



Evaluation Summary

Independent Mid Term Evaluation

Myanmar SME and Entrepreneurship Support Project

Quick Facts

Countries:	<i>Myanmar</i>
Mid-Term Evaluation:	<i>30 January 2021</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office:	<i>Myanmar LO</i>
Technical Office:	<i>SME Unit</i>
Evaluation Manager:	<i>Neetu Lamba</i>
Evaluation Officer- EVAL:	<i>Patricia Vidal Hurtado</i>
Evaluation Consultant(s):	<i>Ty Morrissey, Frances Barns, Ba Nyar</i>
Project Code:	<i>MMR/17/51/MUL</i>

Donor(s) & Budget:

*Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and
Norwegian
Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)USD
5,017,500*

Keywords: Economic growth, economic development

Background & Context

Since 2014 the ILO has supported Myanmar’s small and medium enterprise (SME) sector through entrepreneurship development and business management trainings. Responsible Business in Myanmar which introduced SCORE Training in the garment and the fish-processing sectors.

In the current four-year phase (November 2017 to October 2021), the project focuses on developing the following services for SMEs and activities:

The provision of packages in business management training for SMEs including Start Your Own Business (SIYB) for small business owners, “Leht Li” in collaboration with Coca Cola for micro retailers, Business Eye Opener (BEO) for rural entrepreneurs Sustainable Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) and a modulated training and coaching program for medium sized enterprises, based on a self-sustaining system of cascading TOT where trainers deliver courses to enterprises and expert trainers deliver courses to trainers on a fee-for-service basis.

A SIYB Platform through a professional association of expert trainers and trainers has been established.

Value chain interventions including support for development of the Seabass mariculture value chain in Myeik in Southern Myanmar have been conducted.

The project responded to the Coronavirus pandemic by conducting several surveys and impact studies to understand the effects of COVID-19 on beneficiaries, moving courses online, conducting operations remotely and introducing subsidised courses on COVID-19 related Operational Safety and Health (OSH) for SMEs.

Project Logic

The overall development objective of the project is *SMEs in national and global supply chains have improved productivity and working conditions and provide decent work.*

Management arrangements

The project is managed by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) supported by a project team consisting of one international, four technical national staff and three support staff.

The CTA reports to the Liaison Officer of the ILO Myanmar Office. Technical support is provided by the management of the global ILO SCORE Programme and the Entrepreneurship and Value Chain Specialist, both in the SME Unit of the Enterprises Department.

The project has a Project Advisory Committee with representation from the Government and private from the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Hotel and Tourism and the private sector.

The project fulfils its formal reporting requirements to the donors (SECO and NORAD) by contributing to the annual global project progress report of the ILO SCORE Programme (under SCORE Phase III).

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess project progress against the log frame in achieving sustainability of outcomes pertaining to the SCORE Global program, the SME Entrepreneurship Programme and the Value Chain Component, and

The scope of the evaluation covered the period from November 2017 to September 2020. The evaluation critically examined the project’s results framework for key outputs and outcomes towards BDS sustainability, including training products development and introduction, the pool of trainers’ capacity development, certification and continuing professional enhancement, the financial sustainability and commercial viability of service provision by local counterparts and the implications for long term

impact and scale, institutional platform/s establishment for long-term BDS coordination and support, BDS demand by enterprises/entrepreneurs/other clients and the effectiveness of the non-subsidised private sector based approach to the delivery of SCORE.

The clients of the evaluation included the project team, ILO internal stakeholders, donors, BDS Users/clients and in-country stakeholders.

Evaluation Approach and methodology

In line with the United Nations' good practices for evaluations, as defined in the ILO Policy Guidelines for results-based evaluation (2017), the IMTE assessed the following key criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact

The IMTE has applied a qualitative led mixed methodology. The key data collection methods included a desk review of program and other relevant secondary documents analysis of the program's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System. Key informant interviews based on purposive stratified sampling and focus group discussions were held with 101 individuals (54 men and 47 women).

The evaluation had limitations. The qualitative led methodology applied meant that professional judgements needed to be applied to interpret stakeholder perspectives. Moreover, due to Covid-19 pandemic all interviews were conducted virtually. Holding FGDs virtually made it challenging to obtain the views of large numbers of stakeholders. However, with experience and strong translation skills the IMTE team were able to ensure the evaluation questions were addressed.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The IMTE team found that the project performed well on all criteria, with some caveats. The **relevance** of the project can be seen in the project's alignment with key international, ILO and Government of Myanmar (GoM) policy frameworks. The relevance of the SIYB, BEO, Leht Li and SCORE to BDS needs can be seen in the positive evaluation-responses of training participants' to the courses.

THE IMTE found that the way that the project has **responded to COVID-19** has enabled it to continue to be relevant in the COVID-19 new normal. Notably, the COVID OSH modules have had very strong uptake with 954 SMEs participating in 2020 alone.

The **design coherence of the project** in terms of the assumptions and hypothesis that underpin its logic has

strengths and weaknesses in terms of the feasibility of achieving hoped for development outcomes.

In regard to **effectiveness**, the project has made good progress towards its objectives as defined by the indicators in the results framework with some areas of weaker progress. The project has performed well on introducing training products and has exceeded its targets for capacitating the pool of trainers. For SIYB, the fee-based TOT system is well established. There are 39 Myanmar expert trainers who make profit from delivering TOTs. On SCORE it has been challenging to build up trainers due to lack of specialist skills among the population in engineering, business management and other fields. SCORE doesn't yet have a cohort of expert trainers to provide TOT but this will be achieved will by end 2021.

