



International
Labour
Organization

► Evaluation Office



i-eval Discovery



Enhancing Labour Governance, Inspection and Working Conditions in Response to COVID-19 in Iraq IRQ/20/03/EUR – Independent Final Evaluation>

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Iraq

Evaluation date: 30 September 2023

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: ILO ROAS

Technical Office: ILO ROAS, DWT-Beirut

Evaluation manager: Hiba Al Rifai

Evaluation consultant(s): To Excel Consulting

DC Symbol: IRQ/20/03/EUR

Donor(s) & budget: EU, EUR 3,000,000

Key Words: COVID, Governance and Tripartism, ILS, Constituents



Executive Summary

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project "Enhancing Labour Governance, Inspection and Working Conditions in Response to COVID-19 in Iraq" IRQ/20/03/EUR was the first project to be implemented by the ILO office in Iraq, and aimed at enhancing the application of international labour standards and national labour legislation, and promoting social dialogue, social justice, and decent work. In order to reach this main objective, the project set out four immediate objectives that include:

- Labour inspection system modernized and its effectiveness enhanced in line with the International Labour Standards, particularly the labour inspection conventions
- Occupational Safety and Health improved in line with the ILO Conventions No. 155 and 187 in response to COVID-19
- Awareness of social partners on labour inspection and OSH is raised and they are in a better position to engage in programmes to promote compliance with labour legislation and in response to COVID-19
- Workers in agriculture benefit from enhanced working conditions and improved status through skills development opportunities, awareness raising, and farm level interventions.

The project mainly targeted labour inspectors, OSH inspectors, social partners, farm owners, labour recruiters and agriculture workers including coop members. The project was implemented with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as the main government counterpart.

Present situation of the project

The project ended as of the end of May 2023

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of this final evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the overall achievements of the project against its planned objectives and outputs to generate lessons learned, best practices and recommendations, and also to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of resources and achievement of results. The evaluation has also identified strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy and implementation as well as best practices and lessons learned with recommendations, which will help to inform future project design and implementation as well as contribute to broader organizational learning.



	<p>Furthermore, the evaluation investigated cross cutting issues including gender equality, social dialogue, and labour standards. The evaluation covered the entire timeframe of the project, from December 2020 to May 2023, and also covered the geographical areas of the intervention through assessing (i) centralized interventions at the level of the Federal Republic of Iraq, including Kurdistan Region of Iraq and relevant national institutions in Baghdad, (ii) local-level interventions in one governorate in the north of the country (Dohuk), and one governorate in the south (Al-Basra). It looked at the project achievement at the level of each immediate objective, and took into consideration the project duration, existing resources and political, security, and environmental constraints. The primary clients of this evaluation are ILO ROAS and ILO Iraq Office, ILO constituents in Iraq, including relevant government entities, and the donor. Secondary audience include other project stakeholders and units within the ILO that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>This evaluation followed a mixed methods approach, relying on available information and quantitative data collected through the desk review and primary qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with the key project stakeholders as well as through focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries. Interviews were conducted with 43 stakeholders (of which 8 were females. While the evaluation strived to achieve a balanced share of male and female respondents for the interviews, a balance could not be achieved given that the stakeholders are predominantly male. A total of 14 FGDs were held with 93 project beneficiaries (of which 43 or 46% are female). Gender was mainstreamed throughout the methodology from inception to data collection to data analysis. A main limitation of the methodology was a delay in data collection faced during the fieldwork, but this was overcome by the follow-up made by the project team with stakeholders. Another limitation was that the sample of the beneficiaries selected for the FGDs are not representative of the whole population given the large number of beneficiary groups across multiple locations having been exposed to a varied set of interventions. However, in order to come up with representative findings, the evaluation employed a stratified random sampling process to ensure that voices are heard from across most beneficiary groups, and from both women and men.</p>

**MAIN
FINDINGS &
CONCLUSIONS**

Relevance:

