INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Project Title : Strengthening African Trade Unions’ Capacity to Address Gender Inequality in the World of Work through Basic Education and Legal Literacy

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Collaborating ILO Units/Office : ILO-SRO Harare (Lead Office), GENDER, ACTRAV

Implementing Partners : Organization of African Trade union Unity (OATUU), Accra, Ghana

Type of Evaluation : Terminal Evaluation

Geographical Coverage : Selected countries in Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Sudan and Tanzania)

Date and Duration of Evaluation : October/November, 2005

Composition of the Evaluation Team : Independent Consultant; Project Coordinator and Administrative Assistant; ILO Gender Specialist, Geneva

Evaluation Report Preparation : December, 2005

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“Strengthening African trade unions’ capacity to address gender inequality in the world of work through basic education and legal literacy.”
Project Evaluation
RAF/04/M55/NET

1. Summary of findings and recommendations

The main findings and recommendations from the project are:
1) Ownership of country specific programmes was achieved due to involvement of trade union leadership, trade union officers responsible for policy implementation such as education, gender, research; inclusion of leaders and members from appropriate collaborating civil society organizations in all levels of planning and implementation of project.
2) The importance of trade union leadership taking part and being sensitized on project objectives, particularly on strategies and inter-linkages between gender, informal economy, poverty and HIV/AIDS was crucial to ensure an adequate understanding from union leaders and sustainable results.
3) Sharing of country experiences through the training of trainers workshop from six different countries provided more motivation and insights among participants on how to improve their own efforts in their organizations and at national level to effect gender mainstreaming and the special issues stated above.
4) The selection of one male and one female focal person at national level assisted in practical planning and implementation at national level. This provided coherent work teams and laid a basis for strategies for future work in mainstreaming gender. Often these collaborative efforts created a gender balance in training initiatives for the first time in some of the organizations concerned.
5) The involvement in decision-making at national level of those engaged in project implementation has helped to improve on the efficiency and relevance of the project.
6) Lines of backstopping and authority and alternative strategies need to be carefully assessed according to ILO structures and procedures in projects that have many partners and countries, requiring different financial, reporting and administrative procedures such as via UNDP offices.
7) Adequate administrative training of project coordination staff and the roles and responsibilities of OATUU Secretariat need to be addressed to ensure timely administrative support. Letters of Agreement with the beneficiary organizations would give precise definition of their roles and responsibilities to the project.
8) Communication between project coordination staff and participating organizations was complicated by lack of email facilities, thus requiring national focal points to often use their own resources to access computers in internet cafes. Future strategies should take this into account.
9) Interventions between the Project Coordination staff and ILO Gender Specialists and Workers’ Activities Specialists need adequate resourcing and clear indications as to their roles to ensure smooth coordination and problem solving.
10) Selection of consultants for training and development of manuals require clear
criteria based on ILO expertise and experience to ensure scope and specialized knowledge of ILO mandate and the resulting quality of output.

11) Knowledge sharing has led to additional motivation and insight between project beneficiaries, shared tools and experience gained to help counterparts and other trade unions to tailor these for their own use.

12) Since the ILO Decent Work Programmes are important policy instruments at the national tripartite level and engage in the specific issues of poverty, informal economy and HIV/AIDS, and the GEPATU project also had the objective of highlighting gender mainstreaming of these issues, both would have benefited if there had been a mechanism (informal and/or formal) to enable a systematic exchange of information and experience in these areas.

13) Gender sensitization in trade union organizations in Africa require carefully targeted follow up measures to ensure sustainable results, particularly regarding implementation of policy and integration of gender mainstreaming in overall union structure, research and training. Specific recommendations coming from the project coordination and beneficiaries is listed in an annex which merit consideration in such areas of integrating gender training and mainstreaming in collective bargaining and establishing specific training of trainers; training of leadership level on effective strategies to organize the informal economy; women-specific training in trade unions which lack experience on gender issues and where there is inadequate representation of women in trade union activities and/or structures; introducing gender auditing; introducing policy on sexual harassment at the workplace.

14) A second phase of the project is recommended, taking into consideration findings and lessons learned in the first project and careful consideration of how to more effectively set up coordination of the project with ILO structures, using the expertise developed among project coordinators and trainers trained in the first phase, while perhaps enlarging the scope of the partners.

2. Introduction

The project “Strengthening African Trade Unions’ Capacity to Address Gender Inequality in the World of Work through Basic Education and Legal Literacy”, funded through the ILO/Netherlands Partnership Programme for 2004-2006, was set up to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) to implement and consolidate its gender equality policy and programme. In addition, the project aimed to promote basic education and legal literacy programmes for selected national affiliates of OATUU to address gender inequality issues in the world of work, particularly in relation to poverty, the informal economy and HIV/AIDS.

