



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation
Office

More and quality jobs are created through better policies and frameworks and strengthened labour market information system

Quick Facts

Countries: Myanmar

Independent Final Evaluation: February 2020

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Administrative Office: ILO Liaison Office, Yangon, Myanmar

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

Evaluation Manager: Ms. Margaret Reade Rounds

Evaluation Consultant: Morrissey Consulting International (MCI)

Project End: 31 December 2019

Project Code : MMR/16/03/RBS

Donor & Project Budget: Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA), US\$1,000,000

Background & Context

The project was originally designed to be implemented in close collaboration with key Government agencies such as Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP) and Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), with Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) operating in the targeted areas, and with the targeted local communities.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to support *“vulnerable women and men – in particular youth – in conflict affected ethnic areas of rural Myanmar [to] derive social and economic benefits and increased resilience in fragile situations from employment-intensive investments in key infrastructure and demand-driven Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)”*.

During the inception phase, the following project outcomes were agreed upon:

- **Outcome 1:** State-level Government support in Shan, Mon and Rakhine States for the development of conflict-sensitive and economically viable decent job creation policies through employment intensive public investments
- **Outcome 2:** Demonstrated effective and conflict-sensitive operational models for decent job creation through employment-intensive investments in rural infrastructure in selected areas in Mon State
- **Outcome 3:** Increased support in Mon, Shan and Rakhine States for the adoption of decent work standards and practices among duty bearers in lieu of forced labour.

This JPR project is a strong example of an Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) investment which generates pro-poor economic growth, capacity and networking at the local level. The project had a specific focus on the Bee Rae area of Mon State in terms of the development and implementation of an EIIP model on the ground.

The main purpose of this independent final evaluation was 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. Specifically, the evaluation sought to:

- Assess the extent to which the project has achieved its stated objectives and expected results as reflected in the project document and modifications while identifying the support factors and constraints that have led to them;
- Identify unexpected positive and negative results;
- Assess the extent to which the project outcomes will be scalable;

- Identify lessons learned and good practices, especially regarding models of interventions that can be applied further;
- Establish the validity and the relevance of the project design and implementation strategy in relation to the ILO (i.e. Flagship Programme of Jobs for Peace and Resilience), UN, and Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA),
- Provide recommendations to project stakeholders to promote sustainability and support the completion, expansion or further development of initiatives that were supported by the project.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance

The project fits within relevant policy frameworks including the Government of Myanmar (GoM) Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018 – 2030) with its focus on quality jobs and the private sector as the engine of environmentally conscious and socially responsible economic growth. The project also aligns well with the ILO Myanmar Decent Work Country Programme and the 2016 Bali Declaration.

Effectiveness

Key achievements derived through the project were as follows:

Achievements on Component 1

Component 1 focused on contributing to the adoption and implementation of evidence-based policy by making a case for economically viable and conflict sensitive job strategies (to be funded by RBSA with co-funding from the EU supported Livelihoods and Food Security (LIFT) Skills development project in Rakhine State).

For Component 1, the main result was the completion of a business case for the application of the labour-intensive approach to infrastructure development and consulting on and sharing the study with government and EAO stakeholders. The report is comprehensive and detailed and makes a strong economic and poverty reduction case for EIIP across Myanmar, building on several years of demonstrated achievements in EIIP. The report highlights the benefits of the approach in promoting poverty reduction, its suitability for the Myanmar context and potential impacts upon labour migration and livelihoods. The project held discussion on decent job creation through EIIP investments with several Union and Regional Government Departments.

