

Final Evaluation report ACV-CSCi

DGD programme 2017-2021
June 2022 | Patrick Vander Weyden

Executive Summary*

*Excerpt from the final report of FocusUp

- **Context, aim, scope**

This report describes an evaluation of the outcomes of ACV-CSCi within the joint program 2017-2021 of WSM, BIS/MSI and ACV-CSCi. These outcomes include three continental specific objectives: Africa (Niger, RD Congo), Asia (Cambodia and Indonesia) and Latin America (Haiti and Dominican Republic). For this multi-year program ACV-CSCi, WSM and BIS-MSI joined forces to run a joint Decent Work Development program co-financed by DGD. The main focus of this joint program consists of strengthening capacities of local partnerorganisations (national trade union confederations) and influencing policies promoting Decent Work at national, (sub)continental and international levels in Africa, Asia and Latin-America. The program is fully in line with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which Belgian development cooperation has also considered a priority since 2013. The Decent Work agenda consists of 4 different pillars and the ACV-CSCi program focuses on strengthening capacities for social dialogue, in order to promote workers' rights (including the right to social protection).

At the end of each five-year program funded by DGD, a final external evaluation should be conducted. The primary purpose of this final evaluation is to provide accountability to the donors, in this case DGD and the members of the trade union ACV-CSC. The accountability should primarily be accounted for as a function of whether or not the specific (continental) objectives (outcomes) are achieved. For the reader it is important to know that within the joint program each partner has been assigned exclusive responsibilities for some specific objectives. This evaluation report deals with the three specific objectives for which ACV-CSCi had final responsibility.

In addition to accountability, it is obviously important to formulate recommendations (as lessons learned) based on the findings that may be useful for the implementation of the next program.

- **Evaluation questions and methodology**

For this evaluation, 3 questions were formulated by ACV-CSCi – see ToR :

1. Which good practices, conclusions and recommendations with regard to priority DAC criteria for final evaluations (efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability) may be communicated to DGD in addition to the final moral report of ACV-CSCi?

2. Which has been the influence of COVID 19 on achievement of results and outcome? And has the organization adapted /responded efficiently and effectively in order to still achieve results?
3. Which data collected on the basis of the evaluation's research into efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the program shed which light on impact and relevance for the indirect/final beneficiaries of the 2017-2021 program - in general, as well as regarding the 3 principles of the Agenda 2030 ?

These were split into evaluation questions by FocusUP, in which a hierarchy of importance had to be distinguished. Because of the strong emphasis on the accountability aspect, the criteria efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability were defined as most important, and reflected in the 3 main sub-questions.

EQ (Evaluation question) 1. To what extent did the use of resources (funds, expertise, time,...) and the strategies developed achieve the expected changes among the target groups/beneficiaries at the end of the program?

EQ3. To what extent have the 3 specific objectives and the 9 predefined results been achieved or are they on their way to being achieved?

EQ5. After the program ends, will the partners sustainably consolidate the results of the program?

In addition to these 3 criteria, the other DAC criteria (relevance and impact) were of course included in the evaluation. Evaluation questions were also formulated around the themes of Gender & Environment, the impact of Covid-19 on the program and key lessons learned from this health crisis. Finally, the extent to which the program pays attention to Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and a multi-stakeholder approach was also inventoried.

To answer these evaluation questions, extensive desk research was conducted. ACV-CSCi shared all its documents with the evaluators who, using the software platform NVivo, analyzed these documents according to the evaluation questions. Based on the document analysis, data gaps were identified, and an initial analysis of findings was prepared.

Subsequently, these findings were further triangulated with data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions during the field visits in Cambodia, Indonesia, Haiti and RD Congo. During the inception phase, it was decided to conduct an in-depth study in Indonesia and Cambodia and then to test the findings of these cases in a limited way against the Haiti and RD Congo cases. Two five-day missions were organized in Cambodia (May 2022) and Indonesia (February 2022). In Haiti and RD Congo (May 2022), focus groups and interviews were organized on one fixed day with key local stakeholders.

There are, of course, some limitations to the methodology used. The cases in Latin America and Africa have not been examined in as much depth as those in Asia. This, of course, potentially implies an Asia bias with respect to the conclusions. On the other hand, the programs in the different countries are very similar and the evaluators believe that the mechanism (in the Theory of Change – ToC) is similar for all countries. Of course, contextual differences come into play. We believe that these contextual aspects have been described extensively and considered in this evaluation exercise.

