



## Decent Work in the Garment Sector Supply Chains in Asia

### QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Pakistan, as well as a regional component.

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**Evaluation type:** Project

**Evaluation timing:** Final

**Administrative Office:** ILO ROAP, Bangkok

**Technical Office:** ILO INWORK - Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch

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*Key Words:* Decent Work, Global Supply Chains, Garment Sector, Industrial Relations, Gender Equality, Productivity, Environmental Sustainability, Knowledge Management, South-East and South Asia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Myanmar.

### Background & Context

#### Background and project description

The present evaluation report is mandated by the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Final Independent Evaluation of the project entitled “*Decent Work in the Garment Sector Supply Chains in Asia*”. The project’s objective was to increase knowledge and capacity of garment industry stakeholders in Asia to advance decent work and promote long term improvements in gender equality, productivity, environmental sustainability and knowledge management. Originally designed as a 3-year Project, it was implemented by the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) since 15 January 2019 until 31 December 2022 following the approval of a 12-month no cost extension. It was financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) with an amount of almost USD 4 million and it was implemented in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Pakistan, as well as at the regional level.



## Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The present evaluation's *purpose* is to promote accountability to tripartite constituents, beneficiaries, ILO regional, country and headquarter offices and donor, as well as learning. The *scope* of the Evaluation covers all interventions from its inception to the completion of its extension phase, and included regional, country and factory level coverage with a particular focus at the regional level. The evaluation included a field data collection in Pakistan, where country and factory level activities were implemented. The evaluation also examines the Project's performance in relation to all relevant ILO's *cross-cutting issues* including gender equality and non-discrimination. The main *clients* include the ILO management at regional (ROAP), country and Headquarter levels, ILO tripartite constituents at regional and country levels, the project partners, the members of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and the donor, the Government of Sweden/Sida.

## Methodology of evaluation

The methodology includes a desk study of the relevant documents and primary data collection through online and offline interviews with 34 Stakeholders (19 female). In addition, the international evaluator visited Bangkok from 20 to 27 November 2022 coinciding with the two-day project's Closing Workshop, while the national evaluator in Pakistan made field visits to three factories. The participatory methodology further includes a critical reflection process by the key stakeholders in particular through the online stakeholders' workshop and the inputs by stakeholders to the draft report. Key deliverables are the inception report, the preliminary presentation of findings at the online stakeholders' workshop, the draft report, and the present final report taking into consideration the feedback on the draft report.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

The conclusions of the present final independent evaluation are below analysed according to the eight evaluation criteria used throughout this report. With respect to the first evaluation criteria, ***Relevance and Strategic Fit***, the Evaluation found that the project objectives are generally consistent with the needs and priorities of key beneficiaries and of the ILO constituents. Although the project was initiated by Sida, the definition of the project objectives was the result of extensive consultations with the ILO and the Tripartite Constituents and resource persons from over 10 Asian countries. The MTE had found that each of the project's five Outcomes were considered very relevant by stakeholders and concluded that the project remains as relevant today as it was when designed. The project's objectives were aligned with ILO's Global Decent Work Agenda and with Sweden's strategy for regional development cooperation in Asia and the Pacific, as well as with SDG's 5 and 8. It was further found that the project adapted well to the Covid-19 pandemic and moved quickly to redesign/repurpose project modalities.

Concerning the ***Validity of Design***, it was found that generally it was adequate to meet the project objectives and the Outcomes although it had its strengths and weaknesses. The project being funded by Sida was intended to be a regional project with four different Components in order to address different human, gender, environmental and social rights which was laid down in the PRODOC (2018) and

Inception Report (2019). The Project started in January 2019 with the relevant ILO specialists of the Decent Work Team (DWT) in the regional office in Bangkok taking the lead in their respective areas of expertise. The Project Manager (PM) started later, in June 2019. One of the weaknesses of the design was formed by the lines of accountability: these specialists, or technical leads, are not directly accountable to the project. The original Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework attached to the PRODOC/Inception Report was revised as part of the annual reporting over 2019 and was approved by Sida. This version is dated 31 March 2020 and includes 5 Outcomes, with in total 15 Outputs and 81 Activities. This is the version that is used here as the benchmark. This M&E framework is clearly linked to the Theory of Change. The coherence and complementarity between the different outcomes were not well developed in the project design, and the integration between the four Outcomes was often lacking.

In terms of *Coherence*, the project strategies fit with several other relevant ILO interventions at the regional level and at the national level in some of the target countries, in particular Better Work (BW) and SCORE in several Asian countries and ILES in Pakistan, as well as with ILO ACTRAV in Bangkok. The strategies of the project fit also with other interventions of relevant partners including GIZ's regional programme FABRIC, Care International, the East-West Center, the Institute of Sustainable Futures (University of Sydney), UN agencies/initiatives (UNIDO, PAGE and UNFCCC), two global apparel Brands, Cornell University and the University of Canada.

