Evaluation Summary

Enhancing implementation of SDG Decent Work targets and indicators in Viet Nam – Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Country: Viet Nam

Final Evaluation: October 2019

Evaluation Mode: Independent

Administrative Office: CO-Hanoi

Technical Office: ROAP, STATISTICS

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Project Code: VNM/16/03/RBS

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Background & Context

Summary of the intervention purpose, logic and structure

The enhancing implementation of SDG Decent Work targets of the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the 2030 agenda in Viet Nam (the ILO DW SDG Intervention) seeks to support the development, implementation and monitoring of labour and employment related SDG targets and indicators in Viet Nam.

The immediate objectives of the ILO DW SDG Intervention are three-fold: (1) Support the identification in consultation with constituents (workers', employers' organizations) and research institutes, the list of V-SDG indicators that include the SDG indicators for which ILO is custodian, by September 2018; (2) Support to build the capacity to produce and analyse those labour related SDG targets and indicators to strengthen Viet Nam's SDG monitoring and reporting, by December 2019; (3) Support the acceleration, implementation and monitoring of specific labour related SDG targets and indicators, laying the ground for subsequent support to the longer-term goals of the 2030 Agenda. The intervention was inscribed in the overall work plan on SDG for which the Government of Viet Nam has asked for international community's support.

The ILO DW SDG Intervention aimed to contribute to the achievement of all three priorities of the DWCP for 2017-2021 and the Country Programme Outcome (CPO) VNM128 on "Capacity of government and the social partners to develop and implement employment policies and programmes that are well suited to Viet Nam's dynamic employment environment and favourable to decent work strengthened".

Present Situation of the Intervention

The ILO DW SDG intervention suffered some delays in implementation, i.e. actual implementation was 20 months instead of 24 months planned. The actual expenditure rate as of July 31, 2019 constituted 63%, while the commitment rate stands on the level of 93%. It is anticipated that by the end of December 2019, the actual expenditure rate will be 100%.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

Purpose: The FE focused at assessing the achievements of the ILO DW SDG Intervention, identify intended and unintended effects, assess lessons learned and emerging practices, and assess the likelihood of sustaining key intervention outputs and results.

Scope: The FE covers the ILO DW SDG Intervention implementation since November 2017 until August 2019. Relevant CPOs and DWCP outcomes (and their M&E plans) that this RBSA intervention is linked to, were used as reference frameworks.

Clients: The principle audiences for this evaluation are the ILO CO Hanoi, ROAP and DWT Bangkok, HQ, constituents and research institutes.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation had a participatory character and was based on a mixed-method approach. Data collection procedures included:

1) review of documents,
2) field visit to Viet Nam (August 9-16, 2019),
3) interviews with key informants,
3) focus groups with trainees,
5) online beneficiary survey among trainees,
6) survey among implementing partners,
7) de-briefing consisting of discussion on FE findings, conclusions and recommendations with ILO staff in Vietnam.

In total, more than 40 intervention's documents have been reviewed, 43 key informants (30%-m/70%-f) in person, by telephone, or by skype have been interviewed, and 36 trainees (64%-m/36%-f) took part in the online survey and all 8 IPs (25%-m/75%-f) participated in the surveys.

Major limitations to the methodological approach included: (a) the fieldwork took place during six days period, so not all relevant intervention sites or individuals were available during that time, and (b) the final evaluation was conducted five months prior to the end of the ILO DW SDG Intervention; therefore, not all final figures on budget spending and data on some ongoing activities were available to the ET.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Design: successful
The ILO DW SDG intervention was designed to scale up the efforts made by ILO Viet Nam in 2016-2017 to facilitate constituent's engagement and influence in the SDG related processes. The RBSA intervention's design was generally valid; however, a disconnection could be seen with regard to the usage of implementation

planning approach which is highly relevant for the design of the CPOs, but to lesser extent for the RBSA intervention which is supposed to be results-based focused. The CPO planning template lacks performance measurements. The DWCP Results Framework is of limited usage as well as it does not have outputs and related outputs indicators which would allow easily link the RBSA intervention to the DWCP outcomes and milestone set for the biennium. As a result, the RBSA intervention design is not logically coherent. The RBSA intervention addressed the issues of gender and discrimination (including disabilities) through the development of V-SDGs on decent work and employment and collection of sex-disaggregated data on labour market and V-SDGs indicators.