The project strategy was essentially to train trainers for the six targeted countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Sudan and Tanzania) as well as to build on, and adapt, existing ILO tools in the designated areas. In particular, the project would draw on existing tools and networks to produce training materials for the labour movement in the areas of gender equality, poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and the informal economy. The training of trainers was to be followed by national, sub-regional and regional workshops.
Intended outputs for the project included: i) at least 24 staff of national OATUU affiliates trained as trainers, in particular, gender focal points and education officers; ii) executive officers sensitized on gender dimensions of poverty, HIV/AIDS and informal economy; iii) members at the community level trained on basic education and legal literacy for gender equality; iv) OATUU training tools revised to integrate gender issues and disseminated; v) existing gender tools adapted for trade union use at national and community levels.

An internal project progress report was prepared by the project coordinator and the ILO associate expert backstopping at the time for activities undertaken in the first year of project implementation.

The external evaluator with experience both with the trade union movement in Africa, gender and ILO structures held pre-evaluation discussions with various units in the ILO, and with those providing different levels of backstopping prior to the evaluation mission which took place in October, 2005. The evaluation mission interacted with OATUU leadership, project coordination staff, and different actors within the Ghana country level activities, including field visits and meeting with all the trainers who had taken part in the project national programme and nationally elected officers from the trade unions who took part in the national project. Further telephone discussions or email messages with national focal points and those backstopping the project in various countries were held when communication links were possible.

**Specific Issues of Basic Education**

The project contributed to the reduction of child labour and improved education and training for children from poor families. As an example, the training of trainers dealt with these issues and raised awareness and advocacy within the participating organizations and cooperating civil society organizations in areas such as children’s rights, education for children, and particularly girls. In particular, the Ghana TUC via its affiliate organization in agriculture targeted a rural community concerning these issues, as well as taking part in a national campaign which linked domestic violence, poverty and need for education. Throughout the project there was sensitization on awareness raising and gender dimensions of poverty, the informal economy, HIV/AIDS which is discussed within the evaluation report as these issues were integrated within the regional and national training programmes. At national level many of the participating organizations used these training programmes to reach national policy makers and campaigns.

**3. Design**

The project background analysis provided adequate information to enable the project to create awareness in the target organizations of its objectives. The objectives were clearly stated, describing identified needs and projected outputs. The indicators of achievement
were clearly defined, including targets which were projected. However, some of these indicators made assumptions which were examined in more detail during the evaluation given the level of awareness and development of issues such as gender and equality of treatment, the informal economy, poverty (basic education and legal literacy), HIV/AIDS or even the ability to engage in collective bargaining in some of the countries involved.

What perhaps was not sufficiently taken into account was the cross-cutting selection of countries and the challenges this would present to the project: language, culture, development of the targeted organizations and their democratic structures in such a wide-ranging context of Africa: Tanzania, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, Sudan and Ethiopia, where working people do not share on a widely spread basis the common language of English or French. Although there are often good reasons for trying to reach as many different sub-regions as possible to satisfy the needs of the regional organization and its members, it also places other challenges on the day to day activities and management of a short-term project with rather ambitious objectives.

This created a challenging situation for both the OATUU project staff and those with backstopping responsibilities due to very inadequate communication links between these countries, the ILO offices concerned and procedures involved in transfer of finances via UNDP and reporting to ensure timely delivery of activities.

The lines of authority and responsibility sometimes became confused for various reasons, many of which were often the result of dynamics outside of the control of those concerned. Although these structural lines were clearly highlighted in the project design, given the context in which changes occurred where those responsible for backstopping were transferred and where the ILO regional office was not functioning as normal due to the political situation in Cote d’Ivoire, the resulting confusion created difficulties and some misunderstandings and delays among project partners.

The importance of the OATUU leadership’s commitment to the project was crucial to ensure that the project obtained its ultimate objectives. This was clearly defined in the immediate objectives (1) to strengthen their capacity to coordinate the implementation of its gender policy and monitor, evaluate and review progress made by its affiliates as well as its policy organs, and (2) to strengthen capacity of selected national affiliates to undertake basic education and legal literacy programmes to address gender inequality issues in the world of work, particularly in relation to poverty informal economy and HIV/AIDS.

The indicators concerning percentage of increase of women as new union recruits from the informal economy as well as collective bargaining agreements which include issues of gender equality, maternity protection and non-discrimination may be difficult to ascertain in such a limited time span, although an awareness has been created on the need for unions to undertake specific programmes to enlarge their current focus in these areas. Those trained in the current project would need some specific additional training, or others identified to address issues such as collective bargaining and gender equality. This could be best dealt with in an extended phase either in a new project document or as an
extension for a few months, depending on availability of resources.

