



► Synthesis review of the ILO's employment interventions for the period 2015–2021: What works and why

Background document for the third recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of employment at the International Labour Conference 110th Session, 2022



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employment interventions
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110th Session, 2022

Evaluation Office
April 2022

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► Table of Contents

Acronyms	v
Forward	vii
Executive summary	1
1. Introduction	3
1.1. Global employment trends	4
1.2. The role of the ILO	4
1.3. About this synthesis review	6
2. Sampling and methods	7
3. Findings	11
3.1. Supporting comprehensive employment policy frameworks	12
3.1.1 National employment policies development and implementation	12
3.1.2 Macro, trade, sectoral and investment policies	16
3.1.3 Data collection and analysis, research, M&E for evidenced-based policies	17
3.1.4 Skills policies	18
3.2. Labour market institutions, ALMPs and supply side interventions	18
3.2.1 PES, intermediation, ALMPs, and public employment programmes	18
3.2.2 Skills systems, skills development, and Lifelong Learning (LLL)	19
3.3. Private investment and SME development interventions	21
3.3.1 Private sector development for job creation	21
3.3.2 Enterprise development interventions	23
3.4. Equality, inclusion, environment sustainability and fragile context interventions	26
3.4.1 Supporting women’s employment	26
3.4.2 Youth employment interventions	28
3.4.3 Skills for social inclusion	29
3.4.4 Green works and green jobs	31
3.4.5 Fragile situations	31
4. Lessons learned	34
4.1. Appropriate approach	35
4.2. Adequate approach	36
4.3. Design	37

5. Good practices	38
5.1. Increasing engagement and participation	39
5.2. Project management	41
6. Conclusions	42
Annexes	46
Annex 1. Synthesis review questions	47
Annex 2. List of included reports (“the evaluation sample”)	49
Annex 3. Synthesis review protocol and analysis of the evaluation sample of 25 projects	51
Annex 4. References	52
List of figures	
► Figure 1. ILO Results Framework	5
► Figure 2. ILO Typology of Knowledge Products	17
List of tables	
► Table 1. Type of evaluation	8
► Table 2. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities are relevant to the topic of standards promotion	13
► Table 3. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities are relevant to the topic of enterprise development for job creation	21
► Table 4. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities that are relevant to the topic of enterprise development	24
► Table 5. Estimated effect sizes for business support services	26
► Table 6. Examples of employment interventions relevant to the topic of gender equality	27
► Table 7. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities are relevant to the topic of disability	30
► Table 8. Recurrent issues for improvement identified in EVAL's meta-analyses of development cooperation project evaluations since 2009	45
List of boxes	
► Box 1. Examples of projects with social dialogue objectives	14

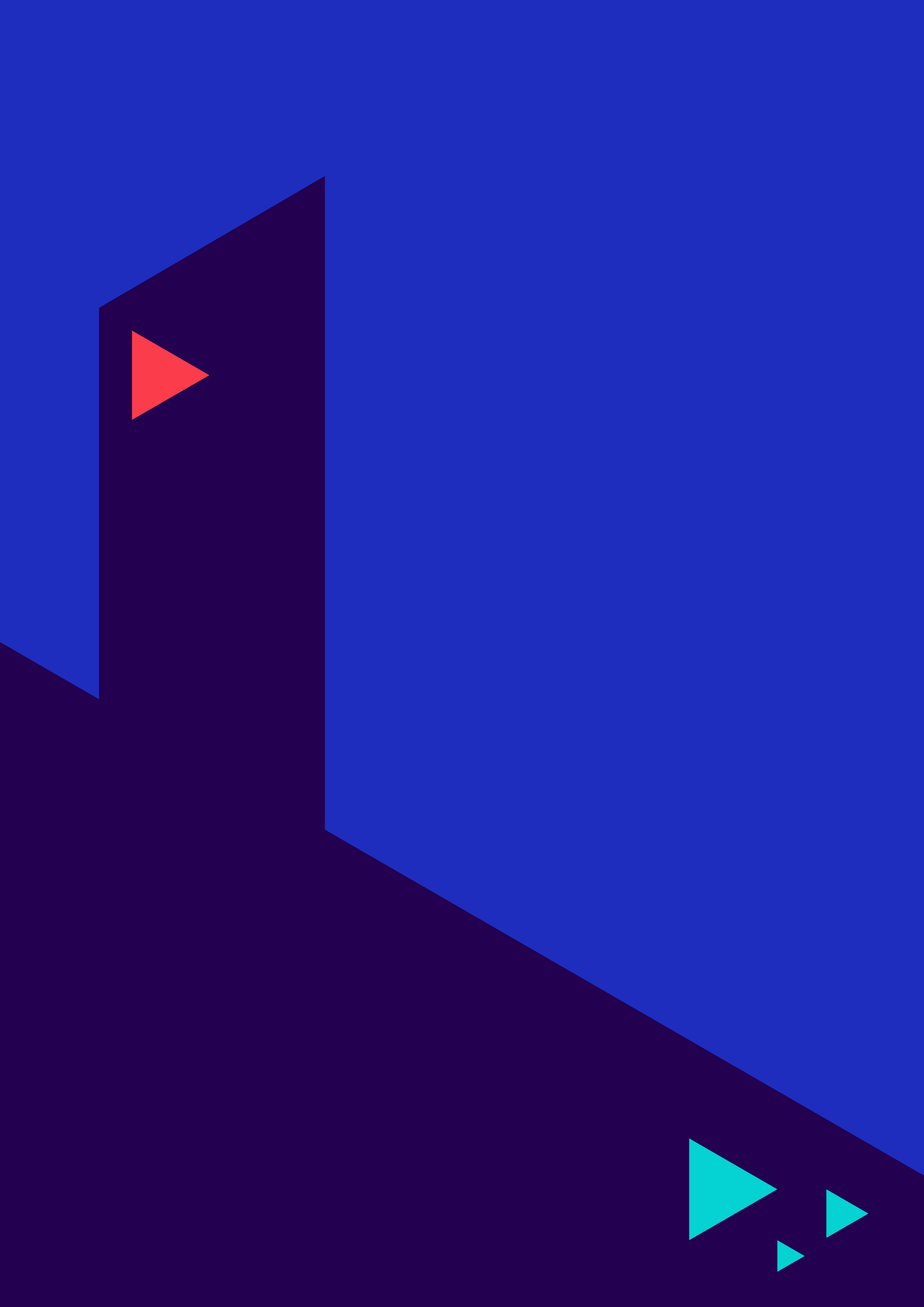
► Acronyms

AWF	Asian Welding Federation
BDS	Business development services
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
COP	Community of Practice
CPO	Country programme outcome
CSO	Civil society organization
DJEP	Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People: Tackling the challenge together
DWA	Decent Work Agenda
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
DWW	Decent Work for Women
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organization
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIIP	Employment Intensive Investment Programme
EILD	Employment and Integrated Local Development in the Comoros
EVAL	ILO Evaluation Office
EYE	Employment for Youth in Egypt
EO	Employer's organisation
GE4DE	Promoting Gender Equality for Decent Employment
ILS	International labour standards
İŞKUR	Turkish Employment Agency
JPR	Jobs for Peace and Resilience
KS4SME	Job Creation through SME Development – a Knowledge Sharing Project
MIRIDEW	Migrants Rights and Decent Work
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs
MOM	Ministry of Power
MOTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MOZTRABALHA	Decent Work for Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Transformation in Mozambique
NEET	Not in education, employment, or training
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PAGE	Partnership for Action on Green Economy
PEP	Public employment programmes
PIP	Public infrastructure projects

PROPEL	Promoting rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities in employment through legislation
PWD	People with disability
R4D-SP	Roads for Development – Support Program
RMG	Ready-made garments
SDGs	Sustainable development goals
SEDP	National Social Economic Development Plan
SEP	Skills for Employment Programme
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SMEDA	Small and Medium Size Enterprise Development Agency
TESP	Training and Employment Support Programme
TOC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UGoM	Government of Myanmar
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
VET	Vocational Education Training
W4Y	Work 4 Youth
WDD	Women's Development Department
ZGJP	Zambia Green Jobs Programme

► Forward

This report was commissioned to contribute to the preparation of ILO's report for the International Labour Conference recurrent discussion on employment under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on social Justice for a Fair Globalization. The study was prepared by the ILO's Evaluation Office (EVAL) with inputs from the [Campbell Collaboration](#). It was managed by evaluation officers Patricia Vidal and Craig Russon. Guy Thijs, Director of EVAL, provided oversight to ensure the quality and independence of the study. The report has benefited from input from the Employment Policy Department (EMPLOYMENT). Any errors and omissions are the responsibility of EVAL.



► Executive summary

The ILO's work on employment promotion, since the last recurrent discussion of 2014, has been focusing on promoting comprehensive employment policy frameworks in line with the Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment (2014), to tackle the long-term unemployment and job insecurity which is affecting disproportionately young people and was on the increase following the Great Recession.

The purpose of this assignment, coordinated by EVAL, is to contribute to organizational learning and to provide effective guidance to the constituents of the Office on their future work on employment by bringing together lessons from past interventions. It is aimed at strengthening the Office's capacity to make decisions in an evidence-based manner from evaluation results.

In this regard, the findings from this assignment should be analysed and documented in a structured and systematic manner, clearly identifying what works, for whom, and why. To the extent possible, it should also identify ILO's main challenges in supporting the achievement of SDGs on employment (e.g., UN reform, new forms of employment).

The work mainly consisted of a desk-based review of evaluations and studies (both published and unpublished) related to employment and skills development to consolidate and synthesise key results and lessons learned, and to make these findings accessible and useful to ILO officials and constituents. After preliminary coding, a sample was selected, and documents were analysed. A report was written using a thematic framework proposed by the Employment department.

Supporting comprehensive employment policy frameworks

The results of the synthesis review suggest ILO's success in supporting employment legal and policy frameworks, and in some cases, improving the capacity of the inspection system and enterprise practice, with respect to standards. In this regard, national employment policies (NEPs) have grown in number in the last 20 years, with many explicitly citing ILO resources. However, implementation of NEPs has been more uneven, partly because of lack of local commitment.

Labour market institutions, ALMPs and supply side interventions

National skills policies serve as a framework or guide for improving access to decent work and skills sets needed to support the labour market. The ILO's role in this area is to support the constituents in developing, monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing skills policies, and providing technical assistance in the development of these policies. Skills development is supported in projects through training programmes for individuals, support to training institutes, and from an enabling environment. Several projects offered training programmes reaching substantial numbers and others have increased the capacity of trainers and training institutes. Project evaluations report numbers trained, although support to skills development is not always successful. The global systematic review reports that skills training has a small positive effect on both employment and earning.

Private investment and SME development interventions

The ILO interventions include significant efforts to provide policy support for enterprise development vis-à-vis decent job promotion, both indirectly from capacity building and via evidence base building, and directly via policy support to ministries. These efforts have not gone unnoticed and are very well appreciated by most constituents/stakeholders. However, the approaches used have not been subject to rigorous evaluation and the global evidence suggests that generally effects are small.

Equality, inclusion, environment sustainability and fragile context interventions

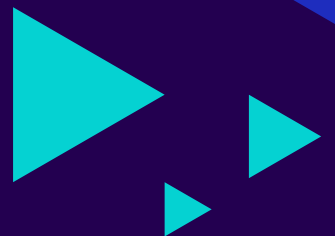
The importance of integrating gender equality in the design of employment-related interventions and outcomes is well recognized, as evidenced by the sizable number of interventions which explicitly included a gender component. However, there is still some room for improvement in terms of measuring impact. In addition, knowledge activities to facilitate better understanding on the meaning of 'mainstreaming gender equality' and how it is related to other developmental outcomes such as reducing poverty and inequality could help increase uptake of initiatives which promote gender equality at work. This could be further harnessed by awareness building activities on gender related issues, which proved to bring positive effects based on the reviewed ILO employment projects.

Overall, ILO is shown to be active in many areas which support the results framework which contribute to the achievement of SDG8. It is not possible to quantify the extent of this contribution, and efforts should be made to validate the theory of change underlying the results framework, especially some of the specific activities. Nonetheless, the summary of results above lists areas of strong performance and areas of relative weakness. Addressing issues raised in the body of report may be expected to enhance ILO's role in attain SDG8 and Agenda 2030 more generally.



1

Introduction



► 1. Introduction

1.1. Global employment trends

In 2019, the labour force (aged 15 and over) in developing countries was estimated to be 1.3 billion people, with almost two-thirds of which residing in rural areas (ILO 2021a). Of this total, an estimated 68.6 million people (5 percent) were unemployed, a marginal decrease since 2012 (ILO 2021b). Among youth, approximately 23.8 percent were not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Time-related underemployment persists especially among low-income countries, affecting 13 percent of its workers, which is substantially greater than the shares from high-income countries (ILO 2020). Gender gaps in access to employment also remain wide especially among lower-middle income countries, which had a 40-percentage point difference between female and male labour force participation rates (ILO 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented and disruptive shocks in labour markets in developing countries. In 2020, unemployment rates increased by 0.5 percentage points in low-income countries and by 1.1 percentage points in lower-middle income countries, therefore offsetting slight employment progress made in recent years (ILO 2021c). Working hours significantly dropped relative to pre-COVID levels, equivalent to an estimated 12.4 million and 119.3 million full-time jobs lost for low- and lower-middle income countries, respectively. Female workers and the youth have also been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, with these groups experiencing a larger decline in labour force participation rates compared to their counterparts (i.e., male workers and the adult group) (IMF 2021). Due to the pandemic, the burden of unpaid work (e.g., childcare and home-schooling) intensified for women and youth's educational transition from school to work was disrupted (ILO Covid 2021c).

Initial estimates for 2021 show an uncertain and uneven recovery across labour markets. The estimates from the third quarter of 2021 on total hours worked remain considerably lower than pre-COVID levels (fourth quarter of 2019), where the gap stood at 5.7 percent and 7.3 percent for low- and lower-income countries, respectively (ILO 2021d). On the other hand, the gap for high-income countries was only at 3.6 percent. The disparity in recovery is explained by a comparatively slower vaccine roll out and limited fiscal stimulus in developing countries.

1.2. The role of the ILO

The International Labour Organization (ILO) sets international labour standards, develops policies, and devises programmes promoting decent work for all. With its unique tripartite structure, the ILO ensures that there is a consensus on International Labour Standards among global players to ensure a level playing field for all. International labour standards help in mitigating the temptation among governments and employers in lowering labour standards to gain comparative advantage in international trade (ILO 2019). Fair labour practices outlined in international labour standards and encapsulated through a national legal system also guarantee an efficient and stable market for both employers and workers (ILO 2019). Through ILO's normative instruments, which may come in the form of Conventions or Recommendations, key principles and rights at work are provided.

Productive employment and decent work have been an integral part of the ILO's work, as these are considered the basis for peace, social justice, social inclusion, economic development, and personal fulfilment. These principles are embedded in the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, developed in 1999, which included employment creation as one of its main pillars, together with social protection, rights at work and social dialogue. It has also been included in the organization's transnational Strategic Plan 2016-2017 (Outcome 1), and subsequently in the Programme and Budget for 2018-19 (Outcome 1) and 2020-2021 (Outcome 3), and subsequent biennial programmes of work.

