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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

ILO's strategy and actions for
improved youth employment
prospects, 2012–2017

ILO Evaluation Office (EVAL)

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

ILO's Strategy and Actions for Improved Youth Employment Prospects 2012-2017



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STRATEGY AND
POLICY

SEPTEMBER
2018



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Summary



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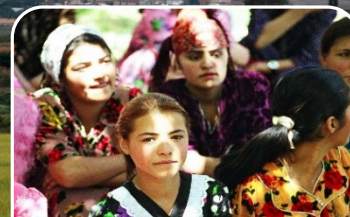
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Background



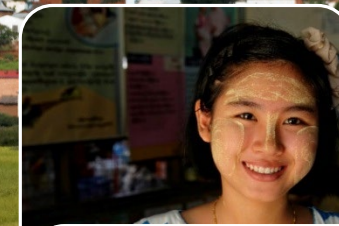
**Objectives
and scope**



Methodology



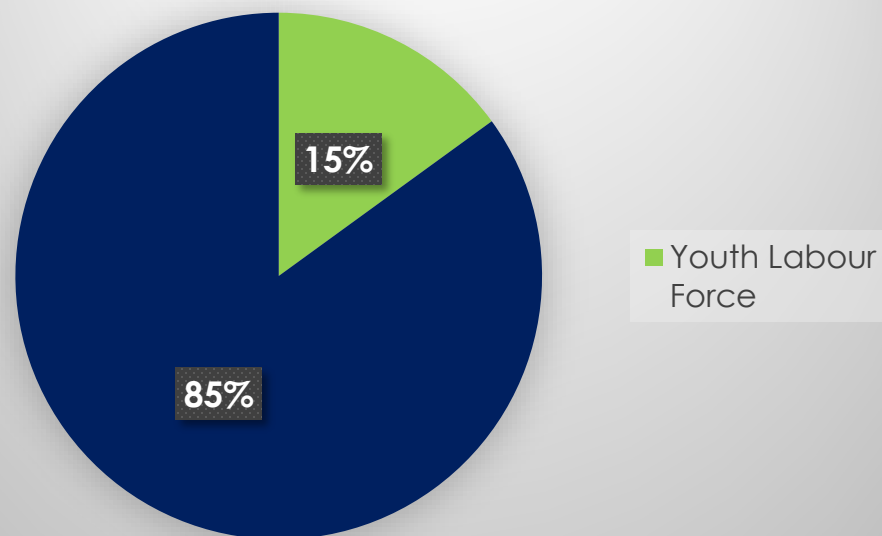
Findings



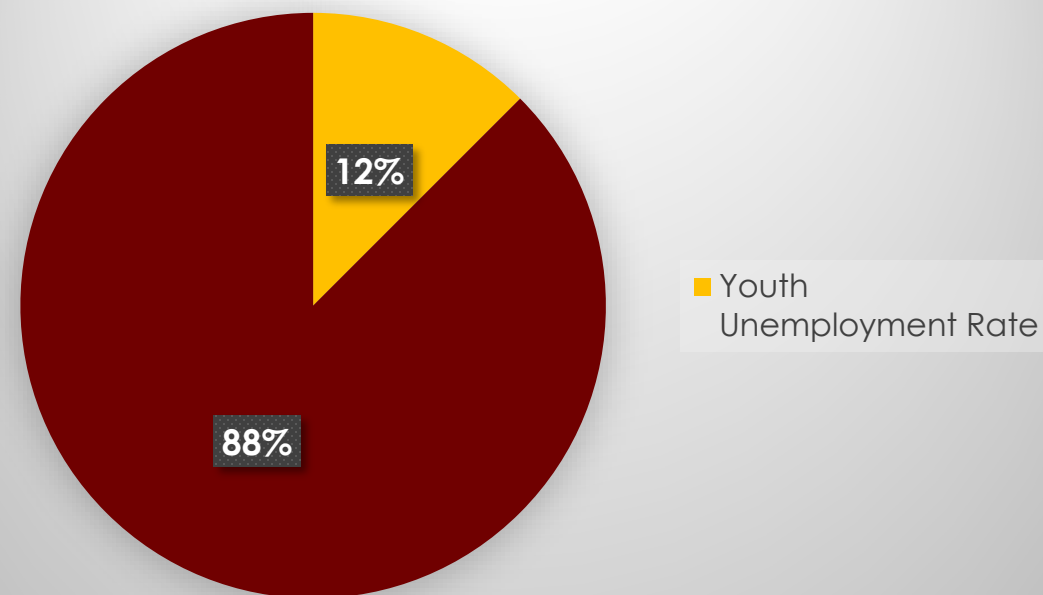
**Conclusion and
recommendations**

Background on youth employment

Global labour force (2017)*



Global unemployment (2018)*



16.7% of youth earn less than 2 dollar/a day (2017)*

* Source: International Labour Office. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a better working future*. Geneva, 2017.