**Effectiveness:** The project has been effective and adaptive in achieving many of its intended objectives and results. While *Outcome 1* was discontinued, and was thus not achieved, all other *Outcomes* were at least partly achieved. Gender Equality (*Outcome 2*) in the garment sector in Asia might have increased a little as awareness among the involved stakeholders increased through the WLP, the GBVH activities, and the dissemination of the reports produced. Evidence-based policy advocacy suffered from the lack of involvement of governments in the project exacerbated by the particularly challenging policy environment (i.e. COVID), while gender mainstreaming was less successful among the other outcomes. On *Outcome 3*, as a result of the production of the FIT modules, the FIT pilots in three countries and the concrete scale-up plans through BW, ILES and NPO the assessment is that workers and managers in the piloted enterprises have acquired better knowledge and capacity to enhance productivity, competitiveness and working conditions. However, it has turned out more difficult to motivate the employers' and workers' organizations to actively spread the FIT message to their members. *Outcome 4* has focused on very relevant, albeit at times academic, knowledge in particular through the Just Transition Toolkit and the PhD projects, but the activities were more focused on knowledge production than on the application of knowledge. The regular meetings of TERN provided an expert forum to disseminate results, and the partnerships with international organisations could provide a basis for sustainability of results. Lastly, *Outcome 5* consists of two parts. Firstly, project integration and effectiveness underpinned by systematic regional knowledge sharing was achieved through the AGH jointly developed with GIZ. The second part of this outcome concerns clear standards, guidelines, and action to mainstream gender and environmental sustainability, and while selected activities have been undertaken towards such a goal, this vast area remains a work in progress. The innovative work undertaken jointly with Cornell University and BW on examining the future of the industry after the COVID-19 pandemic is a noteworthy addition to the knowledge outcome.



The project encountered various *challenges*, of which the prolonged COVID-19 Pandemic was the most pervasive causing delays, but the project team was quick to redesign outcomes and outputs towards an online mode of delivery and designed adequate adjustment strategies. The level of involvement of Brands is a longstanding priority of Sida and the project tried to involve them in the DWGSC project as well, but this materialised only partly. The achievements of the project were facilitated by several pertinent *success factors* including the realisation among all stakeholders of the importance of Decent Work in Global Supply Chains and the rapidly increasing importance of Human Rights Due Diligence. Other such factors include: the various partnerships developed by the project; the regular stakeholder fora set up by the project; the commitment and adaptability of Sida and of ILO ROAP; and the high commitment and flexibility of the project team. Another measure of effectiveness is the follow-up by the project on the eight *Recommendations made by the MTE*. The majority of recommendations were followed up, while two of them should be taken up in a follow-up intervention: Push for deeper engagement of ILO country offices (4), and Enhance project outreach and promotion to deepen stakeholder engagement (7).

**Efficiency:** Considering that it was a regional project with four distinct Outcomes whereby activities in six countries were involved as well as a regional component, the financial resources of US\$ 4 million were not excessive. Some savings were made by discontinuing Outcome-1, by leveraging key partnerships, and by undertaking many activities only online. The financial resources and other inputs seem to have generally been strategically allocated and efficiently used to achieve the expected outputs and outcomes with the necessary adjustments in activities as discussed above. About 12 to 18% of the budget was allotted to each one of the four main Outcomes. Project Management took up just over one quarter of the allocations. As of early December 2022 most of the budget was spent (87%), while a substantial part of the balance is expected to be used e.g. for Programme Support Costs.

The management arrangements and the lines of accountability have been somewhat complex in this project and were not always conducive to smooth and consistent operational procedures. The ILO Project Responsible is the Deputy Regional Director in ROAP who oversees the project team. However, the outcome leads are embedded in the ILO Decent Work Team (DWT) in Bangkok and are thus not responsible or accountable to the Project Manager. Since the project team consists of just two persons, and since the outcome leads are only part-time available, a series of consultants were involved in each component. For networking and knowledge sharing the three committees (PAC, GTF and TERN) played a useful role. The project has a Communications Plan which provides for an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to building visibility of project interventions. The Third Progress Report (March 2022) provides an impressive number of activities dealing with various types of communications. Moreover, the project website is well maintained and up to date, and the project team has been in very regular communication with Sida in Bangkok. The Risk Register was updated regularly and used as a monitoring instrument.

**Impact:** Being in essence a knowledge project, it is difficult to measure if the results achieved are likely to produce longer-term effects. It depends on the degree to which behaviour has been changed among stakeholders, and/or in how far the knowledge products produced are being used by stakeholders and



will have an impact upon actual legislation, policies and plans. Such developments are at this point difficult to assess. However, there are some signs that the achievement of longer-term effects could well be possible in the following selected areas: The figures provided in Section 3.4 demonstrating the use of both the AGH and the FIT are quite promising; FIT is already being implemented in some countries outside of the present project, including by the ILO projects ILES and Better Work; the Just Transition Toolkit is available on the website and can continue to be used; and, ILO HQ (e.g. SECTOR) is already using some of the results in global events in garments/textiles. In an indirect way the Project has contributed somewhat to improving the rights and working conditions of garment factory workers, in particular through the FIT component. In addition, the awareness of the importance of Decent Work in Global Supply Chains increased substantially among the project's stakeholders.

