



Myanmar Covid-19 Response: Livelihood Support to Remittance Dependent Communities – Final Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Myanmar

Evaluation date: 31 March 2023

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: ILO Liaison Office, Yangon

Technical Office: ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand

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Key Words: Labour Intensive employment, employment creation, education and training programmes



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project involves a participatory process that engages local stakeholders, including government, private sector, civil society and community groups, in identifying and prioritising community infrastructure projects which are managed by local contractors employing local community members as workers. The project also includes a focus on livelihood skills and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses on subjects that are relevant in the local context and that improve the employability of the population of the communities. The approach also emphasises the importance of building local capacities and institutions to support economic development and promoting social inclusion by ensuring the equal participation of men and women and the participation of people with disabilities.

The project also focuses on developing livelihood skills and TVET courses on subjects that are relevant in the local context and that improve the employability of the population of the communities.

The management structure involves a contract between the ILO and an Ethnic Service Provider (ESP), the Rahmonnya Peace Foundation (RPF) and a Project Implementation Team (PIT) working under the guidance of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) with representation by the Ethnic Armed Organisation (EAO), the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and its departments.

Geographic coverage of the project included isolated clusters of villages that are deprived of government support and have large numbers of highly affected, vulnerable, and poor populations in Mon and Karen State and Bago and Tanintharyi Regions.

Present situation of the project

The project has recently finished completing 56 Infrastructure assets, provided more than 52,000 workdays (25,707 for females and 26,398 for males) for , established 48 VIOMCs and awarded construction contracts to 56 community contractors. The project also provided TVET training to 325 beneficiaries (including 126 females and 71 males) with 50% of beneficiaries who have successfully completed the certified TVET courses have secured or have been assured job placement. Project activities have finished, and no activities are



	currently taking place. Village Infrastructure Operation and Maintenance (VIOM) Committees are ongoing.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The main purpose of this independent final evaluation is to demonstrate accountability to the ILO member states and key national stakeholders and development partners on key results and achievements. The evaluation also sought to promote key learnings based on the experience of implementation and management. The scope of the final independent evaluation covers the entire project period, i.e., it encompasses all activities and components of the project under the direct responsibility of the ILO from its start in October 2020 up to March 2023. Primary clients of this evaluation are ILO tripartite constituents and, especially those in Myanmar, and ILO units directly and indirectly involved in supporting the implementation of the Myanmar DWCP. Secondary clients are tripartite constituents in ILO member states, regional and country offices and Decent Work Technical Support Teams (DWTs) responsible for providing technical assistance to the achievement of the Myanmar Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP).
Methodology of evaluation	The approach to the evaluation involves a qualitative-led mixed methodology that combines a review of documentation and consultations to produce robust findings and conclusions. The key data collection methods include a desk review of the program and other relevant secondary documents, key Informant Interviews (KIIs) based and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with project stakeholders and beneficiary groups, and an online survey with beneficiaries. The combination of a range of methods drawing on both subjective and objective methods provided a balanced and insightful approach to addressing the key evaluation questions and sub-questions. This enabled the main limitations of the study, including a short time span and the online modality due to travel constraints, to be overcome.
MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	The evaluation found the project was relevant on several levels. The infrastructure built with the support of the project addressed the perceived needs of communities because community members selected the projects themselves. The provision of employment addressed community needs for economic support which were high due to the complex emergency and a reduction in respondents' engagement in farming enterprises, with village-based respondents



mentioning that they had trouble bringing their produce to markets. Second, with villages somewhat isolated from main towns due to conflict, curfews, roadblocks etc., there is a greater need for services to be available in villages.

The evaluation found that the project was **consistent with ILO, donor and Partner Agency Priorities and Policy Frameworks**, but in the situation, policy frameworks for the project have been unclear and hard to operationalise. In regard to the **relevance of Project Partnerships**, partnerships at the local level, such as with EAO, the New Mon State Party (NMSP), have allowed the ILO has been operational and achieved outputs and outcomes where other developments have been unable to develop a presence. The project's partnership with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including Covenant Development Institute (CDI) and Tanintharyi Karen Peace and Security Initiative (TKPSI) and Mountain View Academy (MVA) is relevant to the ILO's engagement in Myanmar, given the important role that CSOs are playing in channelling the will of the people and resistance against the illegitimate occupation. The criterion of coherence looks at whether the project coordinated well with other initiatives in the area. In addition to EAOs, the project also built on relationships with CSOs based on Southeast Myanmar Rahmonnya Peace Foundation (RPF) and CDI in the provision of TVET training. But there was little other donor activity in the vicinity for the project to coordinate with.

The strength of **management relationships** in terms of promoting technical efficacy and community ownership could be seen in the strong support of the EAO and local communities to facilitate the project to go ahead, in spite of the big challenges.

The project was **efficient** in that it drew on community-level human resources for the delivery of outputs, but the delay in implementation caused inefficiencies.

In regard to the criteria of **effectiveness**, the evaluation found that project results were achieved with some revisions and a year-long no-cost extension, despite significant challenges to implementation. The project performed well in terms of the outcome indicators, with 100% of respondents saying that overall they were happy with the project. Under Component 2, the approach taken to the design and implementation of the TVET courses, in collaboration with two local TVET providers, TKPSI and MVA, was comprehensive and thorough.