- **Findings**

Efficiency

For all the specific objectives, the evaluators consider that the budgets were spent efficiently and were used for the objectives and results as formulated in the logical framework. ACV-CSCi also organized training sessions in all partner countries that have led to improved financial management in partner organizations. ACV-CSCi has excellent financial and results-oriented follow-up tools and procedures

that have been effectively used during the implementation of the program by partners and the ACV-CSCi.

The logical and main strategic partners of ACV-CSCi in all countries is of course the ILO and its partners of the common program and the respective Joint Strategic Framework Decent Work (JSF DW). ACV-CSCi and its country partners have besides ILO, network relations with many other relevant actors in order to promote labor rights and social dialogue.

ACV-CSCi operates with its program in 3 continents and 6 countries in a particularly difficult environment. No country is considered a free country by the Freedom House Index. These difficult political contexts are hindering the efficiency (and effectiveness: see below) of the programs. Although the programs were able to reach almost all overall objectives, the political context was nevertheless a hindering factor in achieving even better results. Regardless, we assess ACV-CSCi's presence in countries lacking democratic experience as very valuable in enabling democratic processes through social dialogue. Trade unions are often a last stronghold for people to address their grievances.

Effectiveness

The evaluators were able to validate ACV-CSCi's internal monitoring reports and performance scores during this evaluation. The entire program proved to be highly effective and almost all indicators of the specific objectives (outcomes) were achieved. In general terms, it should be concluded that the program succeeded in increasing workers' income security, increasing social protection, raising the minimum wage for significant numbers of workers, and the partner unions involved succeeded in expanding the number of Collective Labor Agreements (leading to more rights for workers). The extent of success on these outcomes varied somewhat from country to country. Nevertheless, progress was made everywhere.

Exclusively external factors were behind the only partial achievement of some indicators. For example, in Cambodia, it was impossible to achieve the predetermined number of negotiated Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA`s). The Cambodian government introduced new Trade Union legislation, which made it extremely difficult for unions to register. These new registration procedures therefore made it practically impossible to start new negotiations as a recognized trade union in companies where one had a representation in the past. But Covid-19 also had a negative impact. In Indonesia, for example, it was impossible to advocate for wage increases within the framework of social dialogue where factories had to partially or fully close down. Nevertheless, there are fine examples where trade unions and employers, through social dialogue, have reached an agreement whereby, provided wages were reduced, job security was offered in return.

The evaluators confirm the mechanisms (hypotheses) behind the ToC. By training hundreds of trade union leaders and workers, the quality of social dialogue has increased and better CBA`s have been reached that guarantee more rights to workers.

Gender

The ACV-CSCi program paid very close attention to gender-related topics and activities. In all countries, dozens of gender related activities have been organized. In general terms, it can be said that at the confederation level (and to a lesser extent at the level of affiliated federations), strong progress has been made in terms of female representation and capacity building of female trade union leaders. Significant progress has also been made in terms of policy development within the confederations. There has been strong mobilization around specific themes such as rights related to pregnancy and gender-based violence (GBV).

From the document analysis and the interviews conducted, it is very clear that this progress was only possible thanks to the input (and commitment) of the ACV-CSCi program. Without this program, many activities would not have been organized and consequently the presented results would not have been achieved.

Environment/Climate Change

The environmental theme including climate change is also addressed in all country programs. From the document analysis and the field research, it appeared that not all confederations (including federations and local unions) are equally strong on the theme. It became clear that Asian countries are stronger on the issue of environment, and especially the partner in Indonesia XXX seems to be strongly anchored at the national policy level. In general terms, the evaluators conclude that due attention for theme of environment and climate change was given within the program.

Sustainability

Trade unions are largely dependent on membership fees. Confederations depend on the remittances of federations and local unions to the confederation structures. In difficult economic times and due to unexpected crises (like Covid-19), the number of contributing members decreases (because workers are laid off and thus can no longer pay contributions). This, of course, also means a lower budget for unions. The involved partners of ACV-CSCi are able to cover their core functioning with membership contributions, but need other sources of income to ensure the sustainability of program activities. All partners are well aware of this. Since the majority of workers are not yet union members (depending on sector), there is still room for membership growth. The strategy of trade unions is therefore to re-grow their membership in the coming years.

The ACV-CSCi program has contributed to the technical sustainability of the partners. The numerous trainings have greatly increased the capacities of the union leaders. This observation could be verified in detail during the missions.

More specifically, it is important to emphasize the increased capacities in the area of social dialogue. Hundreds of trade union leaders were trained to initiate effective social dialogue. The results of these trainings led in many cases to new/improved CBA`s. It is also important to emphasize that the program has contributed greatly to the empowerment of women workers and union leaders. It was clear from the field visits that the program has contributed to the empowerment of women. Women have also gained more leadership positions in most partner organizations. In most cases, quotas have been included in union policy documents and procedures. The evaluators also confirmed that the number of women members in a number of federations has increased significantly. All these elements combined lead us to believe that rising female participation within trade unions is an important factor contributing to sustainability. There is still a way to go to reach full equal participation, but the first improvements are visible and, in our opinion, are sustainably embedded.

