



Evaluation Summary



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Shan State: Peace, Reconciliation, and Development through Community Empowerment – Independent Midterm evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries:	<i>Myanmar</i>
Mid-Term Evaluation:	<i>June 2017</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office:	<i>ROAP</i>
Technical Office:	<i>ILO Myanmar</i>
Evaluation Manager:	<i>Pamornrat Pringsulaka</i>
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Project Code:	<i>MMR/14/01/EEC</i>
Donor(s) & Budget:	<i>EU, € 24,584</i>
Keywords:	<i>Midterm Evaluation, Myanmar, Peacebuilding, Reconciliation, Community Empowerment, Shan State, Ethnic Armed Organization, Community Protection, Community Infrastructure, Conflict-Affect Areas, EU.</i>

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The “Shan State: Peace, Reconciliation, and Development through Community-Empowerment” (PRD) programme is a four-year (March 2015-March

2019), €7 million European Union (EU) effort to promote the inclusion of community voices in Myanmar’s national peace process. The programme is based on an overarching theory of change (ToC) that “ceasefires have made possible efforts in the empowerment of conflict-affected communities and such empowerment can make a measurable contribution to peace, reconciliation and development at the local level.”

PRD expects to reach over 75,000 beneficiaries across 80 villages in Shan state and achieve three overarching Strategic Objectives (SOs):

1. Provide opportunities for communities and local actors, including women and children, to be engaged inclusively in the peace and reconciliation process.
2. Support all stakeholders to create a safe and protective environment that supports effective and sustainable reintegration of children affected by conflict.
3. Facilitate participatory development in conflict-affected communities based on community empowerment.

PRD is implemented by a consortium of five implementing partners—AIDS Support Group (ASG), Ethnic Peace Resources Project (EPRP), Maggin Development Consultancy Group (MDCG), Save the

Children International (SCI), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Each partner is responsible for implementing activities in their own locations, while ILO, as the Consortium Lead, has the additional responsibility of ensuring the quality of reporting to the EU.

Present Situation of the Project

Midway through its implementation, that programme has already achieved some notable results:

- Holding dialogue sessions benefitting over 4,000 community members;
- Strengthening the capacity of over 20 CBOs in advocacy, community engagement, and organizational management;
- Sensitizing nearly 20,000 community members on forced labour, child protection and child rights issues;
- Starting or completing work on seven community infrastructure programs generating more than 4,500 workdays.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This midterm evaluation was commissioned for several reasons. Firstly, the midterm evaluation is part of the programme's MEAL plan and follows a commitment listed in the programme's original proposal to the EU.¹ Secondly, it follows general ILO evaluation guidance requiring all projects over US\$5 million and/or lasting more than 30 months to undertake a midterm evaluation.² Finally, less on the accountability side and more on the learning side, the programme is interested in a candid, external assessment on its current coherence and relevance given a substantial deterioration of the peace and reconciliation context of Shan.

The evaluation utilises four of the five standard Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee

(OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. Given the relatively recent start of programme activities and aligned with the formative nature of the evaluation, the evaluation only partially analyses impact, the fifth OECD/DAC evaluation criterion. Specifically, this is limited to unintended/unanticipated results (positive/negative and primary/secondary). The evaluation has added an additional "coherence" criteria to more thoroughly investigate the continued validity of the programme's ToC, as well as the complementarity of Consortium partner inputs.

The evaluation is also particularly focused on analysing issues specific to gender and age. This includes not just collecting sex and age disaggregated data but also analysing the relevance and effectiveness of the programme's gender strategy and activities involving youth.

Finally, the evaluation analyses the conflict sensitivity of both the programme as well as the evaluation itself. Instruments, site and interviewee sampling, and data analysis and presentation were reviewed to understand how they might be influenced by the conflict, and in turn possibly influence the conflict and programme stakeholders interviewed.

Purpose and Objectives

As expressed in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the "main purposes of the midterm independent evaluation are for programme improvements and to promote accountability to ILO key stakeholders and donor, and to enhance learning within the ILO and key stakeholders."³

In line with the OECD/DAC criteria described above, the objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the programme design and its theory of change, specifically whether it is still valid;

¹ Organisation. Pg. 23.

² Organisation.

³ International Labour Organisation. Pg. 3.

- Assess the relevance of the programme in responding to peace and reconciliation in Myanmar;
- Assess the effectiveness of the programme and the effectiveness of its management arrangement;
- Assess the programme implementation efficiency;
- Provide recommendations; and
- Identify emerging potential good practices and lessons learnt

Scope

The evaluation covers programme activities beginning from the commencement of the programme (March 2015) until its midway point (March 2017). Fieldwork took place between March 8-24, 2017. It included 48 interviews (key informant, small groups, and focus groups) with 156 stakeholders (71 or 46% female) across seven locations (Taunggyi, Tachileik, Laikha, Lashio, Kutkai, and Muse in Shan state and Yangon). The team attempted to interview a diversity of stakeholders to help triangulate intentions, perceptions, and on-the-ground realities of the activities reviewed.