Relevance: highly successful
The ILO DW SDG intervention was strategic and demand-driven, as it assisted the Government of Viet Nam to implement its commitments under the National Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for realization of SDGs. The intervention's relevance was reinforced in the course of the implementation by addressing additional priorities of the Government partners (e.g. 2018 National Child Labour Survey, trainings on ISCO-08 for PESCs, Green Growth Action Plan of MOLISA) and it was appreciated by the stakeholders. The RBSA intervention contributed to the achievement of all the three priorities of the Decent Work Country Programme for 2017-2021 which is tightly aligned with the National Socio-Economic Development Strategy and Plan. Specific contribution was made to the Country Programme Outcome VNM128 on employment policies and Outcome A on effective advocacy for decent work. The RBSA intervention was in direct support of Outcome 1 of the P&B 2018-19, and indirectly supports the achievement of Outcome 8 and 10 through its cooperation with other ILO's projects (NIRF, ENHANCE, TRIANGLE). The intervention also fitted closely with the UN programming (Focus Area 1 Investing in People and Focus Area 3 Fostering Prosperity and Partnership of the One UN Strategic Plan 2017–2021).

Effectiveness: highly successful
The RBSA intervention in general made effective progress towards achieving the envisaged results despite the delays with implementation. As of the end of July 2019, the ILO DW SDG intervention fully achieved the set targets under Milestone 3, while the targets under Milestones 1 and 2 were partly achieved as a number of activities are still in the process of the implementation. The RBSA intervention has a number of

achievements under each milestone of the CPO VNM 128, but the most significant once is under Output 1.1, Output 2.1, Output 2.2 and Output 3.2. The ILO DW SDG intervention also contributed directly to the achievement of the milestones under Outcome 1 of the DWCP for 2017-2021. The intervention's primarily achievements include: convincing the Government of Viet Nam to include all ILO custodian indicators on labour and employment into the V-SDGs list in spite of the fact that 3 out of 23 indicators do not have yet the developed methodology ; encouraging the Government of Viet Nam to use international concepts on labour when conducting the labour force surveys and population census; usage of ILO definition on child labour in the course of conduction of 2018 national child labour force survey; improvement of knowledge on ISCO-08 of PESCs (done for the 1st time in the country); development of SDGs profiles on DW indicators; improvement of the collaboration between GSO and DOE on labour statistics.

Efficiency: highly successful
The ILO DW SDG intervention is in overall efficient and is accomplishing well with respect to resources used (inputs) as compared to qualitative and quantitative results (outputs). In spite of having limited resources, the RBSA intervention was very successful in complementing its resources through cost-sharing and in-kind contributions with other ILO projects and other development partners interventions for reaching the anticipated results. Nevertheless, the intervention suffered some delays in implementation due to both internal and external factors. The duration of the ILO DW SDG intervention was quite short for bringing the lasting impact; however, the results framework was realistic, given the timeframe, budget and partners capacity as well as the DWCP outcomes and milestone set for the biennium.

Effectiveness of management arrangements: successful
As a whole, the management arrangements of the RBSA intervention was adequate and effective, and allowed reaching meaningful results. The overall management was done by Programme Manager/Labour Economist, meanwhile day-to-day implementation by NPC with support of ILO Technical Specialists at country, regional and HQ levels and a number of national IPs responsible for implementation of respective activities. The IPs have an adequate expertise in the thematic areas of the intervention and each partner contributed to

achievement of the set objectives. However, some of them were not able to meet the intermediate deadlines, although the final products of high quality were delivered as planned. The intervention's monitoring system was weak, while reporting focused primarily on the high-level results leaving other important achievements underreported. The existing monitoring and reporting requirements for the RBSA intervention do not allow to capture intervention's lessons learned and good practices.