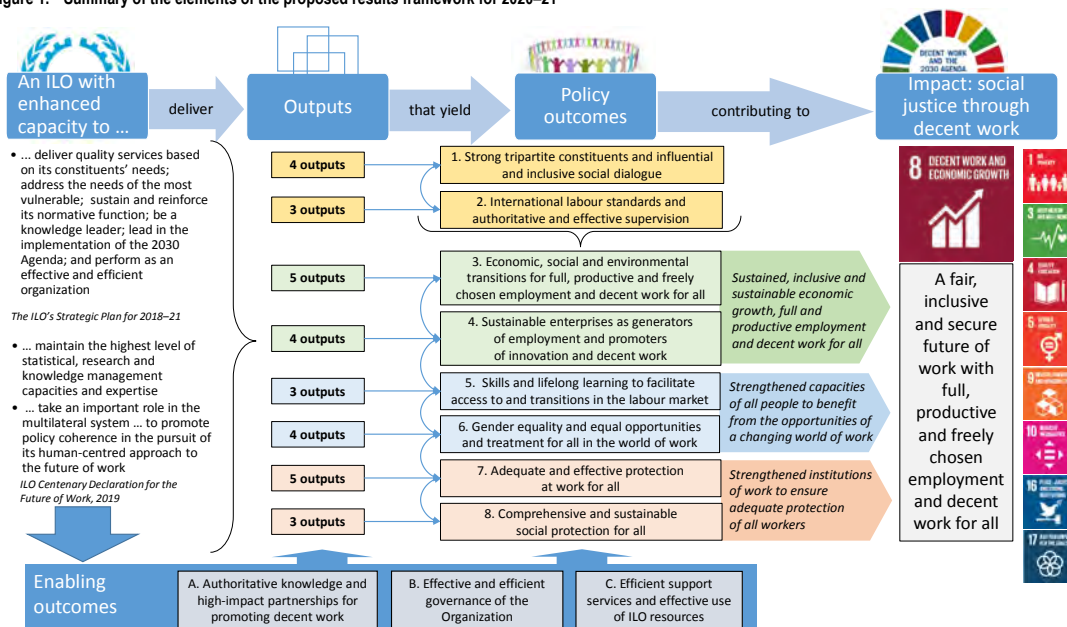
Since 2014, the ILO's strategy, with respect to employment, has been concentrated on the promotion of comprehensive employment policy frameworks to address long term unemployment and job insecurity¹. In this light, the ILO has supported mainstreaming employment in policy (e.g., macro, sectoral, trade, investment) through capacity building, research, knowledge and data generation, advocacy, and social dialogue. The promotion of international labour standards on employment policy has been core to ILO's core during this period to maximize decent work. Skills enhancement measures have also been promoted to improve decent work outcomes and close skill gaps. To promote inclusive structural transformation and generate more employment, support to effective labour market institutions and enterprise and private sector development programmes have been highlighted. In addition, two notable normative instruments to address informal employment² and provide guidance on promoting decent work during conflicts³ and for public emergency services have also been created.⁴

With the adverse employment impacts brought by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, new challenges in addressing decent work issues arose. In response to this, the ILO provided global diagnostics and guidelines to help tripartite constituents in producing real-time information on the pandemic's impact on employment. Other measures to assist member countries to navigate through the pandemic include ad hoc surveys, career guidance systems, among others. Policy briefs and tools on national employment policies for recovery and resilience amid the COVID-19 pandemic were also created.

The operations of the ILO are guided by four-year strategic plans, which are the basis for biennial programmes of work and associated Programme and Budget (P&B) Outcomes for the same period. These outcomes are contained in the results framework, with each outcome having several associated outputs, which are monitored by the ILO. The outcomes support ILO's contribution to the achievement of SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, which in turn contribute to the achievement of several other SDGs. This structure is summarized in the results framework shown in Figure 1.

► Figure 1. ILO Results Framework

Figure 1. Summary of the elements of the proposed results framework for 2020–21



Source: ILO Programme and Budget for 2020–21. Programme of work and results framework

1 For example, the ILO's 1964 Employment Policy Convention requires all requires ratifying States to declare and pursue an active policy designed to promote full, productive, and freely chosen employment (No. 122). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100::NO:12100:P12100_ILO_CODE:C122:NO.

2 Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_377774.pdf.

3 Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_358383.pdf.

4 Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_626551.pdf.

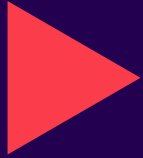
1.3. About this synthesis review

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda identifies employment creation as one of the four pillars to deliver sustainable development through an integrated approach with "Social Protection", "Guaranteeing rights at work" and "Promoting social dialogue". This was reaffirmed in the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization adopted in 2008 by the International Labour Conference, and the ILO Centenary Declaration adopted by the ILC in June 2019.

In the context of the Recurrent Discussion on Employment, scheduled for the 110th session of the International Labour Conference in 2022, the ILO Evaluation Office (EVAL) is providing a synthesis report that reviews and collates the lessons learned from the evaluation of ILO interventions in employment from 2015-2021. The purpose of this assignment coordinated by ILO EVAL is to contribute to organizational learning and to provide effective guidance to the constituents of the Office on their future work on employment by bringing together lessons from the evaluation of past interventions. It is aimed at strengthening the Office's capacity to make decisions in an evidence-based manner from evaluation results.

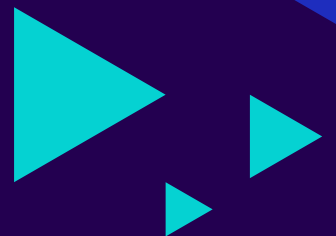
This synthesis review is intended to document, in a structured and systematic manner, what works, for whom, and why. To the extent possible, it should also identify ILO's main challenges in supporting the achievement of SDGs on employment (e.g., UN reform, new forms of employment).

The methodology used for the synthesis review is described in the following section, including the key questions addressed, the selection of reports, the approach to synthesizing the information, and the limitations encountered during the study. The subsequent sections present findings based on evaluation reports of employment and skills interventions within the defined timeframe.



2

Sampling and methods



► 2. Sampling and methods

This section contains a description of the universe of reports, the procedures that were used to draw a sample of reports, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the questions that the synthesis review intended to answer.

Key questions to be addressed

The synthesis review aimed to answer the overarching questions found below. A detailed list of questions can be found in Annex 1.

- 1) What is being done? (What interventions do we observe?)
- 2) What works? Or what does not work? (What aspects of interventions are particularly effective?)
- 3) For whom? (Who are the beneficiaries of these interventions?)
- 4) Why? (What are identified success factors and challenges?)

A planned portfolio review (overview of projects by country, region etc) was not undertaken as it did not address the evaluation questions and would have been of limited usefulness. Efforts went instead to an analysis of objectives and developing typologies of approaches to the different issues being addressed.

The universe and initial sorting

ILO EVAL conducted a search of records (2025-21) in the ILO's i-eval Discovery database using the following search terms (number of records returned in parentheses): Employment policy (82), Youth employment (63), Skills development (104), Employment intensive (22), Employment trade (40), Public Employment services (22), Job creation (33), Green jobs (18), Women employment (67) and Peace (7). After deduplication this results in 189 records. However, one of the strategic evaluations is an annex of an included study in the list. This sampling frame of 188 studies is referred to, in the report, as the universe.

The studies were sorted into categories to ensure broad coverage of employment interventions. The breakdown by the type of evaluation is shown in Table 1. The largest category by far is project evaluations

► Table 1. Type of evaluation

Type	Number	Percent	Ratings available	Satisfy rating criteria*
Cluster evaluation	11	5.8	4	3
Country programme evaluation	1	0.5	0	n.a.
Partnership evaluation	2	1.1	0	n.a.
Policy evaluation	1	0.5	0	n.a.
Project evaluation	163	86.2	59	35**
o/w under joint programme	4	2.1	3	2
o/w interim for which final available	19	10.1	n.a.	n.a.
RBSA funded activity	6	3.2	6	4
Strategy evaluation	2	1.1	0	0
Thematic evaluation	2	1.1	0	0
Total	188	100.0	66	42

Note: * (i) EVAL ex-post *quality* assessment: Median rating ≥ 5 ; and (ii) EVAL ex-post *comprehensiveness* assessment: satisfy $\geq 80\%$ all of the standard elements that EVAL has determined should be in a good report. ** Excludes interim for which final available.

(163 studies, 86 percent). However, 19 of these are interim evaluations of a project for which a final evaluation is also included – these 19 are dropped from further consideration.

Preliminary Coding

The reviewers originally considered using the P&B Results coding as a proxy for the objectives categories, supplementing the codes with additional ones (e.g., peace), required to fulfil the ToR, but not in the P&B outcomes. However, the preliminary analysis showed that this approach would miss relevant studies.

There were few evaluations in the sample with P&B outcomes codes for standards, gender and social protection even though these are features of the project objectives and design. For example, evaluation ID 2200 had the objective 'To support inclusive job-rich growth, improve employment opportunities, working conditions and social protection of women and men, by contributing to the implementation of DWCPs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan' but was coded for neither social protection nor gender. Therefore, the reviewers conducted their own objective coding for 107 projects with categories like the P&B outcomes, plus supplementary outcomes. The objective coding headings were:

1. Tripartism/ social dialogue
2. Standards
3. Employment
4. Enterprise development
5. Skills development
6. Gender and equal opportunity
7. Safety
8. Social protection
9. Peace
10. Policy support
11. Institutional development
12. Prosperity
13. Planet
14. Disadvantaged population

Sampling (inclusion and exclusion criteria)

It was agreed that, for studies to be included in the synthesis review, they must meet minimum criteria on ratings for quality (median rating ≥ 5) and comprehensiveness (satisfy $\geq 80\%$ of all the standard elements that EVAL has determined should be in a good report). The ratings used for the purpose were provided by ILO EVAL as part of the ex-post quality appraisal of decentralized evaluations.

Unfortunately, many of studies were missing ratings because the ex-post quality appraisal assessment took a sample approach up until 2019, leaving just 66 reports for consideration. Once the quality and comprehensiveness criteria were applied this number fell to 42.

A sample of 25 project evaluations, plus six non-evaluative documents, that were purposively selected by ILO, was drawn from the universe. In the report, this is referred to as the evaluation sample (see Annex 2). The proposed sample of 40 studies for the synthesis review was thus:

- Six purposively selected studies proposed by ILO
- Two strategy evaluations

- Two thematic evaluations
- Two partnership evaluations
- Three cluster evaluations satisfying the quality and comprehensiveness criteria
- Twenty-five project evaluations, randomly selected from the 35 which were eligible

Analysis of the evaluation sample of 25 projects (plus relevant cluster or thematic evaluations as per topic)

The evaluation reports were analysed using the ILO EVAL's assessment tool to measure [decent work results and effectiveness of ILO operations](#), which is applied in the series of meta-analyses conducted by the Evaluation Office since 2011 (see Annex 3).

EVAL's ILO evaluation policy and strategy calls on the Office to learn from and to make effective use of evaluations to improve decent work results. These meta-analyses aim to promote organizational learning regarding development effectiveness in the delivery of decent work results, by focusing on *relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, evidence of results* supporting achievement of decent work outcomes, and *projected sustainability* of obtained results, as well as ILO cross-cutting policy issues.

Meta-analyses ratings that corresponded to a topic of interest for the synthesis review were used to: (1) identify studies for which the project was deemed to be relevant or highly relevant; (2) triangulate and or validate the results of the qualitative analysis conducted by the synthesis review team; and (3) identify areas of success or in need of improvement. The number of such projects is reported in the text.

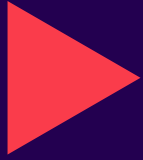
Using EVAL's assessment tool, the review team conducted a detailed textual analysis to collect evidence regarding implementation and effectiveness of each approach. This was notably the case for the performance criteria on relevance, effectiveness, and evidence of results.

In a few cases where there were few relevant studies in the evaluation sub-sample, the synthesis review turned to the starting sample of 107 projects for which objectives had been coded to identify relevant projects and subjected them to the same approach.

Limitations

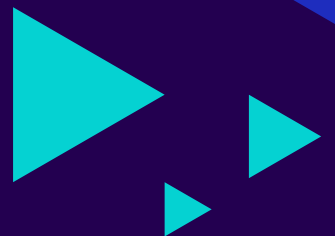
The review had to be prepared in a relatively short time with a limited number of days. In addition, the desk-based nature means that the content analysis of the reports is not supplemented by insights from key informant interviews which would have enriched, and possibly corrected, some of the study findings.

There were limitations to the evidence base on which this review was based. The reports of twenty-nine of the evaluations, that were in the universe, were not written in English, so they were excluded from consideration. It is difficult to rationalize this limitation. Also, the bulk of the research effort for this study has been directed to project evaluations, especially the evaluation sample of 25 evaluations. However, much of the work of ILO on employment takes place outside of the projects. As shown in Figure 1, all of ILO's activities are intended to be linked to employment. Hence, the broad range of research questions selected for this review meant that it was necessary to prioritize breadth at the expense of a depth analysis of the employment aspects of ILO's work.



3

Findings



► 3. Findings⁵

3.1. Supporting comprehensive employment policy frameworks

3.1.1 National employment policies development and implementation

The ILO promotes comprehensive employment policy process, in which national employment policies (NEPs) should involve a coherent framework which bind employment policy interventions and relevant stakeholders.⁶ NEPs are considered instrumental in achieving SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and are likewise relevant to SDG 1 (Poverty) and SDG 10 (Inequality).

A recent ILO report, *Two decades of national employment policies 2000-2020*,⁷ identifies 84 countries which have initiated the formulation of standalone employment policies over the past two decades, and another 15 countries have taken other approaches such as the integration of employment objectives in their national development plans. Some of the countries without an NEP have requested support from the International Labour Office to formulate one.

Countries preparing national employment plans can obtain support from the ILO such as knowledge building, policy advice, advocacy, capacity-building and technical cooperation. In addition, the ILO published a Guide in 2012 outlining the process of social dialogue and analysis necessary to prepare policy. For example, in Gabon, the ILO facilitated a tripartite process to achieve consensus on the Labour Code, and in Burkina Faso it convened separate workshops with employer and worker organizations to make proposals to improve the NEP. Half of all NEPs cite ILO Convention 122 as the basis for the policy.⁸

The ILO Employment Policy Gateway (<https://www.ilo.org/empolgateway/>) was created in 2021 to share information on employment policies, including support to learnings from ILO's experience in supporting the formulation of NEPs.

This section provides an overview of ILO projects' efforts to support NEPs in three areas: standards, social dialogue, and partnerships.

Labour standards

NEPs are considered to be an effective tool in the promotion of international labor standards at the national level.⁹ Setting labour standards has been central to the ILO's mandate since its foundation in 1919. The first strategic objective of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is to 'Set and promote standards and fundamental principles and rights at work'.¹⁰ ILO's 100th anniversary was marked by the launch of the Standards Centenary Initiative and the establishment of a Standards Review Mechanism.¹¹ Decent Work Country Programmes are the country-level vehicle for supporting standards development and implementation.

The analysis of the 25 documents in the evaluation sample identified 17 cases in which the project design incorporated substantial elements related to standards promotion. This led to the conclusion that most ILO employment projects contain components which address standards, in their design. Table 2 lists examples of project components related to standards, found in the project evaluations.

⁵ Findings are reported using the proposed thematic framework suggested by the Employment Department to ease the integration of evaluative evidence into the Recurrent report prepared by the ILO.

⁶ ILO: 17. *National Employment Policies*, Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/n-e-policies/lang-en/index.htm>.

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_817748.pdf.