As OATUU had just engaged a new education and research officer and a new gender and youth officer in the last half of 2005 who are committed to the objectives of the project but nonetheless new to their posts, it appears that the importance given in the project document to the issues of mainstreaming gender concepts, women workers’ rights and gender issues related to African development issues such as poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and basic education and literacy are being integrated in the overall policy of OATUU.

The level of commitment of the political leadership will be extremely important to the integration of the project objectives in the years to come as crucial for the sustainability of the project. Thus, the eventual implementation of the OATUU policy made in January 2004 to include more women in decision-making at all levels including the highest level, and to vitalize the education and training programmes to take into account gender, both at regional and national level is to be commended and monitored as a basis for future analysis and support. Specific indicators that OATUU Secretariat and OATUU affiliates develop and adopt action plans and institutional arrangements on gender equality will need to be formalized and analytical mechanisms put in place and reviewed systematically in order to follow the development of these policies.

There is an important linkage of the project and project coordination and the on-going gender and education programmes currently under different OATUU departments headed by OATUU senior executive officers with political responsibility and who have benefited from training in this project. Quantifiable results and positive feedback through sustainable activities and policies implemented could lead towards a model of good practice on the continent.

The overall design of the project is coherent and gives an adequate blueprint for the implementation of the project objectives. The financial budget however does not seem to be adequate to cover the real costs involved, particularly concerning the backstopping required across Africa and from Geneva Headquarters. A more consistent participation and adequate funding of backstopping from ILO Gender Specialists and the Workers’ Activities Specialists in the region would have strengthened the project objectives given the wide range of issues that were to be mainstreamed into policy and implemented in the various organisations.

What should be recognized is that awareness on many of these issues in both national and regional cultural contexts is sometimes slow to mature, and, even at executive level, attitudes take time to change. Some national trade union programmes have benefited from long-standing educational training and experience in gender and other issues, in countries which have a tradition of active participation in social dialogue. These unions have taken part in previous ILO activities and other internationally sponsored national projects and policies such as in Ghana. Thus, there was very quick response and understanding of project objectives.
In countries where women’s rights (and even trade union rights) are not yet fully recognized or implemented, the awareness building was extremely crucial. However, problems or lack of understanding of project objectives surfaced for which leadership intervention was necessary to ensure that activities received support from those at the highest level both through their presence and their active input. A positive example of this was in the Sudan where a delicate balance exists in freedom of association and where union leadership showed commitment to bring an awareness of women’s participation and the overall concept of gender and how this could impact at a wider level. In both of these examples gender equality activities were reflected and developed as a support to strengthen national policies. The question of sustainability will need to be addressed in such a context over the long run, as leadership support, although important, needs to be matched by understanding and commitment at other levels.

An example where there was lack of overall understanding of the project and its objectives was Mali, where the counterparts responsible for implementation of the project activities did not adequately understand their role and responsibilities. This entailed additional intervention from both the project staff and OATUU leadership, and has created delays in implementation until the participating organization can undertake its responsibilities in implementation appropriately.

Some of the growing pains of the project and relations with the beneficiaries might have been facilitated by letters of agreement signed with the participating unions, with clearly stated objectives and responsibilities outlined to minimize any misunderstandings. Given the communication difficulties between project headquarters and national programmes which were experienced, focal points will need more material and/or financial support to enable them to have easy access to internet. More systematic backstopping financed by the project to ensure participation from the ILO Gender and Worker specialists would have also given additional authority to the project implementation. Within ILO structures such additional costs outside the immediate coverage of the sub-regional office have to be identified from other sources. This might be considered for future project design.

4. Project Implementation

The project coordinator and project assistant were fully engaged in all project activities and showed enthusiastic commitment to ensuring activities were conducted according to project objectives and work plan. They were faced by challenges to integrate the project within the OATUU structure, familiarize these objectives through training to OATUU executive officers, national union officers and those selected as national counterpart coordinators, an extremely delicate task coming from technical staff to elected executives. They were also struggling to overcome the administrative difficulties mentioned above with ILO structures and the UNDP while remaining flexible regarding planned activities which could not always go forward according to schedule due to financial delays in transfer of funds, sometimes because UNDP financial reporting on activities is a slow process and therefore appear as undelivered when in fact activities had already taken place and new funds were needed. Adequate training given to the project
coordination staff regarding administrative procedures would be an important feature in future to minimize these issues.

Attention should be given to cultural differences and technical expertise in the region which require special consideration in the context of Africa where communication and information technology are neither adequately available nor utilized. Specialized training would be welcome in future projects with the participating organizations which would help overcome some of these issues.

