



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

Evaluation Unit

## Final Evaluation of Promoting and building unemployment insurance and employment services in ASEAN

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** ASEAN

**Final Evaluation:** December 2013

**Mode of Evaluation:** Independent

**ILO Office Administratively backstopping the Project:** DWT/Bangkok

**ILO Technical Backstopping Office:** ILO Decent Work Team for East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific

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**Project End:** 31 March 2013

**Project Code:** RAS/10/59/JPN (for year 2011), RAS/11/58/JPN (for year 2012), RAS/13/53/JPN (for year 2013)

**Donor & Project Budget:** Japan US\$ 1,900,000

**Keywords:** Unemployment insurance, ASEAN, employment service

### Background & Context

**Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure** The project sought to support ASEAN governments in setting up measures to guarantee income replacement and access to decent re-employment opportunities for the unemployed and working poor. It also aimed to raise awareness among the social partners (workers' and employers' organizations) of the importance of unemployment benefits and other income

security programmes. The project's support focused particularly on Viet Nam where the implementation of the UI scheme started in 2009, with first benefits paid in January 2010.

The objective of the project was to increase awareness and interest among ASEAN countries as well as to provide support in the design, implementation and proper operation of unemployment insurance combined with a range of employment services.

**Immediate objective 1:** A platform to extend income-security measures (for those workers who lose employment or whose income is reduced) and employment services for workers in ASEAN countries is strengthened through awareness raising activities and research.

**Immediate objective 2:** Unemployment Insurance scheme in Viet Nam functions effectively, with improved financial sustainability and overall management and increased population covered.

**Immediate objective 3:** A network of expertise among ASEAN countries on unemployment insurance schemes and employment services is strengthened.

The project had three mutually supportive components, namely knowledge development and awareness raising, capacity building and knowledge sharing, and support and lessons learnt from Viet Nam experience in implementing unemployment insurance.

The project was nested under the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and implemented in close collaboration with the Decent Work Team for South-East and East Asia (DWT-Bangkok). Country-level activities for Viet Nam were relayed by a national project officer based in Hanoi, reporting to the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) of the project located in Bangkok who was responsible for regional coordination as well as country-level activities in Viet Nam.

**Present Situation of the Project** The project is currently coming to an end (planned for December 2013 but the closing date has been extended to March 2014 in order to provide continuity with a planned phase 2).

#### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

The final evaluation examines the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project. It focuses on whether the project has delivered the expected outcomes in light of time and budget. The evaluation also provides recommendations for similar technical cooperation initiatives, in particular a second phase of this project.

The evaluation examined the period of project implementation since project inception until end of November 2013. It covers both activities in Viet Nam and at the ASEAN level. The three project components are addressed, i.e. (i) awareness raising and research, (ii) support to the UI scheme in Viet Nam, and (iii) capacity building and knowledge sharing. The evaluation also integrates gender equality as a crosscutting concern throughout its methodology and all deliverables, including some recommendations in the final evaluation report.

The clients and users of the independent evaluation include ILO project management based in Bangkok and Hanoi, management of the ILO/Japan Multi-bilateral Programme, the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), and the partners of the project, in particular the ASEAN Secretariat and the Project Advisory Committee in Viet Nam.

#### **Methodology of evaluation**

ILO's Evaluation Guidelines provides the basic framework for the evaluation. The evaluation has been carried out in accordance with ILO standard policies and procedures, complies with evaluation norms and follows ethical safeguards. Methodology included:

- Review and analysis of documents related to the project, including the initial project document, progress reports, workshop and mission reports, project midterm evaluation report, research publications, relevant correspondence, and documents from the Project Advisory Committee Meetings, project M&E documents,
- Review of other relevant documents such as the ASEAN Declaration on Social Protection, and documentation concerning the Social Protection Floor.
- Field visits, interview and group discussion with ILO staff in Bangkok and Hanoi, and key stakeholders, including key implementation partners such as funders, the ASEAN Secretariat, the Government, Workers' and Employers' representatives of Viet Nam; and representatives of ASEAN countries.
- Interviews with randomly selected beneficiaries of training/capacity building carried out in Viet Nam.

### **Main Findings & Conclusions**

Overall, the project has clearly been successful in achieving its objectives. On the basis of this evaluation, all three components of the project have achieved their objectives and almost all activities have been completed as planned.

In general, the project was very relevant to the needs of ASEAN countries and all countries have participated in the project, although at different levels of engagement. However, on balance, one would conclude that the emphasis on UI was relevant only to a small number of ASEAN countries and that a greater emphasis on employment services more broadly and on support for the

informal sector would have been more relevant to the needs of many countries.

The project was also relevant to the achievement of ILO objectives in the region and contributed to the achievement of the DWCP outcomes, national development framework and UN development assistance framework (UNDAF) of Viet Nam.

The project outputs and activities were very relevant to achieve the objectives and outcomes that identified during the design phase.

The project also appears to have worked well in terms of its links with other ILO interventions and there appear to have been important synergies with other ILO activities, e.g. the promotion of the Social Protection Floor.