- Finding 1: The project's objectives and focus were found to be aligned with the needs of constituents and with the context of Iraq and the priorities of its authorities, mainly due to the fact that the project design was heavily based on the DCWP (2019-2023) which has already been agreed upon with constituents.
- Finding 2: The relevance of the project to the needs of the targeted populations was enhanced through the different assessments conducted early on in the project to inform implementation, and the needs of vulnerable groups were addressed by the project design.
Effectiveness:
- Finding 3: In spite of the ambitious design of the project in relation to its limited level of resources, the project managed to implement almost all of its planned activities and was effective in its contribution to achieving all of its immediate objectives.
- Finding 4: Under the 1st and 2nd immediate objectives, the project was able to develop evidence-based national policies for labour inspection and OSH that were both validated by social partners and endorsed by the government in federal Iraq as well as in KRI. The project also built the capacities of labour inspectors & OSH experts, and upgraded the institutional capacity for labour inspection and OSH in both Federal Iraq and KRI. But due to limited resources, the project could not complete the setting up on an online/electronic labour inspection system, despite having accomplished related activities towards laying the groundwork to automating the inspection system. The ILO plans to complete the automation process through another ILO project.
- Finding 5: A main gap found in the labour inspection system in Iraq is a lack of inspection on agriculture farm activities given the closed family nature of these farms and their distant locations, coupled with the limited resources available for inspection.
- Finding 6: Under the 3rd immediate objective, the project was effective in raising the awareness of social partners on the role of inspection and OSH and established a tripartite labour inspection committee. However, there remains challenges in coordination within local tripartite structures and mechanisms in Iraq.
- Finding 7: Under the 4th immediate objective, the project succeeded in implementing a very large number of field-level activities, including at the farm level, across several different topics and in different locations

across Iraq within a relatively limited period. The project reached close to 9,000 beneficiaries (around 45% females) in Basra and Dohuk, under this component of the project.

- **Finding 8:** While the extensive field-level activities carried many varied benefits to workers, the evaluation found some improvements in the working conditions and status of specific, but not all, beneficiary groups exposed to the project's activities. This was due to many factors including workers not being able to apply what they learned due to various constraints, and also due to the fact that the wide range and large number of activities across different topics and geographical areas implemented in a limited period of time may have played a role in scattering efforts under this outcome and diluting its effects.
- **Finding 9:** The project's achievements form an essential contribution to the project's overall objective, but they are considered to be a first step in the long journey towards realizing the project objective.
- **Finding 10:** The project contributed significantly to ILO's cross cutting policy drivers. *Labour standards* were at the heart of the project and its objective. On social dialogue, the project activities, especially the component focused on social partners and the validation workshops and trainings held with them under other components, contributed to bringing ILO constituents closer together during implementation. But gaps remain in social dialogue in Iraq.
- **Finding 11:** Not only did the project manage to reach an impressive share of female beneficiaries, but it also addressed the issue of gender equality across many components including its provision of gender-sensitive trainings, including ToT trainings, and the integration of gender equality in the awareness session provided by the project. The project reached more than 4,000 women across its activities.
- **Finding 12:** A number of unintended positive consequences emerged as a result of the project intervention, including a higher capacity of local implementing partners, the Iraqi government's enhanced reporting on the OSH Convention No. 184, and the opening of an ILO office branch in Basra.
- **Finding 13:** The project was able to provide strategic technical support and enhanced policy dialogue among social partners in response to COVID-19 mainly through its work on developing the labour inspection and OSH systems in the country.