Audience

The primary intended audience for the evaluation is the ILO Consortium members and the EU as the funding agency. Secondary audiences including township, state, and Union level officials and EAO representatives, project beneficiaries, ILO Regional and Headquarters staff, and other development partners (current and future) interested in supporting peace, reconciliation, and development through community empowerment in Shan state.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation followed a non-experimental, qualitatively-dominant design. It utilised a theory-based approach to collect and analyse information guided by an overarching framework. The evaluation was designed to be implemented in three phases: (1) an inception phase to revise the design of the

evaluation based on a review of project documents and early-stage interviews; (2) a fieldwork phase to collect and analyse primary data; and (3) a data analysis and reporting phase to consolidate and report the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation.

Main Findings & Conclusions

- 1. Programming Assumptions.** While some of the program's underlying assumptions have materialized, particularly those around the program's community-empowerment and armed actor sensitization work, other important assumptions around duty-bearer participation and response have not. This has constrained the program's ability to deliver on outcome-level results.
- 2. Coherence.** The programme has struggled to develop and follow a coherent approach to implementation across its consortium. This is partly caused by institutional agreements between Consortium partners; partly by the different thematic and geographical focus areas of partners; and partly by incomplete use of central programme management tools.
- 3. Relevance.** PRD is strongly aligned to the empowerment needs expressed by communities. It is also aligned to the priorities of the EU. However, the lack of government participation indicates that PRD may not be aligned to the peacebuilding priorities of the Shan state government, which admittedly have been vague and poorly defined.
- 4. Effectiveness** The lack of updated M&E data at the time of the evaluation, which occurred prior to end-of-year reporting, limits its ability to make a definitive

assessment on the program's effectiveness. However, based on information available and collected during the evaluation, PRD appears unlikely to reach all its current targets and intended results.

5. **Efficiency.** Issues related to reporting and subsequent release of funds have caused disruptions to activities and even threatened the continued participation of some partners. Additionally, while the PAC has met on a regular basis, it has had limited effect on improving joint planning and efficiencies in implementation across the Consortium.
6. **Sustainability.** The sustainability of PRD's activities and results appears mixed. While staff and beneficiaries hold positive expectations that activities and results will continue, the evaluation found few examples of tangible steps taken to ensure sustainability. The exception is activities under SO3 which have the highest chance for sustainability, in part due to the strong design addressing sustainability from the outset.
7. **Special Aspects.** PRD has taken notable steps to capture and report sex-disaggregated data, however additional effort is needed to understand differences in how activities are internalized by women, men, girls, and boys. PRD has had a strong focus on ensuring a conflict sensitive approach and has succeeded in establishing mechanisms to investigate, understand, and monitor sensitivities in areas where it works. The programme has already experienced several unanticipated results, both positive and negative, the most concerning of which relates to protection issues for staff and beneficiaries.

Recommendations

1. **PRD should scale back its ambitions on the targets and results feasible in Myanmar's current peacebuilding context.**

PRD should update its programming assumption and revise its targets and intended results to better reflect its current operating environment. The programme should also adopt a more unified and coherent approach to implementation. This should include increased joint planning, monitoring, and implementation.

<u>Responsible</u> <u>entity:</u> PRD Partners and EU.	<u>Priority:</u> High	<u>Timeframe:</u> 0- 6 months.
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2. **PRD should consider focusing more effort on promoting the participation of MPs as part of the program's effort to encourage "duty-bearer" response.**

The programme should focus on encouraging and supporting MPs to meet regularly with their constituents in project areas and provide workshops to community members about how they can get in touch with their local MPs to express concerns. This will provide a new avenue to encourage government participation and help improve the prospects for government buy-in and strengthen the sustainability of results.

<u>Responsible</u> <u>entity:</u> PRD Partners.	<u>Priority:</u> High	<u>Timeframe:</u> 0- 6 months.
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3. **PRD should consider working with fewer local partners and instead provide more in-depth and sustained engagement, including conducting fewer but more joint and high visibility events and awareness-raising platforms.**

PRD should consider adopting the approach implemented by SCI where it has identified five main

CBO partners that it then engages, supports, and capacitates over the life of the programme. Additionally, PRD should look to support larger joint events, seminars, and platforms to bring more visibility. ILO and SCI should look to utilise their “convening authority” to encourage the participation of government and MPs, as well as EAGs members to the extent that laws allow.

<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Priority:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
<u>entity:</u> PRD Partners.	High	0- 6 months.