



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Gender-sensitive Labor Mitigation Policies in the Nicaragua-Costa Rica-Panama and Haiti-Dominican Republic Corridors – Midterm Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: *Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Haiti, Dominican Republic*

Midterm Evaluation: *March 2013*

Mode of Evaluation: *Independent*

ILO Office: *Country Office (DWR/CO) for Central America (San José)*

ILO Technical Backstopping Office: *MIGRANT*

Evaluation Manager: *Walter Romero*

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Project Code: *RLA/09/05/EEC*

Donor & Project Budget: *EEC € 1,993,777.*

Keywords: *labour migration, gender, capacity building, social security, professional training*

Background & Context

The project is being implemented by the ILO Decent Work Team and Country Office (DWR/CO) for Central America, Haiti, Panama and Dominican Republic, with funding from the European Commission (EC) through the Migration and Asylum Thematic Programme. Its start date was February 14, 2011, with a total duration of 36 months. It is being implemented in partnership with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Trade Union Institute for Development Cooperation (ISCOD).

The project proposes the following general objective: *Strengthen the capacity of policy makers and social partners to adopt and implement policies, laws and the administration of the gender-sensitive labor migration.*

This objective is achieved through three immediate objectives:

Immediate objective 1. Promote the adoption and implementation of gender sensitive policies, laws and the administration of labour migration to improve labour migration flow regulation in consultation with social partners.

Immediate objective 2. Promote and support strategies to improve social security coverage of migrant workers and their families.

Immediate Objective 3. Support the improvement of skills matching between sending and receiving countries and, in turn, reduce the skills wastage by promoting the recognition of migrant workers' certificates, diplomas and skills.

Present Situation of the Project

At the time of the mid-term evaluation the project's completion is one year away. The project team is operating in the ILO's Subregional Office in San Jose. The project is being implemented in all the countries and the coordination and implementation mechanisms provided are in operation.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The evaluation covered the period between February 2011, the start date of the project, and February, 2013. It included all of the components and the five countries covered by the project, with the following interrelated objectives: (1) Assessment of the relevance of the objectives and outcomes established in the project's document, (2) estimation of the progress the project is making in meeting its objectives, (3) analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation,

(4) assessment of the prospects for sustainability in the achievements. On the other hand, by being this a mid-term evaluation particular attention was placed on extracting the lessons learned and best practices to reinforce those areas in which the project is succeeding, or helps to solve the weaknesses found.

The internal clients of the evaluation were: CTA and the project team, DWT and the Country Office for Central America Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, CINTERFOR, MIGRANT and others responsible for the ILO-related projects. External customers were government institutions, organizations of employers and workers in the project countries, ISCOD, the OAS and the European Commission (DG DEVCO in Brussels and, EU delegations in the 5 countries).

Methodology of evaluation

The methodology adopted the approach of an outcomes-based evaluation. Given the highly qualitative nature of the project's objectives a mixed qualitative and quantitative method was used although, with a heavy weight of qualitative methods. The main instruments used for the collection and analysis of information were the documentary revision and key informant interviews by triangulation of documentary sources and key informants.

In some cases it was not possible to obtain information directly from the participants in the activities, although this gap was filled by the documentary evidence collected, and it was not considered to have introduced significant biases. The United Nations Evaluation Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Guide for the Inclusion of Gender Considerations in the Project Monitoring and Evaluation, and the ILO Policy Guidelines for the Outcome-Based Assessment were taken into consideration throughout all the evaluation process.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The project is highly relevant in terms of the issues it addresses concerning labour migration, geographical scope, the needs of target groups and priorities of national partners, the ILO and the EC.

The project's objectives are entirely pertinent by focusing on three key areas of labour migration in Central America, such as the weakness of policies

and the legal framework, insufficient social security coverage to migrant workers, and the barriers to the recognition of their skills.

The project design has some weaknesses regarding the feasibility of several of its objectives and outcomes, as in the consistency of its logical framework. Fundamentally, these weaknesses may be associated with an inadequate reading of the political context and the interests and priorities of the constituents concerning labour migration and the capacities of labour, migration and professional training. The development of bilateral agreements on labor migration between countries of origin and destination is hardly feasible because they do not have the necessary political or tripartite support in the destination countries.

The evaluation found that the level of the project's progress towards its targets is very small at the moment the exercise was implemented. This is explained not only by the design issues mentioned above, but also by the delay in the implementation which caused that many of the activities and products are not being delivered within the deadlines planned. The factors that have caused this implementation delay are different: the delay in the project start, coupled with the first CTA's accumulated delays in the work plan implementation, added to a weak technical support and monitoring by the team of specialists and the MIGRANT department during the first year of the project. The reaction of ILO to correct these problems has been timely (for example, by replacing the CTA and designating a focal point in the Sub-regional Office in San José), but could not fully compensate for the delay.

