Thematic Performance Evaluation – Stakeholder Debrief, July 14, 2021

Labor Administration Electronic Case Management Systems

Colombia, Honduras, Paraguay, Perú, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam

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PROJECTS OVERVIEW

Projects: Seven projects with ECMS subcomponent, five OTLA, two OCFT, four projects closed, three ongoing

Locations: Colombia, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka Vietnam

Implementers: International Labour Organization (ILO), Partners of the Americas (PoA), PLADES, World Vision

Objective: seven projects had different specific objectives but broadly shared an objective to promote improved application of national and international labor laws and standards in the target countries by strengthening the capacity of the Labor Administration.

1. Promoting Compliance with International Labor Standards in Colombia (ILO)

2. Futuros Brillantes: Project to Reduce Child Labor and Improve Labor Rights and Working Conditions in Honduras (World Vision)

3. Paraguay Okakuaa: Project to Reduce the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Improve Labor Law Enforcement and Working Conditions in Paraguay (PoA)

4. Building the Capacity of the Perúvian Labor Inspectorate (PLADES)

5. Building the Capacity of the Philippines Labor Inspectorate (ILO)

6. Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Sri Lanka (ILO)

7. Improving Labor Laws and Labor Administration within the New Industrial Relations Framework in Vietnam (ILO)

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Purpose

Assess the achievements, challenges, and sustainability to date of the ECMS components in seven OTLA and OCFT-funded projects.

Scope and Audience

- Primary users: USDOL personnel, Grantees, Labor Administrations in seven countries

Data Collection Methods

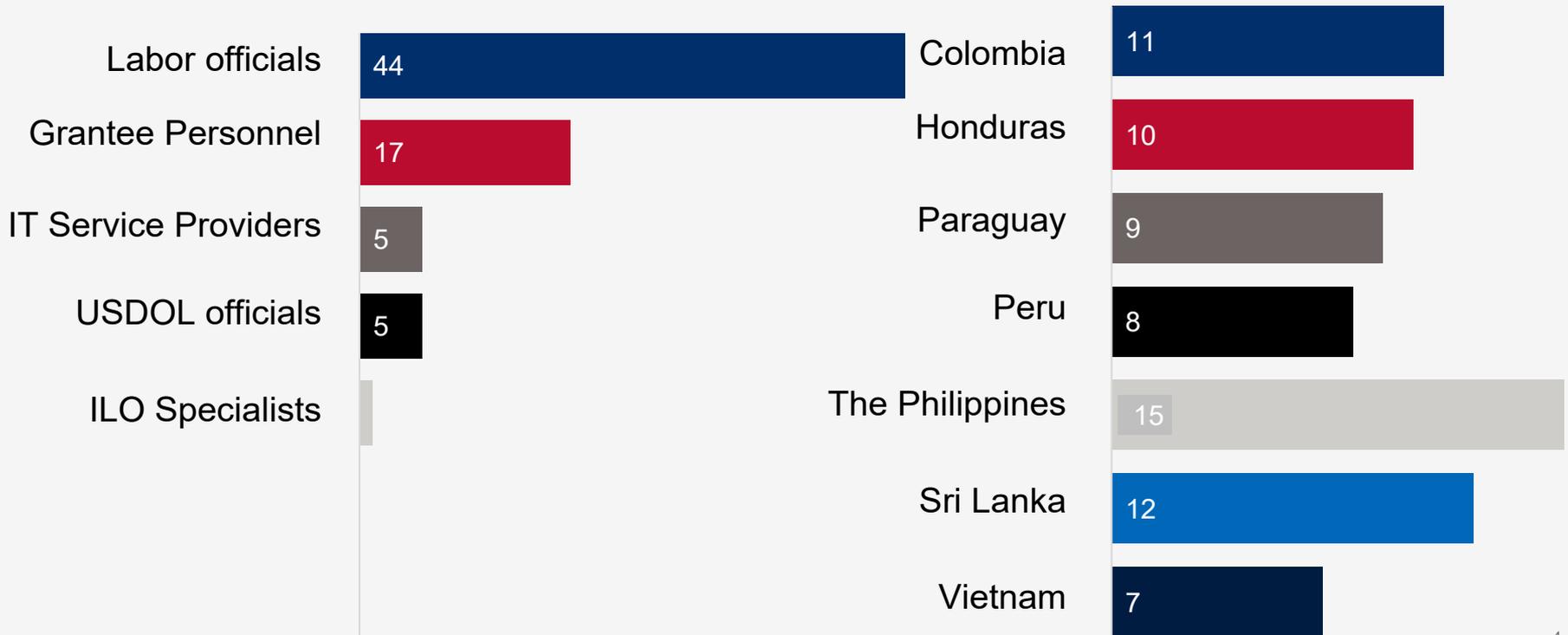- Document Review, Key Informant and Group Interviews

