



EVALUATION BRIEF | APRIL 2023

META-EVALUATION OF LABOR RIGHTS-RELATED OUTCOMES

Photo Credit: Bobot Go, ILO

This meta-evaluation assesses outcome achievement of labor rights-related projects in relation to scope, cost, and time frame factors. The options paper highlights key trends and patterns emerging after analyzing 98 evaluations across 95 countries (Figure 1) with projects that covered 9 outcome domains and were funded by various donor organizations including the United States Department of Labor, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and International Labor Organization (ILO).

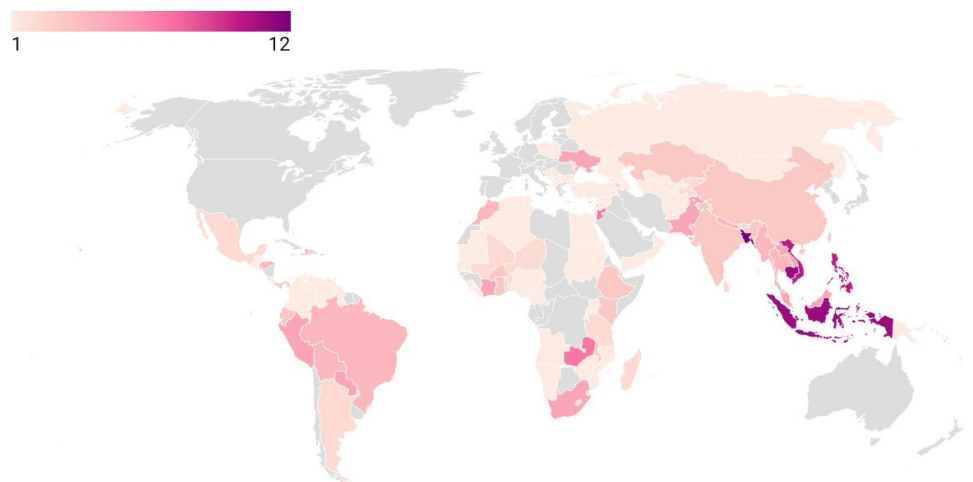


Figure 1: Map of evaluated projects

1. OPTIONS FOR PROJECT DESIGN SUMMARY

In looking at the most effective ways to achieve labor rights-related outcomes, two inter-related factors - project time frame and budget - are major determinants. The following key trends were illuminated from the review of the labor rights-related evaluations.

- Project time frame is a bigger determinant of outcome achievement compared with budget size.
- Projects with over five years of implementation were more likely to achieve higher-level outcomes related to their goals and sustain them.
- Projects with shorter duration (one to three years) were more likely to achieve outputs and at times, short-term outcomes, but these are likely to not be sustained.
- A majority of the evaluated projects by number were able to achieve supply of services and human capacity outcomes regardless of time, budget, or project topic.

Table 1 below shows the number of evaluated projects achieving outcomes. It is important to note that the evaluation team was unable to determine how many projects intended to achieve a specific outcome so the number shows the total number of projects that achieved the outcome and does not indicate how many projects in total intended to achieve a specific outcome. The percentages included indicate the percentage of projects that achieved outcomes among those projects that reported outcomes in each outcome category.

The United States Department of Labor commissioned the QED Group LLC dba Q2 Impact to conduct an independent meta-evaluation of labor rights-related outcomes and generate options for project design.

Table 1: Number of Evaluated Projects Achieving Outcomes

Outcomes	Outcome Domain Type	Number of Evaluated Projects Achieving Specific Labor-Related Outcomes	Percentage of Projects that Reported on an Outcome that Achieved that Outcome
Supply of Services	Leverage points	65	100%
Access to Services	Leverage points	22	100%
Demand for Services	Leverage points	14	100%
Human Capacity	Available capital	58	97%
Linkages/Networks	Available capital	31	97%
Behavior Change	Causal mechanism	46	92%
Motivation	Leverage points	43	91%
Utilization of Services	Causal mechanism	23	88%
Replacement Resources	Available capital	14	78%
Equity / Equality	Cross-cutting	3	50%

Based on these findings, the evaluation team developed three options featured in the table below. Also included are cross-cutting contextual and design considerations that should be considered regardless of option.