⁸ Whilst this may appear to be evidence of influence, it may also indicate that policies are drafted by ILO consultants rather than national staff. The evaluation of NEPs does not explore who actually drafts the policy.

⁹ ILO: 17. *National Employment Policies*, Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/n-e-policies/lang-en/index.htm>.

¹⁰ ILO: *Mission and impact of the ILO*, Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/lang-en/index.htm>.

¹¹ ILO: *Rules of the Game. An Introduction to the standards-related work of the International Labour Organization* (Geneva, 2019).

► **Table 2. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities are relevant to the topic of standards promotion**

Project	Description	Code
More and Better Jobs for Women: Women's Empowerment through Decent Work in Turkey	The project sought to integrate ILO's rights-based approach into vocational training programmes together with awareness raising on gender equality and labour standards.	TUR/13/02/SID
Promoting worker rights and competitiveness in Egyptian export industries	The project's objective was to 'Improve the labor compliance levels in the Egyptian export-driven RMG, textile and food processing sectors' (1924: vii) with the specific objective to 'build specialist expertise in the national labour inspectorate to assess, monitor and report on working conditions in export factories' (1924: vii)	EGY/11/06/USA
Strengthening Labour Law Governance in Afghanistan	The project assessed existing laws and develop new ones in line with international standards, building the capacity of tripartite social partners to take part in those discussions, and developing a Handbook on Islamic Labour Law Principles and International Labour Standards	AFG/10/01/USA

Based on the evaluative evidence presented in the reports, the synthesis review identified four different approaches used in reviewed employment interventions to support labour standards. These can in simple terms be classified as: (i) establishing new legal frameworks for labour standards, (ii) training and support to labour inspections or enterprise advisors, (iii) support to enterprises to improve practice, and (iv) increasing awareness of labour rights.

(i) *Establishing new legal frameworks for labour standards.* Evaluations of projects that assessed existing legislation and proposed legislative reforms found that these ends were met, although attribution to ILO-supported activities was not possible. Implementation and enforcement of labour standards, resulting from changes in legislation, had a mixed record, sometimes running into issues of capacity and commitment.

(ii) *Training and support to labour inspections and enterprise advisors.* The evidence regarding training is mixed. Some studies reported positive findings. For example, the evaluation of *Promoting worker rights and competitiveness in Egyptian export industries* reports that 'inspection training provided by the project's interventions were beneficial in harmonizing inspection practices among inspectors... [there were] "significant reductions" in the number of irregularities among the inspectors' reports' (1924: 27). On the other hand, project recruited Enterprise Advisers in the Better Work Programme in Vietnam said that the training contained too much material and they learned more on the job (2226).

(iii) *Support to enterprises to improve practice.* When a project is engaging with a large agency or several agencies, then training alone may be ineffective, both because of the limited numbers reached, and the lack of follow up support (if you don't use it, you lose it). The evaluation of *More and Better Jobs for Women: Women's Empowerment through Decent Work in Turkey*, stated

► given the size of İŞKUR [Turkish Employment Agency] and the low base from which the project has started working on the issues, the efforts undertaken to date have only 'scratched the surface', be it in terms of being able to reach a significant proportion of staff members, involving and securing commitment from senior level managers, ensuring that gender equality related recommendations and practices are used in a systemic way and their use monitored and enforced (2114: 20).

The institutionalisation of online training courses may be a more cost effective and sustainable alternative that could be tested.

(iv) *Increasing awareness of labour rights.* Evaluations reported activities undertaken to increase awareness of rights. However, none of them formally evaluated the impact of increased awareness in the final target

audience, though some suggestive evidence was provided. The evaluation of *Strengthening Labour Law Governance in Afghanistan* reported that

▼ *there have been several positive effects which can be causally linked to the project's interventions, namely the increase in complaints lodged at the MOLSAMD – demonstrating the increased awareness of labour rights and obligations' (2391: 5).*

However, this anecdotal evidence contained no discussion of other possible reasons for the increase. More generally, there was a lack of rigorous evidence of the effects of labour standards where these were adopted – however it may be argued that at least some standards are value based, so evidence was not required.

Overall, **these activities successfully helped to support the reform of legal frameworks**. In some cases, they improved the capacity of inspection systems and enterprise practices, with respect to standards, and increased awareness of rights. Several evaluations highlighted intercountry experience sharing as having been valuable, which is something the ILO is well-placed to facilitate. However, none of the evaluations reviewed contained counterfactual analysis of the effect on the quantity and quality of employment, or the expected distal outcomes.

Social dialogue

Social dialogue and tripartism are imperative to national employment policies development and implementation, as this ensures policy coherence, ownership, and sustainability. As documented in a recent review of NEPs, social dialogue was used to engage a broad range of actors to prepare policies.¹²

While fundamental to the ILO's work, only 12, out of the entire universe of 107 projects, were found to be fully aligned to the P&B 2020-21 Objective on social dialogue and tripartism (P&B Objective 1). The low number is explained by the integration of social dialogue and tripartism as a cross-cutting components of other outcomes.

A fuller analysis of the sample of 25 project evaluation reports showed that **most projects successfully used social dialogue to support national employment policies**. Examples of these projects are listed in Box 1.

► Box 1: Examples of projects with social dialogue objectives

Programme on Responsible Business (PRB) in Myanmar, which aims to contribute to decent work opportunities for men and women and includes 'improved social dialogue and policy environment in both [garment and fisheries] sectors' (2497: 16) as one of its immediate objectives

Economic and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) project in Western Balkan countries, wherein the specific objective was to 'create a sustainable platform for governments and social partners to share good practices and lessons learned related to social dialogue, labour inspection, and public employment services at the sub-regional and national levels' (2559: 12)

Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Morocco's Agricultural Sector, with the objective of 'promoting effective social dialogue and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work for all, including women, youth and informal workers' (2936: 8).

The different approaches that projects took to using social dialogue to support national employment policies, included: (i) strengthening the tripartite process in policy formulation and project implementation, and the (ii) establishment of tripartite or social dialogue groups.

¹² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_817748.pdf.

The results from ILO projects, with a social dialogue component, seeking to encourage better engagement in policy formulation and project implementation, were generally encouraging. For instance, through the *ILO-SIDA Partnership Programme*, it was noted that

✔✔ *trade unions in Cambodia are now invited by the government (without the ILO necessarily being the liaising organization) to participate in meetings—for example, to participate in the drafting of laws—, and are asked to input on the integration of international labour standards’ (3167: 47).*

The evaluation of the project also stated that the

✔✔ *desk review and [key informant interviews] concurred that the social dialogue, technical assistance, and ongoing capacity building have not only fostered national ownership but also ensured that governance mechanisms and expertise-built stays in the targeted countries’ (3167: 45).*

Meanwhile, in the evaluation of the *Applying the G20 Training Strategy: A Partnership of the ILO and the Russian Federation* project, it was stated that the

✔✔ *project has been successful in adapting flexible strategies to respond to the emerging concerns of the stakeholders’ (2669:35). The project evaluation partly attributed this success to the National Project Steering Committees (PSCs), which had a tripartite representation and ‘acted as the key coordination mechanism on the national levels to ensure active engagement of key stakeholders into project planning and implementation and operational responsiveness of the project to the emerging needs of the constituents and partners’ (2669: 36).*

Based on the evaluation reports that were reviewed, some efforts were also made towards the inclusion of the informal and agricultural sector in social dialogue, but the capacity of these sectors to engage was questionable. For example, the evaluation of the *Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Morocco’s Agricultural Sector* project stated that

as noted by many key informants, the [agricultural] sector was not ripe for effective social dialogue and collective negotiations to improve labour practices, given limited capacity in employers’ and workers’ organizations’ (2946: 23).

To create a platform for social dialogue, plans to form tripartite groups were quite common. However, most of the plans fell through, because the objectives were too bold, or support was inadequate. In the *Strengthening Labour Law Governance in Afghanistan* project, there was an intention to form a National Tripartite Council that was never realized. The evaluation noted that it was too ambitious because the project needed to ‘wait for the associated regulation to be passed’ (2391:16), which was beyond the control of stakeholders.

Likewise, the proposed national and regional social dialogue units from the *Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Morocco’s Agricultural Sector* project were not realized. The evaluation quoted one key informant who stated that

✔✔ *when we [they] started the project, the partners were against creating a regional tripartite structure, even though we’re [they’re] not necessarily proposing to create a new formal structure but a regional forum’ (2936: 6)*

This suggests that there was a lack of alignment in priorities and commitment. Similarly in Egypt, the government was not supportive of an independent trade union movement, leaving no room for genuine tripartism and social dialogue.

Partnerships and collaboration

ILO employment interventions have been successful in creating fruitful collaborations with a wide range of actors to support the implementation of NEPs. Based on a review of the sample of 25 project evaluation reports, 23 projects were highly rated (i.e., 3 or 4) in this respect.

Interventions which capitalized on partnerships for implementation of NEPs benefited from greater efficiency and effectiveness, as in the *Decent Work for Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Transformation in*

Mozambique (MOZTRABALHA) project (2646). The partnership helped in 'achieving greater legitimacy and visibility of the project and the approaches and methodologies that it is proposing' (2646: 26).

In conflict areas, partnerships with local actors also proved to be useful for implementation of NEPs, particularly in reaching out to beneficiaries. For instance, in the *Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen* programme, an ILO national officer noted that 'When access to Hajjah and Hodeidah governorates was severely restricted, ILO was able to create partnerships with CSOs YLDF and the SOS Centre, both of whom were better able to reach beneficiaries' (2542: 15).

There is also evidence that **partnerships with international and regional institutions, together with political commitment by member states, tended to be 'critical in the effective and timely delivery of services to constituents'** (2487: 61). This was noted in the thematic evaluation of the *RBSA Support to Selected Country Programme Outcomes (CPOs) Concerning Promotion of Employment during the 2012 – 2013 Biennium*. In the *More and quality jobs are created through better policies and frameworks and strengthened labour market information systems* project, a significant finding was that the 'inclusion of CSOs in the project management mix proved to be effective, since they were more willing to engage in processes through attending meetings' (3076: 30).

In several projects, **partnerships and collaboration were viewed as tools for mobilizing resources to support NEP implementation**. In the *Skills Development for the Renewable Energy Sector (SkiDRES), Public-Private Development Partnership* project, it was noted that the 'KGRTC's national, regional and international partnership networks helped to mobilize different partners to contribute financially or materially to the project' (3208: 24). Another example is the *Job Creation through SME Development – a Knowledge Sharing Project (KS4SME)* which found that

►► *the benefits delivered to the funder as a result of linking this project's activities to other projects within the ILO and to other prioritised activities of ILO constituent partners, are significant because of having created economies of scale.*

In addition, **successful leveraging of resources through partnerships often improved prospects for sustainability**. The assessment of the *Strengthening the Impact on Employment of Sector and Trade Policies* project (Component A) mentioned that 'partnerships with other donor-funded projects like in Honduras enhance the likelihood that at least some components of the project might be sustained' (2503: 61).

3.1.2 Macro, trade, sectoral and investment policies

The work of the ILO on employment related macro, trade, sectoral and investment policies has been significant during the period under review. However, only one evaluation included in the sample of reports reviewed provided interesting findings in this area, namely the evaluation of the project *Strengthening the Impact on Employment of Sector and Trade Policies* (2503).

The evaluation showed how ILO interventions were relevant to the national context of project countries, and institutions' needs and priorities concerning employment policies and development frameworks. In assessing the impact of pre-selected, sectoral employment policies and programme outreach, the evaluation found a positive effect in knowledge generation and capacity strengthening among policymakers, social partners, and other relevant actors.

Furthermore, the intervention was successful at influencing policymaking. Yet, as recognized by the evaluation,

►► *if a project aims to promote and implement innovative solutions, it might not be necessarily demand-driven. In this context additional time for project implementation needs to be factored in at the project design. Engaging stakeholders and getting their ownership would take much longer than in a demand-driven project.*

3.1.3 Data collection and analysis, research, M&E for evidenced-based policies

There are three kinds of research-based outputs in the ILO:

- Primary research – studies involving either quantitative or qualitative data collection, which includes evaluations,
- Literature reviews, including systematic reviews which provide an overview of the literature on a particular topic, and
- Knowledge products, which present evidence in a way which can be used to inform policy and practice. It is increasingly common to have web-based knowledge products, such as ILO’s Skills and Lifelong Learning knowledge sharing platform¹³ and the knowledge section of the Decent Jobs for Youth knowledge platform, Youth Foresight.¹⁴

Knowledge products, the third category of research-based output, can be further sub-categorized by type (Figure 2). Different knowledge products serve different purposes for different audiences, though in the end, all are intended to inform global and national policy debates.

► Figure 2. ILO Typology of Knowledge Products



Source: <https://edmsp1.iilo.org/KSP/en/KnowledgeProducts/index.htm>.

There is stronger evidence of ILO knowledge products playing a role at the national policies and initiatives level. *Two decades of national employment policies 2000–2020* documents the role that the ILO has played in supporting the formulation of stand-alone National Employment Policies. However, the report does not identify the role analytical work has played in policy or project formulation, and evidence of that is also not available in the project evaluations.

Of particular importance is the guidance document *Guide for the formulation of national employment policies*.¹⁵ Such guidance documents play an important role in multilateral organizations supporting policy and practice around the world. It is plausible that other guidance documents are used as described here, but the reviewers did not have evidence to comment on that in general (noting that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence).

13 <https://www.skillsforemployment.org/skpEng>.

14 Available at: <http://www.youthforesight.org/> (this site was not accessible at the time of writing).

15 ILO: *Guide for the formulation of national employment policies*, (Geneva, 2018).

This study also assessed the use of knowledge products at the project level. In the project evaluation sample for this study, few cases were found of ILO research informing project design or implementation. Yet, from these, the review identified the need for ILO knowledge products to be improved by adopting a more strategic approach. Each knowledge product should have a clear intended purpose, which can be primary research, summarising existing evidence, or knowledge translation (such as guidance documents). The product should follow the appropriate production process, which for knowledge translation means a clear target audience, and engagement with key stakeholders throughout the production process, and a reliance on rigorous evidence synthesis.

3.1.4 Skills policies

National skills policies serve as a framework for improving access to decent work and skills sets needed for employment growth.¹⁶ The ILO's role in this area is to support the constituents in developing, monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing skills policies, and in providing technical assistance in the development of these policies.¹⁷

Findings from the sample of project evaluation reports relevant to employment policy development and implementation showed a strong emphasis on interventions targeting local ministries/agencies. **Results in this area are mostly positive, showing an increase in capacities among line agencies to perform their respective functions, relative to the policy process on skills development.** For example, in the *Work 4 Youth (W4Y)* project, a key finding was that the

▼ *technical assistance provided to NSOs [National Statistics Offices] in implementing the SWTS has enhanced the capacity and knowledge of NSOs in assessing school to work transition (1926: 16).*

In the *Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP)* project, which included the 'increased capacity and effectiveness of policy, systems and institutional arrangements that improve the skills system' (2067: 2) as one of its objectives, the evaluation stated that the

▼ *that Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) under TMED of the MoE can now independently develop standards and conduct certification owing to the project's success in achieving its target outputs.*

3.2. Labour market institutions, ALMPs and supply side interventions

3.2.1 PES, intermediation, ALMPs, and public employment programmes

Since the global economic and financial downturn of 2008–09, public employment services (PES) have become an important point of access for jobseekers, workers, and employers to a range of passive and active employment support mechanisms. Employment policies and programmes have been critically important in assisting workers and employers to preserve jobs and skills, facilitating employment in essential production and services, and keeping people connected to the labour market, including disadvantaged workers in the informal economy and new forms of employment.

