

Lessons Learned

KHM/17/03/WOF - Communication campaign to support the roll out of the Health Insurance Scheme of the National Social Security Fund
ILO – Weave our Future Foundation

The WoF project was implemented between November 2017 and April 2018, although preparatory work begun as early as June through NSSF funding. The total project funding was EUR50,000 of which USD40,000 were available for programming. The entire amount was allocated to activities with no salary or administrative support to the TC staff implementing in Phnom Penh. These resources were used to develop a Communication's Strategy for the National Social Security Fund and the airtime for a national radio campaign.

The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) contributed an additional USD150,000 to the project's implementation. These resources, managed by direct contract between the NSSF and the subcontractor, financed the production of the radio campaign and two selected activities proposed within the strategy which included an information pack for new NSSF members and two videos on health insurance and employment injury benefits for distribution in social media.

The project was successful in its key objectives of producing an evidence-based campaign to raise awareness amongst targeted populations, but had an additional benefit of building capacity within the NSSF to understand the significance of communicating with beneficiaries, as well as to manage contracts with communication agencies. This is reflected in the institution's financial commitment and establishment of a communication's team within the Policy Division.

It is recommended that the following lessons are considered for similar future projects:

- i. **The methodology developed is replicable in other contexts, but the project modality is not.** The Cambodian project benefited from two unique factors which were essential to its success. The donor's expectations for new projects should be fully mindful of these issues.
 - We knew exactly where the knowledge gaps were and how these were affecting the performance of the social security system. A parallel project funded by Korea had already produced a nationwide survey on workers' and employers' awareness (or lack thereof) with existing social protection benefits. This was the foundation for the evidence-based proposal submitted to WoF and the subcontractor's subsequent work.
 - Without the Government's contribution, the project could not have produced any product beyond the strategy. The Government financed almost 80% of the project's activities. The donor's contribution acted as a seed to mobilize resources but this exceptional arrangement was only possible because of the

strong relationship of trust between the NSSF and the ILO in Cambodia and is unlikely to be easily replicated elsewhere.

- ii. **Raising awareness on social protection is an expensive affair.** If the project aims to raise awareness on statutory benefits the scope of the activities must be national, which means high dissemination costs. In Cambodia, the minimum dissemination cost for a national campaign was \$25,000 in radio and \$100,000 for TV. Tripartite partners largely favored the latter. Dissemination costs are much lower in social media, which is a great alternative where appropriate, but production costs remain high with a single 1 minute Facebook video costing as much as \$15,000.
- iii. **Specialized agencies should be employed for strategic work, but not necessarily for product development.** The complex nature of the topic means that specialized social communications agencies can add real value to ensure the message is effective yet understandable for the general population. In Cambodia, the innovative and participatory methodology employed by 17 Triggers was essential in engaging the NSSF and building their capacity. However, once the strategy is developed, regular advertisement agencies have enough capacity to handle the production of materials at a significantly lower cost. It is recommended that the strategic and product development activities are managed as separate procurement processes in future projects.
- iv. **Communications activities are time-intensive.** Communication agencies function in a strict private-sector fashion including fast-paced schedules and the need for quick feedback and approvals. Any delays result in additional charges. They are used to dealing with the communications divisions of their clients, who devote their full time to these contracts. In Cambodia this meant that the ILO staff had to devote a considerable amount of time to the project (50% of the NOB and 30% of the P3 during peak months). The same was true for NSSF staff which often resulted in significant delays in approvals, particularly given their highly centralized decision-making structure.
- v. **The importance of the Government's commitment to communications activities should not be underestimated.** The top management of the NSSF was clear on the relevance of creating a culture of social protection. However, the project suffered costly delays because of a perception amongst technical staff that this work had low priority within their busy schedules. Political dynamics should also be acknowledged, as at times there was a confusion between PR and communication objectives.
- vi. **Communications is essential to building a culture of social protection, and a key are for the ILO.** This is an interest and important area of work for SOCPRO to expand on, linking our normative role to operational performance. However, a proper project with sufficient funding for staff, activities and evaluation would be necessary to see real impact and build evidence to support further investments in this area.

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