2. CONTEXTUAL AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Table 2: Contextual and Design Considerations

Contextual Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the prevailing cultural norms (including traditional gender roles)? • Who are the underserved groups or populations? • What are the current labor laws? • Is there political will to reform labor laws? • Are any reforms currently being implemented or planned? • Are there upcoming elections or other similar events that can create or limit opportunities of labor reform? • What is the state of social dialogue processes?
Design Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a need to conduct analyses (e.g., stakeholder analyses, gender analysis, political and economic assessment, etc.) and is there enough time and money to do that? • How will you identify and engage underserved groups or populations, so you are able to customize specific interventions to address their needs? • Is it possible to consult with host country government counterparts and other key groups prior to finalizing program objectives? • Are the project objectives relevant for the country context? • What opportunities for building in “pause and reflects” and learning throughout the implementation cycle exist? • Can you require a sustainability plan from the outset of implementation (and that is revisited for maximum relevance and effectiveness)?

3. OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

Table 3: Overview of Options

Option	Pros	Cons	Outcomes Most Likely to Be Achieved	Recommended When...
Option 1 - Options for shorter time frame (under 3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term projects can serve to pilot new approaches for future expansion. • Relatively quick implementation period so subsequent projects can replicate or expand on successes; or learn valuable lessons about what did not work to inform future designs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher level effects or outcomes are more difficult to achieve within a shorter time frame. • Programs will likely not have time to create institutional changes including policy changes. • While outputs and lower-level effects or outcomes may be achieved, they are difficult to sustain. • Any impact on gender mainstreaming, which requires behavioral change, is likely not to be effective in short-term projects. • It is difficult to measure the effect and achieve sustainability of key outputs and outcomes in a short time period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of Services • Human Capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an idea / set of activities to pilot that can then be expanded or replicated in a follow-on phase. • There is a window of opportunity to capitalize on (e.g., recent labor law reforms). • There is an inclusive, participatory community-based approach. • There is opportunity for adaptation in response to the priorities, capabilities, resources, and interests of target beneficiaries. • There are no equity-related objectives which take several years to achieve.

Option	Pros	Cons	Outcomes Most Likely to Be Achieved	Recommended When...
<p>Option 2 – Medium time frame (3-5 years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium term projects have sufficient time to effectively achieve outcomes related to behavior change and motivation and are more likely to be able to sustain outcomes than short term projects. • The duration allows adequate time for implementers to build trust and relationships with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects focused on local service delivery can be difficult to sustain during this timeframe because of dependence on donor resources; project sustainability plans should consider identifying alternate sources of funding post-implementation. • The country context influences project success and sustainability, and while some factors can be influenced by project interventions (e.g., strengthening institutions), some are outside of any project scope (e.g., sudden political instability, natural disasters) so the project should employ an inclusive and flexible project design which is more resource-intensive to successfully implement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of Services • Human Capacity • Motivation • Behavior Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is political will for labor law reform. • Project objectives include behavior change, or similar outcome requiring time to achieve. • There is a need for institutional capacity building. • The project will need to build relationships and trust with stakeholders, including local partners, trade unions, ministry staff, etc.

Option	Pros	Cons	Outcomes Most Likely to Be Achieved	Recommended When...
Option 3 - Longer time frame (over 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer-term projects are more likely to achieve high level effects and outcomes including important policy changes. Longer term projects are more likely able to sustain key outcomes and outputs. These projects are more able to build and maintain effective working relationships with government counterparts, communities, CSOs, etc. and to create important linkages to resources (e.g., financial, technical, information). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The country context, supply chain operations, political situations, environmental factors, and more can change dramatically over the course of a multi-year project and necessitates a flexible, adaptive design and implementation approach. Projects that are designed up front to last eight or more years may have negative impacts on localization and create dependency on international donors and staff, potentially disempowering local actors, and perhaps fueling underinvestment by the host country government in the project sector/areas of focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply of Services Human Capacity Behavior Change Motivation Access to Services Demand for Service Utilization of Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project objectives include policy change. Project objectives include influencing social norms (e.g., promoting gender equity). There is mitigated risk of donor interventions substituting host government service delivery.

Funding for this evaluation was provided by the United States Department of Labor under contract number GS-10F-0405M and order number 1605C2-21-F-00058 with the QED Group LLC dba Q2 Impact. This material does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.