



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation
Office

Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh - Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Bangladesh

Final Evaluation: *May-July 2015*

Mode of Evaluation: *Independent*

Administrative Office: *DWT/CO-Dhaka*

Technical Office: **MIGRANT**

Evaluation Manager: **Erlie Wubs**

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Project End: 31 October 2015

Project Code: *BGD/11/01/SDC*

Donor & Project Budget: SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (*US\$ 3,500,000*)

Keywords: **Labour migration – Migration policy**

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project represents the first phase of a wider engagement by the Government of Bangladesh, with technical and financial assistance from ILO and SDC, to improve the governance of labour migration, the protection of migrant workers and the promotion of migration development linkages.

The main implementing partners of the project are the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) and its Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM).

The overall objective of the project is “to contribute to the sustainable economic and social development of Bangladesh through the creation of decent employment opportunities and the protection of the male and female migrant workers and their family members”.

More specifically, it pursues a three-pronged intervention strategy having the following specific objectives or project outcomes:

- 1) Strengthened policy and institutional frameworks to maximize the development impact of migration and the improved protection of migrant male and female workers and their families;
- 2) Improved operational efficiency and effectiveness in overseas employment promotion and social protection for male and female Bangladeshi workers, with special attention to regulation and supervision of recruitment agencies and the reduction of migration costs for aspiring migrant workers;
- 3) Strengthened social protection and support for Bangladeshi migrant workers, with special attention on female migrant workers, available onsite and on their return.

Present Situation of the Project

The project was designed as a first phase, in order to explore a range of actions towards establishing a labour migration governance framework, to be followed by a second phase meant to expand

programme framework for legal, policy and institutional strengthening for improved social protection and outreach and proven practices on the basis of learning and identified needs. While implementation of the first phase is approaching its conclusion (on 31 October 2015), project development for the second phase is already at an advanced stage and the new intervention (with a foreseen duration of five years) is expected to start before the end of 2015.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose is to determine whether the project objectives have been achieved, as well as to assess the emerging impact of the project. Stakeholders are:

- Government of Bangladesh;
- Target groups, project implementing partners and ILO tripartite constituents in Bangladesh;
- The Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC);
- ILO management and technical specialists at ILO DWT/CO Bangladesh, ROAP and Headquarters;
- Project staff;
- Final beneficiaries of the project – female and male migrant workers.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation has been conducted in accordance with the ILO guidelines for independence, credibility and transparency and has followed the OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance. The methodology of the evaluation is based on the review of project documentation, on interviews with key stakeholders and on the participation in selected events during the fact-finding mission to Bangladesh.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance and strategic fit of the project

The project was formulated at the request of the Government of Bangladesh (MEWOE) and is fully in line with the fundamental policy documents of the country. It has been found fully consistent with essential elements of the Swiss Cooperation

Strategy for Bangladesh and with the ILO Decent Work Country Programme for 2012-2015. Furthermore, the project fits strategically with ILO's mandate to protect migrant workers, international labour standards and key instruments for the protection of migrant workers, including relevant international conventions and the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. A process of constant cooperation among project partners and stakeholders has ensured that the project has remained highly relevant throughout its implementation.

Validity of project design

The project is quite complex and addresses all critical aspects of labour migration governance with a particularly strong emphasis on policy development and institutional support. It consists of three components characterized by strong inter-connections. While the three specific objectives and relating main outputs remained valid throughout project duration, very significant changes took place in terms of methodological adaptation and at the level of activities during implementation. This flexibility and design adaptation is one of the strong features of the project and the national partners have been fully associated to this process of change.

Efficiency and implementation

The project is very well managed technically and administratively by a Project Management Team (PMT) located within the premises of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE). The PMT happens to be very reduced in size, particularly for a project of this complexity, its activity diversification, the high technical content of most outputs and the considerable number of partners involved at various levels in the project. The choice of office location, has made it possible to maintain constant contact with all relevant MEWOE wings and BMET and this has greatly facilitated cooperation and coordination. There has been good quality and extensive reporting by the ILO/PMT on progress achieved. The project has witnessed delays from its inception. Apart from the late start-up due to a lengthy approval process, delays have predominantly affected blocks of activities relating to the second

and third components implemented by international partners. Some difficulties in harmonizing project interventions have materialized and a degree of “confusion and disagreements on project directions have sometimes resulted in stagnation”. However, in the final stages of the project, all partners have acted upon a recommendation of the Mid-Term Evaluation and made an extraordinary effort to bring implementation back on track.

Effectiveness

An analysis of project effectiveness has been carried out by project component. The project had a very vast aim and the activities carried out covered an ever increasing range of issues. While considerable achievements were made, these are not in most cases self-conclusive but do represent the necessary groundwork for a longer term process that needs to be sustained. This was clear from the outset and stakeholders are currently working at a smooth transition to a new (longer) phase which should ensure expansion and consolidation of results. A large number of high-quality outputs were produced, shared and disseminated as appropriate; furthermore, evidence has emerged that these outputs fed into the elaboration of labour migration policies by national stakeholders. The three specific objectives have been largely achieved, although some activities relating to the third specific objective were implemented at the very end of the project and substantial evidence and reports have not yet materialized at the time of the evaluation mission.