Efficiency:

- Finding 14: The project faced some delays in its first year from factors outside of the project team's control, including the repercussions of COVID 19 (e.g. longer than anticipated lockdowns and travel restrictions) and a slow recruitment process for project staff. And since this is the first project implemented by the ILO office in Iraq, the project was operating in new contexts and had limited knowledge of the landscape of implementing partners which caused delays, given the general weak level of capacity of potential partners in the country
- Finding 15: the efficiency of the project was greatly enhanced following the 1st year given the strategic decisions made by the team, including the competitive procurement of services from local implementing partners and recruiting local consultants. The use and development of local skills and adherence to competitive procurement procedures carried effectiveness and efficiency gains, especially with regards to project activities being cost efficient.
- Finding 16: The development of evidence-based national policies in full consultation with social partners in a limited period of time has raised the efficiency of the project.
- Finding 17: However, much of the efficiency gains of the project came at a cost which was the very high levels of workloads and stress experienced by most human resources of the project as well as rushing some activities to meet the project's ambitious targets within a limited period of time. This was mainly due to the misalignment between the project design and its resources.
- Finding 18: The results achieved by the project are extensive and more than justify the resources invested, reaching more than 9,000 individuals and resulting in endorsed policies, plans, structures, and tools. Results included achievements on both the policy and field levels across different autonomous geographical areas that have different structures and languages.

Sustainability & Potential Impact:

- Finding 19: A number of sustainability measures and approaches were utilized by the project to enhance the sustainability of its results, including the many different ToT programs, the development of evidence-based nationally endorsed policies in full consultation with social partners, the establishment of a dedicated training centre, the

establishment of two new units at MoLSA KRI, and the equipping of the national OSH centre.

- **Finding 20:** Despite these sustainable approaches, most results achieved by the project were found to be unsustainable without further ILO support, given that this project was originally designed to be a first phase in a larger programme. In other words, the project has only laid the groundwork for further action and developments to the inspection and OSH systems, and there is still a need of further capacity building.
- **Finding 21:** While national government and non-government partners have expressed their willingness to continue their efforts towards the project's objectives, they indicated that it will be challenging for them to do so outside of ILO's support given the need for a higher level of capacity.
- **Finding 22:** Most of the project's initiatives are logically correlated with each other and with the overall objective of the project, with the exception of outcome 4, which many consider to be a separate project by itself.
- **Finding 23:** While the project's initiatives provide an essential contribution to the project's overall objective, they are considered as groundwork and the first step in the long path ahead towards realizing the project objective.
- **Finding 24:** The evaluation has found that allocating more resources to the project, especially in terms of time, would have enabled a more effective contribution to the project's main objective, given the very ambitious objective for the context of Iraq.

Effectiveness of Management Arrangements:

- **Finding 25:** Significant managerial and technical effort was put by project team to complete almost all of the project's extensive activities and achieve a number of results in a new context and within limited resources. The team's ample effort is considered to have been a pivotal factor behind the success of the ambitious project.
- **Finding 26:** Extensive consultations were held between the project team and the relevant technical specialists at ILO ROAS and HQ across many components of the project which has enhanced the effectiveness of the project. The evaluation found that extensive technical and

administrative support was provided by ILO regional and global specialists based on the request of the project team.

Conclusions:

- The project, which was based on the DWCP in Iraq, was found to be relevant to the Iraqi context and its objectives aligned with the needs of constituents and priorities of authorities. The implementation of assessments in the beginning of the project has contributed to informing implementation to better meet the needs of vulnerable groups addressed by the project design.
- The project was effective in its contribution to its immediate objectives and managed to implement most of its planned activities in spite of the ambitious nature of the project design relative to its resources. The project resulted in a number of significant achievements, especially on the policy level, including the development of evidence-based policies on inspection and OSH that were validated by social partners and officially endorsed by the government. On the field level, the project managed to reach a large number of beneficiaries across different interventions in separate regions inside Iraq, with improvements in the working conditions and status of some workers exposed to some of the project's activities. But implementing such a wide scope of activities across different areas may have played a role in scattering some efforts and diluting their effects.
- The project contributed significantly to ILO's cross cutting policy drivers, given its focus on labour standards across all of its objectives and activities and its efforts in bringing together social partners in validating important project outputs, despite existing gaps in tripartite coordination structures and mechanisms in Iraq.
- The project also contributed to gender equality. Not only did the project manage to reach an impressive share of female beneficiaries, but it also addressed the issue of gender equality across many components including its provision of gender-sensitive trainings, including ToT trainings, and the integration of gender equality in the awareness session provided by the project.
- The extensive results achieved by the project within limited resources points towards a high level of efficiency by the project, despite some delays encountered early during implementation that were mostly

related to the novelty of the operating context to the ILO and a general weak capacity of potential partners. A late recruitment process of the project team as well as prolonged travel restrictions and lockdowns from COVID were also behind some of the delays. Overall, the use and development of local skills and adherence to competitive procurement procedures carried efficiency gains in the project.