Yet the project has -or is starting- work lines that can produce significant outcomes however, the time available may not be enough to achieve them. Objective 1 is showing greater degree of progress, but should be kept at a steady pace to achieve significant outcomes in terms of adoption and implementation of policies and gender-sensitive migration legislation or produce improvements in labor migration management. Meanwhile objectives 2 and 3 are further behind.

With respect to objective 1 major advocacy opportunities exist in Costa Rica, where the project can contribute to properly incorporate labour migration from a gender perspective into the

Comprehensive Migration Policy (currently under development). The project also presents reasonable prospects in achieving influence on the improvement of the national legislation on labor migration in Dominican Republic, specifically in the Regulation to the Migration Act.

However, the project is still far from leading to the development of bilateral binational agreements. First, the state of bilateral relations between the countries involved in migration does not make it very viable for governments to mobilize bilateral agreements. On the other hand, the project as designed and due to significant implementation delays does not have the means or the time frame necessary to initiate and sustain a process leading to the signing of bilateral agreements. There is more scope for the development of technical capacities for policy design and labor migration management, which will eventually lead to the implementation of bilateral agreements when political conditions between countries allow it.

As for the ratification of Conventions 97, 143, 181 and 189, the project is making an impact in creating a favorable environment for the ratification of Convention No. 189 in Dominican Republic and Nicaragua.

The project's progress in terms of objective 2 is low. However, some lines of work that could lead to relevant outcomes are being opened. In Dominican Republic, the project is working on a strategy that has a reasonable chance of contributing to produce reforms in the social security system in order to extend social security coverage to informal sector workers and domestic workers.

Overall, the level of progress in terms of matching skills (objective 3) is also low. The strategy to promote the adoption of bilateral agreements through a sub-regional approach so far has not found support from the national vocational training institutes, responsible for the certification of skills. In this situation, the project is focusing on several alternative strategies to bilateral agreements, but that allow creating a more favorable context for its adoption in the medium term. One is the implementation of pilot projects on skills certification for migrant workers in the formal sector in order to encourage a more inclusive national skills certification system for migrant

workers. The other action line is the formation and support of Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) technical levels, in order to gradually introduce the topic on the VTIs agenda from a less politically sensitive perspective.

The project's budget execution level is low. This data demonstrates the delay in the work plan and reinforces the need to print a more intense pace in the project's implementation, especially in the component executed by ISCOD.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

1. To the CTA: To focus the project's actions in capacity building and context improvement for policies and legislation generation, and knowledge base development focused on best practices dissemination and generation.
2. To the CTA, ACTRAV specialist and ISCOD: To strengthen coordination with ISCOD. Project / ACTRA / ISCOD-UPF meeting.
3. To the CTA and ACTEMP specialist: To outline action programs with the employers sector in each country.
4. To the CTA and Social Security and Professional Training specialists: To strengthen the implementation of Objectives 2 and 3, focusing them on obtaining nationwide outcomes with the social security institutes and the vocational training institutes.
5. To the CTA, the DWT-CO and Sub-regional Directorate: To create a technical committee for Project's follow-up.
6. To the ATP: Develop a plan for speeding up implementation which identifies critical activities required to update the project work plan, including implementation of the evaluation recommendations.
7. To the EU: To grant an extension to the project, at no cost, so the outputs can be completed and properly appropriated by the target groups.
8. To MIGRANT and the DWT-CO: In the design of future projects in the labor migration field in the region, to assure a closer team

work and a phase for context and risks in-depth analysis, with the participation of the constituents and other stakeholders in each country.

Important lessons learned

1. A careful context analysis is crucial to ensure viability in labor migration projects, especially in destination countries.
2. The high-level goals in labor migration, such as the signing of bilateral agreements, the development of labor migration policies, the legal framework reform or the ILO Conventions ratification, are very difficult to address for a technical cooperation project if the context conditions are not highly favorable and without a previous tripartite mobilization of the constituents. Yet, in these conditions a technical cooperation project may have a good impact margin in creating conditions and in the provision of technical inputs to provide constituents with the ability to carry out such reforms.
3. In a technical cooperation project design, particularly when it is an initiative to address new issues for the ILO (thematic area, type of strategies or territorial approach) that may require using experts from outside the region, emphasis should be placed in the process of formulating the analysis stage of context and risk. It is therefore essential the participation of specialists from the ILO office concerned, and the consultation to constituents and other stakeholders.
4. Before transferring the tripartite discussion to the national, bi-national or regional level, work must be carried out separately with each sector. It may be problematic to launch the tripartite discussion at regional level when the sectors are not prepared internally for the discussion, have information gaps or are not sufficiently sensitized on the issue.

Best practices

1. A labor migration approach with a migratory corridor focus, working both in the origin and destination countries.

2. The focus on sectors where the migrant labour is concentrated, as a sector from which the labor migration approach models can be generated and can be extended to other sectors.
3. Introducing issues where there is resistance or lack of consensus among the constituents through a technical and neutral way, as information and research generation. This will develop a set of arguments based on solid evidence with which knowledge can be transferred and awareness created to subsequently facilitate a more political work.