



## Governing Body

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Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee

**PFA**

**FOR DECISION**

FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

## Evaluations

### Independent evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme for Kyrgyzstan: 2006–09

#### Overview

**Issue covered**

This report summarizes the findings, lessons learned and recommendations from the above evaluation. The final sections contain a management response from the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and comments from the tripartite constituents of Kyrgyzstan.

**Policy implications**

None.

**Financial implications**

None.

**Decision required**

Paragraph 46.

**References to other Governing Body documents and ILO instruments**

None.

## Introduction

1. This report presents analyses, findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme in Kyrgyzstan, conducted in late 2009.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation reviews the ILO's performance throughout the period 2006–09, during which 40 ILO projects were implemented. The percentage of the total ILO technical cooperation project budget allocated to the country could not, however, be verified.
2. The evaluation focuses on the ILO's strategic positioning in the country; its approach to setting an ILO agenda; and the composition, implementation and evolution of ILO national strategies as they relate to the Decent Work Agenda.
3. The evaluation team used primarily qualitative methods to collect data on the results. During data collection, the evaluation team reviewed 33 documents, interviewed 56 stakeholders, and conducted direct observation of several ILO projects.

## Decent Work Country Programming in Kyrgyzstan

4. The Decent Work Country Programme document for Kyrgyzstan was developed in May 2006 between the ILO and the tripartite constituents. The document was subsequently refined through an exchange of drafts between the ILO Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Moscow<sup>2</sup> (Moscow Office) and the tripartite constituents.
5. Kyrgyzstan's current Decent Work Country Programme is composed of three main priorities, which together encompass seven mid-term outcomes, nine short-term outcomes, and 27 outcome indicators. The three priorities are:
  - **Priority A: Employment creation, skills and employability for women and men** covers issues such as creating more job opportunities for both young women and men, including improving their work abilities in order to increase their employability.
  - **Priority B: Improving the national occupational safety and health system** focuses on upgrading policies, programmes and practices pertaining to the Kyrgyz national occupational safety and health system.
  - **Priority C: Reducing the decent work deficit in the informal economy** focuses on extending decent work reality and standards to other sectors of work, in particular the informal economy.
6. The Decent Work Country Programme encompasses an additional priority area within which one mid-term outcome is targeted: *Policy of the partners* is aimed at developing institutional mechanisms of the social partnership system through enhanced activity of the tripartite commissions and promotion of collective bargaining at all levels.

<sup>1</sup> A full version can be found on the Evaluation Unit's website: [www.ilo.org/eval/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/eval/lang-en/index.htm).

<sup>2</sup> The Subregional Office is now called Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office (DWT/CO) for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

## Findings and recommendations

### Programme design

7. An analysis of the project portfolio showed that 16 technical cooperation projects were being implemented in Kyrgyzstan when the Decent Work Country Programme began in 2006. Of those 16, half were new and half were ongoing. Blending new and ongoing projects into a new programme posed challenges to the programme design process.
8. Analysis showed that three out of the seven mid-term outcomes (MO 1.1, MO 1.2 and MO 3.2) were in line with all of the United Nations and Government strategic documents. Other mid-term outcomes were in line with some, but not all, of those documents. This shows that the strategic alignment of the Decent Work Country Programme with national and international development frameworks was uneven.
9. In order to analyse the design of the Decent Work Country Programme, the evaluation team used programme documents to create a logic model. Most of the mid-term outcomes of the programme were logically connected to their respective priorities. However, many short-term outcomes were not logically connected to their respective mid-term outcomes.
10. For example, it is not quite clear how *applying* tools and approaches that are grounded in ILO core values (STO 1.2.1) would *equip* the ILO's constituents, stakeholders, and intermediaries with practical tools and methodologies for applying an integrated approach to employment creation (MTO 1.2). It seems more logical that the ILO's constituents would only be able to apply the tools and approaches with which they had been previously equipped.