**Sustainability:** There was no Sustainability or Exit Plan in the PRODOC/Inception Report, but the project intends to include sustainability provisions in the Final Technical Progress Report (TPR) planned for January 2023. Nevertheless, some of the results are likely to continue even after the Project has ended, including: GIZ will continue to manage the AGH with possible support from ILO SECTOR; FIT will be embedded in the Better Work service model in Pakistan and Viet Nam; the Body-swaps Virtual Reality learning programme is expected to be taken forward by Better Work, the ILO-ITC and the ILO Outcome Lead on Gender; the various capacity building efforts (e.g. WLP, FIT, PhD's) are certainly durable; ILO ROAP/DWT will continue to liaise with key project partners (e.g. Care International and UNFCCC); and the TERN members have agreed to continue their regular meetings with ISF as coordinator. In addition, it is likely that future ILO work in the garment sector will benefit from the DWGSC project and build on its results. Another important element of Sustainability is ensuring Ownership of the project results, but this has not materialised much among the tripartite constituents, and this is partly due to the regional nature of the project, while the project period of 3-4 years may also not have been sufficient time for that.

The involvement of other development partners or donors than Sida has not been explored by the project as the focus was squarely on completing all the planned activities before the end of December 2022. The project has, however, developed a proposal for a follow-up intervention and it has submitted a draft concept note to Sida. Selected Project results are only likely to be durable if a follow-up intervention can build on the results of the current project. And it should be underscored that all stakeholders indicated that they would very much value if the cooperation with ILO in this area can be continued after the present project ends.

**Cross-cutting Themes:** Gender equality and environmental sustainability have been included as two major Outcomes (2 and 4) of the DWGSC project and as such have received significant attention as well as resources. However, at the project level there was relatively less integration of such considerations among each of the other Outcomes. Gender inequalities in the garment sector were clearly addressed by the project through the activities related to the garment sector conducted in Outcome 2, in particular the key report 'Moving the Needle' and accompanying regional roadmap for action. Such inequalities were at a broader level also discussed in the so-called Trends-report ('Employment, wages and productivity trends in the Asian garment sector', 2022) produced by the

project. Although more cooperation could have been useful between Outcome 2 and the other outcomes, the FIT modules and the AGH do address selected relevant issues related to gender inequalities in the garment sector. The normative context and the impact of International Labour Standards (ILS), including the possible ratification of ILO Conventions, have not played a central role in this regional project as ratification is first and foremost a national affair involving Governments. Initially, social dialogue was included in a separate Outcome (No. 1) which was later discontinued, while the mainstreaming of social dialogue over the other Outcomes was undertaken but in a much-reduced scope. Disability inclusion did not receive specific attention by the project.

### Recommendations

- 1. Explore the possibilities of a follow-up intervention with the financial support of Sida** and/or other donors in order to maintain the momentum gathered by the DWGSC project and to make the project results sustainable By building on the project and expanding its impact including in new areas / themes (e.g. Future of Work topics). The draft proposal for a follow-up project is an important first step into this direction. Significantly, all stakeholders interviewed would like the project to continue as they underscored the relevance and importance of its outputs and results.
- 2. Enhance** in a follow-up intervention **the integration between the different Outcomes/Components and maintain the specific focus on and expand the mainstreaming of both Gender Equality and Environmental Sustainability considerations**, also in view of their key role in the rapidly increasing impact of Human Rights Due Diligence in global supply chains and especially in the garment sector.
- 3. Broaden the scope for Governments as well as Trade Unions to be involved in the project** (and include the regional workers' organisation IndustriALL) **and include substantial capacity building on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains for all ILO Tripartite Constituents**, including employers' organisations.
4. Following the Recommendation by the MTE as well as the suggestions made by several stakeholders during the interviews for the present evaluation, it is recommended **to intensify the connections with the ILO Country Offices** in the relevant countries.
- 5. Explore with Better Work from the design phase of a new intervention how certain project tools and approaches (incl. FIT) can be integrated into the BW service model.**
- 6. Explore the involvement of Brands** and in particular those brands that have already global agreements with the ILO and have shown clear interest in the issues at stake **such as H&M.**
- 7. Make sure the accountability of the Outcome Leads will be to the Project Manager** in a follow-up intervention.
- 8. Explore increasing the Project Team** of a new intervention **with a Communications/M&E staff and possibly with staff attached to priority countries** (in ILO Country Offices).
- 9. Target and support more directly the preparation for and ratification of key ILO Conventions**, including Convention 190 and the two new Fundamental Conventions on OSH (C.155 and C.187).