Emerging impact and sustainability

The project brought together for the first time several categories of stakeholders (Government, Trade Unions, employers, recruitment agencies, international organizations, NGOs, research institutions, etc) which had only been engaged separately, at one time or another, in earlier projects on international migration. This dialogue shift was an important achievement. The strategy used by ILO has been admirable since it has not attempted to lead or impose the discussion but has rather put the constituents at the forefront, allowing them to define their own priorities, stepping in eventually to provide technical assistance to support agreed

courses of actions. As regards the institutional framework, there is evidence of emerging impact at several levels following enactment by Parliament of the Overseas Employment and Migrant’s Act, 2013, drafted with ILO’s technical assistance, while the comprehensive reviews of BMET and WEFW are expected to have a direct impact on the programmatic outlook and work modalities of these entities and this will in turn impact on the actual delivery (and content) of the services to be provided to migrant workers. Ownership and sustainability are also quite high due to the active involvement of national stakeholders in the definition of the activities and throughout project implementation.

Gender concerns

Gender concerns have been satisfactorily addressed through the project. The project emphasizes a rights-based approach in line with the Beijing Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and has a “women-focused” approach to gender equality. Bringing to the forefront the woman perspective was a considerable achievement in an environment where traditional considerations had often prevailed. While several activities were designed to benefit specifically migrant women, all have paid particular attention to gender aspects. The project has contributed to fill many longstanding gaps. Data disaggregated by gender has been collected and is now available and utilized by researchers, administrators and other stakeholders to develop policies and concrete responses in problem areas. All training and capacity building initiatives were developed in a gender-sensitive fashion and included strong components on women issues. Skills diversification was promoted through the contribution of project partners. All migrant women now receive pre-departure briefing/orientation; help-lines were set up in Muscat, Oman and Dubai, United Arab Emirates to ensure that migrant women have an outreach/access to air their grievances, and many more examples are documented of activities which lay special emphasis on women. The PMT includes a dedicated Gender Focal Point for monitoring and reporting on all project activities from a gender perspective.

Recommendations

1. The design of the second phase should be based on extensive pre-project consultations with all relevant actors in the field of international migration in order to ensure the consistency of the follow up intervention and to avoid redundancy and duplication with other initiatives being planned or carried out by primary stakeholders in Bangladesh. In designing the new phase or during its inception an analysis of the potential impact or, as the ILO calls it, evaluability of the envisaged activities should be conducted and an effort should be made to define and include in the logical framework matrix realistic and measurable indicators of achievement for each of the objectives and the intended outputs/results.
2. The first project/phase had a very wide scope – which was a correct strategy at the time – but it might be advisable to follow a more focused approach for the new project/second phase. This however should not impact the participation areas agreed with the ILO constituents, particularly, the workers’ and employers’ organization and the ILO’s mandate and role concerning social security and protection of the workers.
3. While coordination among the many partners on strictly project-related issues has worked well, there seem to exist some deficiencies in the country as regards thematic coordination on migration in general among international organizations and NGOs involved in this field. While Government coordination is satisfactory, substantial improvements are required in terms of thematic coordination at the technical level among relevant international organizations and NGOs.
4. Pre-nomination of implementing partners is not recommended for the new project/phase. Choices should better be made on case by case basis depending on the actual capacity and commitment of potential partners to implement specific blocks of activities once they have been defined in detail and all potential ramifications are clear. ILO should try to maintain, across the entire project cycle, a one output/one partner relationship in order to draw clear lines of responsibility for the actual production of outputs.
5. Although considerable achievements were made, these should not be seen as self-conclusive but do represent (in most cases) the necessary groundwork for a longer term process that needs to be sustained through the new project/phase. Generally speaking, while laws, policies, rules and internal reviews have been successfully developed and conducted - and formal adoption and/or validation has materialized or it is at an advanced stage - there is now the need to assist in a targeted manner the beneficiary institutions in applying and effectively implementing such policies, rules and systems.
6. Attention must be paid to geographic prioritization in the next project/phase. Only limited activities have departed from a rather centric approach and more should be done in terms of decentralizing services provided by the Government for potential migrants and returnees. While civil society has a fundamental role to play in expanding outreach at the community level, in connecting effectively with people at the periphery, stronger operational partnerships should be developed from the outset and become a pre-requisite for financial support. Furthermore, mechanisms are needed to enable constructive interaction between NGOs and the State (by effectively involving local authorities in the planned activities) so as to transfer achievements at the local level into the overall dynamics.
7. At the same time, suitable civil society organisations should be identified, and more vigorously mobilized, including through appropriate capacity building and by supporting their participation in international networks, for the purpose of establishing partnerships with operational counterparts in countries of destination (since it is still comparatively difficult for Trade Unions to do so), with a view to provide fundamental support to migrants workers there and liaise as required with Labour Wings in order to share obligations, according to the respective roles and responsibilities, and mutually reinforce efforts made.