### Evaluability

11. An evaluability assessment conducted by the evaluation team revealed that few of the indicators included in the Decent Work Country Programme were specific, measurable, relevant or had a means of verification. The 2006 programme document included neither baselines nor targets for the indicators. In addition, no monitoring and evaluation plan providing information on outcomes, indicators, baselines, targets, milestones and risks/assumptions was prepared. The techniques of results-based management would be very difficult to implement without these elements.
12. The evaluation team recognizes that the guidance from the ILO was less than complete. ILO Circular Nos 598<sup>3</sup> and 599,<sup>4</sup> which introduced the concepts of Decent Work Country Programmes in 2004, did not provide definitions of the above concepts; nor did the first version of the *Decent Work Country Programme Guidebook*. Furthermore, the *Results-Based Management Guidebook* was not published until 2008, long after the Decent Work Country Programme in Kyrgyzstan had begun.

<sup>3</sup> ILO: *A framework for implementing the decent work agenda*, Director-General's Announcements, Circular No. 598, Series 1, 20 May 2004.

<sup>4</sup> ILO: *Decent work country programmes*, Director-General's Announcements, Circular No. 599, Series 1, 20 May 2004.

## Programme implementation

13. The Decent Work Country Programme Implementation Plan was finalized in October 2007 – almost a year after the programme document was signed in November 2006. The plan included 81 activities such as study tours, workshops, research, policy analysis and awareness-raising activities. There was an understanding that the programme would be used for resource mobilization among donors.
14. Although the Moscow Office, supported by the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, tried to raise funds for the programme, success was only partial. Over one-third of the planned activities had no funding sources three-and-a-half months prior to the end of the programme in 2009. This resource gap posed serious challenges to its implementation.

## Technical cooperation

15. Most of the activities mentioned above were implemented through 28 subregional projects. The evaluation team estimates that Kyrgyzstan's share of technical cooperation funding amounted to at least US\$4,885,813. However, the exact amount could not be established.
16. There were a number of problems with having a country project portfolio that was dominated by subregional projects. First, such a programme does not conform to the principles of country-led development contained in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action, or for that matter, the *Decent Work Country Programme Guidebook*.
17. Second, the projects that constituted the core of the programme were designed by several different offices at various times during the programme cycle. Thus, the programme was not based on a comprehensive and holistic approach.
18. Third, there were multiple lines of accountability. It was unlikely that a Decent Work Country Programme that included independent global, regional and subregional projects could be managed or coordinated effectively from multiple centres.

## Visibility

19. Interviews with stakeholders revealed that the programme had internal and external marketing challenges. Respondents who were not directly involved in it or with ILO projects were not aware of the existence of the programme and, in general, were not well informed about ILO activities in Kyrgyzstan.
20. ILO staff members in Kyrgyzstan representing various projects were aware of the Decent Work Country Programme. However, they had a clear understanding only of those components of the programme that were related to their respective projects.
21. The individuals who were well informed about the programme were tripartite constituents who participated in the planning and implementation – representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Federation of Workers' Organizations and the Confederation of Employers' Organizations.

## Results

22. Lack of a proper results-based management framework made it difficult to assess progress toward outcomes. However, the evaluation determined that in the area of employment creation, skills and employability, the ILO made substantial contributions through

commissioning high-quality research, providing policy advice and capacity building – especially in vocational education and business skills development. ILO products such as Know About Business (KAB) and the Modular Skills Training methodology have been institutionalized in the national vocational education and training system.

23. In the area of improving the National Occupational Safety and Health System, the ILO made important contributions through the Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development (WIND) project that brought improvements in the everyday practices of farmers around the country. Another important result was the development of the capacity of labour inspection. But the long-term goals of the programme in this area were achieved only partially due to the contradictions between constituents and the political context.
24. The overall effect of the programme's efforts in the area of reducing work deficits in the informal economy could not be assessed. However, it made considerable progress in developing social dialogue in the agriculture and textile industries through the WIND project. It also made progress in combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) through the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) project. For example, a National Plan of Action on the elimination of WFCL was successfully developed and over 100 activities were implemented. Limited progress was made in the area of local economic development.

