



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
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Office

## *Sustaining Strengthened National Capacities to Improve International Labour Standards Compliance and Reporting in Relevant European Union Trading Partners – Final Independent Evaluation*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *El Salvador, Guatemala, Pakistan, Mongolia*

**Final Evaluation:** *November 2020*

**Evaluation Mode:** *Independent*

**Administrative Office:** *ILO OFFICES IN BEIJING, ISLAMABAD and SAN JOSE*

**Technical Office:** *INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS DEPARTMENT (NORMES)*

**Evaluation Manager:** *Maria Borsos*

**Evaluation Consultant(s):**

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**Project Code:** *GLO/17/29/EUR*

**Donor(s) & Budget:** *European Commission (DG TRADE) (US\$ 1,000,109)*

**Keywords:** *Use the ILO Thesaurus*

<http://www.ilo.org/thesaurus/>

### Background & Context

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

The project ‘*Sustaining Strengthened National Capacities to Improve International Labour Standards Compliance and Reporting in Relevant European Union Trading Partners*’ was funded by the European Commission (DG TRADE), with a budget of USD: USD 1,000,109. It aims to improve the application of the 8 Fundamental ILO Conventions in beneficiary countries of the GSP+ scheme (Mongolia and Pakistan) and the implementation of ILO fundamental conventions in the Trade for Sustainable Development Chapter of the EU Central America Association Agreement (El Salvador and Guatemala). The project provided the target countries assistance in the application of the 8 fundamental ILO Conventions and meeting their obligations on standards particularly on critical issues raised by the ILO supervisory bodies and reflected under the EU GSP+/EU CAAA monitoring. The fundamental strategy was to improve implementation of International Labour Standards (ILS), especially the Fundamental Conventions, and compliance with reporting obligations to the supervisory bodies within ILO leveraging on the EU special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance arrangement

(GSP+). The Project ran for a period of 28 months, from April 2018 to July 2020, following a no-cost extension of 6 months.

The programme management strategy highlights the importance of coordination and coherence while ensuring cost efficiency and national ownership. Roles and responsibilities between HR and the regions are delineated such that the ILO field offices primarily implements the project while NORMES Department facilitates the necessary coordination and report to the Donor. The International Training Center of the ILO provides the technical assistance related to training.

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

Overall, the project has successfully achieved its global objective including the implementation of the planned country activities. The project successfully supported social dialogue and carried out training activities for social partners and government institutions geared towards the improvement of knowledge and understanding on ILS in all four countries.

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

The purpose of the independent evaluation is to give an assessment of the effectiveness and the sustainability of the project across the major outcomes; assessing 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 performance and delivery of future project results. The evaluation will cover the project's various components, outcomes, outputs and activities as reflected in the project document as well as subsequent modification and alterations made during its implementation.

The list of the intended users and clients of the evaluation are:

- Project management Department (NORMES),
- ILO Country Offices in Beijing, Islamabad and San Jose,
- ILO EVAL,
- European Commission – DG TRADE
- EU Delegations in Islamabad, San Jose and Ulan Bator.

The ILO evaluation office will use the evaluation for reporting, input for organisational learning and other meta-evaluation purposes.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

The evaluation is based on a participatory approach, involving a wide range of selected key stakeholders, taking into account the need for adequate gender representation. Relevant data have been collected, validated and analysed. The evaluation process included the following:

- A desk review of relevant documents related to project performance and progress, including the initial project document, revised log frame, work plans, and the progress report.
- Interviews with project management staff, relevant staff in the ILO country office, EU Delegations and Decent Work Teams (Brussels, Bangkok, Beijing, Islamabad, Ulaanbaatar, and San Jose) and ILO HQ through Skype/videoconference.
- Relevant staff in Turin Centre who were involved in capacity building activities through Skype/call.
- Field interviews through Skype/videoconference with individuals and/or focused group discussions with relevant national stakeholders (i.e., Government, Public institutions, social partners, DG TRADE in Brussels, EU Delegations).

The Project was evaluated against criteria such as its relevance and strategic fit, the validity of project design, project effectiveness, the efficiency of resource use, the effectiveness of management arrangement, and sustainability. The Gender dimension is considered as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables, and final report of the evaluation.

Major limitation encountered emanated from the conduct of virtual interviews due to COVID-19 restrictions. While virtual consultations tend to be constricted, the ILO guidelines for virtual evaluations were followed and particular importance was placed on keeping the list of issues simpler rather than unduly complex, and where possible shorter, as well as placing significant emphasis on flexibility to react to different perspectives and depths of knowledge and views amongst stakeholders.

### **Main Findings & Conclusions**

**Relevance, Quality of Project Design and Strategic Coherence/Fit.** Overall, the project's objectives and design took into account the needs, policies, and priorities of beneficiaries and stakeholders (global, country, and partner/institutions). Regarding the quality/appropriateness of project

design, the project was well-designed and set up to contribute to SDG 8 through improved labour relations and working conditions in the focus countries, consistent with the focus countries' ILO commitments.