Limitations

- Limits of remote data collection: challenges contacting key informants
- Recall, response, selection biases

DATA COLLECTION

- January to March 2021
- All data collection carried out remotely due to Covid-19

KIIs and GIs: 72 respondents (32 males, 40 females)

Respondent type	Count
Labor officials	44
Grantee Personnel	17
IT Service Providers	5
USDOL officials	5
ILO Specialists	

Country	Count
Colombia	11
Honduras	10
Paraguay	9
Peru	8
The Philippines	15
Sri Lanka	12
Vietnam	7

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main Question	Sub Questions
Question 1: What level of ECMS functionality has been achieved/maintained among the ECMS project components in projects that are still active?	- Which of the active project ECMS components show the greatest likelihood of being sustained after external support has ended, and why? - What adjustments could be made to enhance the ECMS functionality or sustainability within the active projects?
Question 2: What level of ECMS functionality has been achieved/maintained since the inactive projects have closed?	- Which of the closed ECMS components/projects exhibit the strongest sustainability and functionality post-hoc? - What were the factors that limited or facilitated ECMS sustainability and functionality? - What adjustments should be made for future ECMS?
Question 3: How does the organizational capacity of project implementers, target institutions, and implementing partners limit or facilitate the effectiveness, functionality and sustainability of project based ECMS interventions?	- Are project designs adequately accounting for differences in capacity?
Question 4: What effect(s) have the projects' ECMS interventions had (positive, negative, or neutral) on labor inspectorate operation (from case inception to final disposition)?	- What were the factors that limited or facilitated ECMS results?

THEORY OF CHANGE

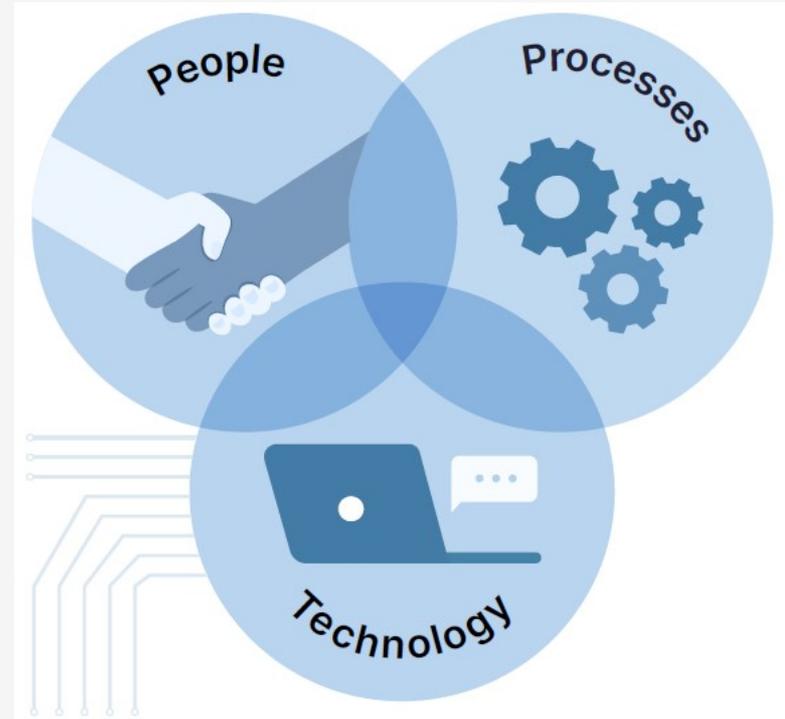**People, Processes, Technology (PPT)**

✅ **People**

Extent intended users have received adequate support, training and have adopted the ECMS

✅ **Processes**

Extent software has been adapted to labor administrations procedures and legal framework

✅ **Technology**

Extent software is fully developed, the number of types of features, level of adaption to ICT enabling environment

Model grew out of Harold Leavitt's diamond organizational model first published in 1965.

EVALUATION RESULTS

ECMS Status in Seven Countries

At the time of the evaluation, four projects (Colombia, Peru, the Philippines, Sri Lanka) were closed and three (Honduras, Paraguay, Vietnam) were still ongoing.

