Asia Regional Child Labor (ARC) – Independent Midterm Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Myanmar, and Pakistan

Evaluation date: July – November 2022

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: ILO Delhi

Technical Office: FUNDAMENTALS

Evaluation manager: Ms Rattanaporn Poungpattana, M&E officer, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Evaluation consultant(s): Aitor Pérez, James Burns, Beatriz Ruiz, Uddhav Raj Poudyal, Zakia Haque, Shankar Talwar, Sabir Mehmood Baig

DC Symbol: RAS/19/04/GBR

Donor(s) & budget: United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office.
USD. 10,096,016.90

Key Words: Child Labour, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	
Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	The ARC project focuses on six countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan, which all have a high prevalence of child labour. In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal 8.7., ILO ARC aims to eradicate, the worst forms of child labour (WFCL), trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in the region. In line with ILO's Integrated Strategy on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW), the project's three main objectives include building a knowledge base on the causes and drivers of child labour and ways to address them, aligning legislations and policies with international conventions on child labour, and developing and applying a holistic approach to eradicating child labour in its worst forms in all six countries. The main target beneficiaries of this project are the countries' governments, which along with trade unions and employers' organisations, will collaborate to enhance capacities to tackle child labour by producing data, providing technical assistance, and piloting interventions in concrete zones within the region. Furthermore, the project will include working with the child labourers and their families at large, in partnership with local NGOs and governments, to act against child labour.
Present situation of the project	The project inception phase took place between May and December of 2019, with activities beginning in January of 2020. The COVID-19 Pandemic created limitations in mobility in all participant countries and political strife interrupted activities specifically taking place in Myanmar and Afghanistan. Despite these challenges, progress was made towards achieving all three objectives. Implementing partners and stakeholders include national/state/local governments, employers' organisations, workers' organisations, private companies, local NGOs, UNICEF, and other UN and research organisations.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The purpose of the evaluation is to both assess the project's first implementation phase and to conduct techniques that contribute to long-term institutional learning and provide recommendations for the second phase. The evaluation covers the inception phase and time in which field missions were conducted at the regional level, in Bangladesh, India, Nepal,and Pakistan as a group where efforts where concentrated, and Afghanistan and Myanmar as a second

This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.

2

	group in which activities were impeded for various reasons. The primary clients of this evaluation are the ARC regional and national project team, ILO Offices, ILO HQ, FUNDAMENTALS, and FCDO. Secondary clients include other project stakeholders such as key Ministries, NGOs and embassies.
Methodology of evaluation	The evaluation is based on the terms of reference (ToR) issued by ILO RO for Asia and Pacific, standard criteria in development cooperation, and UNEG ethical guidelines, standards, and norms. Based on the ToR, the evaluation questions were structured under six criteria: relevance, validity of the project's design, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Data collection was a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques, including document review, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, online survey and computerized content analysis.
MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	The ARC programme is highly relevant and covers countries with a high prevalence in child labour and important shortcomings in policy responses on standards and compliance. The programme is also aligned with the SDG target to eradicate child labour. The COVID-19 pandemic increased vulnerability of boys and girls due to school closures, alteration in livelihoods and shifts in political focus. The programme design includes empirical research, CLFZ and engagement with evaluation informants, CSOs, workers' organisations and employers' organisations. Gender was not visible in the project's initial formulation due to data indicating that child labour was mainly affecting boys in the target countries. New findings indicate that there might be hidden female child labour cases hidden in domestic services. The project's implementation was delayed several months due to administrative procedures, and later affected in the implementation process due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Myanmar and Afghanistan were especially delayed due to political turmoil. Despite these challenges, there were great results in the other countries involved. Bangladesh and Nepal succeeded in producing a knowledge base on the scale of child labour and contributing to action plans for policies that align with international standards on child labour. UNICEF also made a lot of progress in Pakistan and India was the most successful in implementing on-the-ground activities. Big data analysis indicates

This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.

3

that social media has a positive impact on ARC as it contributes to increased engagement and media coverage. The ARC programme has produced gender-balanced results in Pakistan as the child labour sector mainly affects female child labourers. For programme sustainability, it is noted that collaboration with governmental counterparts, aligned with international and national norms, are crucial for the eradication of child labour.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations	1. A time extension should be negotiated with the donor for the implementation of the project ToC to become possible. 2. The second phase of the project should focus on a sustainability plan and exit strategy for every result area and country. 3. Internet metrics should be systematically used to follow up on the project's effects on the partners and stakeholders. 4. By countries, Nepal should prioritize its remaining time on the implementation of CLFZ, and consider how ILO can preserve its technical assistance to the 8.7 Alliance. The agreement with ESDO should be implemented in Nepal. 5. Bangladesh should prioritise policy dialogue around the new data obtained from the national child labour survey. 6. In Pakistan, ILO and UNICEF could engage other departments in respective provinces to collaborate in the eradication of child labour 7. In India, it would be worth measuring the impact of the work conducted on child labour and social protection schemes. 8. In Myanmar, it is imperative for the project to continue building capacity of social partners and communities to institutionalize child labour monitoring systems at the community level.
Main lessons learned and good practices	1. Data collection on CL might require previous high-level dialogue in some countries. 2. Despite all countries being committed to the eradication of CL, the Alliance 8.7 and choice of a country to become Pathfinder of the Alliance provides momentum for collaborating stakeholders in addressing child labour.

This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.

4

	3. Female child labourers in the domestic work sector (and their own households) should be taken into account in gender-balanced project design. 4. The set-up of a large programme with an ad-hoc programme team within ILO takes time. Improving knowledge, policymaking, and activities on the ground cannot always been done in a sequential manner, as challenges and opportunities in each area of work arise differently in each national contest. 5. Institutionalizing CL under the umbrella of well-established institutions and practices enables effectiveness and sustainability. 6. Partnerships with CSOs allow ILO to connect research and policy levels with activities on the ground. 7. Regional programmes facilitate exchange of information between different countries.

This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.

5