From the sample of reviewed reports, only one evaluation was identified to contain relevant information on the effectiveness of such work: the ILO-China project to expand employment services and enhance labour market information in Cambodia and LAO PDR (2207). As reflected in the evaluation, the ILO intervention was found to be highly relevant, with the delivery of high-quality public employment services and labour market information embedded in core national policies, strategies and plans.

¹⁶ ILO: *ILO Evaluation Tool for the Review of a Country's Apprenticeship Policy and System*, Available at: http://www.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_532851.pdf.

¹⁷ ILO: *National Skills Policies and Lifelong Learning*, Available at: https://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/skills-policies-and-systems/WCMS_547468/lang-en/index.htm.

Furthermore, the ILO intervention was effective, particularly with respect to improving the quality of delivery of employment services to jobseekers and employers and the generation of lessons and initial good practices for future development of employment services. Solid evidence was available of country ownership of the outcomes of the intervention (encompassing both the governmental institutions concerned as well as employer and trade union counterparts).

3.2.2 Skills systems, skills development, and Lifelong Learning (LLL)

The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) and the Global Jobs Pact (2009) highlight skills development as central to improving productivity, employability, and social inclusion.¹⁸ The ILO supports skills development mainly by aiding governments in providing policy, planning, and regulation in skills systems, and by promoting greater involvement among employers' and workers' organisations in skills development.¹⁹

This section discusses the effectiveness of different ILO employment-related interventions which seek to promote skills development and improve skills systems under three core themes (i.e., capacity building, social dialogue, partnerships, and collaboration). The rest of the section discusses what ILO projects have achieved to support skills development, particularly through capacity building, social dialogue, and partnerships.

Capacity building

For the ILO, capacity development is considered as one of the most important tools needed to achieve decent work and social justice objectives. It is defined as a "process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time".²⁰ In the discussion below, the terms capacity 'development' and capacity 'building' are used interchangeably.

In employment policy development and implementation of the projects evaluated, a large emphasis tended to be placed on capacity building. The analysis revealed that capacity building has been well integrated in ILO interventions. Out of 107 project documents for which objectives were coded, over half (74) of the projects mentioned 'capacity' building in their objectives and/or activities. Apart from this, the **fuller analysis of 25 project documents in the evaluation sample also demonstrated that capacity building exercises in ILO interventions have been effective**. In this regard, 22 (88 percent) of the projects scored highly (3 or 4).

In operational terms, **capacity building could be delineated into three levels, namely: (i) individual, (ii) organization, and (iii) resulting from an enabling environment**.²¹

At the individual level, which is described by the ILO as 'increasing skills and abilities of individuals', evaluations generally showed high appreciation of training services among stakeholders, as evidenced by their positive statements. An example is the *Egypt Youth Employment (EYE): Jobs and Private Sector Development in Rural Egypt (RAWABET)* project, wherein one of the aims was to capacitate relevant stakeholders (such as farmers) 'to engage effectively in the development of specific (sub-) sectors/value chains' (2787: 25). The evaluation of the project noted that the

▼ *trainings that were offered were highly valued by the farmers' and that 'they expect further pieces of training to be offered to them in the remaining period of the project (on topics like choosing an animal, insemination, diseases, vaccination, etc.)'. It was mentioned that 'increased productivity and satisfaction of the farmers demonstrate the benefits of the training provided (2787: 33).*

A large emphasis also tended to be put on institutional capacity building, which is a recurrent theme in the projects evaluated. Results from these activities were generally positive. For example, the

18 ILO: *Employment For Social Justice And A Fair Globalization, Overview of ILO programmes*, Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_140961.pdf.

19 ILO: *Skills policies and systems*, Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/skills-policies-and-systems/lang-en/index.htm>.

20 ILO: *ILO-wide strategy for institutional capacity development*, (Geneva, 2019).

21 ILO: *ILO-wide strategy for institutional capacity development*, (Geneva, 2019).

evaluation on the *Training and Employment Support Programme (TESP)* noted that 'there has been a significant increase in the number of qualifications and competencies available for use by training providers and the qualifications of training staff' (1962: 11). For the *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti*, it was found that

- ✔✔ *strengthening the capacities of cooperatives has enabled members to organize themselves better and raise more funds, in order to create more added value from the agro-processing, agro-economic, socio-educational and even aspects of improvement of the governance aspects of these socio-economic structures, compared to traditional practices' (2582: 57).*

While the positive impact of capacity building was acknowledged, some challenges were also encountered. As an example, certain projects flagged issues related to financial matters. For instance, the evaluation of the TESP stated that 'accessibility was limited by lack of effective and stable VET [Vocational Education Training] financing arrangement' (1962: 11) and that 'financial resources allocated for skills training are very limited' (1962: 27).

Another issue which surfaced was an unrealistic timeline for activities related to capacity building. For example, the evaluation of the project "Combating child labour through education and Combating child labour through skills training for older children" highlighted that 'the short implementation time made it difficult to develop appropriate curricula, and so, most of the trainings were based on already existing programmes' (2266: xv). Additionally, it was noted in the *Support the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Kurdistan to Develop an Action plan for the Implementation of the Employment Policy* project that 'the timeframes set for certain project activities, such as the recruitment of the CTA, were unrealistic and some language barriers had not been taken into account' (3043: viii).

The same project above also noted that the 'existing capacity did not meet the basic requirements for implementing the different components of the project' (3043: 13). In another example, mismatch between the need and the training course offer exists. This occurred in the *ILO DW SDG* project in Vietnam, wherein it was mentioned that the arrangement of its training courses

- ✔✔ *created a challenge, because the two groups of trainees have different needs: the national level needs more knowledge and skills for analysis and forecasting, while the provincial level needs more practical skills in counselling and connecting job seekers with suitable vacancies. (3077: 22).*

Social dialogue for skills training

Around the world, there has been an increasing recognition on the importance of involving social partners in skills systems. In the review of ILO projects, a positive indirect effect from the use of social dialogue relevant to skills development was found. The evaluation of the *ILO-SIDA Partnership Programme* highlighted that the competency and curriculum-based standards in Cambodia TVET centres, which was built on social dialogue, was 'pivotal in strengthening the government's capacity to bridge the skills gap in key labour market sectors that experience the most growth' (3167: 118). The evaluation also mentioned that 'greater partnership and ownership of the implementation of skills strategies are reinforced through social dialogue and through the tripartite approach' (3167: 61).

Partnerships and collaboration in skills training

Positive effects were found on projects which utilized partnerships or collaboration for skills training systems. For instance, in the *Training and Employment Support Programme (TESP)* (1962) project in Timor Leste, it was noted that the project was able to effectively contribute to the development of a demand-driven accredited vocational training system through its partnership with INDMO (National Labour Force Development Institute). In the *Applying the G20 Training Strategy: A Partnership of the ILO and the Russian Federation* project,

- ✔✔ *the results of the pilot public-private partnership between the TVET institutions and the businesses on development of the assessment tool for two occupations in Tourism & Hospitality Sector are expected*

to bring improvements to the national occupational standards and TVET educational curricular' (2669: 66).

For some projects, an intention to promote partnerships for capacity building was expressed but did not come into full fruition. However, the benefits that could have been harnessed from such partnerships were noted. The evaluation of the *Gender Equality for Decent Employment (GE4DE)* project in Pakistan stated that its

► *strategic partnership with the higher education commission proved that the impact of capacity building activities can be optimized by partnering with national training and academic centres to establish relevant and sustainable capacity-building initiatives that inform, sensitize, and educate public and private sector stakeholders on the key concepts of the DW [Decent Work] agenda and international labour standards' (1269: 45).*

In summary, capacity building activities, in-line of skills development, are generally well-integrated in ILO interventions and are positively received by stakeholders. However, **there is a need to improve ways in which stakeholder needs are identified, with respect to capacity building**. This could be achieved using “diagnostic methods, subsequent joint planning of implementation, and ensuring linkages of organizational strategies with capacity development at the individual and enabling environment level”.²²

3.3. Private investment and SME development interventions

Small and medium-sized enterprise development are deemed crucial in achieving decent and productive employment, as shown by its contribution in terms of providing jobs and creating new ones. With this, SME development has been an integral part of ILO interventions. This section discusses the effectiveness of interventions targeting enterprises.

3.3.1 Private sector development for job creation

In the earlier section, this review underscored the importance of Enterprise Development for the success of the Decent Work Agenda (DWA), job creation as well as the observation and implementation of labour standards. In the 25 sampled project evaluation reports, the review found that all the projects involving enterprise development also include the promotion of decent jobs. Some examples are summarized in the table below.

► **Table 3. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities are relevant to the topic of enterprise development for job creation**

Project	Description	Code
Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) program	The project aimed 'to reframe economic policy around sustainability and put in place enabling policy conditions, reforms, incentives, business models, and partnerships to catalyze greater action and investment in green technologies, and natural, human and social capital' (2480: 6)	GLO/15/32/UNP
Enhancing policy capacity of Employers organizations to promote enabling environment for sustainable enterprise and job-rich growth	The project aimed 'to enhance the capacity of employers' organizations to engage in policy development with government and other stakeholders to promote enabling environment for sustainable enterprises' (2291: 33).	GLO/14/59/NOR
Increasing employment creation and opportunities in Sierra Leone through entrepreneurship training, business development services and labour-intensive investments	In this project, 'a comprehensive approach was taken to support the SME sector, including situation analysis, policy reforms, institutional strengthening, business development support, including access to finance and post-service delivery support' (3357: 23)	SLE/16/01/RBS

²² Ibid.

Broadly speaking, **the ILO uses an integrated approach to policy support in enhancing decent job outcomes of enterprise development, which includes: (i) capacity building of relevant stakeholders, including governments for policy reform, (ii) evidence base building, and (iii) direct support to ministries to improve policies.**

Policy support to improve capacity building activities was viewed favourably by the stakeholders, but the results were mixed in reaching the intended participants. For example, in the evaluation of the MozTrabalha project, it was noted that the technical support for the promotion of pro-employment policy and macroeconomic/sectorial measures... 'is very much appreciated, according to the people met during the field mission' (2646: 16).

Meanwhile, the *Job Creation through SME Development – a Knowledge Sharing Project* (KS4SME) project shows that, while it met its target 'in terms of the number of annual blended learning courses on sustainable enterprises', it did not reach its target 'in terms of the number of policy makers and practitioners who participated' in these courses (2373: 30).

This may imply weak buy-in and interest among constituents, with poor turnout for the courses and/or poor marketing of the courses, meaning people were not aware of them. The same project also did not meet its targets on the number of 'African Talks on Entrepreneurship', which may have been due to the absence of a 'clear logical framework to map out key activities leading to outputs and planned outcomes' (2373: 30). Sub-optimal planning, in this case, led to sub-optimal results.

On the positive side, **policy support from the ILO for capacity building was extremely effective in bridging "gaps" which the governments/constituents may not have addressed, notably with regards to employers/enterprises.** In the *Enhancing policy capacity of Employers organizations to promote enabling environment for sustainable enterprise and job-rich growth project*, 'in many countries, however, government fails to take a lead, so ILO supports employers' organisations [EOs] and others support business membership organisations more generally to engage in dialogue and advocacy to influence public policy (2291: 1). Results from the same project, which aimed to increase the policy capacity of EOs, shows that

▼ *as a result of their enhanced capacity, they are seen to be generating excellent research (in some cases, better than that of their government) and persuasive policy positions' and that the EOs are being consulted on issues other than simply social and labour issues (2291: vi).*

This in turn **leads to higher stakeholder involvement, which bodes well for sustainability of the project beyond the involvement of the ILO** – an issue mentioned in the section on enterprise development.

Beyond promotion of pro-employment policies amongst other pertinent approaches, an important subset of capacity building is the enrichment of the evidence base to help governments in evidence informed policy making. Examples include the creation of 'policy briefs/SME development practice notes to influence policy and programming' (2373: 23; 2673: 53), and 'sectoral and thematic diagnostics, assessments and policy analysis undertaken' (2480: 13).

Results under this domain are also mixed. On a positive note, is the evaluation mentioned above of the *Employment for Youth in Egypt (EYE): Working Together in Qalyoubia and Menoufia* project stated that the technical support it provided through policy briefs 'was very timely and contributed to the dialogue on new legislation introduced to support the GoE's strategy and high priority given to promotion of an enabling environment for SME development and entrepreneurial initiatives. The Minister of Trade of Industry participated in the launch of this policy brief and was very attentive to all the recommendations' (2673: 33).

A mere increase in quantity in the evidence base is not always sufficient, however. A key example of this can be found in the *Job Creation through SME Development – A Knowledge Sharing Project*, where it is noted that it was successful in achieving its target on the number of policy briefs disseminated 'but not in terms of the number of stakeholders that received/accessed policy briefs' (2373: 29). In a way, this may imply that hitting targets does not always equate to generating a positive impact, and that quality of discussions, to actively engage stakeholders, is critical to improve the effectiveness of the policy support provided.

Most of the approaches listed above have been indirect, providing advise/consultations or increasing the evidence base. ILO interventions also provide direct support to ministries with the aim of influencing

and improving policies. Examples include contributions ‘to the consolidation and institutional development of the SME unit, within the FEI, with high quality technical input, guidance and coaching’ (2673: 32), ‘entrepreneurship and MSME strategy developed together with Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI)’ (1650: 65), and support provided to SME agencies in developing strategic plans for facilitating SME development (3357: 36).

Anecdotal evidence for this area is positive for some projects, particularly in terms of direct contribution to government policy. For example, the evaluation of the EYE project notes that with its support, the ‘FEI [Federation of Egyptian Industries] reports that they already see results of the SME unit’s advocacy work in new rules and regulations’ (2673: 93).

Meanwhile, for other projects, the results are less clear. In the case of the *Increasing employment creation and opportunities* in Sierra Leone through entrepreneurship training, business development services, and labour-intensive investments project, it was noted that while it supported

▼▼ *SMEDA to develop a strategic plan on how to deliver on its mandate of facilitating SME development’, ‘it is unclear to what extent SMEDA [Small and Medium Size Enterprise Development Agency] adopted the plan (3357: 36).*

Once again, this highlights the importance of stakeholder buy-in. **Even with a direct approach, developing policies with the government and providing the technical assistance required, without the necessary buy-in, advice may not be taken or the gains from the project may not be sustainable beyond the lifespan of the ILO project.**

In summary, the **ILO interventions include significant efforts to provide policy support for enterprise development vis-à-vis decent job promotion, both indirectly from capacity building and via evidence base building, and directly via policy support to ministries.** These efforts have not gone unnoticed and are very well appreciated by most constituents/stakeholders.

However, improvements could still be made on some aspects. For one, other success or impact measures should be considered, instead of merely focusing on hitting targets. In the case of the creation of policy briefs or materials to support policy making, it is also necessary to consider its ‘reach’ and ‘stakeholder buy-in’.

This could be achieved by **strengthening social dialogue and tripartism**, which would ensure that enterprise policies reflect the actual needs of stakeholders. In line with this, **capacity building activities must not be confined to governments, but should also involve SME partners so that they could take an active part in the policy formulation process.**

Finally, a **clear logical framework, mapping out how activities related to enterprise policy support could lead to decent job outcomes, are also needed to ensure not only the effective execution of the plan, but also that the achievement of the objectives would lead logically to the desired results.** The logical framework, or theory of change, can provide a basis for more rigorous evaluation.