3 OUT OF 4 ECMS in closed projects are still functioning (Colombia, Peru, the Philippines). In Sri Lanka, the labor administration (LA) reported plans to redevelop a new system.

2 OUT OF 3 ECMS (Honduras, Vietnam) in the active projects are working on software development and have not yet reached the critical deployment phase. ECMS is in an early deployment stage in Paraguay.

Evolution of ECMS Functionality

- Most project supported ECMS are evolving in ways likely to increase the tools' usefulness to strengthen the labor inspectorate's effectiveness and efficiency.
- Demand from labor officials for **more advanced features** and uses **grew over time:**
  - Automation of administrative tasks
  - Sharing data between public sector and other information systems
  - Client-facing services
  - Monitoring and advanced data analytics

Impact

ECMS outcomes on labor administrations effectiveness, efficiency and transparency

Stakeholders perceived ECMS was already having or would have real impact on:

LABOR ADMINISTRATION DECISION MAKING	LABOR VIOLATION CASE MANAGEMENT	ENFORCEMENT OF SANCTIONS	PROMOTION OF TRANSPARENCY

RECOMMENDATIONS

USDOL	Grantees	Labor Admin

Use more adaptive management approaches: Develop ECMS in phases, taking in account the time required to address system design errors, incorporate new features to meet emerging needs, resolve technical bugs, train users and overcome their resistance to ECMS use.
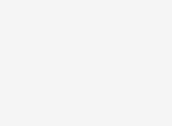
| ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |

Advocate for and assist with overcoming systemic issues affecting labor administration effectiveness (e.g., limited number of labor inspectors, LI status and access to training, national leaders' commitment to enforcing labor laws and fighting corruption).

| ✔ | ✔ | |

RECOMMENDATIONS

USDOL	Grantees	Labor Admin

Design ECMS to help measure performance and impact: Orient ECMS data collection forms and reporting tools to facilitate measurement of labor inspection key performance indicators and other required reporting.

✓ ✓ ✓

Capitalize on lessons learned from past ECMS interventions: Systematize and document good practices and lessons learned supporting ECMS development in practical formats, such as an ECMS toolkit, business cases, or implementation guidelines.

✓ ✓

Discussion

What are other examples of ways Labor Administration needs and ECMS features have evolved over time?

What are examples of ways that ECMS has had an impact on decision-making, follow-up on labor violation cases, or transparency based on your experiences?

Have there been other high-level impacts not highlighted here?

Do you have any other recommendations to increase impact?

People

Extent intended users have received adequate support, training and have adopted the ECMS

Labor inspector ECMS adoption major challenge in all countries because of many factors

- Inspector's workload, inadequate user training and technical glitches influenced inspectors' resistance

- Other factors beyond the project's responsibility: Limited number of adequately trained inspectors, corruption, LA limited power to impose sanctions, LI's status and working conditions, lack of political will to enforce compliance

It was not hard to convince labor inspectors to use the system because it was a requirement. But to get them to embrace the system is another thing. – Labor official, Philippines

People: Achievements

- Implementation of strategies to foster labor inspector acceptance in several countries
- Project strategies to involve higher level decision-makers were generally effective

ECMS adoption and acceptance by users: emerging good practices

Involving	Involving labor inspectors and other sub-national users in software development and testing stages to build ownership
Training	Supporting IT literacy and system use training programs to overcome competency-related obstacles
Supporting	Providing user support through peer-to-peer and helpdesk mechanisms to make resolving problems easier
Communicating	Implementing targeted communication activities to highlight ECMS benefits and dispel myths
Requiring	Requiring ECMS use through administrative orders or including the requirement in job descriptions
Rewarding	Using incentives to reward inspectors or inspection units that meet their targets, as tracked in ECMS

RECOMMENDATIONS

USDOL	Grantees	Labor Admin

Design and implement comprehensive change management strategies: Aimed at fostering ECMS acceptance and adoption by labor inspectors as well as decision-makers who may not use the system directly but will benefit from access to data for decision-making.

USDOL	Grantees	Labor Admin
✔	✔	✔

Technology

Extent software is fully developed, the number of types of features, level of adaption to ICT enabling environment

Key challenges:

- Meeting labor administration (LA) requirements for ECMS has largely been a process of trial and error: LA were not able to anticipate their needs in the early design phase.

- Limitations in grantee and LA's IT expertise and time led to extensive outsourcing of ECMS implementation (software development, deployment and change management strategies).