The Gender Bureau of the ILO was fully involved in the design and backstopping of the project, and they made timely interventions when it became apparent they were needed to help strengthen the administration and solve problems in the host sub-regional office. However, the ILO Gender Bureau is a small division backstopping many other activities at international level, so it was also a challenge for them to become specifically involved in such detail in one project. The de-centralization of this project to one sub-region not included in the project but where the ILO gender specialist was located, proved problematic when she was transferred. Since the project covered so many sub-regions the structural implications of backstopping need to be assessed in future projects.

Other backstopping which helped project implementation was the participation of the Bureau for Workers’ Activities’ specialists servicing the different countries taking part in the project. They intervened where requested and took part as resource persons in the project activities where possible. Their seniority and familiarity with the participating organizations contributed to strengthen the objectives of the project: mainstreaming gender in union response to PRSP, Informal Economy, HIV/AIDS as well as their impact on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development, Social Dialogue, and how these issues interact within ILO policy. ILO Decent Work Programmes at national level, NEPAD, and with other agencies. This unique combination makes these ILO specialists natural partners to take a more active part in such projects in future. The ILO Bureau for Workers’ Activities has an overall grasp not only of the issues, but of all international and regional programmes supporting initiatives in the region, both with OATUU and with the other Global Unions, national unions, and is in a position to be a continuous support even beyond the life of the project. This role should be maximized and used as much as possible in future projects to assist the Gender Bureau.

The importance of the above lines of communication, reporting and administrative and backstopping responsibility although generally outlined in the project document, nonetheless proved complicated due to real on the ground difficulties and perceptions of authority. This needs to be rethought in future in order to overcome the difficulties experienced.

As of December, 2005, almost all major activities were implemented in each country: one leadership sensitization workshop, one national training of trainers and three national workshops on different issues had been conducted with the exception of Mali, where only a leadership sensitization and one national workshop had taken place. However, full reports had not yet been received from all countries because of translation difficulties in
Sudan and delays in some countries due to Ramadan. Ghana had completed all activities and were finalizing their plan of action with the national executive committee of the TUC. The level of quality may have differed according to expertise available, but in reviewing the reports, it seemed that efforts had been made to ensure quality and appropriateness of input.

To deal adequately with specific needs, the project covered both women-specific activities as in Sudan taking into account cultural differences as well as activities to ensure gender awareness of both men and women to promote issues of gender in poverty reduction programmes and the role of trade unions in various national policies such as HIV/AIDS and the importance of basic education and legal literacy. Ghana TUC used the activities in the project to promote trade union involvement in a national platform on domestic violence as well as the other specialized issues under the project. In all cases, the project coordination worked on the finalization of the work plans with the participating organizations to ensure that there was harmonization of project and union objectives. All organizations recognized the importance of having different levels of training available, both women and/or men specific or for mixed seminars.

In telephone or email conferences with the various national level coordinators, all had reported practical difficulties with the short timeframe of the project. They had managed to plan and conduct these activities with the assistance of the project coordinator and qualified resource persons, but many felt a more flexible time frame would have allowed better assimilation and follow-up, particularly where gender and workers’ education focal points had different reporting mechanisms within hierarchies. Some delays had been experienced due to delay in financial transfers, particularly in some countries where UNDP offices were perhaps overwhelmed and did not consider such small projects a priority.

The project developed a training manual (*Enhancing African Trade Unions’ Capacity for Promoting Gender Equality: Focus on Poverty, Informal Economy and HIV/AIDS*) which was tested in various countries in a first draft. Following lessons learned and feedback gained through deficiencies experienced in the first draft, it was adapted into final form by an extremely qualified consultant, familiar with gender, the ILO mandate, trade unions and civil society organizations in Africa. The level of expertise in selection of consultants is crucial to ensure the quality of output, thus the importance of ILO backstopping in identification of appropriate consultants for such manuals and training materials. There have been requests coming from all participating organizations as well as other African trade unions to have these manuals translated or adapted into other major languages used in the region such as Swahili and Arabic.

5. Project Performance

Relevance

The project was an appropriate means to reach the overall objective of gender
mainstreaming in a regional African trade union organization which encompasses all trade unions in the region, particularly given the sensitivity of culture and tradition where women have varying roles in society and hierarchical structures. Since trade unions are often relatively strong organizations in civil society and have special status at national and regional level, the importance of strengthening gender mainstreaming in these organizations is extremely relevant if one is to change attitudes, albeit slowly, on gender and important areas of poverty, informal economy, HIV/AIDS and other areas where working people and those in the informal economy need to have their voice heard.