**Efficiency.** Overall, the project has been managed relatively satisfactorily, in particular given its multi-country focus, complexity and the strain on budget resources to deliver the work programme. Regarding **cost efficiency**, the project has achieved significant savings vis-à-vis budget due to synergies established with other ILO projects along with benefits gained through use of regular ILO funds meant for single strategy across several projects. For approximately USD 200,000 Technical Assistance (TA) per country, the Project generated significant results which can be attributed to ILO's project management efficiency.

**Effectiveness.** Overall, the project successfully achieved most of its objectives and correspondingly implemented the planned activities in each of the four countries. In particular, the project successfully promoted social dialogue by providing training and orientation, supporting establishment of structures and building trust among constituents, all of which significantly improved capacity and commitment. view of its focus on institutional development, the Project carried out relevant training activities, targeting social partners and government institutions thereby improving the knowledge and understanding on ILS in all four countries. The training successfully built capacity in enhancing ILS reporting in terms of quality, participation, coordination with other line ministries and conformance to overall reporting requirements.

**Progress Towards Impact.** One impact of this project is the Institutionalization of tripartite committees which look into reporting and the comments of ILO supervisory bodies pertaining to implementation. Another important impact has been an improved understanding and knowledge on ILS among government staff, policy makers and social partners leading to overall improvement in national capacity to apply ILS in law reform, judicial processes and other relevant fields. A further impact is improved reporting on ILS both in terms of the quality of reporting and in terms of the systems and processes within ministries of labour to coordinate and consult with social partners and with other line ministries.

**Sustainability.** ILO is an important sustainability anchor of the project as it continues to pursue its normative and tripartite mandate in these countries, while the ILO supervisory bodies continue to function and supervise application of ratified Conventions. For

instance, some of the related components of this project can be carried over to its work under the Trade for Decent Work Umbrella, Trade for Decent Work Project, among others to ensure that they will be sustained beyond the life span of the project.

## Recommendations

The final evaluation recommendations are as follows:

**Develop communications material to help EU Staff understand the work of ILO, its specificities and challenges.** ILO should develop some communication materials (e.g., PowerPoint Presentations) explaining the key features of its work, the linkages to trade, factors facilitating success and examples of specific achievements in the past. While direct EU project counterparts in DG Trade may understand some of the specificities and challenges involved in ILO's work, it does not necessarily follow that other EC staff will.

**Develop communications material to broadcast some of the Project's successes, and the complementarity of the EU-ILO partnership.** ILO should develop some communication and dissemination materials (e.g., video, PowerPoint, web pages) that explain the complementarity and value of the partnership, as well as using some of the project's results and achievements to showcase same.

**Strengthen communication, dialogue and information flow between ILO country offices and EU Delegations.** It is recommended that ILO in particular make communication more value-focussed and results focused, with a view to immediately strengthening the EU-ILO country-level dimension of the partnership (some ILO offices are already to some extent dialoguing with EU counterparts).

**Develop a stronger conceptual framework for the EU-ILO Partnership, as a first step to Strengthening the Value Proposition and Partnership.** The EU-ILO partnership is a highly complementary one that is bringing mutual value added to both partners. It is strongly recommended that a (rigorous) **conceptual framework for the EU-ILO Partnership Is developed, as a first step to Strengthening the Value Proposition and Partnership.**

**Explore how operational mechanisms can be adapted or developed to grow ILO's value (and that of the partnership with the EU).** There is potential to improve the value of the partnership by a greater strategic view on what can be achieved during a

project-based intervention, and what would need to happen outside of that. In particular, **more focus on a project ‘exit’ strategy with a focus on maximising sustainability would bring further value to the partnership**

**Diplomatic Engagement and Strengthening of Cooperation.** Continue the high-level engagement strengthening of cooperation with high-ranking government officials not just with the Labour Ministry but probably also with the Trade Ministry. ILO can collaborate closely with the EU-Delegation on this undertaking. The goal is to orient or re-orient high-ranking government officials on the benefits of GSP 3 and what has accomplished to date in the country as far as the GSP Project on ILS, social dialogue and tripartism.

### **Operationalise within ILO Discussion and Reflection on the Reflection Questions**

It is recommended that ILO launch a structured reflection and discussion process on the questions below, as a contribution to its own ongoing organisational reflection and learning.

- ✓ **RQ1** - Can ILO do more – and achieve more – with increased use of technology, including e-learning and e-guidance?
- ✓ **RQ2** - Should ILO look anew at its approach to partnering, with a view to developing a partnership strategy and support that can amplify its impact?
- ✓ **RQ3** - Can ILO do more in terms of increasing sustained impact in partner countries over the medium-term?
- ✓ **RQ4** - Covid 19 Recovery - Can ILO strengthen linkages between its work around ILS and effort to support Covid 19 recover and building back better?

As can be seen, while these questions emanate from the evaluation work on this project, they are rather wide-ranging in scope, extending beyond ILO’s work on ILS. One option could be to do this with for example an Input Discussion Paper, supported by structured questions and an online or in situ discussion forum/fora. The questions could/should be adapted also to reflect existing internal reflection and policy development that is ongoing within ILO, or could be broadened or finetuned, for example, implicit in some questions is also the question whether is a **need to provide more systematic capacity development along with TA support?**