Achievements on Component 2

Component 2 involved demonstrating viable, effective and replicable employment intensive and conflict-

sensitive strategies for decent job creation and social and economic empowerment for vulnerable people – particularly youth in conflict affected rural areas in Mon State, with the aim of these being taken up by the Government and EAOs. At the operational level, the project results were achieved despite the project being subject to a substantial delay in commencement of up to one year. The delay was due to restrictions on international agencies travelling to rural locations which affected the ability of ILO project staff to access project implementation locations. Prior to the start of implementation, the project team attempted – unsuccessfully – to get an exemption before deciding on remote monitoring. The delay in commencement and the remote monitoring caused delays and extra costs throughout implementation. Nevertheless, project achievements included:

- Completion of 17 infrastructure facilities including - 4 water supply facilities, 3 new clinics, 2 bridges, 3 pre-schools, 3 schools, 1 training centre and 1 dormitory totalling USD 173, 843.
- Employment of 791 workers including 454 (57%) males and 337 (43%) females. Of the workers selected, 42% were youth.
- Creation of a total of 8,022 worker days which included 36% of worker days for women and 39% of worker days for youth.
- Supporting 10 major local CSOs to deliver training for 1,015 girls/women and 702 men/boys in key topics.
- Training and mentoring support for 13 local community members to manage construction contracts.
- Establishing Village Development Committees (VDC) to oversee physical works development and to manage operations and maintenance.
- Developing relationships with the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the political stream of a local EAO
- Creating a platform for key stakeholders in a conflict environment to develop relationships and work together including the NMSP, CSOs, village level authorities and village members (notably the Government has not been involved).
- Collaborating with 10 CSOs in Mon State and to bring them together with the NMSP and vice versa.

Achievements on Component 3

Component 3 focused on increased engagement and evidence-based buy-in of duty bearers on promotion and adoption of decent work practice, employment for peace in lieu of forced labour (to be funded with co-funding support from the USAID project on the Forced Labour complaints mechanism). For this component, the work of the RBSA project included production and distribution of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials and workshops on human rights and workers' rights. This represented a

continuation of ILOs previous flagship work in Myanmar around eliminating forced labour. Ending forced labour is an area where successive Myanmar governments both military and NDC led have been cooperative with development agencies due to their interest in being compliant with the demands of the international community in lieu of their investment goals. Since a liaison office was established in 2002, the ILO has played a leadership role in the campaign to end forced labour and child labour in Myanmar.

Efficiency

The evaluation team found that there were aspects of the approach that were efficient, i.e. drawing on community level human resources for delivery of outputs but the delay in implementation and restrictions on the movement of ILO staff caused inefficiencies. Inefficiencies pertained to many project activities being required to be held in townships resulting in extra accommodation costs, difficulties in securing the attendance of participants because it required them to be away from livelihood activities.

The total funds contributed to infrastructure were MMK 252,130,981 (USD 173, 843), approximately 19 percent, to paying local labourers were MMK 72,448,800 (USD 49,953), approximately 5.4 percent of total expenditure and to maintenance Funds was MMK 18,060,296 (USD 12,423), 1.3 percent of total funds spent. This implies that total funds spent at the community level was about 25% which is somewhat low.

Impact and Sustainability

Data collected by the project is preliminary but initial findings from baseline and end-line data showed positive economic changes from before to after project implementation. For example, after the intervention 32% more participants reported that they had received any form of income compared to before the intervention. In addition to showing the financial benefit of the project, the data showed the low level of integration of the villagers into the monetary economy prior to the project. In the baseline study 46% of respondents said they received no income in the last 12 months. This suggests that the project is operating in an area of high need where the income provided makes a big difference.

Key Recommendations

Moving forward the ILO should build on its historically strong positioning as a brokering partner of parties to conflict to support peace and development in Myanmar. This should occur through the on-going implementation and promotion to policy makers of the EIIP model and advocacy for equal and fair treatment in striving towards the SDGs in EAO, Government, as well as joint

EAOs- Government controlled areas. Toward this end, the following recommendations have been identified by the evaluation team:

Recommendation 1: The ILO should seek ongoing funding for its LRB infrastructure and local economic development work. Priorities for future funding should include:

- Activities to support beneficiaries to link more lucratively to markets such as TVET training in key sectors, SME training and value chain development. This could be a continuation in the Bee Rae area as these activities were not extensively explored during the RBSA project as well as expanding into other areas.
- Activities to support income generation for women (although women are involved in farming also) such as soap making and sewing
- Expanding the LRB approach to other areas in Mon State and neighbouring states such as Karen State