Impact orientation: successful
The RBSA intervention has shown positive impacts on the national systems, policies and beneficiary agencies. Thanks to the support of the intervention, Viet Nam is today one of the first countries in the world to have a nationally-owned, comprehensive tool to monitor progress on the SDGs. Viet Nam became the first country in the world which has a comprehensive list of the ILO custodian indicators on labour and employment, which was institutionalized by the circular of the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Viet Nam replaced the statistical standards that have been applied for nearly 40 years with advanced standards (LFS, population census, child labour). Viet Nam became one of the first new countries in the world to adopt the newest statistical standards on ICLS19. The ILO DW SDG intervention contributed as well to the ratification and post-ratification process of C88 on Employment Services. The RBSA intervention has also provided important contributions to the UN in Viet Nam in working with the Government of Viet Nam on other SDGs and ILO is fully established as lead agency on labour SDGs and one of the strongest in the SDG space. However, still much more work has to be done for strengthening statistical capacity and the quality of the labour market information system in the country, improving awareness about SDGs and ensure implementation of the NAP.

Sustainability: partially successful
The RBSA intervention does not have a strong phase-out strategy developed in a participatory way with the tripartite plus constituents. The prospect for securing funding to continue intervention's activities is still to be seen. The ILO DW SDG intervention developed and/or upgraded tools and methodologies for different labour surveys as well as strengthened capacity of tripartite plus constituents (GSO, DOE and PESCs, ILSSA as well as social partners (VGCL and VCCI); however, further support is required to ensure the institutionalisation of practices.

Conclusions

The ILO DW SDG Intervention was instrumental and very timely. It led to stepping up the quality of the Government of Viet Nam's monitoring of labour and employment issues. Viet Nam has now one of the world's most advanced national SDG frameworks, under the Government's strong leadership and to which workers' and employers' organizations are prepared to contribute substantially. In addition, the regular Labour Force Survey is aligned with the latest global standards, collecting statistical data that are in the process of being harmonized with administrative data. This progress translates into a wealth of relevant and robust data available to policy-makers to keep moving towards the country's priority objectives.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

The main recommendations are summarized as follows:

General recommendations
1. In the remaining time of the implementation of the ILO DW SDG intervention focus on sustainability.
2. ILO needs to consider alternative mechanism for funding of its work on statistics and data collection (apart from RBSA, donor funding) in middle-income countries like Viet Nam.
3. It is important to improve the planning process of the RBSA interventions to ensure the possibility of its proper evaluations. A longer time frame should be required for the design of RBSA project of a certain amount, such as above US$ 750,000, including allowing time for consultations with constituents and stakeholders.

Specific recommendations
4. Completing the 19th ICLS (2013) implementation through the analysis and communicating 2019 LFS data in comparison with data from previous labour force surveys, for at least until early 2021 when Viet Nam will fully use data from new standards.
5. Provide support to VSDGI implementation for category B indicators under ILO custodianship; these indicators were included at the very request of GSO themselves, with the expectation (rightly so) from an ongoing efficient ILO support.
6. Continued support to LMIS from administrative records, such as the work of MOLISA's employment services, leveraging on the current commitment of MOLISA to use international labour statistics standards (ISCO-08) within its employment services.
7. Support to constituents' work plans of support to implementing the VSDGs, particularly for demonstrating the added value of constituents.
8. SDG decent work profile dissemination, and updating the profile when all SDGs indicators under ILO are available, most likely within 2 years (2021).

Important lessons learned

The evaluability of RBSA intervention is quite limited under the current planning, implementation and reporting frameworks. The RBSA intervention does not have the explicitly articulated Theory of Change, which includes all assumptions and causal hypotheses which would allow to explain how a group of early and intermediate accomplishments sets the stage for producing long-range results. The design of the RBSA intervention is made on the assumption that the Country Office has the DWCP which has the Results Framework which could be used for implementation monitoring. However, the DWCP Results Framework cannot be used as a monitoring tool of the RBSA intervention.

Emerging Good Practices

The ILO DW SDG intervention provided technical assistance to key institutions involved in SDGs, with the objective to strengthen awareness of SDGs as well as overall statistical capacity. Activities included tailor-made SDG and LMI training for social partners, capacity building for officials of MOLISA, ad-hoc training opportunities in Turin for members of the General Statistics Office and MOLISA, as well as dedicated workshops and missions of specialists to train small groups on specific issues. These capacity building activities were delivered with the support of ROAP and DWT Bangkok, and HQ. In addition, a high-ranking delegation from Viet Nam participated in the 2018 International Conference of Labour Statisticians.

See the full report for all recommendations, lessons learned and good practices.