In terms of **achieving the overall development objective** "SMEs in national/global supply chains have improved productivity & working conditions & provide decent work" there are mixed results in regard to data on improvements in income, employment and investment.

The project has performed well on **gender mainstreaming** but there is room for improvement particularly in gender balance among the most senior management board (PAC). (GETAhead and Leht Li) having a gender focus. In regard to course delivery in **regional, remote and conflict locations**, the largest number of course deliveries have taken place in Yangon followed by Mandalay but there have been courses widely delivered in all states and regions including conflict regions such as Rahkine.

On **efficiency**, the utilisation of project resources in delivering project outputs and outcomes appears cost-effective in line with the project design although IMTE team was not resourced to conduct a detailed cost benefit analysis.

In regard to **sustainability**, the **institutional** capacity of the SIYB Platform has been strengthened by the project but it is not yet fully independent. The membership base is small and at least 50% of trainers across Myanmar have never heard of the association. There is a need to clarify the mission of the platform and the different roles of the members to ensure they are maximising their role in sustaining the system of business management training.

For SCORE, the future institutional modality is not clear. The exit strategy calls for an expert trainer to be the keeper of the methodology and fulfill the necessary oversight functions including boosting the sales of trainers, ensuring

factories meet the criteria for SCORE, management of materials, tripartite representation and monitoring.

In regard to **technical** sustainability, for SCORE monitoring systems have revealed good quality in the training provided, under the tutelage of Kaizen, the SIYB has less quality oversight since the SMEs participating in the training do not need to “qualify” and also there is less intensive performance monitoring.

In regard to **financial** sustainability, for SIYB there has been a high degree of trainer attrition, but this should not be a problem as there is a big enough cadre of expert trainers who are making money from Train-of-trainer to keep the program going. For SCORE this is still a work in progress because two expert trainers will only be trained by end 2021.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The commencement of a new DWCP from 2022 offers an opportunity to consider a broader range of areas of support for SMEs based on MSD analysis built on a better awareness of the challenges, potential leverage points and ILO’s comparative advantage. To achieve the development objective of *SMEs in national/global supply chains have improved productivity & working conditions, & provide decent work*, the ILO should consider adopting the MSD approach more comprehensively both for analysis and intervention.

Recommendation 2: In moving forward into designing a future phase, the ILO should conduct a strategic review of the seabass value chain work. To support this, the ILO should conduct research (in the remaining time available on the project) into the investment climate for the value chain and tighten up the framework for monitoring changes the value chain (beneficiary profit margins, employment, input and output markets etc.), taking into consideration the hopefully temporary effects of COVID-19). In regard to VCD work in the future, the ILO should use a mechanism like the DCED Standard or something similar to make clear decisions about what level of “upgrading” it is targeting and make a conscious choice about what level of risk it is willing to undertake through experimentation and what timeframe it can commit to.

Recommendation 3: SCORE still requires more support before sustainability as a private sector driven training program can be guaranteed. There are ongoing opportunities to support SMEs to create jobs and decent work, and the donor has indicated support for a future phase. The ILO-LO should thus initiate a series of workshops with key stakeholders to inform a possible new

phase. It should include a coherent ToC specifically for the country context covering all the components.

Recommendation 4: The ILO should review and revise the Results Framework to align to current work priorities. The project database should be improved to link more clearly to the targets and indicators. This will make the final evaluation much easier and help to provide the necessary information to design a new phase. In a future phase, there should be improvements to data collection practices pertaining to (i) improving data collection on enterprise level outcomes such as before and after data on whether or not training participants have an enterprise, how many people they employ, income and investment behaviour (ii) streamlining SCORE monitoring data collection to make it less burdensome to companies and (iii) re-examining the usefulness of post training opinion surveys and considering new approaches to testing training efficacy.

Recommendation 5: To promote the sustainability of the SIYB, the ILO should closely monitor and document the SIYB association’s ability to operate independently, attract finance and support trainers’ financial viability through assistance with marketing and new product innovations with a view to a new phase with only minimal oversight and no funding for the association. This monitoring will help to decide for the next phase whether specific additional support, new management arrangements or shift the focus to one or more different entities.

Recommendation 6: ILO should conduct research/monitoring of trainer attrition for SIYB and SCORE to ensure that it remains “healthy” as well as trainer marketing strategies and needs with a view to assist the SIYB Association/SCORE oversight entities to provide support in this area moving into the next phase.

Recommendation 7: To promote the sustainability of the SCORE, the ILO should focus on ensuring that an organisation or trainers’ group can: (i) undertake the oversight functions, (ii) conduct research into public and private sector entities which may be interested in adopting SCORE oversight as a business, (iii) continue to facilitate ToT to expand the pool of SCORE trainers and (iv) assist SCORE trainers to develop a marketing strategy for their business including the option of specialising in modules, and include in a new design for the next phase a specific strategy for SCORE financial independence within two years.

Recommendation 8: The ILO should explore delivering more gender content in the course modules on matters such as restrictions imposed by social norms, gender stereotype roles and responsibilities and expectations

from women and men and accounting for unpaid domestic labour. For example, the SCORE Programme has developed a SCORE Gender Equality module which could be delivered.

Recommendation 9: The ILO should expand collaboration with donors and NGOs to increase the availability of

packages in rural, remote and especially conflict areas of Myanmar. This should be linked to conducting and/or facilitating research on the link between worker conditions and smaller MSMEs supported through SIYB, BEO and Leht Li.