Recommendation 2: The ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar have a context specific strategy around employment and local economic development that cuts across different projects but currently it is rather informal. It may be helpful for the ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar to support projects with different funding sources operating concurrently and sequentially with:

- Good quality integrated formal analysis covering institutions, systems and processes, political economy, human resource capacity, economic conditions and an identification of opportunities for supporting agents of change that supports their project development.
- An articulated longer term strategy of the ILO's objectives for EAO areas within the framework of the JPR (conflict sensitive LRB infrastructure development, TVET training, value chain development etc)
- An articulated proactive strategy to coordinating with other development partners to work collectively to support national level leaders who possess "agency" to take up opportunities for change.

Recommendation 3: The project team has already produced an excellent video on the project achievements including a long and short version. These materials should be disseminated as widely and actively as possible through various media forms and social media. The business case study is another informative output. The study has robust findings, but it is long and technical. It would be useful to produce a shorter version with key findings and recommendations for dissemination. Among the development partner community, it is useful to disseminate lessons through the Development Partners Forum and stakeholders to the LIFT project.

Recommendation 4: While EAO areas have been disadvantaged in terms of service delivery, if ILO focuses their operational activity solely on EAO areas then there may be a perception by the Government and Military that they are siding with the EAOs. This may reduce the willingness of the Government to collaborate with the ILO in learning lessons and striving towards development outcomes. In the future, EIIP interventions should be balanced between EAO and Government areas. The ILO should also focus on inter-EAO collaboration as this is a current source of conflict in the country.

Recommendation 5: An important achievement of the project has been the relationship established between the NMSP and the ILO. To achieve effective leadership, the NMSP needs capacity building to strengthen its systems and processes. However, there are sensitivities around external involvement in its internal affairs. The ILO should build on its relationship with the NMSP to influence and support capacity building within the NMSPs internal systems and processes. In the long term, the ILO should encourage the NMSP and other EAO administrations to take an active leadership role in promoting development outcomes such as jobs, services and infrastructure, for communities in areas controlled by them. Improvements in planning and management systems may help to achieve better outcomes.

Recommendation 6: The project has also provided a basis for the ILO to develop a relationship with the NMSP around reducing forced labour. However, as with other project results, results for this outcome have been limited in scope and size. Notably the NMSP has not yet signed any agreements on forced labour. Moving forward, the ILO should continue to encourage the NMSP to sign agreements on eliminating forced labour.

Recommendation 7: While the planned works were completed by the project team and operation and O&M committees were established, implementation was rushed and there was not much time to ensure the O&M committees were up and running and operating effectively and sustainably. The extent to which maintenance systems established will remain operational and effective is unpredictable. Activities relating to oversight of village infrastructure maintenance from facilities built on the RBSA project should be included in proposals for future funding.

Recommendation 8: A key result of the project at the operational level has been support for community members to become commercial contractors with the capability to manage construction projects. To build on the skills and business linkages that have been developed through this, the ILO should look for opportunities to further strengthen the skills and business acumen of the community contractors that have been trained. Support for launching community contractors as sustainably functioning business

operations should be built into future community led infrastructure projects.

Recommendation 9: Several recommendations emerged from the evaluation pertaining to training which are as follows:

- Trainees found courses that were particularly useful to them to be ecological farming, soap making, and dressmaking. In future projects, it would be useful to deliver training content in these areas. Trainees also noted that the duration of courses was quite short and they would have benefited from more content delivery. In future, consideration should be given to increasing the duration of training to cover participants needs.
- Participants also appreciated “soft skills” training courses such as leadership and human rights but training evaluations did not clearly ascertain the extent of benefits or what additional support is needed. The design of the “soft” skill training courses should be specific in the outcomes it is trying to achieve to ascertain how much time and what strategies are needed to achieve outcomes. Training evaluations should be more rigorous with a focus on building the capacity of trainers to **observe, analyse** and **communicate** outcomes.