## **UN reform**

25. The United Nations reform process is driven by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) – a strategic framework for the operational activities of the UN system at the national level. UNDAF guidelines contain five key programming principles that should guide the work of United Nations Country Teams: (1) human rights-based approach; (2) gender equality; (3) environmental sustainability; (4) capacity development; and (5) results-based management.
26. The ILO in Kyrgyzstan developed comparative advantages in programming principles 2 and 4: gender equality and capacity development. GENDER was administratively responsible for implementing two technical cooperation projects in the country. The participation of ILO officials from headquarters and from the Subregional Office in gender training had both positive and negative implications. The expertise of these officials was well regarded and appreciated. However, when technical advice was needed, some strategic partners bypassed the ILO in Kyrgyzstan and contacted the Subregional Office directly because of a perception that information was easier to obtain and that it was provided in a more timely manner.

## ***Delivering as One***

27. The ILO and UNDP have been exploring ways of working together through the Delivering as One (DAO) initiative. A joint ILO–UNDP workplan to implement the Decent Work Country Programme was signed in March 2008. This was one of the first steps towards strengthening cooperation between the two agencies. Collaboration with UNDP was for the most part related to the Boosting Youth Employment (BYE) project. The partnership with UNDP was mutually beneficial. UNDP helped with the outreach, funds and logistics. The ILO provided high-quality products and services to beneficiaries that also helped develop UNDP capacity.

## **Lessons learned**

28. The following are the three main lessons learned from this evaluation:

- Evaluability of the Decent Work Country Programme substantially depends on the quality of its design. If the programme logic is not coherent and there are no good indicators and baseline data, the programme will face serious challenges in measuring its progress and results. It is much more effective to conduct an evaluability assessment at the design stage than to undertake it when the programme is in progress or coming to an end.
- It is not possible to have a strong Decent Work Country Programme without a strong ILO presence. The ILO country representatives play a crucial role at all stages of the programme cycle including needs assessment, design, implementation and evaluation. At present, the Country Team is made up of a national coordinator and four project managers.
- In order to implement the programme in accordance with the country priorities, technical cooperation resource mobilization should be done at the country level by the ILO country representatives/offices and constituents. This is because neither the Regional Office nor the Subregional Office is able to provide the funding necessary to meet all the country's needs. Such resource mobilization should be encouraged and supported.

## Recommendations

29. The recommendations are presented below.

- (a) **Conduct a financial reconciliation.** It was not possible to verify the percentage of the total technical cooperation project budget that was allocated to the country. Therefore, it is recommended that the Subregional Office conduct a financial reconciliation of the programme. In addition, an accounting mechanism should be implemented that would enable the percentages to be verified in the future.
- (b) **Harmonize the Decent Work Country Programme with the National Decent Work Programme.** The national coordinator and the tripartite constituents, with support from the Subregional Office, should harmonize the next Decent Work Country Programme with the National Decent Work Programme (NDWP) that was envisaged by the Government of Kyrgyzstan at the end of 2009. The Decent Work Country Programme should contribute to the NDWP design and implementation. The ILO may consider Kyrgyzstan to be a pilot country where a national government has accepted and implemented a Decent Work Programme approach. This topic should be included in the ILO agenda and discussed with the tripartite constituents in the near future.
- (c) **Develop a coherent programme logic based on priorities.** The new Decent Work Country Programme logic should be coherent and focused on the priorities identified by the tripartite constituents rather than on the existing regional projects with secure funding. Special attention should be paid by the national coordinator to the development of high-quality indicators and a programme monitoring system based on those indicators. The new programme should be supported with adequate resources for its implementation.
- (d) **Build on the ILO's strengths.** The ILO contributions to the Decent Work Country Programme should be based on its strengths and comparative advantages in the areas of research, policy advice and capacity building.
- (e) **Strengthen the ILO's presence in Kyrgyzstan.** To have a strong programme, the ILO should strengthen its presence in Kyrgyzstan. Ideally, the ILO should consider

the possibility of establishing a fully functional country office with the proper technical capacity and funding authority. There are numerous barriers that make it unrealistic to immediately implement all the proposed changes aimed at strengthening the ILO's presence in Kyrgyzstan. The evaluation team suggests considering this as a long-term goal towards which the ILO should work. In the interim, the ILO should strengthen the role of the national coordinator. The Regional Office should review options for giving the national coordinator greater responsibility for overseeing Decent Work Country Programme implementation and for creating synergies. The ILO should explore the possibility of moving the national coordinator to the UN House in Bishkek.

