

Quick Facts

► High-level evaluation of ILO's strategy and actions for promoting sustainable enterprises 2014-19

► **Date:** October 2020

► About the evaluation

This high-level evaluation (HLE) provides insight into the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the ILO's work in promoting sustainable enterprises in the period 2014 to 2019. It also looks forward, identifying lessons learned that might inform the ongoing development of the organization's strategy and approach, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It covers the period 2014-19 (biennia 2014-15, 2016-17; and 2018-19) and considers all efforts of the Office in promoting sustainable enterprises during this period. It concentrates on the work of the ILO's Enterprises Department, but since each of its units and programmes work closely with other ILO Departments, these links are also explored.

► Evaluated topic

The ILO's work in promoting sustainable enterprises mainly reflects the structure of the ENTERPRISES Department. The Enterprise Department comprises six units or programmes: Multinational Enterprises and Enterprise Engagement (MULTI), Small & Medium Enterprises (SME), Cooperatives (COOP), Social Finance, Green Jobs and Global Programme of Employment Injury (GEIP). It was agreed during the scoping mission that GEIP's work fell outside the scope of this evaluation.

Evaluation methodology

Evaluation followed EVAL's High-Level Evaluation Protocol for Strategy and Policy evaluation.

Three methods were used for collecting data and information:



Synthesis review of 30 relevant project evaluations



131 interviews conducted of which 43% were women



2 surveys administered to 102 ILO staff and the to 119 constituents. Overall response rate was 29 per cent

Promoting sustainable enterprises in a post-pandemic world

The evaluation report included a chapter on promoting sustainable enterprises in a post-pandemic world. The report found that the ILO has responded well to the emergency phase of the pandemic, but that there needs to be fresh thinking to guide its work in the recovery phase. Some of the key issues to be considered for the future work is:



Restructured global supply chains and role of social partners



Practical entrepreneurship training tools: opportunity for innovation and creativity



Role of SSE in the UN Inter-agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy to be better defined and promoted



Support to building resilience of businesses of all sizes, governments to build resilient economies and ILO to think of Resilience Readiness

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Demand from member States for ILO support remains strong across all units and programmes within Enterprises Department. Support offered aligns with national priorities and SDGs.
- 2 The best results against P&B targets are related to the implementation of entrepreneurship programmes. Overall, results suggest that the ILO meets or exceeds targets against indicators that relate to direct assistance to enterprises.
- 3 Survey results suggest that both constituents and staff perceive the ILO to have improved local capacity to sustain its work without further support or funding.
- 4 There is no current overarching strategy to provide a coherent framework for the ILO's sustainable enterprises activities as a whole.
- 5 Perceived tension between what the ILO saw as its contemporary vision and approach vs. continued delivery of what were seen as "legacy" products such as SIYB.
- 6 Measuring the long-term impact of the ILO's enterprise work remains a weakness, resulting in restrictive assessments on efficiency, especially cost-benefit analysis.
- 7 Entrepreneurship can be an effective means to empower women and create employment, but women continue to face gender-based barriers to starting and growing their business. ILO has tools designed to address these barriers but this does not guarantee ownership by all stakeholders, more could be done to ensure gender is mainstreamed in all interventions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a strategic framework for the ILO's work in promoting sustainable enterprises that builds on and updates the 2010 framework and repositions this work to respond to the challenges of the post-COVID-19 world.
- Establish a more effective mechanism at the operational level to get the input of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) to improve programme design and implementation and to resolve any concerns.
- Undertake longitudinal assessments of impact and sustainability for more projects and do so one year after and three years after the end of projects, based on impact and sustainability indicators agreed during the design stage.
- Actively encourage and support innovation in sustainable enterprises work that directly responds to the circumstances of Member States as they rapidly change.
- Ensure that proposals for policy reform consider ways in which governments can build resilience into their economies; review and amend capacity building programmes to reflect the need for businesses to take positive action to become more resilient.

QUOTES

► Voices from constituents

"ILO shared COVID-19 information and materials in time with trainers and enterprise owners to support for the challenges we face in recovering from COVID-19 pandemic."

► Voices from ILO staff

"We need to learn from what others are doing to fill the gap or build on others' work...to respond to the needs gap that other development actors are not responding to."