Covid-19

Just about all partner organizations managed to switch to digital operations during the Covid-19 pandemic. Meetings and training were held online. Partners indicate that it is highly likely that a hybrid of digital-live meetings will continue to be organized in the future. However, there are a number of important preconditions that need to be met to enable a proper rollout of digital operations: 1/access to fast speed internet , also in remote areas ; 2/the availability of laptops.

During the covid-19 pandemic, it was certainly not obvious to push for income increases. In many cases, it seemed important to negotiate for job security where temporary loss of income could then be accepted. This approach seemed to be the right one and led to a number of positive CBA`s. Nevertheless, numerous companies went bankrupt, resulting in job losses. This led to an impoverishment of the final beneficiaries which was only partly and to a very limited extent compensated by government intervention. Trade unions partners have taken initiatives in this area, distributing sanitary equipment and providing food parcels. Besides that, trade union partners did negotiate with government and employers about special regulations on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and legislation, and provided for awareness raising on the danger of COVID and how to work in safe environment. Another consequence of the deteriorating economic conditions resulting from Covid-19 is, of course, that the membership growth of most unions was halted. Some federations lost

large membership numbers which obviously had consequences on union revenues. It remains to be seen whether there will be a recovery soon.

Relevance, LNOB & Multistakeholder approach

The ToC and the hypotheses are still extremely valid. The program has achieved success based on the ToC that was developed. In essence, by building different capacities within the confederations, federations and local unions, better social dialogue is created that leads to better labor rights and working conditions of the workers (final beneficiaries). This has been achieved to a large extent thanks to the program implementation. Moreover, relying on social dialogue to resolve conflicts seems to be a very efficient, effective and sustainable way of enabling structural change.

With respect to LNOB, it is clear that it is at the heart of the Decent Work agenda. In particular, engaging people working in the informal economy and involving women is one of the strongest practices of the program. But also, for those working in the formal sectors, working for access to social security, a decent wage and improving working conditions is fundamental. The target groups are people who can hardly build a decent life with adequate opportunities and a regularly paid wage. In other words, the program aims to improve the lives of the most vulnerable workers in all countries. This vulnerability is also reflected in the political and economic context. Often governments side with employers. By doing so, they hope to attract and retain (foreign) investment, frequently at the expense of the basic needs of workers.

The ACV-CSCi program also scores particularly well in terms of multistakeholder approach. There is very strong cooperation, in all countries, with representatives of the ILO, with other local and international trade unions, and with civil society actors (including Belgian NGA).

- **Conclusions**

Evaluators rate the five-year ACV-CSCi program as very successful in terms of the main criteria (efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability). The evaluators validate ACV-CSCi's performance scores and internal monitoring reports. The various country programs operate in particularly difficult and challenging political contexts, which greatly complicate union work. The evaluators assess a limited number of result and outcome indicators not having been fully achieved, to be the result of changing (deteriorating) political contexts and the huge impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on a number of crucial sectors. The Asian focus on HRDD (Human Rights Due diligence approach) proved to be very successful.

The program succeeded in increasing the participation of women within union structures. Women became more involved in training, were empowered and now hold more positions within partner unions than at the start of the program. These increased participations are also embedded in the policies and regulations of most confederations where quotas for women have been decided on. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go to achieve gender equality. Especially in the federations and unions at workplace, there are still important steps to be taken.

Finally, all partner organizations worked on the theme of climate change and the environment. In most countries, these activities were limited to raising awareness and informing the grassroots. Only in Indonesia does XXX play a special pioneering role.

- **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were formulated. Detailed information on the recommendations can be found in the chapter about recommendations.

1. R1 (Recommendation 1). Do not withdraw from supporting independent trade unions/confederations in deteriorating fragile and autocratic political systems.
2. R2. Support the principles and practices of good governance within the trade unions (confederations & federations).
3. R3. Continue to support international cooperation and networking among trade unions (confederations & federations).
4. R4. Continue to promote and support digitalization.
5. R5. Consider measuring the effectiveness of training on ad hoc basis.
6. R6. Develop HRDD expertise of partners (especially in Africa and Latin America).
7. R7. Continue to support gender mainstreaming, in particular at the lower levels of the (con-)federations.
8. R8. Continue to support (and strengthen) the activities on environmental issues and climate change, in particular at the lower levels of the (con-)federations.