3.3.2 Enterprise development interventions

Enterprise development is central to the success of ILO’s mission, for the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) and sustainable development, with not only job creation, but also the observation and implementation of labour standards being performed by enterprises. **Many international labour standards can be implemented only at the enterprise level. The importance of engaging enterprises is underscored by the ILO making the Enterprises Initiative one of the seven centenary initiatives launched by the ILO’s Director General in 2013, seeking to engage enterprises to further the objectives of the ILO.**

Such an emphasis is highlighted in project objectives and activities. 22 of the 107 projects for which P&B Objectives are available were reported under enterprise development (P&B Objective 4). In the coding of objectives of 107 projects, 42 projects were identified as having objectives relating to enterprise development. Table 4, below, provides selected examples of relevant enterprise development interventions.

► **Table 4. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities that are relevant to the topic of enterprise development**

Project	Description	Code
Employment Generation and Livelihoods through Reconciliation Project	Has an objective of promoting 'an enabling environment for competitive, sustainable enterprise development and creation of 2,000 decent and productive employment opportunities among the vulnerable people including women in the conflict affected Northern region in Sri Lanka' (2631: iv)	LKA/16/02/NOR
Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti	Aims to 'create opportunities and promote working conditions and decent wages for women and men' and DWCP's result 2.3 on the 'gradual formalization of work by strengthening value chains and promotion of enterprises that create decent jobs' (2582: 14)	HTI/16/01/NOR
Promoting worker rights and competitiveness in Egyptian export industries	Sought to 'improve the labour compliance levels in the Egyptian export-driven RMG [ready-made garments], textile and food processing sectors' via a 'three-pronged approach of targeting the MOM and its inspectors, worker and employer organizations and indirect beneficiaries at the grassroots level' (1924: 15)	EGY/11/06/USA

Based on the sample of 25 reports, approaches to supporting enterprise development can broadly be classified as: (i) business support services and other support to individual enterprises, (ii) working with governments and social partners to improve labour standards and the regulatory framework, to provide a conducive and enabling environment for enterprises', and (iii) improving the functioning of markets and sectors through integrated and systemic value chain development, including through bottom-up approaches. The intervention approach the ILO takes is adapted depending on whether the enterprise is an SME, a multinational or cooperative.²³

Business support services. Capacity building of individual enterprises is done via increased access to business development services (BDS) and finance, for instance business management training.²⁴ For instance, in the project *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti*, management training of agricultural cooperatives was provided. This strengthening of the capacities of cooperatives

► *enabled members to organize themselves better and raise more funds, to create more added value from the agro-processing, agro-economic, socio-educational and even aspects of improvement of the governance aspects of these socio-economic structures, compared to traditional practices' (2582:57).*

From the Crisis Towards Decent and Safe Jobs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Phase II (DW II project), enterprises were supported via the

► *improved ability of labour inspectors to investigate occupational accidents, make reporting, etc. according to ILO OSH standards, defend rights of workers and challenge discriminative policies.' In doing so, constituents are better placed to provide 'more and better jobs, and to enhance employment opportunities for young people will have been improved' (2200: 6).*

This underpins the cross-cutting nature of enterprise development, where even projects not directly targeting enterprise development typically involved enterprises heavily, or at least placed them in consideration, often in collaboration with governments and employees/unions to promote decent jobs.

Support for enterprise development is often implemented through governments and social partners (e.g. tripartite collaborations or public-private partnerships) in order to further the core objectives the project(s) are pursuing by enhancing dialogue and engagement with public policy makers in developing evidence-based policy and programme responses. For instance, in *Fair recruitment and decent work for women migrant workers in South Asia and the Middle East – Global Component – Midterm Evaluation*,

²³ ILO: 4. *Enterprise Development*, Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/enterprise-development/lang-en/index.htm>.

²⁴ Ibid.

as part of a five-pronged strategy of their Theory of Change (TOC) to make employers better aware of the Codes of Conduct, the programme worked with governments, employers and worker organisations, CSOs [civil society organizations] and international agencies to ‘promote decent work of migrant women [and] fair recruitment practices by bringing together other key stakeholders’ (2681: 71). To this end, **there was a focus on increased capacity building related to gender equality and non-discrimination, notably at the union/employer levels, through more equitable policies improving gender equality and non-discrimination in the world of work.**

Even with a tripartite approach, it is difficult if the burden of providing job opportunities falls solely on the enterprise. To this end, **integrated and systemic value chain developments can be undertaken to create job opportunities and decent jobs.** Using the project *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti* again, the project addressed the high level of informality and shortage of decent work opportunities via the ‘gradual formalization of work by strengthening value chains and promotion of enterprises that create decent jobs’ (2582: 14). It was further noted that ‘the design, organization and project operational strategies were well suited to the promotion of employment policy and the needs of the communities’ (2582: 14).

It is important to note that the ILO is not limited to simply one approach; these approaches often complement each other and result in better results, notably as seen above in the project *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti*. The project’s design also planned to involve

▼ *local tripartite consultative committee (government and employers) to advise on the adaptation of the technical training offer meeting the demands of the local job market but was not implemented, in large part, due to the socio-political unrest situation in the country prohibiting formalization meetings’ (2582: 6).*

Evidence from the sample of project evaluation reports relevant to this topic illustrated that ILO interventions supporting enterprise development had helped promote decent jobs. For instance, in the *Employment Generation and Livelihoods through Reconciliation project*, *the increased support for organizational capacity and increased production and marketing capacity at various targeted sectors has helped generate decent jobs, with private sectors praising the ILO approach, ‘strengthening their business partnerships and their awareness of labour standards’ (2631: 12).*

Based on observation, ‘these sectors provide jobs which meet national standard wages and conditions, and reasonable attention to occupational safety and health’ (2631: 28). It must be noted that this is anecdotal evidence of association, as more rigorous evidence to show further linkage to the promotion of work standards was not found.

Meanwhile, **evidence from a systematic review of business support services in developing countries found that these programmes had a positive effect on firm performance, but that this effect was small** (Table 5). Specifically, matching grants improved business performance but support to exports did not. **But matching grants did not improve employment or labour productivity. There were also effects, but again small effects, on export and innovation. Similarly, the systematic review of youth employment interventions found that entrepreneurship had only a small effect on earnings** (smd=0.09; Kluwe et al.: Table 17).

It is important to note that the approaches did not ‘simply boost the capacity of enterprises, but also involved national and government capacity, as well as policy development on economic development to sustain and expand the gains and overall approach’ as in the project above (2631), which led to mixed results in some sectors for the project.

Implementation issues were also a concern, notably with a tripartite approach. In the *Promoting Gender Equality for Decent Employment (GE4DE)* (1269) project, despite an agreement to ‘strengthen labour inspection systems as reflected in DWCP agreed with the ILO’, with ‘effective social mobilization’, it was challenging to come to a common understanding about concepts such as gender equality principles and relationships to equal employment among some of the stakeholders.

► **Table 5. Estimated effect sizes for business support services**

Outcome	Intervention		
	Overall	Matching grants	Support to exports
Firm performance	0.15 (0.08-0.22)	0.13 (-0.04-0.30)	0.00 (-0.09-0.08)
Employment	0.15 (-0.00-0.30)	0.12 (-0.12-0.36)	N.a.
Labour productivity	0.04 (-0.05-0.13)	-0.02 (-0.15-0.10)	N.a.
Exports	0.12	N.a.	0.12
Innovation	0.15	0.05	N.a.

Notes: Figure is standardized mean difference with 95% confidence interval in parentheses. Effect sizes in bold are significant at the 5% level. Average effect sizes are not reported for exports and innovation, so approximated in this table by the simple average. The estimate for exports excludes an influential outlier.

Source: Piza et al. (2016).

Similarly, in *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti* project, there was feedback from the business community in the implementation zone that 'actors actively participated in the activities, but most of them were not deeply involved in the project' (2582: 22), due to the reliance on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and private firms for the implementation of the project.

Limited participation of tripartite constituents in the implementation of the project resulted in an over-reliance on the ILO to achieve the project objectives, which had negative implications on the sustainability of the project. The project *Promoting worker rights and competitiveness in Egyptian export industries* (1924), managed to build a 'solid foundation for improved labour conditions in Egypt'. However, there was an 'absence of strong ownership of project-initiated activities by non-ILO entities' which led to concern about the sustainability of the project.

Even without a strong tripartite engagement, it was possible to have strong, sustained results as long as enterprises were heavily involved. The *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti* project was rated highly (3) in terms of sustainability despite the lack of focus on the 'broader level of national and local government capacity and policy development on economic development'.

The reason for this was strong private sector engagement, and acceptance of the approach by provincial line agencies in agriculture and fisheries. Another good practice was that, in fisheries, the government's ADB-funded Northern Province Sustainable Fisheries Improvement Project provided a key platform to continue cooperatives' involvement in aquaculture expansion, which bode well for the durability of the project (2582: 41).

3.4. Equality, inclusion, environment sustainability and fragile context interventions

This section delves deeper into specific themes relevant to the 2030 SGD agenda. Specifically, these include gender, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and peace and how they relate to employment.

3.4.1 Supporting women's employment

Gender equality in the world of work is enshrined in the ILO's Constitution. Considered as a crosscutting measure, an integrated approach towards gender equality and decent work forms part of the ILO's Decent

Work Agenda.²⁵ **The Women at Work initiative is one of seven centenary initiatives launched ahead of the ILO's 100th anniversary in 2019.**²⁶ **The initiative aims to secure a better future for women at work.**

Gender equality is typically integrated into interventions as a crosscutting component of outcomes. The coding of the evaluation sub-sample found that, of the 25 projects examined, **the majority (19) were highly rated (i.e., 3 or 4) in terms of their integration of gender responsiveness in the project design.** For example, the *From the Crisis towards Decent and Safe Jobs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Phase II (DW Project)* (2200) project, implanted mechanisms such as gender equality in decision-making and beneficiaries' participation in its project structure and management. Table 6, below, provides selected examples of employment related interventions relevant to improving gender equality concerns.

▶ **Table 6. Examples of employment interventions relevant to the topic of gender equality**

Project	Description	Code
Promoting gender equality for decent employment in Pakistan	Has the objective of empowering working women 'so that they have better incomes, a better working environment and increased participation in household decisions and specifically expenditures' (1269: 17).	PAK/09/03/CAN
Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Middle East and North Africa	Includes 'improved gender policy and investment for governments and international organizations' (2448: 6) in its overall objective	GLO/14/24/IFA
Employment Generation and Livelihoods through Reconciliation	Puts special attention on women and female-headed households in promoting an enabling environment for sustainable enterprise development and creating more decent work opportunities in the conflict-afflicted Northern Province of Sri Lanka	LKA/16/02/NOR

Based on the sample of evaluation reports, the different approaches to mainstreaming gender equality and strengthening women's voices in interventions include: (i) strengthening gender-sensitive policy frameworks, (ii) skills training with a special focus on women, (iii) awareness-raising strategies, and (iv) female-to-male ratio targeting.

i. Results of strengthening gender-sensitive policy frameworks show that while staff are made aware of the frameworks, a greater emphasis on the importance and utilization of such frameworks is required, including for ILO management. The thematic evaluation of the *ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2010–2015* notes that 'although the majority of ILO staff interviewed and surveyed were aware of the Action Plan, many did not see it as an important document – the document itself was complicated to use', and that 'amongst many constituents gender equality issues were not often raised as a priority' (2725: 5).

The need for better understanding of gender equality in policy is echoed in project evaluations. The evaluation on *Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Middle East and North Africa* cited that a 'thorough and more sophisticated understanding about gender and its implications in programming has not been achieved', '[which] was confirmed through the evaluation team's interviews with many of the CoPs, some of whom were not well aware of the gender focus of Taqeeem or thought it was relevant to their projects (where a gender dimension could well be analysed with greater capacity to do so), and some of whom talked about gender as it relates to data collection only by the project' (2448: 32).

ii. The impact of trainings to improve skills and employability with special attention on women tended to be positive, although with the caveat that this was based mostly on anecdotal evidence of association. For example, the evaluation on the GD4DE project noted that the

▶ *extended technical support to the Women's Development Department (WDD) Punjab', which provided training to domestic workers, led to improvements in their working conditions (1269: 44).*

²⁵ <https://www.ilo.org/gender/Aboutus/ILOandGenderEquality/lang-en/index.htm>.

²⁶ ILO: *The ILO Women at Work Centenary Initiative: Where we are, and where we want to be* (Geneva, 2014)

Meanwhile, the *Employment Generation and Livelihoods through Reconciliation Project* in Sri Lanka, which included a specific outcome on improved capacity of women on employment, only reported that the target was exceeded without adequate substantiation.

iii. Positive effects from awareness building on gender-related issues were found. The cluster evaluation on the *SIDA-ILO Partnership Programme* noted that

► *worker's organizations and women workers consulted by the evaluation explained that the workshops conducted by the ILO have helped women workers to better understand and defend their labour rights in sectors where these rights are often not respected' (2991: 42).*

Some success was also demonstrated by the GE4DE project in the 'marked increase in reporting on women and work', owing to its 'skills training programme targeting 700 journalists from print and electronic media' (1269: 49).

Notably, **several projects evaluated tended to measure achievements on gender equality mainly through the targeted percentage on women beneficiaries.** For example, *More and quality jobs are created through better policies and frameworks and strengthened labour market information system* project in Myanmar promoted gender equality by requiring at least 35% of workers to be female under its Outcome 2.

The evaluation on the *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti*, which also set a target on the percentage of women, noted that during the first phase of the project, 'the gender aspect was mainly limited to the notion of "quotas"' and that 'the quality of women's participation [was] not considered' (2582: 78).

The background research papers for this study show differing effects. The study in Malawi found that men benefit more from vocational and business training as women are more constrained in their opportunities to pursue further education and training or starting businesses. However, the systematic review found that the effects of entrepreneurship were slightly higher for women than for men – though the effect sizes remained small.

Only one project was found to be directly aligned to strengthening women's voices, which had a positive but limited effect. The evaluation of the *Win-Win: Gender Equality Means Good Business* project stated that

► *with a few exceptions – including some ILO work with employers' organizations and work on masculinities – much of the Programme outreach was limited to women and to private sector personnel already concerned with gender or diversity issues. However, the evaluation found some evidence of efforts to reach out to men and to address gendered norms and practices at a deeper level' (2859: 47).*

3.4.2 Youth employment interventions²⁷

Employment policies are central to the ILO's results framework. Specifically, under outcome 3, economic, social, and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all, the outputs include the number of member states introducing new national employment policies, including distinct strategies for youth.

The most comprehensive review of impact evaluations of youth employment interventions around the world, undertaken by a team including ILO and World Bank staff. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of youth employment interventions on the labour market outcomes of young people. The review looked at the available evaluation evidence in a systematic and rigorous manner to fill the knowledge gaps relating to the effectiveness of the various types of youth-targeted interventions in different contexts.

The systematic review and discussion paper synthesized empirical evidence on the labour market outcomes of youth employment interventions worldwide. Interventions comprised skills training, entrepreneurship promotion, employment services, and subsidized employment. Outcomes of interest included employment,

²⁷ This information comes from https://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS_327595/lang-en/index.htm.

earnings, and business performance. A comprehensive systematic search for relevant evidence across more than 70 sources, using search terms in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, identified over 30,000 records that were screened according to the review's inclusion criteria.