- A number of sustainability measures were utilized by the project, but most project results were found to be unsustainable without further ILO support, as results have laid down the groundwork for further work. While national government and non-government partners are willing to continue their efforts, there remains a need for continued ILO support given the need for a higher level of capacity.
- Having said that, the achievements of the project are considered to be only a first step in the long journey towards realizing the project's main objective. The evaluation has found that allocating more time for the project would have enabled a more effective contribution towards the project's main objective.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

- Align future projects' design parameters with estimated/available project resources, including human, time, and financial resources
- Continue supporting Iraq's journey to develop and modernize its labour inspection and OSH monitoring systems, including completing procedures for the online labour inspection system, supporting the implementation of the policies developed under this project and continued institutional and professional capacity building.
- Earmark some of the resources of future projects to build the capacities of implementing partners, especially when operating in new contexts or with new partners.
- Request more time for the inception phase when implementing a project in a new context to better understand the landscape.
- Work on enhancing the social protection of agricultural workers through enabling the labour inspection system in Iraq to inspect farm activities and facilitating the registration of workers in social security under the newly endorsed social security law.
- Utilize graduates of ToT activities and the newly inaugurated

	<p>training centre to build the capacities of stakeholders in Iraq in upcoming projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the high level of contribution made by the project to ILO's cross cutting policy drivers of gender equality, social dialogue, and labour standards, to facilitate the eventual realization of ILO's policy goals in Iraq.
<p>Main lessons learned and good practices</p>	<p>Lessons Learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of local skills can greatly facilitate the implementation of activities in new contexts in which there is no ILO presence or where it is difficult for ILO personnel to reach. A main lesson learned by the project's experience in implementing large scale field-level activities in Basra is that the use of local consultants can help avert adverse implications to the project's efficiency and effectiveness resulting from such contexts. • The misalignment observed between the project's overly ambitious design and the project's resources has led to very high workloads and stress levels experienced by most human resources of the project, as well as the project's inability to complete a few of the planned initiatives while rushing a few others. The contribution towards project objectives and the sustainability of results would have been enhanced through a closer alignment between the project's design and resources. Nevertheless, the project exerted much effort to complete most of the activities successfully, including 3 new activities that were added during implementation, and even over achieved some its targets, despite of the limited resources available. <p>Emerging Good Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project was able to effectively leverage ILO's global tools, resources, and guidance to complete a large range of activities within a limited period of time. In addition to the heavy technical and administrative support received by the project from the ILO ROAS and HQ as well as the cooperation made with the ILO's ITC, the project utilized and adapted a significant number of ILO global tools in its implementation of field activities including ILO's Career Guidance and Employment Services Tool, GetAhead, SYIB, COOP tools, and the strategic compliance model. The evaluation found that this leveraging of existing resources has



raised the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation.

- The national labour inspection and OSH policies were developed in an inclusive and informative approach under this project which resulted in its official endorsement by the government, thus constituting an integrated part of the official inspection and OSH systems in the country. The development of the policies was heavily informed by evidence coming from assessments done early in the project, and policies were validated with tripartite constituents, which facilitated their endorsement.
- Incorporation of a significant amount of TOT activities across many of the project's activities leads to an enhanced level of sustainability of some project results and facilitates the implementation of future capacity building activities utilizing ToT graduates. ToT activities were implemented across various components of the project including TOTs on labour inspection, GetAhead, career guidance and employment services, cooperative development, and OSH. In other words, the project established a group of local trainers who may be utilized in further trainings during implementation of future projects, especially that this project was the first project implemented by the ILO office in Iraq.