- (f) **Encourage resource mobilization for technical cooperation.** The ILO in Kyrgyzstan should adopt a more proactive approach, much as it does in Indonesia. A priority-based approach to the Decent Work Country Programme design (as opposed to a subregional projects-based approach) will most likely result in some new Kyrgyzstan-based projects of considerable importance which will require substantial amounts of funding. Hence, resource mobilization should be included in the Decent Work Country Programme and Implementation Plan. The national coordinator in Kyrgyzstan should be given more responsibility to mobilize resources for the needs of the programme. National constituents should be involved.
- (g) **Develop public relations and communications.** The national coordinator and technical cooperation project managers should build awareness of ILO activities in Kyrgyzstan among important target audiences. They should include the expert community, the donor community and the business community. Systematic communication activities should be implemented and the web presence of the ILO in Kyrgyzstan increased on the Russian section of the Internet.

## Comments from the Office

- 30. The Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia welcomes the independent evaluation of the Decent Work Country Programme for Kyrgyzstan.
- 31. The Regional Office endorses the findings of the evaluation that the ILO, through the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme, made substantial contributions to all of the three priorities. Within the first priority on employment creation, skills and employability, ILO methodologies on business skills development and modular vocational education and training have been included in the curricula of national vocational schools and training facilities. The ILO also contributed significantly to the improvement of the National Occupational Safety and Health system through the capacity building of the national labour inspection system and to the reduction of the decent work deficit in the informal sector through upgrading productivity and safety practices of small farmers.
- 32. The Regional Office accepts the constructive recommendations made by the independent evaluation and would like to make the following comments.
- 33. This programme was formulated in 2006 when the practice of designing Decent Work Country Programmes was not yet well established across the ILO. This impacted on the lack of measurability of some indicators and the absence of targets and baselines, and of the monitoring and evaluation plan. The evaluation report recognizes this in paragraph 12. Moreover, in the endeavour to ensure full ownership of the Decent Work Country Programme by the constituents, the tripartite constituents themselves prepared the first draft of the programme. They formulated the programme priorities as well as the mid-term and short-term outcomes.