For the selected studies that met the inclusion criteria, treatment effect estimates were coded and standardized mean differences (SMDs) were computed. The search process was completed in January 2015. The analysis explored the interventions' overall effectiveness and the roles that context, evaluation and programme design and implementation played in determining impact.

The systematic review and meta-analysis were based on evidence from 113 counterfactual-based impact evaluations of 107 active labour market programmes in 31 low-, middle- and high-income countries. The ILO Evidence Gap Map provided an overview of the available evidence by type of active labour market programme and labour market outcomes.

Meta-analysis methods were employed to synthesize the evidence, based on 2,259 imputed effect sizes (SMDs). Overall, empirical results indicated positive treatment effects that were statistically different from zero on labour market outcomes. In other words, investing in young people through active labour market programmes paid off with positive impacts particularly on employment and earnings outcomes. This impact did not take effect immediately and was more pronounced among low- and middle-income countries than among high-income countries.

Active measures to support the (re)integration of young women and men into the labour market succeeded in enhancing employment and earnings outcomes and have potential to increase human capital and employment prospects in the long-term. The evidence suggested that the type and design of youth employment intervention was important and was strongly influenced by the income level of the country.

Programme evaluations generally showed larger effect sizes in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income countries. Multi-pronged measures were shown to be effective in tackling the many barriers to success facing youth in the labour market, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where skills training and entrepreneurship interventions had prompted significant improvements in youth employment and earnings outcomes.

Targeting disadvantaged youth and features such as participant profiling, participant engagement mechanisms and incentives for service providers were positively correlated with a larger magnitude of impact. The results appeared robust in terms of the quality of the underlying evidence. The review did not find differential treatment effects by gender or age.

3.4.3 Skills for social inclusion

The ILO's inclusion policy and strategy of 2020 aimed to 'strengthen ILO capacity to accelerate greater and more meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities' in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) which was launched in June 2019.²⁸ Labour market inclusion of persons with disabilities through employment interventions was to be promoted through three coordinated approaches: (i) increasing employability (e.g. ensuring access to vocational training and opportunities for MSMEs); (ii) inclusive employment (encouraging employers to employ PWD), and (iii) enabling environments (the legislative and policy environment).²⁹

Only one project in sample of 25 reports for the period under review counts as a disability-specific project, that is *Promoting rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities in employment through legislation* (PROPEL), which was a global project with activities in China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Zambia, Azerbaijan, Botswana, Mongolia, Myanmar, and the objective to achieve 'better work and employment opportunities created for men and women with disabilities, through the creation of an enabling legal

²⁸ ILO: *ILO disability inclusion policy and strategy* (Geneva, 2020)

²⁹ See also the pamphlet 'ILO and disability inclusion' which gives examples of these approaches: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_407645.pdf.

and policy environment, the promotion of skills development opportunities and measures to eliminate discrimination' (2328: 1). The evaluation of PROPEL reports achievements across the approaches:

- (i) increasing employability: an audit of TVET in China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Zambia, and an inclusive vocational training course, including training of trainers in Zambia, and over 250 persons with disabilities were supported in accessing entrepreneurial opportunities and micro financing through skills training and self-confidence promotion in Ethiopia;
- (ii) inclusive employment: employment services such as job placements, job fairs and employment advice in China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Vietnam, and over 100 persons with intellectual disabilities placed in supported employment in China; and,
- (iii) enabling environments including media training in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Zambia, and the establishment of committees in the regions to implement the UNCRPD and the National Plan of Action in Ethiopia.

Of the sample of 25 evaluation reports, six were assessed as having disability embedded in the project framework or objectives, or a strong or very strong disability inclusive approach. For example: (i) in Egypt it was reported that inspectors 'were more committed to adhering to the 5% guideline for hiring of persons with disabilities'; (ii) in Tajikistan, the project assisted with assessing social protection services to support employment of PWD and review of the national draft Programme for employment; and (iii) a job creation programme for Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities provided work for over 1,800 individuals of which 2.6% of job days were for PWDs (noting this is much lower than population share).

Inclusive disability employment programmes was an area in which there is little research regarding effectiveness. A map of disability evidence in developing countries found few studies on livelihoods and employment interventions.³⁰ A rapid evidence review of those studies found promising evidence for both employment services and skills training, though the evidence base remained weak.³¹

► **Table 7. Examples of projects objectives and/or activities are relevant to the topic of disability**

Project	Description	Code
Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People: Tackling the challenge together (DJEP)	The project had the objective of 'Increased decent employment opportunities for young men and women, especially groups that find it particularly hard to get access to such opportunities, such as women headed households, people with disabilities, poor people in rural areas and unemployed graduates' (1650: 14) but PWD are not mentioned in the specific objectives or the project outcomes and outputs. Limited evidence is presented of programme activities to benefit PWD. These are: (i) a study to assess the inclusion of young people with disabilities among selected enterprises in the tourism sector in the Red Sea- Hurghada; (ii) an employment fair reached 45,000 people of which 6,000 young individuals obtained employment, of which 200 were persons with disabilities; and (iii) overall it is stated that '300 persons with disabilities secured decent job'	EGY/11/02/CAN
Centre of Excellence for RMG to implement certified training within the national skills development framework of Bangladesh	The project aims to 'improve the productivity, occupational safety and quality of Bangladesh's RMG workforce by creating an approach to skills training and certification which enables all job seekers, including disadvantaged and disabled, to access skills training and progress to decent employment with increased incomes' (2186: 5), though PWD are not mentioned in the specific objectives. During the project three enterprise voluntarily adopted the Inclusive Business Policy for Disability Inclusion and Gender Empowerment and introduced the employment of persons with disabilities in their employment policies to stimulate recruitment and skills development of PWD. A seminar to promote this initiative included the Ministry of Labour and Manpower, BGMEA, FBCCI, and the Bangladesh Employers Federation. But these are small parts of a much larger project with a budget of US\$1.4 million	BGD/13/06/MUL

30 Saran, A, White, H, and H Kupper. (2020). Evidence and gap map of studies assessing the effectiveness of interventions for people with disabilities in low-and middle-income countries, Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cl2.1070>.

31 Kupper, H, Saran, A, and H White. (2020). Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of What Works to Improve Livelihood Outcomes for People with Disabilities in Low and Middle Income Countries, Available at: https://www.lshrm.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/REA%20livelihood%2022.05.2020%20GG_1.docx.

3.4.4 Green works and green jobs

The environment and work are interconnected, as jobs are dependent on the planet's resources. Therefore, climate change, if unaddressed, will lead to the loss of jobs and livelihoods. A study conducted by the ILO noted that carrying out the Paris Agreement on Climate Change would lead to an additional 18 million jobs by 2030.³² In recognition of this potential, the ILO Strategic Plan for 2018-21 introduced environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting policy driver.³³

In most of the projects (21) included in the focus sample, no link to environmental sustainability was found in the project framework or implementation. ILO employment interventions, which underscore environmental sustainability, typically include the promotion of green jobs.³⁴ For example, the *Zambia Green Jobs Programme (ZGJP)*, which is mentioned to be directly relevant to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), was

► designed to promote sustainable development and the creation of more and better jobs, especially for women and young people through private sector development and inclusive green growth in the building construction sector' (2119: 2).

Another example was the Decent Work in the Green Economy project where one of the objectives was 'to improve the ability and commitment of stakeholders in China to formulate and implement skills for green jobs development strategies' (1960: 6).

The outcomes of employment initiatives that relate to green jobs were generally positive. For instance, the ZGJP aided in the 'development of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidelines for the Construction sector' in Zambia (2119: 22). In Tanzania, the *Sida-ILO Partnership* program resulted

► in the creation of several framework documents for the mainstreaming of just transition into ILO work programs' and 'contributed significantly to the issue of just transition, and the uptake of green economy issues across other ILO initiatives' (2994: 8).

However, there were some contextual factors which inhibited green jobs promotion from reaching its full potential. These included sectoral underdevelopment and gaps in data and research and development (R&D) on green jobs and markets. For instance, the evaluation of the ZGJP noted that 'the green building construction market has not yet developed to a sufficient scale that allows for large transnational investments' (2119: 30).

The same also flags that 'while this is a good initiative, R&D is required to test and develop more localised and affordable materials and technologies to support a growing green building construction sector' (2119: 14). On a similar note, the evaluation of the *Decent Work in the Green Economy* project stated that 'the lack of data on green jobs is one of the most important drawbacks for analysis and policy making' (1960: 24).

3.4.5 Fragile situations

In the domain of peace, employment and skills training are often viewed as tools for peacebuilding and resilience, especially among people in conflict-afflicted areas. An example is the *More and quality jobs are created through better policies and frameworks and strengthened labour market information system* project, whose objective was to

► support vulnerable women and men – in particular youth – in conflict affected ethnic areas of rural Myanmar [to] derive social and economic benefits and increased resilience in fragile situations from employment-intensive investments in key infrastructure and demand-driven Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (3076: 15).

32 <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/lang-en/index.htm>.

33 ILO: *ILO Strategic frameworks in the area of environmental sustainability and climate change*, Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS_744334/lang-en/index.htm.

34 According to ILO's definition, green jobs pertain to 'decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency' (ILO 2016).

In other projects, such as the *Support to the Peace Process in Myanmar through an integrated livelihoods approach* project (2455), skills development (e.g., soft skills and construction skills) and knowledge transfer on the peace process were regarded as viable tools to empower conflict afflicted communities.

The effects of interventions relevant to the peacebuilding were rather ambiguous. Most of the evaluations tended to provide positive, yet general, statements, such as 'Project's contribution to the peace process in the Project working area is to be highly commended' (2455: 17), and 'project helped raise key peacebuilding and peace enhancement priorities and address the root causes of fragility in a post conflict environment' (2851: 41).

While project perceptions and appreciation among stakeholders are favourable, clear linkages between the interventions and their contribution to peacebuilding, as well objectives measures are lacking. What evidence there is from the wider literature suggests that peacebuilding is challenging (see for example White et al., 2016, on community-driven reconstruction).

What tends to be clearer are factors which may impede the peacebuilding process. These can be mainly summarized into two: (i) politics and (ii) project duration. For example, the evaluation of the *More and quality jobs are created through better policies and frameworks and strengthened labour market information system* project (3076) in Myanmar stated that

► while the UGoM [Government of Myanmar] has put job creation for peacebuilding at the top of its formal policy agenda in the Myanmar context, the political economy context impedes the potential for roll out of this agenda evenly across Government controlled and EAO [Ethnic Armed Organisation] controlled areas' (3076: 20).

In the case of the *Employment and Integrated Local Development in the Comoros (EILD)* project in Comoros, 'the government did not follow the ILO's original peace and resilience approach to select project sites and preferred a change of benefitting communities' (3357: 24).

These clearly show the importance of political context and government support to implementing interventions related to peacebuilding. The newly released *ILO Peace and Conflict Analysis: Guidance for ILO's programming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts* tool may be useful in carefully creating future ILO initiatives to minimize these challenges in conflict areas.

Sustainability or lasting impact of employment initiatives, related to peacebuilding, tend to be questionable when the time allotted is too short, especially when conflict situations may lead to substantial delays in project implementation. For example, the evaluation of the *Support to the Peace Process in Myanmar through an integrated livelihoods approach* project noted that it

► was on the right approach and if the Project would have lasted 2 or 3 years longer it is very likely that the Project's interventions could have resulted in significant positive impacts on the economic livelihood situation of the targeted population' (2455: 23).

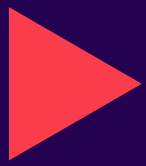
In the evaluation of the *Employment Creation for Youth to Build Sustainable Peace in The Gambia* project, it was stated that the 'project's original duration of 12 months was very ambitious and unrealistic, which lead to its no-cost extension to 18 months' (3142: 26).

Meanwhile, partnerships with local actors proved to be useful for implementation, particularly in reaching out to beneficiaries. For instance, in the *Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen* programme, an ILO national officer noted that

► When access to Hajjah and Hodeidah governorates was severely restricted, ILO was able to create partnerships with CSOs YLDF and the SOS Centre, both of whom were better able to reach beneficiaries' (2542: 15).

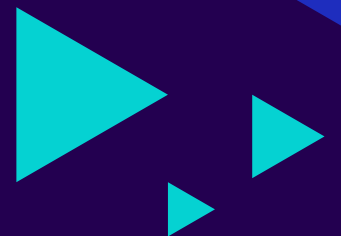
Like environmental sustainability, synergies between ILO interventions and peacebuilding were not yet fully maximized. Peace and stability generated a conducive environment where jobs could be created and conditions for decent work could continuously be improved.³⁵

Despite its importance, there is a relative lack of evidence on the effects of ILO employment related projects which involve a component on peace. Contextual factors such as political stability pose a challenge on fully realizing the benefits that could be derived from ILO projects.



4

Lessons learned



► 4. Lessons learned

The lessons learned generally focused on what went wrong. Several themes were identified in the lessons learned sections of the evaluation reports in the sample. These themes are grouped under three headings: the project approach being appropriate and adequate, and design issues.

The next section, on Good Practices, focussed on what went right.

4.1. Appropriate approach

The following themes relate to the approach being appropriate or not:

Local context: The importance of considering the local context emerged in the evaluation reports of many projects. Sometimes it was stated quite generally. For example, the evaluation of the multi-country study *Completing solid labour market studies is fundamental for skills and vocational training programmes* says 'actions designed for country-level intervention must take into account national and local contexts' (2266). The same study goes on to elaborate that

▼▼ *when carrying out a project located in many countries, and that aims at shaping policies and institutional practices, it is important to define clear and systematic strategies that are well adapted to the different national contexts' (2266), noting one way to achieve this is the importance of completing solid labour market studies [which are] fundamental for skills and vocational training programmes (2266).*

Local context also arises in the need to adapt approaches and materials to the county or sector. For example, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) tools 'for cocoa or other sectors cannot be applied automatically in the fishing context and the need for specific OSH materials and tools in fishing to achieve better results' (2259), and 'the design of "soft" skill training courses should be specific in the outcomes it is trying to achieve' (3076).

The need to take local context into account means that 'decentralization of project management and implementation is needed' (2580), that 'the appropriate involvement of ILO country offices is essential' (2503), and that 'a complex project that covers two ILO regions and aims to influence policy would benefit from being based in one of those regions' (2448). In one case, the main issue that was raised in the evaluation report was: 'the predominant theme throughout this mid-term evaluation was a disconnect between the ILO regional office and its project in Yemen' (2548).

Ownership, tripartism and social dialogue: Ownership is mentioned as being important in a few cases: e.g., 'the potential for sustainability of progress made towards social dialogue is conditional to ownership of the social dialogue process by local actors' (1924);

▼▼ *where there [is]... commitment from the partner agency, the project will be given due attention and can progress more satisfactorily' (2247); and 'limited participation of tripartite constituents in the implementation of the project limits ownership and implementation' (1269).*

On a positive note, the ILO's emphasis on tripartism and social dialogue can create broader ownership than if it only dealt with governments 'the tripartite approach is pivotal in providing existing partners with exposure to opportunities that are otherwise unavailable to them' (3167), and 'counting with the presence of employers' representatives, trade unions, and other relevant sectors makes it possible to introduce child labour concerns in a cross-sectional manner to all parties involved' (2266).