- Lack of effective oversight, design errors and delays due to the software development team's lack of subject-matter expertise, as well as difficulties in getting adequate input or cooperation from labor administration stakeholders

- Inadequate Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, especially in sub-national offices

- Slow data upload speed and system downtime constrain system acceptance, especially among labor inspectors (LI).

Technology: Achievements

- In most cases technical support has led to improved ECMS designs that take in account institutional needs.

- Access to basic Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure by system users is improving in all four countries with mature systems.

- Some countries are upgrading the servers, increasing bandwidth, and improving server maintenance to improve system performance.

Technology: Emerging Good Practices

- Learned from other countries' ECMS design and deployment experiences

- Assessed digitization needs, agreed who/how to address identified gaps, documenting in Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)

- Involved grantee's in-house IT specialists and personnel with previous ECMS implementation experience in intervention and software design

- Supported labor administration infrastructure upgrading and IT teams' capacity to support and maintain information systems

Processes

Extent ECMS adapted to Labor Administration's legal and procedural frameworks

Key challenges:

- Poorly defined or nonstandard labor administration procedures
- Broader technical assistance on labor administration reforms was needed to complement the ECMS intervention
- In most evaluation countries, legal frameworks are not yet fully adapted to digitalization (e.g., paper-based systems are still used in parallel in some countries).

Processes: Achievements

- Projects implemented largely effective strategies to align ECMS with laws, regulations, and LA practices and workflows in the seven evaluation countries.

- ECMS implementation offered opportunities to improve inspection processes in the countries while still reflecting the actual practices

- ECMS stakeholders in countries with mature systems noted the ECMS was contributing effectively to greater consistency in labor inspection processes.

Software design and development: emerging good practices

Emerging good practice:

- Developing ECMS in stages
    - Involved getting user feedback at regular intervals
    - Correcting flaws and adapt software features to meet user needs
- Developing specific ECMS modules to manage processes related to a specific industry, sector or inspection area (example Occupational Safety and Health)
    -

RECOMMENDATIONS

	USDOL	Grantees	Labor Admin
Conduct readiness assessments prior to ECMS software development: Review other countries' experience, and carry out assessments on ICT infrastructure, government IT standards, labor inspection process and legal requirements, information systems in other LA departments, etc. Assess LA's political will and develop clear MOU among donor, grantees, and governments.	✔	✔	✔
Ensure software developers are guided by government and grantee labor inspection specialists	✔	✔	✔
Address hardware, software, and software hosting solution requirements: To promote usability, projects and/or labor administrations should allocate resources to ensure the ICT infrastructure available to users is adequate.			✔

Discussion

To what extent do the challenges highlighted in the evaluation accurately reflect your experiences? Was there anything important left out?

What are other examples of ways to overcome challenges associated with user acceptance or to ensure ECMS software meets labor administration needs and reflects the national laws, regulations and practices?

Sustainability

To different degrees, projects addressed issues affecting ECMS sustainability:

- Capacity of the labor administration to support and maintain the system

- Need for state budget allocations

- Buy-in for system use by labor administration decision makers

Colombia, Peru and the Philippines appear to have adequate technical capacity within the labor administration to sustain and improve their ECMS without significant donor or grantee support.

ECMS software development is ongoing in **Honduras**, but deployment is facing significant resistance. The system would likely
benefit from additional support afforded by a project extension.

Paraguay and Vietnam are facing the end of project assistance relatively soon after the initial deployment of
their systems, likely placing their ECMS sustainability at risk.

The ECMS in **Sri Lanka** is currently out of use and needs to be redeveloped.

Achieving sustainability: challenges and emerging good practices

Key challenges:

- Capacity to adapt the ECMS to evolving laws, regulations and procedures
- Inadequate internal IT team capacity for maintenance, lack of an adequate support contract
- High turnover among labor officials
- Projects ending too early in deployment stages

Emerging good practices:

- Procuring software warranties and software support contracts
- Enabling IT teams to adjust forms (training, software design)
- Documenting high level commitments in formal MOUs
- Using subsequent projects to overcome lingering ECMS technical challenges

RECOMMENDATIONS

USDOL	Grantees	Labor Admin
✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓

Document the roles and commitments of the donor, /grantee and the government in clear MOUs

Train labor administration personnel on software maintenance.

Consider outsourcing at least part of software maintenance to the software development company following deployment: Projects and/or labor administrations should acquire software maintenance contracts after the software is deployed for at least two to three years.

Discussion

What were other important issues related to ECMS sustainability?

Do you have any additional challenges or success stories to share regarding ensuring ECMS sustainability?