the project under evaluation, two years was too short to complete the complexity of tasks and results originally expected from the project. While countries' reporting to ILO supervisory bodies greatly improved, the short duration of the project does not guarantee the sustainability of these results.

b. Human resources are a key input for projects promoting social dialogue and aiming to increase countries' compliance with ILS. Project staffing should be commensurate to the wide spectrum of tasks and responsibilities implied in this kind of project. The project would have greatly benefitted from having at least one full-time local coordinator in each country. Likewise, the services of a full-time project manager would have benefitted the project, allowing for closer support from ILO HQ and going beyond the task of ensuring timely reporting to the donor.

Good Practices

The evaluation identified several good practices, which contributed to advancing the project's normative work.

a. The use of research to create awareness on ILS among tripartite stakeholders and promote change (Mongolia): The findings of a study on the

situation of ILS in small and medium enterprises carried out by the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (NHRCM) served as catalyser for the participation of workers' and employers' organizations and raised the awareness of policy makers about decent work deficits.

b. Build the capacity of local consultants and social partners through their active involvement in the process of preparing reports to the ILO supervisory bodies (Cabo Verde): The training and use of local professionals (instead of foreign specialists) and members of government, workers' and employers' associations, so that all activities and outputs are delivered by national partners, is a good way to promote ownership among stakeholders and contributes to the sustainability of project results.

c. Establish synergies with other ILO projects (Mongolia, Pakistan Thailand): Coordinating project activities with those of other ILO projects and partners helps to link the project to long-term strategic frameworks, increase the resources available to implement activities, and enhance project results and sustainability.

d. Mainstream the promotion of ILS within stakeholders' institutional action plans (Mongolia): In the case of Mongolia, the Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions' (CMTU) Action Plan on the Informal Economy should contribute to promote the sustainability of project achievements after the end of the life-of-project (LOP).