One issue in relation to the validity of the design is that, as noted above, although gender is stated to be a cross-cutting concern of the project, there are no specific gender-related activities. This is a weakness in the project design which might be addressed in future projects.

All three components of the project have achieved their objectives.

Component 1 has certainly led to increased awareness of key policy issues and the tools to address them. Viet Nam has introduced a new Employment Law which will incorporate the UI scheme and the project has actively engaged with the design of the new law. As noted elsewhere, the debate in Malaysia as to the possible introduction of a UI scheme has been advanced by the project and other countries (e.g. Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines) are also considering various measures to support unemployed or underemployed persons. Overall one can conclude that the 'platform to extend' income security measures has been strengthened by the project.

Component 2 (support to Viet Nam) has had the most measureable impact and it is certainly the case that the Viet Nam UI scheme now functions effectively, with improved overall management and increased population covered

Component 3 has also certainly achieved its objective and the project has strengthened a network of expertise among ASEAN countries on unemployment insurance schemes and employment services.

It would appear that resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes and have been used efficiently.

Management, administrative and monitoring arrangements for the project appear to have been adequate and to have facilitated good results and efficient delivery.

The main emerging impacts of the project are two-fold. First (components 1 & 3), key policy makers/staff of relevant national ministries are much better informed about issues concerning UI and employment services which should improve the national capacity to design and implement policies in these areas and more generally in the field of social protection.

The project itself has adopted an effective and realistic approach to its exit and to handing over the means of action to the national partners. However, given the success of the project there is a demand for further support and in order to build on an expand the achievements of the project the ILO should develop an appropriate strategy which might involve technical support on specific issues.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

### Main recommendations and follow-up

1. Future unemployment protection-related ILO projects in the region should have a broader focus than UI alone and should respond to the needs of informal economy workers. At the same time, there should be a focus on increasing employment opportunities (in the non-public sector) that would be covered by the UI and other social security/insurance schemes. This may be relevant to phase 2 of the project in Mongolia.
2. In the design of future ILO projects, attention should be given to how gender can more fully be incorporated in to the design, e.g. through the development of specific gender-related activities. Again this may be relevant to phase 2 of the project.
3. In future ILO projects consideration should also be given to designing specific

- activities for employers and trade unions, in attention to incorporating these important stakeholders into the general work of the project.
4. The second phase of the project should continue providing support to the ASEAN Secretariat and its member States for the effective implementation of the newly adopted ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection. This support should be always closely coordinated with the ILO Decent Work Team in Bangkok.
  5. ILO Bangkok should discuss with the Malaysian authorities how best to build on the achievements of the project and whether further technical support is needed at this time.
  6. ILO Bangkok should follow up the work of the project in the other ASEAN countries in its general work and, in particular, through the assessment-based national dialogues around the Social Protection Floor where these are taking place, as in Lao PDR, Mongolia and Myanmar.
  7. In order to build on and expand the achievements of the project the ILO Ha Noi and Bangkok offices should, by the end of 2013, develop an appropriate strategy to provide further support to the implementation of the Viet Nam UI scheme, which might involve technical support on specific issues. These specific issues, to be implemented in conjunction with the Vietnamese authorities, should include:
    - Roll-out of the communications strategy and implementation of KPIs developed by the project
    - Greater involvement in a structured way of employers/trade unions in UI, e.g. tripartite structures
    - Tracker studies of those on UI to establish duration, exit patterns, vulnerable groups, etc.
    - Actuarial (financial) studies of UI fund
- Better use of existing data (if possible) e.g. analysis of administrative data and linking to labour force surveys
  - Use of labour market information e.g. for getting people back to work, improved job counselling and better linkages with VET
  - Responding to large scale unemployment, e.g. in SoEs, drawing on experience in other countries.
  - Extending unemployment protection to informal and rural workers through the establishment of public work programmes.

### **Important lessons learned**

One basic lesson (but a very important one) is that Identification of a relevant topic, good project design and employment of knowledgeable and effective staff all lead to a successful project.

More specifically, in the context of Viet Nam, the selection of correct stakeholders (project management board), including in Government (BoE, Employer (VCCI) and Trade Union (TGCL), helps to strengthen the tripartite cooperation. This led to a participatory working method between ILO and BoE (key implementing partners); and in the project management board. Each side understood well and supported the project's activities. This in turn created a participatory and good cooperation which helped the project identify the intervention activities relevant to the needs of beneficiaries.

In terms of emerging good practice, one important good practice was the development by the project of a training package and, in particular, guidelines for the design of unemployment protection schemes in the form of a SPF Good Practice Guide on unemployment protection. These products can be of benefit to and replicated by key ILO stakeholders and beneficiaries. It should be possible to replicate this approach in other ILO projects as long as the topic is not too context specific. The design of the training course involved collaborative work with ILO training centre, Turin. A similar approach should be possible by other similar ILO projects involved in capacity building and awareness raising