However, in some cases, that ownership is said not to be required or it comes at a cost. The engagement with national agencies may limit projects: 'early National Steering Committee promotes ownership but may exclude tripartite approach' (2994) and 'signing the NCA does not necessarily lead to the NSMP taking a strong leadership' (3076).

Coordination: poor coordination is a common cause of problems in project implementation; for example, 'stronger coordination mechanisms at the project level will contribute to the enhancement of project impact'

(1269); 'there is a need for coordination among all components, ILO constituents, and partners under a systematic strategic and implementation plan' (1269); and

- ❖ *there was a trend of poor communication and coordination in the programme, including clarity around donor expectations, communicating programme goal and objectives clearly, communication between management and Advisory Council, and communication between programme management and REO. Clear communication is essential to increased levels of efficiency, developing buy-in, and ultimately to achieving the programme goal and objectives (2448).*

A final example of the approach not being appropriate came from the ILO's own administrative requirements

- ❖ *an essential finding was that the ILO's demanding administrative procedures and requirements along with the projects' large coverage and the enormous amount of Action Programmes and service contracts did not contribute to supporting its implementation (2266).*

4.2. Adequate approach

The issue of the approach being adequate arose most frequently in regard to inadequate financial resources and the goals being overambitious for the duration of the project. It also covered ownership, social dialogue and gender issues.

Resources: Comments in several evaluations suggested that resource constraints may compromise project impacts, for example, 'globally managed projects that propose objectives or have expected outcomes at the country level must secure three resources for country-level activities' (1926), and 'financial commitment from the project's partners and donor is also crucial for the successful implementation of the project' (2247). Resource constraints were especially an issue for ambitious projects:

- ❖ *ESAP is dense in its priorities, strategies, and projects, and features two vulnerable aspects: it has limited resources and its management is at the regional level (thus remote from the stakeholders) (2559).*

Another aspect of resources is adequate and appropriate staffing: 'realistic human resource planning is needed to carry out the various activities' (2247). On the positive side, several evaluations commented the positive role played by the right staff. For example, 'the availability of staff was a key aspect of project implementation. Project execution was more stress-free in countries in which the ILO had larger resources' (2266), and that 'the quality and experience of [Enterprise Advisers] involved in the core services is the key to success' (2226).

Long term engagement: A common finding was that project duration was too short to achieve the intended objectives. For example, in general terms, 'limited project duration does not allow enough time to appropriately deliver project activities in a consequential manner to achieve greater impact' (2259), and that 'in a complex and volatile political context, it is not effective to have a short project' (3076).

Specific examples demonstrated that establishment of 'new enterprises' should not be included in short (12 months) disaster recovery projects because there was not enough time to develop markets and to increase production (2240), and 'short-term interventions in the education sector and technical capacitating and skills training activities are not likely to generate a significant impact' (2266).

Gender: ILO projects have attempted to promote gender issues and gender equality in contexts where this is lacking, such as *Promoting gender equality for decent employment in Pakistan and Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa*. However, these projects often run into difficulties because of local understanding and acceptance. For example, in the Pakistan project 'the lack of a consistent understanding of gender equality and decent work concepts among implementing partners can lead to results which may not be aligned with decent work and gender equality principles' (1269). And in another case 'more support and discussion around gender issues is required to be fully absorbed by the communities' (3076).

Other projects confirm that, as reported above, gender mainstreaming has been weak: 'the absence of a Gender-Mainstreaming strategy at the Project Design stage resulted in rather poor gender-performance at the implementation stage' (2669).

4.3. Design

Comments on programme design, found in a several studies, included:

The importance of a theory of change or a results framework for M&E: 'An effective, and well-thought-out Theory of Change framework is needed' (2994), 'Each and every project must have a comprehensive Results-Based Monitoring system' (2579), and 'Good programme design involves the use of measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators' (1269).

Supporting country level standards: 'The formulation of standards for training courses strengthens the government's capacity to bridge the skills gap. RPL assessment programme is perceived as useful. The apprenticeship programme shows a great deal of promise in bridging the skills gap between education and work experience' (3167).

As a multilateral agency, the ILO is well-placed to support inter-regional learning, which is reported to be a valued part of projects: in a 'multi-country initiative it is important to have joint activities so that the different countries can learn from each other' (2579) and 'peer review is a strong tool for capacity-building, building stakeholder ownership and constructing a regional network' (2559).

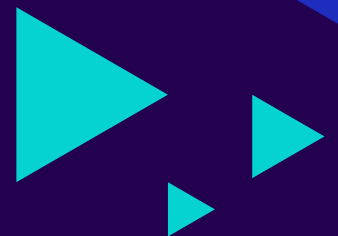
Observations on lessons learned reporting: The lesson learning sections were, potentially, the most important part of the evaluation reports. They varied in quality, with the use of the standard template helping to ensure consistency. There was a tricky balance to be obtained between stating a lesson which is clearly rooted in evaluation evidence from a study to stating a finding which was transferable.

It was also a challenge to write transferable lessons that were sufficiently concrete to be useful rather than a mere general statement such as 'ownership is important'. More guidance on lesson learning may be useful for evaluation teams. It may also be useful for teams to be given a list of themes, such as those used above, to classify lessons. The list would be indicative. They are certainly not required to find a lesson per theme, and they may identify other themes.



5

Good practices



► 5. Good practices

Good practices found in project evaluations are grouped into three headings, namely: (i) increasing engagement and participation, (ii) capacity building, and (iii) project management.

5.1. Increasing engagement and participation

Participatory approaches are important for 'sensitizing and mobilizing communities to build up connections among households and community institutions' (2266) and for 'achieving a more comprehensive and holistic effort against issues' (2266). The following themes below related to approaches that sought to increase engagement and participation:

Tripartism and social dialogue: As mentioned in the evaluation of the *Economic and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)* project,

- ✔✔ *more than just seeking feedback or collecting information from institutions, efficient communication requires direct, personalized relations to grasp the insights into the nuances of the national contexts and encourage thorough stakeholder involvement. (2559).*

Some of the projects provided 'how-to' examples, particularly by embedding tripartism and social dialogue into their frameworks and acknowledging their corresponding benefits. For instance, the *Applying the G20 Training Strategy: A Partnership of the ILO and the Russian Federation* project showed that the 'synergy of the work of TVET experts, government officials and the National Statistical Committee led to the identification of the most disadvantaged groups in access to TVET education' (2669).

Setting up tripartite forums are quite often regarded as good practice. In the evaluation of the *Decent Work for Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Transformation in Mozambique* project, it was noted that 'open processes and forums that bring together different ministries, institutions and social partners enhance governance' (2646). In another example, it was mentioned that it 'is an important step towards the goal of supporting policy development' (2579). Meanwhile, 'the 'open planning' approach appears to be very suitable' (2240) in the context of disaster recovery, as stated in the *Integrated Livelihood Recovery for Typhoon Haiyan Affected Communities*. The same project evaluation mentioned that

- ✔✔ *where sub-project activities provided forums or focal points that allowed workers to meet, through follow-up training, or in the case of the tri-cycle drivers' foundation in Tacloban, a repair and spare parts center, this fosters communication (2240).*

Knowledge sharing: Knowledge sharing, both at the regional and international level, resulted in

- ✔✔ *enhanced ownership among stakeholders, raised awareness of their own gaps, and established a strong network likely to remain sustainable if it is maintained with regular events and an accessible, user-friendly virtual platform (2559).*

Good practices, on this topic, include a peer review with 'appropriate consultation and preparation, and the accurate targeting of beneficiaries with decision-making leverage' (2559), 'a dedicated project webpage at the global level' (2669), and 'public awareness campaigns' (2775) for greater public engagement.

Partnerships and collaboration: Strong collaboration with local authorities and stakeholders is acknowledged positively. As seen in the *GE4DE* project's strategic partnership with the higher education commission,

- ✔✔ *the impact of capacity building activities can be optimized by partnering with national training and academic centers to establish relevant and sustainable capacity-building initiatives that inform, sensitize, and educate public and private sector stakeholders on the key concepts of the DW agenda and international labour standards (1269).*

Apart from local authorities and stakeholders, engagement and partnership with the private sector has also been highlighted as a good practice. For instance, the evaluation of the *ILO/Korea Partnership Programme 2015 – 2017 funded projects in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam* noted that

► *partnership with Myanmar Engineering Society and the Asian Welding Federation (AWF) in Singapore on the standards is a good practice in the area of cooperation with employers' organizations and the private sector (2579).*

As exemplified in the example of the *Win-Win: Gender Equality means Good Business* project, it

► *hired personnel with private sector experience for NPSS positions and this was found to make a positive contribution to the Programme, as these individuals were familiar with private sector culture and adept at "speaking the language" of business (2859).*

External collaboration and partnerships are also essential for leveraging resources, thus achieving more on a limited budget. In the case of the DW Project, 'synergizing with the World Bank project allowed leveraging resources and conduct Labour Force Survey in Tajikistan based on the improved methodology developed with support from the project' (2200). The same project evaluation highlighted that

► *supporting participation of the labour inspectors from the target countries in other initiatives relevant to decent work agenda such as a sub-regional meeting on OSH organized by Rostrud and RALI meetings allowed leveraging resources, facilitated the exchange of regional experience and enhanced the capacity of labour inspectors (2200).*

Capacity building

Capacity building can be broken down into the individual and the institutional levels:

Individual level: Skills training is essential to equip individuals with the necessary competencies to join or to gain more opportunities to access the labour market. Effective ways to augment the skills of stakeholders were mentioned. For example, in the evaluation of the *Dutch Education* projects, it was noted that 'internships and apprenticeships are an excellent way to acquire experience with real market demands and to gain first-hand knowledge of market needs and opportunities' (2266). Meanwhile, 'apprenticeships serve as a great complement to skills-training since they give trainees the chance to apply the abilities acquired and to test them against the demands of their chosen trade' (2266).

Beyond increasing the pool of eligible workers, consultations with associations during diagnostic visits revealed the need to offer the possibility of training the people who were already in the field, such as farmers and fishermen. In addition, this aimed to improve their work performance and employability. Thus, in the *Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti* project, there was a proposal to perform a Validation Programme of Acquired Experience (VAE) certification. It served as a verification of 'acquired work/experience/skills so that a certificate could be given to formalize their [farmers'/fishermen's] knowledge that could lead to another training offered by the INFP to reinforce/complement their competencies'. (2582)

Training packages could also render some benefits to 'cultivate first success stories and build the confidence of other targeted companies' (1924). Concomitantly, training guides such as the ILO Skills and Livelihood Training guide 'has a strong potential to improve the quality of training' on certain issues, and 'as well as to standardise procedures and results' (2266).

Institutional level: Good practices in terms of building capacities among institutions to enable them to perform their functions effectively are likewise present. As an example, the evaluation of the Dutch Education Projects mentioned 'enhancing capacities and awareness of relevant agents through training and orientation sessions and advocacy campaigns' (2266) and 'improving infrastructures of local primary schools to better equip them for incorporating children that are withdrawn from child labour and re-enrolled in schools' (2266) as good practices. As shown by these examples, what is needed varies greatly and so needs to be adapted to the local context in consultation with local partners.

Technical assistance to key institutions could also be provided by the ILO, as in the case of the *Improved human resources development and employment policies, with particular attention to youth, women, and migrants* project. In this project,

- ▼▼ *the ILO DW SDG intervention provided technical assistance to key institutions involved in SDGs, with the objective to strengthen awareness of SDGs as well as overall statistical capacity. Activities included tailor-made SDG and LMI training for social partners, capacity building for officials of MOLISA, ad-hoc training opportunities in Turin for members of the General Statistics Office and MOLISA, as well as dedicated workshops and missions of specialists to train small groups on specific issues (3077).*

5.2. Project management

The following themes were related to project management:

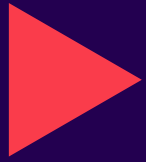
Management: To ensure that project implementation is efficient, good management practices are needed. For example, the project evaluation of the ILO /Korea partnership projects mentioned that ‘the management set-up of the ILO/Korea projects is a good practice with a Management Team, lead specialists and Korean experts on loan from Korean partner institutes’ (2579). Focal persons could be useful, as highlighted in the GD4DE project where

- ▼▼ *the designation of the GFPs [Gender Focal Persons] was an important first step towards changing institutional culture, ensuring that new labour policies and procedures are gender sensitive, sensitizing labour inspectorates on gender equality issues in the workplace, promoting policy dialogue about gender issues, and identifying administrative and procedural gaps (1269).*

Monitoring and evaluation: In terms of monitoring and evaluation, partnership with local actors helped in ‘easier application of new knowledge and skills achieved’ (2448). For example, in the *Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Middle East and North Africa* project, it was found that ‘pairing M&E technical experts with Track 2 COP [Community of Practice] members led to a very productive exchange and built capacity of staff on their own organization’s projects’ (2448). In addition, ‘the production of the M&E Guide served as an effective means to help sustain the program through capturing teaching and learning under the Taqeen programme, while serving as an effective resource for future M&E training’ (2448). Meanwhile, the design or inclusion of third-party monitoring mechanisms (e.g., monitoring bureau) was suggested to provide a ‘potential solution to issues surrounding effective monitoring and evaluation processes’ and to serve as ‘another forum in which tripartite members can be engaged’ (2994).

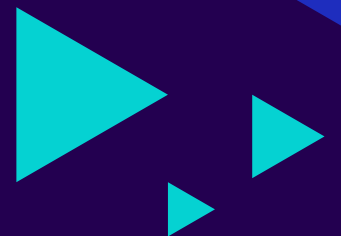
Observations on reporting good practices

Like lessons learned, the quality of the ‘good practices’ section tended to vary in quality across the project evaluations. While present in some, what tended to be lacking in others was the answer to the ‘why’ (why did it work) and the ‘how’ (how would it help). Substantiation along these lines could be useful in future evaluations and could aid in assessing whether a specific good practice would be applicable and appropriate to a particular context, as suggested good practices are not always generalizable.



6

Conclusions



► 6. Conclusions

In general, employment-related evaluations reported positive findings in terms of their effectiveness.

Reviewed reports suggest ILO's success in supporting employment legal and policy frameworks, and in some cases, improving the capacity of the inspection system and enterprise practice, with respect to standards. In this regard, NEPs have grown in number in the last 20 years, with many explicitly citing ILO resources. However, implementation of NEPs has been more uneven, partly because of lack of local commitment.

Most projects that were reviewed were successful in supporting social dialogue. Both the formulation of NEPs and the implementation of projects were facilitated by ILO's support to tripartism and social dialogue, which is an area of strong ILO expertise. When success was limited, this was partly due to the lack of government commitment to broad social dialogue. Other than that, ILO employment initiatives performed well in forming and working with partnerships at both national and international levels. These partnerships can support ownership, implementation and resource mobilization, all of which can contribute to sustainability of supported activities.

National skills policies served as a framework for improving access to decent work and skills sets needed to support the labour market. During the period of review, the ILO has provided a variety of support services in this area, notably in developing, monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing skills policies, and providing technical assistance in the development of these policies. The global systematic review reported that skills training has a small positive effect on both employment and earning.

Moreover, capacity building activities in line of skills development had been generally well-integrated in ILO interventions and were positively received by stakeholders. In turn, diagnostic methods, subsequent joint planning of implementation, and ensuring linkages of organizational strategies with capacity development at the individual and enabling environment level were identified as areas in need of improvement.