The current economic status in Africa has created an increasingly shrinking formal economy, leaving a labour force under or unemployed in formal workplaces. Trade unions have seen their membership dwindling because of retrenchment or retirement, often in reduction of public services, particularly affecting large numbers of women. Since in some participating countries more than 80 percent of the active labour force is engaged in the informal economy, the project has opened dialogue on various initiatives concerning how unions can to give support to these informal economy workers under the union umbrella and articulate their concerns at national and regional level. The importance of basic education and legal literacy is crucial to assist both workers and their organizations to participate more effectively in programmes and strategies. Unions have started different initiatives, including gender analysis, to see how best to address these issues.

Since the trade union movement developed at a time when unions were basically male-dominated, efforts are now being made to bring awareness to union leadership to see that interests of all members are taken into consideration equally and gender issues mainstreamed. The project has helped to improve the capacity of the Organization of African Trade Union Unit (OATUU) and their affiliates to address gender mainstreaming concerns in their activities and programmes. The importance of the ILO in assisting and being visible on gender issues to help OATUU as the regional trade union organization recognized in the African Union, the participating unions and other unions and organizations in the region is to give strong backing on issues of non-discrimination and awareness of gender policies and programmes which the ILO can help develop.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the project has been wide-ranging. The project targeted gender focal points, research and education officers, executive leadership of OATUU affiliates in order to strengthen the capacity of member trade unions to address gender inequality more appropriately. In Ghana, industrial relations officers were also included, since they realized the importance of gender in collective bargaining. Participation from women’s organizations in civil society were also included in national training programmes to interact with the trade unions in order to create a multiplier effect in civil society at national and community level.

The main project outputs have been progress made on gender mainstreaming in policies
and programmes. At the national level, one of the activities to be undertaken by all participating organizations was a review of gender policies and their implementation. Although all national trade union organizations participated in different ways concerning this review, results varied due to experience in this area.

Tanzania had made this a priority in their activities. Ghana has had a long experience with their women's committee and integrated some of the activities in national platforms on gender, such as a national campaign against domestic violence in the context of civil society.

In Ethiopia where there was no gender policy officially in place, a policy document in the form of a constitutional amendment was produced and they finalized a draft gender policy which had been developed a few years earlier but which yet had not been put into effect. The CETU amended their constitution to create a new division for women to be headed by a woman with equal status as other divisional heads, a positive step.

In Sudan, due to support at the highest level, proposals have been made to develop a positive document on gender mainstreaming which is expected to be followed by administrative and political decision to review the existing structure of the union leadership. The decisions in themselves are important steps in cultural terms, but a very well-planned feasibility and training and awareness programme for both men and women will be required to effect appropriate changes in attitudes and acceptance of the idea of women in union activities, much less in leadership positions.

The training of trainers workshop was a crucial element in giving the project a sound basis for the follow up in each country. The level of awareness on gender issues and what was meant by mainstreaming was strengthened by the participation of ILO Gender Specialists. The further development of understanding how gender could impact at all levels was an important objective. A decision was taken early in the project to ensure 70 percent women and 30 percent men’s participation in ensuing activities. Also, efforts were made to increase the number of women trained in Sudan and Ethiopia because of lack of structures to support women’s training.

The project activities were implemented within the proposed time frame insofar as possible due to some of the delays in receiving financial transfers. OATUU leadership advanced some finance where possible, but in some countries this was not possible due to other issues dealing with national restrictions or financial guidelines. Thus until transfers could arrive through appropriate UNDP channels, activities had to be delayed, which caused considerable difficulties for coordinators, backstopping offices, resource persons and beneficiaries.

The benefits of the project reached the target group as planned, except for the exception of Mali, although OATUU had indicated it was still in discussions to see if this could be remedied. Reports have been collected and processed, although some translations of reports were still being finalized. This has proved a challenge in a project with a rather limited time frame, particularly as it has affected French-speaking Africa, Sudan and
other countries where workers, especially women, use their national languages for training and reporting.

The project partners were selected by OATUU in function of the donor guidelines specifying levels of assistance in the qualifying beneficiary countries. The final selections comprised national trade union organizations in Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Sudan and Tanzania. The differences of culture, language, level of trade union democratization have proven challenging, particularly considering distances involved and structures of reporting and administration. Levels of commitment and capacities have also varied. For OATUU leadership, these countries were selected to reach various areas in Africa which could benefit from the project objectives to strengthen gender awareness in their organizations and affiliated members. Considerable analysis should be made in any follow-up phase or new project to ensure that adequate resources (both human and financial) are available to overcome these disparities and communication issues in future, or alternative strategies to deal with one sub-region exclusively with more feasible coordination mechanisms.