Monitoring and evaluation of the project was detailed and thorough and well disaggregated for gender and social inclusion. Some impact level indicators were covered, such as employment and small business take-up by TVET graduates. However, the link between project outputs and higher-level socio-economic outcomes was not extensively articulated through the M&E System.

In terms of ensuring the **sustainability of outcomes for Component 1** the main focus has been on maintenance arrangements and sharing arrangements for water systems. A key issue in regard to the sustainability of project outcomes relates to ensuring the ongoing availability of equipment, supplies and staffing for health and education facilities. Ensuring this was one of the key reasons the NMSP were invited to participate in the PSC, as they provide some support in this area. NMSP Funds are more available for education than health and for this reason, the project built more schools than health centres. In regard to the **impact and sustainability of Component 2**, an impact assessment conducted by CDI showed that the training was assisting graduates to improve their livelihood and gain more income. More than half (53%) said they have been successful in starting a business or a workshop since graduation, with an additional 33% stating they are planning to. However, the sustainability of equipment and programs developed by the TVET trainers is not clear.

In regard to **cross-cutting issues including gender** the project performed well. 52% of the workers were female and women were to receive equal pay with men. 45% of VDC members were female, as well as 18% of contractors. Among TVET trainees, 55% were female and 45% were male.

The project is a strong example of an EIP investment from the ILO, which generates pro-poor economic growth, village governance, community development and EAO administrative and governance capacity. The addition of TVET training to the mix has been beneficial to people in the area, particularly youth, given that the complex emergency is reducing the scope for commercial agriculture. The TVET training appears to have been successful.

With an operational approach focused on “resilience” in a complex emergency involving conflict and displacement, the ILO should



continue to implement the successful approach of the current project.

But the proposal would be enhanced by more detail explaining how the project fits into a wider strategy in the region, how it builds on achievements through the current project and how some problematic aspects in the current project will be addressed in a future one.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main Findings & Conclusions	
	<p>Recommendation 1: Building on the success of the current project, the ILO should continue involving the same components and management arrangements with the EAOs, ESPs etc. However, the proposal should explain in detail how the project fits into a wider strategy in Southeast Myanmar.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: The ILO should support beneficiaries in areas which are vulnerable to conflict and displacement with suitable modalities such as safe migration training, perhaps being provided from Thailand and TVET training, perhaps through the use of a mobile clinic.</p> <p>Recommendation 3 The ILO should focus on promoting resilience as a high-level goal for development partner engagement in the current complex emergency in Myanmar.</p> <p>Recommendation 4: The ILO should continue collaboration with current experienced and effective CSOs whose values align with the ILO and seek to develop relationships with others being mindful of conflict sensitivity.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: The ILO should continue to focus on and expand TVET training in collaboration with effective CSO partners. The ILO should articulate, what are the features of this strategy that make it appropriate for a complex emergency involving conflict and displacement, as well as matters of certification, delivery mode, level of advancement and workforce planning.</p> <p>Recommendation 6: The ILO should consider linking with other initiatives focused on access to finance for TVET training to start a</p>



business. Although TVET training is effective in assisting beneficiaries to start a business, lack of access to capital remains an impediment.

Recommendation 7: The ILO should look for funding opportunities that might support longer-term engagement in villages or promote to other development partners opportunities to work in villages where the ILO has built infrastructure.

Recommendation 8: The ILO should consider minimising the number of transactions made to community contractors, notwithstanding the role of tranche payments in performance management.

Recommendation 9: The ILO should dedicate some technical backstopping resources to the future EIP project in Myanmar due to a gap in the project in the areas of socio-economic analysis, strategic thinking and future resource raising.

Main lessons learned and good practices.

Lesson Learned 1: An approach to programming that combines commitments to equal opportunities for participation with clear and detailed procedures, adequate training and full transparency on matters including finances can be effective in garnering the ownership and commitment of stakeholders.

Lesson Learned 2: It is possible for Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAO) to move beyond being rebel forces towards becoming administrations capable of decentralised service delivery and public revenue generation, even in a context of political instability. By supporting them, donors may be able to protect against a collapse of governance during a complex emergency.

Lesson Learned 3: Collaborating with Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) is an effective way for humanitarian/development partners to access communities in hard-to-reach areas, cut off from Government support. Doing so does not need to imply that the development agency is aligned politically with the EAO.

Lesson Learned 4: TVET training is a useful entry point for development partners due to its increased importance in livelihood strategies in post-2021 Coup Myanmar with constraints on agricultural trade and an increase in demand for local services due to constraints on movement between villages and towns and across the country. TVET training programs should be of sufficient duration, and



quality and linked to an understanding of service demand locally, regionally and in ASEAN.

Lesson Learned 5: As crucial stakeholders in the complex emergency who are leading the resistance to the State Administrative Council (SAC) and have on-the-ground understanding, it's important to nourish relationships with CSOs, particularly those with experience, capacity and values that align with the ILO. Care must be taken to ensure conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm.

Emerging Good Practice 1: Involving the Ethnic Armed Organisation in project leadership (e.g., through representation on the PSC) can help to facilitate the sustainability of project outputs such as infrastructure (education and health centres) and, at the same time, support EAO capacity development.