Significant efforts were placed on providing policy support for enterprise development vis-à-vis decent job promotion, both indirectly from capacity building and via evidence base building, and directly via policy support to ministries. In general, successful approaches to enterprise development exist, including job creation, and the observation and implementation of labour standards being performed by enterprises. These efforts have not gone unnoticed and have been very well appreciated by most constituents/stakeholders. However, improvements could still be made on some aspects. For one, other success or impact measures should be considered, instead of merely focusing on hitting targets. In the case of the creation of policy briefs or materials to support policy making, it is also necessary to consider its 'reach' and 'stakeholder buy-in'.

Reach and buy-in could be achieved by strengthening social dialogue and tripartism, which would ensure that enterprise policies reflect the actual needs of stakeholders. In line with this, capacity building activities must not be confined on governments, but should also involve SME partners so that they could take an active part in the policy formulation process. Finally, a clear logical framework, mapping out how activities related to enterprise policy support could lead to decent job outcomes, are also needed to ensure not only the effective execution of the plan, but also that the achievement of the objectives would lead logically to the desired results.

The importance of integrating gender equality in the design of employment-related interventions and outcomes is well recognized, as evidenced by the sizable number of interventions which explicitly included a gender component. However, there is still some room for improvement in terms of measuring impact. In addition, knowledge activities to facilitate better understanding on the meaning of 'mainstreaming gender equality' and how it is related to other developmental outcomes such as reducing poverty and inequality could help increase uptake of initiatives which promote gender equality at work. This could be further harnessed by awareness building activities on gender related issues, which proved to bring positive effects based on the reviewed ILO employment projects.

Work and the environment are intertwined, and yet integration of environmental sustainability in ILO employment-related initiatives was found to be low. As such, inclusion of environmental sustainability

would render large benefits. For projects which have integrated environmental sustainability, promotion of green jobs is often utilized, and these projects demonstrated some positive effects. Contextual challenges need to be addressed to fully maximize the benefits that could be derived from promoting environmental sustainability in ILO interventions.

Poverty reduction through employment has long been central to ILO's work. The 1944 Philadelphia Declaration states that "poverty anywhere is a danger to prosperity everywhere". However, poverty reduction is not the main focus of the majority of ILO employment projects. Whilst ILO has a good policy framework for inclusive employment for people with disabilities there is scant evidence that it is being widely put into practice.

Lastly, the ILO is shown to be active in many areas which support the results framework which contribute to the achievement of SDG8. However, it is not possible to quantify the extent of this contribution, and efforts should be made to validate the theory of change underlying the results framework, especially some of the specific activities. The evaluation methods used in the sample of reviewed report were limited in their capacity to support conclusions as to impact. A good starting point of improving this situation would be to have wider coverage of, and better, theories of change and M&E systems.

Overall areas of strength and success resonate with those identified in [EVAL's meta-studies on Decent Work results and effectiveness of ILO operations](#), pointing at moderate to high levels of effectiveness at policy influence, strategic partnerships, and capacity building. The areas of weaknesses of employment related interventions summarized in this synthesis review overlap with systemic issues identified in the same meta-study series, notably on the need for ILO interventions to integrate a pro-poor perspective, gender equality, environmental sustainability and monitoring and reporting more systematically while promoting decent work. Greater engagement of the tripartite constituents continues to be a recurrent area for improvement in both studies as well.

The limitations in measuring the achievement of immediate objectives have been a recurrent issue for improvement since 2009, as showcased in EVAL's meta-studies (see table 8 below). In this regard, not all employment-related projects had a theory of change and where there was one (or a logical framework) it was not always clear how it linked to the intended outcomes – this is especially so for policy influence interventions. The lack of robust theories of change is a recurrent issue for improvement identified in the meta-study series, cutting across all intervention areas of the ILO. In this regard, the ILO could consider developing a mid-level theory of change³⁶ for all its main interventions (like the umbrella theory of change developed for formalisation as part of the implementation of one recommendation of the [High-level Evaluation on Informal Economy, 2014–2018](#)).³⁷ These mid-level theories should cut across all the organizations work, not just projects. They will assist the formulation of activity-level theories of change.

36 <https://cedilprogramme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PDD10144-CEDIL-Template-WEB.pdf>.

37 https://www.ilo.org/moscow/information-resources/publications/WCMS_768807/lang-en/index.htm.

▶ **Table 8. Recurrent issues for improvement identified in EVAL's meta-analyses of development cooperation project evaluations since 2009**

Strategic relevance and alignment

- ▶ Project design with clear specification of outcome levels and results (meta-studies for 2009–18 DC projects)
 - ▶ Constituents' involvement into project formulation or implementation (meta-studies for 2013–18 DC projects)
 - ▶ Gender sensitivity of project design (meta-study for 2013–16 DC projects)
-

Effectiveness, sustainability and impact

- ▶ Prospects for sustainability (meta-studies for 2009–11; 2013–16 DC projects)
 - ▶ Integration of tripartism in project approach and implementation practices (meta-studies for 2013–18 DC projects)
 - ▶ Integration of ILS in the project strategy (meta-study for 2017–18 DC projects)
-

Implementation and efficiency of management and resources

- ▶ Goal orientation of the project: clarity in the definition of and differentiation between indicators, targets, activities, milestones and results (meta-studies for 2009–18 DC projects)
 - ▶ Monitoring and evaluation practices and use of associated indicators, baselines and data measurement systems (meta-studies for 2011–19 DC projects)
 - ▶ Adequacy of resources (meta-studies for 2011–18 DC projects)
 - ▶ Implementation management practices (meta-studies for 2011–18 DC projects)
-

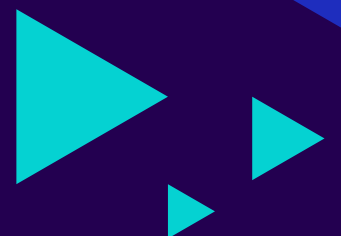
Source: Summary table from [EVAL's Annual Evaluation Report, 2018–19](#).

A clear theory of change should also inform the identification of P&B outcomes for each activity, which is another recurrent issue for improvement identified in the meta-analyses since 2009. Moreover, the theory of change should also have a realistic timeline. This, in turn, should support realistic expectations as to what can be achieved. Several evaluations report that the employment-related interventions were too short to achieve the desired outcomes. Supporting policy change depends on building relationships of trust. ILO's position gives it authority in the field of employment policy. That fact positions it to play an important role in developing employment policy, but it does not guarantee it.

Relationships need a sustained engagement with local counterparts, and the successful support to a tripartite process requires presence. Some employment-related evaluations pointed at the difficulties encountered in trying to run a programme from a regional office, or with insufficient local staff. Where government capacity or commitment is lacking then ILO staff need to play a larger role and so may become over-stretched. It is also important for stakeholders to have proper understanding of the projects and what these projects aim to achieve, for better stakeholder buy-in.



Annexes



► Annex 1. Synthesis review questions

EQ	Reformulated question (if applicable)
1	What are the trends with regard to the ILO's normative mandate (especially C122, R205) being central to ILO's work on employment?
2a	How do ILO interventions promote the role of standards to support employment promotion?
2b	What issues, if any, have arisen in the implementation of ILO interventions which promote the role of standards to support employment promotion?
2c	What is the evidence regarding the effects of ILO interventions which promote the role of standards to support employment promotion?
3a	How do ILO interventions utilize social dialogue in the development of effective employment and skills development policies and programmes?
3b	What issues, if any, have arisen in the implementation ILO interventions which utilize social dialogue in the development of effective employment and skills development policies and programmes?
3c	What is the evidence regarding the effects of ILO interventions which utilize social dialogue in the development of effective employment and skills development policies and programmes?
4a	How do ILO interventions support enterprise development, including on SMEs, with a view to creating decent jobs?
4b	What issues, if any, have arisen in the implementation ILO interventions which support enterprise development, including on SMEs, with a view to creating decent jobs?
4c	What is the evidence regarding the effects of ILO interventions which support enterprise development, including on SMEs, with a view to creating decent jobs?
5a	How do ILO interventions provide policy support to enhance decent job outcomes of enterprise development?
5b	What issues, if any, have arisen in the implementation ILO interventions which provide policy support to enhance decent job outcomes of enterprise development?
5c	What is the evidence regarding the effects of ILO interventions which provide policy support to enhance decent job outcomes of enterprise development?
6	What are the external and contextual factors that can determine success or failure of ILO employment and skills development-related interventions?
7	In particular, what influence has the COVID 19 pandemic had?
8	Are there examples of successfully addressing some of these factors (e.g. globalization, rapid transformations in the world of work, climate change, humanitarian crises, demographic transition, governance issues, institutional and capacity related gaps, political will, external pressure from IFIs, UN reform, demographic trends, economic crises, environmental disasters etc.)?
9	How are synergies achieved, between Programme and Budget, Flagship initiatives, DWCPs and TC projects in the area of employment and skills development?
10a	To what extent do ILO interventions include planned outcomes which are relevant to the priorities of the 2030 Agenda (People, Peace, Prosperity, Planet, Partnerships), SDG Goals, SDG targets and indicators?
10b	To what extent do ILO interventions improve outcomes which are relevant to the priorities of the 2030 Agenda (People, Peace, Prosperity, Planet, Partnerships), SDG Goals, SDG targets and indicators?
11a	To what extent have ILO's employment and skills development related interventions been targeted the poor, disadvantaged and socially excluded so as to contribute to the SDG call of 'leaving no one behind'?
11b	What mechanisms have been used in ILO's employment and skills development related interventions to target the poor, disadvantaged and socially excluded so as to contribute to the SDG call of 'leaving no one behind'?
11c	What has been the effectiveness of ILO's employment and skills development related interventions in targeting the poor, disadvantaged and socially excluded so as to contribute to the SDG call of 'leaving no one behind'?
12a	How have the ILO's cross-cutting policy drivers (e.g. Social Dialogue & Tripartism, people with disabilities, environmental sustainability, etc.) been addressed?
12b	What is the evidence for mainstreaming gender equality and strengthening women's voice, through ILO interventions on employment and skills development?

EQ	Reformulated question (if applicable)
13	What are the trends and “good practices” in ILO employment and skills development interventions at all levels?
14a	How have ILO's interventions for employment and skills development? involved partnerships and collaborations
14b	How have ILO's partnerships and collaborations contributed to reduce fragmentation and more harmonized approaches in employment and skills development?
14c	What are lessons with regard to partnerships?
15	What are the lessons with regard to knowledge products?
16	Has the ILO shaped the policy debates around employment and skills development?
17a	How do ILO interventions provide support to training and capacity building?
17b	What issues, if any, have arisen in the implementation ILO interventions which provide support to training and capacity building?
17c	What is the evidence regarding the effects of ILO interventions which provide support to training and capacity building?

► Annex 2. List of included reports (“the evaluation sample”)

ID	Report title	Type
2679	Independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy and actions to promote skills development for jobs and growth, 2010-2015	Strategy evaluation
2896	Independent evaluation of ILO's strategies and actions for improved youth employment prospects 2012-2017	Strategy evaluation
2991	Clustered Evaluation of Policy Outcome 8: Protecting workers from unacceptable forms of work and Cross-cutting policy driver: Gender equality and non-discrimination – Final clustered evaluation	Cluster evaluation
2994	SIDA-ILO Partnership Programme (phase I) “ Cross cutting policy driver environmental sustainability and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy – Clustered evaluation	Cluster evaluation
3167	Clustered Evaluation of the Sida-Funded Interventions under Outcome 1 (2018-2019), Phase I ILO-SIDA Partnership Programme, 2018-2021 – Final evaluation	Cluster evaluation
2676	Independent thematic evaluation of the ILO's work in post-conflict, fragile and disaster-affected countries: Past, present and future	Thematic evaluation
2725	ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2010-15 – Thematic evaluation	Thematic evaluation
	Growing Markets through Business Training for Female Entrepreneurs: A Market-Level Randomized Experiment in Kenya – American Economic Association (aeaweb.org)	ILO selected
	First edition: Global Employment Policy Review 2020: Employment Policies for Inclusive Structural Transformation (ilo.org)	ILO selected
	ILO/WTO joint publication: Investing in skills for inclusive trade	ILO selected
	Global evidence on youth employment: Interventions to Improve the Labour Market Outcomes of Youth: A Systematic Review of Training, Entrepreneurship Promotion, Employment Services and Subsidized Employment Interventions (ilo.org)	ILO selected
	Differences in the effects of vocational training on men and women: Constraints on women and drop-out behaviour (ilo.org)	ILO selected
	Report: Two decades of national employment policies 2000-2020 (ilo.org)	ILO selected
2579	ILO/Korea Partnership Programme Towards the Realization of the Asian Decent Work Decade (2015-2017) – Final Evaluation	Partnership evaluation
2580	Outcome-based funding component in support of P&B Outcome 1 – Focus on skills development, including on vocational and professional training and education – Final Evaluation	Partnership evaluation
1269	Promoting gender equality for decent employment in Pakistan – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
3076	More and Quality jobs are created through better policies and frameworks and strengthened labour market information systems – RBSA independent evaluation	Project evaluation
1924	Promoting workers rights and competitiveness in Egyptian exports industries – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
1926	Work for Youth (W4Y) – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
2200	From the crisis towards decent and safe jobs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Phase II (DW II project) – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
2207	ILO-China project to expand employment services and enhance labour market information in Cambodia and LAO PDR – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
2226	Better Work Viet Nam (Phase II) – Midterm Evaluation	Project evaluation
2240	Integrated Livelihood Recovery for Typhoon Haiyan affected communities – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
2259	Irish Aid Phase II: Testing methodologies to support informal economy workers and small producers to combat hazardous child labour in their own sectors – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
2266	Combating child labour through education and Combating child labour through skills training for older children – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation

ID	Report title	Type
2449	Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa – Final evaluation	Project evaluation
2503	Strengthening the impact on employment of sector and trade policies – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
2542	Enhance the resilience and self-reliance of crisis-affected rural communities (...) – Final evaluation	Project evaluation
2559	Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) – Final evaluation	Project evaluation
2582	Addressing Education and Skills Gaps for Vulnerable Youths in Haiti: Promoting rural socio-economic development in South and Grande Anse Departments – Final Evaluation	Project evaluation
2631	Employment generation and livelihoods through reconciliation in Sri Lanka – Final independent evaluation	Project evaluation
2646	Decent work for sustainable and inclusive economic transformation in Mozambique – Midterm Evaluation	Project evaluation
2669	Applying the G20 Training Strategy (Phase II) – Midterm Evaluation	Project evaluation
2681	Fair recruitment and decent work for women migrant workers in South Asia and the Middle East – Global Component – Midterm Evaluation	Project evaluation
2755	P&B Outcome 17 (Discrimination in employment and occupation is eliminated) – Final evaluation	Project evaluation
2817	Job creation for Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities through green works and agricultural industry – Final evaluation	Project evaluation
2859	Win-Win Gender Equality Means Good Business (in co-delegation with UN WOMEN) – Midterm joint evaluation	Project evaluation
3075	Jobs for Peace and Resilience (RBSA) – Independent evaluation	Project evaluation
3077	Capacity of government and the social partners to develop and implement employment policies and programmes that are well suited to Vietnam's dynamic ... – RBSA independent evaluation	Project evaluation
3081	Improved human resources development and employment policies, with particular attention to youth, women and migrants – RBSA independent evaluation	Project evaluation

▶ **Annex 3. Synthesis review protocol and analysis of the evaluation sample of 25 projects**

Available upon request to the ILO Evaluation Office.

► Annex 4. References

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