The project has contributed to the implementation of the OATUU gender equality policy. The coordination of the implementation of OATUU’s gender policy has been placed directly under the project gender coordinator (formerly the gender officer of OATUU) who is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing progress made by the affiliates and the policy mechanisms. The 2004 OATUU Congress made a decision to review the constitution of the OATUU to make it gender sensitive. Proposals have been made and practical steps have been taken to increase the number of women in the executive committee to at least four women out of 13 members. To date, no woman elected official has yet been placed in the OATUU executive committee, but this is currently under discussion. A new gender and youth officer has been appointed to OATUU and there will need to be clear divisions of reporting to ensure the effective harmonization of the gender project coordinator and the gender and youth officer and the education and research officer who have different department lines of authority.

The project beneficiaries’ capacity has been raised on the interlinkages on the informal economy, HIV/AIDS and gender equality. Trade Unions have been active partners in the ILO/UN HIV/AIDS programme at international level. Varying levels of understanding have been reached on the continent and multi-sectorial approaches engaged to fight HIV/ADS have not been systematically aligned and mainstreamed into poverty eradication and other national programmes. The project has greatly contributed information in general on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and particularly drawn attention to the ILO Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and appropriate tools to those participating trade unions to take part in negotiations of national social and economic programmes on these issues.

As an example of awareness raising of HIV/AIDS in sensitive cultures, there was first denial and resistance from the Sudan WTUF national trainers that a problem existed. The use of statistics and timely newspaper reports from neighbouring regions incited them to do their own research and integrate it into subsequent training workshops. One participant remarked, “at first we were afraid to talk about HIV/AIDS in the open
because we felt it was a taboo and a private thing, but now we even discuss the gender dimension of it; we even made our own research on the subject.”

Concerning the linkages among these issues and poverty reduction strategies, in Ghana, a farming community was targeted through the General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU), affiliate of the Ghana TUC. Basic education, HIV/AIDS awareness was carried out in the community. In the course of discussions the issues of access to land to enable the women groups in the community to continue farming was raised. (The land owners were threatening to evict these peasant farmers from the land where they had been for several decades). During the evaluation, the project coordinator, the evaluator and TUC and GAWU representatives met with the community leadership and beneficiaries of the project who explained the importance of the HIV/AIDS training (role playing which was video taped). The villagers also explained that village chiefs and community representatives were in the process of negotiating with the landowners. Because of trade union support and the many community development projects (day care center, food processing unit, construction of a school) which had been initiated due to union pressure and support over the last few years, a change of attitude had been created in the absentee landlords and thus enabled the community representatives (who took part in the project training) to open negotiations to reach an agreement with them. The GEPATU project had come at a timely moment to revitalize their motivation at community level. As a result, more targeted resources were being made available to upgrade the materials at the disposal of the day care center and the union had requested recommendations from the teachers to put forward at government level to improve quality of education. All these community based, and union supported, activities have helped to address poverty and the informal economy.

The project has helped to meet one of the major challenges of the trade unions: to influence and be more directly consulted and participate effectively in the national processes of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes to promote employment as a main strategy against poverty. The PRSP process has been marked by the lack of inclusion of not only trade unions, but also of employers and civil society which form the backbone of national implementation of policy. The importance of integrating gender in the assessment and design of national social and economic programmes aimed at eradicating poverty was an important contribution of the project in those countries taking part and gave tools to the trade unions to make a meaningful contribution in the dialogue. The interaction and support of ILO offices and programmes in the region will be an important element to further develop this major issue.

It is important to note that in a relatively complex project such as this, coordination and management are crucial elements to ensure activities take place according to plan. The OATUU Gender Officer was selected as the project coordinator following extensive discussions to identify someone who knew OATUU, their affiliates and who could link effectively with the ILO backstopping procedures. Relatively early in the project life, the ILO Gender Specialist backstopping the project from Harare was promoted to another post in the region but with different responsibilities. An associate expert was given responsibilities to backstop the project but due to lack of previous involvement and
sufficient recognition was perhaps in a difficult situation as well vis-à-vis seniority and authority both inside the ILO and with the constituents. She in turn was promoted to another post outside the region, leaving no one available who was adequately trained in either gender or available to take immediate responsibility in the administrative aspects for the project in the responsible office. It should also be noted that the ILO office in Harare did not cover any participating country inside the project, placing them in a rather awkward situation and creating even more administrative red tape as finance had to go via UNDP in the other countries.

Compounding this was the fact that the project coordination staff had no previous ILO experience in administrative matters or highly specialized gender training on ILO policy at the beginning of the project. Linkages between the Gender Bureau of the ILO, the project coordination staff and the ILO sub-regional office were complicated due to communication difficulties and the fact that the OATUU project staff had no internet or telephone access except through the OATUU regular lines of communication. Thus, they often operated via internet cafes and private telephones until adequate internet and computer access was obtained in 2005.

