



International  
Labour  
Organization

## Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprise (SCORE)

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are at the heart of local and national economies. They are a source of economic growth, wealth and jobs and can make an essential contribution to social and economic development. However, increasing competitiveness does not always go hand in hand with improved working conditions or sustainable livelihoods - decent work and competitive enterprises are often presented as if they were in opposition to each other. Indeed, there is often an assumption that actions towards the improvement of working conditions or safety are burdensome for enterprises.

In actuality, such investments can yield real business returns and a 'business case' exists. Furthermore, in an era of extensive globalization, multi-national enterprises and international buyers often struggle to ensure that decent work is implemented along the full extent of supply chains. Ensuring that suppliers comply with contractual and legal requirements and effectively consider sustainability has become a protracted and difficult task.

In this environment, a socially responsible continuous drive for increased job quality, and productivity can be a challenge.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

#### Partners:

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO); the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD); Swiss COOP; Business and Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI).

#### Beneficiary Countries:

Colombia, Ghana, South Africa, China, Indonesia, India, Vietnam

#### Timeframe:

2009 - 2013

#### Budget: USD 19 million

### THE RESPONSE

Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) is a practical training and in-factory counseling programme that improves productivity and working conditions in SMEs. The product demonstrates best international practice in the manufacturing and service sectors and helps SMEs to participate in global supply chains.

The training is relevant whether applied to start-ups, established companies struggling to maintain market share, or dynamic firms with large ambitions. On-site consultations and classroom training are combined to address the individual needs of companies. Through the application of proven lean-manufacturing techniques and improvements in worker-manager cooperation, production efficiency is boosted and enterprise performance increased.

The training modules include: (i) Workplace cooperation; (ii) Quality – managing continuous improvement; (iii) Productivity through cleaner production; (iv) Workforce management for cooperation and business success;

and, (v) Safety and health at work: a platform for productivity. ILO works with national and local social partners to promote and deliver the training.

MNEs and international buyers, by partnering with the ILO, have an opportunity to provide suppliers with access to the SCORE training programme and thus help suppliers address challenges in conditions at work, productivity and product quality, as well as to increase consumer confidence.

Training activities under SCORE have been complemented by an ILO research project that, contributes to the development of intervention models and policy guidance on how to identify and raise awareness of synergies between higher productivity, improved skills, working conditions and occupational safety and health.

Messages delivered through SCORE are reiterated at the global level through advocacy. An array of methods are used including social marketing campaigns that promote positive workplace practices and the engagement of national counterparts, such as labour inspectorates.

### Partnerships and Field Support Department (PARDEV)

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*“Through SCORE, I have come to realize that improvements are a long-term investment that benefit the company by increasing productivity, profit and also product quality. Our company has to continue growing to remain relevant. Thanks to SCORE we are now expanding our markets”*

*Ms. Li Yang – Assistant General Manager, Chuan*



## RESULTS

The SCORE Phase I programme was implemented between 2009 and September 2013 in China, Colombia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Viet Nam.

At an average cost of USD 2,500 per SME per module, the programme achieved the following results:

- 308 enterprises representing over 54,000 workers participated in the training – more than 2,400 managers and workers jointly participated;
- 75 to 80 per cent of enterprises subsequently adopted a range of good management practices;
- 70 per cent of SMEs reported improved workplace relations;
- More than 50 per cent of enterprises reported cost savings:
  - Up to USD 15,000 of savings within 3 months of training;
  - Lower defect rates reported by 80 per cent of companies (-10 per cent average);
  - Lower energy use with an average 2 per cent kWh reduction per production unit;
- Participating enterprises reported 16 per cent fewer accidents and a reduction in absenteeism by 3.6 per cent;
- Participating enterprises reported productivity improvements of 15 – 50 per cent;
- 19 institutions (government organizations, industry associations, training organizations) had their capacity built allowing them to deliver SCORE training independently;

The SCORE programme has collaborated on a number of research outputs, including for example:

- The publication: “Can better working conditions improve the performance of SMEs?: An international literature review.” This study reviews literature discussing the link between working conditions, safety and health, skills development and productivity in SMEs. It reveals evidence of an association between good workplace practices and various positive enterprise-level outcomes.

Phase I final report available here:

[http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS\\_226486/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_226486/lang--en/index.htm)

## BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

Workers benefit from more decent work opportunities in a healthier workplace converging with national standards. Concurrently, companies wishing to ensure the wellbeing of workers along their supply chains are supported to do so.

SMEs that participate in SCORE training increase their opportunities to gain access to national and global markets through meeting buyer and national labour law requirements. Furthermore, SMEs attain increased productivity and quality in tandem with more committed employees. SCORE training costs can be recovered in one month, representing excellent value for money.

National and international buyers benefit from more competitive suppliers concurrently with lower risk of bad SME supplier practice. Once SMEs recognize the benefits gained through good working conditions and a safe working environment, the challenges of ensuring supplier compliance with contractual and legal requirements are reduced.

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