- 34.** The domination of the technical cooperation projects portfolio by subregional projects is mainly driven by donors' preferences. This is because donors are often not willing to provide funds to a single country and prefer to stimulate cooperation among neighbouring countries. Many countries in the subregion also prefer subregional projects and activities since they share many challenges and can thus learn from each other's approach. For the ILO, the subregional approach is also more cost-effective. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that subregional projects always also include country-specific activities that address special needs.
- 35.** Successful implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes depends to a large extent on the availability of extra-budgetary resources, which are sometimes difficult to attract for the Central Asian subregion to support country priorities identified by the constituents. Moreover, it is very difficult to have all technical cooperation projects in place at the time of the programme formulation and to base it on "a comprehensive and holistic programme theory". Concerning the management and coordination of all programme-related activities in the country, the Moscow Office is responsible for all the Decent Work Country Programmes in its subregion, with the support of national coordinators, where they exist. It also directly supervises all decentralized projects and cooperates closely with the project staff of the few centralized projects. The Moscow Office takes responsibility for formulating the project documentation itself or provides comments on it in order to create synergies among different projects. During implementation, it should make sure that these synergies are exploited.
- 36.** With regard to paragraph 26, it should be noted that the Moscow Office has capacity to provide technical advice to the constituents and strategic partners in Kyrgyzstan. The role of the national coordinator is to liaise with the ILO and the national tripartite constituents but not to provide technical advice. Therefore, the constituents can rely on the Moscow Office for technical advice, including on gender matters.
- 37.** The recommendation on conducting a financial reconciliation will be implemented.
- 38.** A new Decent Work Country Programme will be designed in support of a national development strategy. Once a stable government is in place and determines its development priorities, negotiations will re-start on the new programme in full compliance with the national development strategy.
- 39.** The new programme will be designed in close consultation with the tripartite constituents and in line with the new Decent Work Country Programme Guidelines. It should be noted that it is not the task of the national coordinator to develop programme indicators and the monitoring system. This is the responsibility of the Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office (DWT/CO) for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Moscow.
- 40.** While the Regional Office finds the recommendation on the strengthening of the ILO's presence in Kyrgyzstan through establishing a Country Office with the proper technical capacity and funding authority very interesting, it also recognizes that this is currently not feasible given the number of countries covered by the Regional Office, the number of Decent Work Country Programmes (ten) and the extremely scarce financial resources. This will most probably remain the case in the future. The Regional Office will seek to strengthen the coordination and facilitation role of the national coordinator in the course of the programme implementation and in promoting synergies among its different parts and projects within the integrated approach. The financial implications of moving the national coordinator from the accommodation provided free of charge by the Labour Ministry to premises in the UN House would have to be carefully examined before such a move could be implemented.

41. While the recommendation encouraging local resource mobilization for technical cooperation and its inclusion in the Decent Work Country Programmes and the Implementation Plan is in principle good, the guidance and assistance of PARDEV is very important for raising funds for Kyrgyzstan and for guiding the national coordinator appropriately. It should also be noted that any decentralized resource mobilization for technical activities should be led by the DWT/CO for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Moscow.
42. The recommendation on developing public relations and communication at the national level by the national coordinator and technical cooperation project staff is very important. DCOMM could assist by providing appropriate training to the national coordinator and technical cooperation staff and the Moscow Office Communications Officer can provide further guidance.

## Tripartite constituents' comments

### 43. Ministry of Labour:<sup>5</sup>

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic expresses its gratitude for the work accomplished and for the information provided. Overall, the Ministry agrees with the conclusions and recommendations in the Summary, in particular:

- on paragraph 23 on the improvement of the National Occupational Safety and Health system;
- on paragraph 29a on the necessity to implement a mechanism of accounting;
- on paragraph 29b on the necessity for the ILO national coordinator and tripartite constituents with the support of the ILO Subregional Office to implement the Decent Work Country Programmes in line with the National Decent Work Programme; and
- also the Ministry fully supports the experts' recommendations regarding the strengthening of the ILO's presence in Kyrgyzstan (paragraph 29e).

### 44. The Federation of Trade Unions of Kyrgyzstan:<sup>6</sup>

The Federation of Trade Unions of Kyrgyzstan believes that the independent consultants of the ILO provided an objective assessment of the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programmes (2006–2009). The unions support the views that in the new Decent Work Country Programmes it is necessary to pay attention to:

- the priority areas of activity, defined by the tripartite constituents;
- development of quality indicators and monitoring system of Decent Work Country Programmes;
- establishment of a fully functional ILO representative office in the country; and
- delegation of additional responsibilities to the national coordinator for the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programmes.

### 45. Federation of Employers of Industries “Guild of Directors:<sup>7</sup>” “The Federation of Employers of Industries ‘Guild of Directors’ has studied the evaluation results summary and has no objections to it”.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from the Deputy Minister of Labour, Mr M. Bakashov, dated 1 July 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from the Chairperson of the Federation, Mr K. Osmonov, dated 30 June 2010.

**46. *The Committee may wish to recommend to the Governing Body that it requests the Director-General to take into consideration the above findings, recommendations and lessons learned together with the deliberations of the Committee, for continuing support to Kyrgyzstan through the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme.***

Geneva, 23 September 2010

*Point for decision:* Paragraph 46

<sup>7</sup> Email dated 29 June 2010.