As witnessed by the independent project evaluator, telephone communications and email with the participating organizations in the various countries and even with ILO regional offices is not an easy task from Accra. Even from Geneva, direct telephone communication to Africa proved to be quite difficult to reach the different persons needed for input in the final evaluation.

Nonetheless, given all these problematic issues, the project has been conducted in a very short time frame and has benefited both OATUU and their affiliated organizations. The project coordination should be commended for having accomplished the objectives and all those backstopping in difficult circumstances should be given credit for problem solving and assisting outside of their usual responsibilities. It is clear that in future the reshaping of management and coordination responsibilities will have to be considered in the light of ILO structures and communication in the region. Adequate training and guidelines will have to be given to those concerned before the project starts full implementation.

**Efficiency**

The results of the project have more than justified the cost incurred. When one looks at 6 countries with considerable transport and communication difficulties, the amount of US$ 500,000 is very modest and perhaps not even adequate given the scope of the project. The cost of holding seminars and training in Africa is relatively costly, but many of the organizations concerned managed through stringent measures to hold the activities as planned while foregoing more comfortable amenities. In some cases the participating unions funded some counterpart contribution through resource persons or materials. The OATUU project coordinator and OATUU itself advanced some funds to finance activities when funding did not arrive in time for scheduled activities, and also in one case leadership formally suspended activities until they were satisfied guidelines had been followed properly.
All accounting has been subjected to regular examination in accordance with established procedures, either through ILO offices or UNDP.

**Sustainability**

The project beneficiaries in the participating countries have developed a sense of ownership of the project components related to their organizations. The fact that they have now a roster of trainers who have capacity to conduct other training on the project issues as well as integrating these issues into other workers’ education programmes is a significant positive benefit. Since the beneficiaries have developed and used different tools and policies, these need to be more fully integrated into union activities or as a means to influence national policy on poverty eradication measures or other issues where social dialogue can be used to bring about change for working people and those in the informal economy. The training manual developed is also an important tool which needs to be widely distributed and adapted into local languages in a simple format. This request has been received from all participating countries.

Attempts are being made at national level in a few countries to fundraise for more activities on gender for their membership. This includes Ethiopia which was previously not engaged in gender as a priority issue. In Ghana, they are exploring avenues to ensure that the national budget on HIV/AIDS could be used to support a particular deprived community.

The strategy of training trainers will be a significant input to sustainability of the project. Although the project is quite short and under funded considering the depth of the issues it has covered, it nonetheless has created an awareness, reinforced policy on gender where it existed and developed gender strategies and policies where they did not exist. The main benefit the project offered was additional training on issues already of great concern to trade unions in the region and where the support of the ILO has helped to make inroads in national policy, such as poverty reduction strategies and the informal economy, the international programme on HIV/AIDS and how to use gender mainstreaming to influence these issues. A more active interaction with ILO Decent Work National Programmes and the project would highlight these linkages more adequately in future and strengthen the gender dimension.

Since the project has not been in operation for a very long time, exit strategies have not yet been considered, although specific action plans have been drafted by the participating organizations with the objective of conducting activities either through future project support, ILO regional support, through OATUU or other sponsoring organizations where they have membership, and through their own modest workers’ education programmes as well.

Knowledge sharing, while extremely important, does require adequate resourcing. There was one activity developed within the project to formally share experiences. Given the modest amount available for project activities, such knowledge sharing is otherwise restricted to informal exchanges via networks and trade union structures through their
regular meetings and conferences. For example Ghana and Tanzania have agreed to exchange information on gender policy and implementation. Nonetheless, the project has helped to focus on best practices. This could be better developed through project plans to continue for an additional phase to carry on with basic training in the three thematic areas, with significant input from the ILO in these areas where there is significant ILO expertise in poverty reduction strategies (which include basic education and literacy), informal economy and HIV/AIDS – all of which are crucial issues in Africa.

OATUU has stated its continued commitment to gender equality, both in the evaluation and in making its constitutional amendments, including discussions underway to include an elected woman official in the Executive at OATUU Headquarters in Accra.

The national trade union organizations taking part in the project are developing national action plans and/or strategies which should provide a basis for sustainability in future.

There are fully established trade union networks operating at international and regional level which is a significant comparative advantage in selecting trade unions as beneficiaries in gender projects. All training essentially reinforces and modernizes trade union policy in the region with multiplying effects at all levels, hence the importance of creating gender mainstreaming as a priority objective.

Unanticipated effects

The project has incurred effects which were not foreseen. In particular, the reporting chain and backstopping was a significant challenge early in the project. This required considerable efforts from the project coordination staff, ILO headquarters and the field which were not anticipated. It has led to lessons learned which will assist future development of a new project phase or which will benefit other projects of this nature or which are decentralized in the region.

Alternative Strategies

Given the specific objective of strengthening the internal gender policies and programmes of OATUU and its affiliates, the project proved to be timely, coherent and useful as it provided modest but strategic resources which gave sensitivity training to OATUU leadership and to those affiliates within the six participating countries.

The objectives within the project which might benefit from alternative strategies are to provide a better cohesion of ILO programmes and expertise in the region. Since the project was targeted for OATUU affiliates and structures and implementation seconded via the OATUU Secretariat, the ILO role was to provide important but nonetheless occasional expertise concerning the special issues of gender, poverty and PRSP, the informal economy and HIV/AIDS, while using basic education and literacy as a means to raise awareness.

Another option, but perhaps more costly, would have been to place coordination of the
project directly under the ILO, either via the Gender Bureau or the Bureau for Workers Activities with liaison with the OATUU Secretariat which would have still been actively involved in project implementation, but giving more financial and administrative responsibility directly to ILO structures, while using ILO Gender and Worker Specialists in their various capacities.

A second phase might also consider the possibility of gender mainstreaming of these specific policy issues in other trade union structures operating on the continent to take advantage of lessons learned in the first phase and to widen gender mainstreaming in their on-going programmes which also are dealing with poverty, informal economy and HIV/AIDS campaigns.

6. Lessons Learned

1. Project staff need careful instruction and information on ILO administrative procedures and in some cases specialized training on objectives concerning special issues such as ILO policy on gender, the informal economy, poverty, HIV/AIDS, etc. to ensure project cohesion.
2. Selection of countries (and their cultural, linguistic and communication needs) require careful consideration and criteria to ensure that project design, financing, backstopping and implementation are practicable.
3. National focal points need access to email for smooth functioning with the project coordination. Special measures need to be designed within the project to ensure facility of communication.
4. Training of trainers is an excellent means to achieve sustainable results in participating organizations, but participating organizations need to show their commitment in utilizing these resource persons not only in the project, but in future.
5. Selection of both men and women focal points from participating organizations ensures gender balance and prepares for team-working.
6. Knowledge sharing is an important element to give confidence, motivate and provide sustainability, but it requires adequate inputs to be effective.
7. Development of training materials is most effective with use of appropriate consultants with knowledge and experience of all issues defined and the organizations concerned, including at the level of ILO and participating organizations within the regional context. Such consultants should be acknowledged and used in future. Adaptation into important languages used at regional level should receive adequate financing and distribution as feasible.
8. Ownership of projects is the result of involvement of actors at various levels in the design, implementation and reporting. Adequate feedback at each level provides a basis for on-going activities at the end of the project life.
9. Careful consideration is required to find acceptable but effective strategies, particularly concerning lines of reporting and decision-making regarding project objectives within hierarchical structures--in particular regarding technical staff and officially elected staff, where perception of roles can become distorted easily.
10. Support from the highest office in participating organizations is crucial not only for implementation but for sustainability.

11. In projects where there are many beneficiary organizations and levels of decentralization, letters of agreement would simplify administrative procedures as well as making clear project responsibilities and roles.

12. Gender mainstreaming projects are not only useful but extremely strategic to assist international and regional structures to develop or further integrate gender policies and programmes in their on-going work with their national affiliates.

13. Decentralization of issues such as gender mainstreaming and specific issues of informal economy, poverty, HIV/AIDS requires well-informed and strategic inputs from all organizations involved. In particular the role of ILO specialists and ILO programmes in the region must be carefully designed and planned to ensure cohesion.

14. The ILO provides particular comparative advantage to reach partners/constituents which can affect change on socio-economic issues at international, regional and national level and integrate gender effectively into these issues.

15. Projects which require extensive backstopping in various sub-regions require systematic ILO overview and very specific lines of authority, decision-making and problem solving to ensure timely delivery of financing, implementation of activities and reporting.

16. The input from the ILO Gender Bureau is crucial to ensure gender issues are reflected and sustained and oversight maintained. The input from the ILO Bureau for Workers’ Activities provides cohesion and authority within the framework of workers’ organizations and future sustainability in workers’ education programmes in the region. The ILO regional/sub-regional offices provide the cohesion of programming and administrative in the region and integration of projects and their objectives where appropriate in the ILO Decent Work Programmes at national level. All of these roles and responsibilities require careful consideration to ensure that they provide added value to gender projects.