Objectives and scope of evaluation



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- The **purpose** of this high-level evaluation is to assess the ILO's strategy and actions for improving youth employment prospects. The evaluation takes into consideration all efforts undertaken by the office from 2012 to 2017 to provide insight into the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of its work in this area in order to inform future policy and decision-making processes.
- Responding to the deterioration in youth employment prospects, the 2012 International Labour Conference adopted a resolution, entitled “*A call for action*” to advocate for **an approach that is tailored to the diverse situations of member states and fostered job creation through macroeconomic and labour market policies.**
- This evaluation will be used as **an input to the 2019 ILO Governing Body session** discussing progress in implementing the follow-up plan on the Call for Action.

Methodology



Methods	Description
1. Analysis of key documents and information resources	➤ Synthesis review of 30 evaluation reports from 2012 to 2017 ➤ Results reported in each biennium's Programme Implementation Report and the ILO's Decent Work Results web-based "dashboard" ➤ Review of Youth Employment Programme Unit work plan and reports ➤ Review of research papers, reports, publications and tools produced by the ILO as part of its youth employment work ➤ Analysis of selected individual project evaluations held on EVAL's knowledge management system
2. Interviews	➤ 174 interviews with ILO staff, constituents, UN partners and donors
3. Case studies and country missions	➤ 7 countries visited: Egypt, Tunisia, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, China and Peru
4. Survey	➤ 97 ILO staff, constituents, donors and other partners were surveyed

Findings



Relevance

1. The ILO's expertise in supporting the *Call for Action* remains as relevant as ever. This is due to high global youth unemployment rates, which are rising in some regions.
2. ILO's work was relevant to the diverse needs and circumstances of young people, but more needs to be done to identify "what works" for disadvantaged youth.
3. ILO's work remained relevant in the context of many new challenges and opportunities that emerged in the period under review.
4. Efforts to understand "what works" was also relevant and focused on the practical needs of constituents. The findings need to inform ILO's technical assistance in the field and be applied to its products.
5. Stakeholders highly regard ILO's expertise in youth employment, its commitment to social dialogue and rigour in conducting research.

Coherence

1. The involvement of social partners has been generally good, although some concerns expressed insufficient involvement at different stages of the development and implementation of policies and programmes.
2. There was a sound “theory of change” behind the ILO’s approach articulated in both the 2012 Call for Action and the 2005 resolution. The “what works” focus has also helped to clarify the theory of change behind some specific intervention types.
3. The Call for Action defined a range of policy and programme options to address constituent needs but provided limited guidance on how to “put the pieces together” in a coherent whole.

Effectiveness

1. Results either met or exceeded P&B targets against all youth-specific indicators – globally and in most regions.
2. The ILO has achieved results across the “three pillars” of the youth employment strategy. More could be done to ensure effectiveness measurement based on outcomes and not just outputs.
3. More activities focused on increasing employment demand are needed to maximize the effectiveness of the ILO’s work in youth employment.
4. ILO’s work in youth employment gave attention to cross-cutting themes of gender and non-discrimination, but there is scope to improve effectiveness by learning more about “what works” in situations where cultural traditions and belief systems inhibit the achievement of equity goals.

Efficiency

1. Efficiency of the ILO's work in youth employment is hard to measure – data limitations do not currently allow a detailed analysis. The fact that youth employment work is dispersed throughout the ILO makes such an analysis even more problematic.
2. The Youth employment Unit within the EMPLOYMENT department is the key driver and coordinator for the topic in the ILO. Looking at its outputs and staffing profile, it operated efficiently. Despite this, the demand for guidance and services from headquarters at country level still exceeds supply.
3. The flexibility of outcome-based funding (through RBSA) allows focus on agreed national priorities, to follow and build on previous and current activities in each country, and to maintain continuity of effort.
4. Determining the relative cost-effectiveness of different strategic approaches set out in the Call for Action could be a useful exercise in the future.

Impact and sustainability

1. The impact and sustainability of much of the ILO's youth employment work is not measured well and remains unclear.
2. The staff survey showed that ILO is making a difference across all three pillars of the Call for Action and, in some specific areas, it is making a very substantial difference.
3. The ILO made the most difference in 1) putting youth employment on the development map; and 2) providing information on youth employment trends. Less impact was made in the area of youth rights at work.
4. As the ILO is custodian of SDG indicators on youth employment, it is in a key position to monitor impact and sustainability over the SDG time frame. Its role in the Global Initiative can also support this, given its focus on maximizing impact.

Conclusions and lessons learned



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Lessons learned

- **Youth engagement and relevance:** While the Call for Action rightly identified the need to better engage with young people, more work is needed to ensure that the youth voice is heard.
- **“Upstream” policy work requires a longer-term view of performance:** The ILO’s result-based management does not provide a comprehensive picture of its work in youth employment. To truly measure the value the ILO adds, final project evaluations should not be considered the end of ILO’s performance.
- **Outputs versus outcomes in some ILO youth employment work:** As some of the ILO’s work is more distant from the youth employment results that matter most, care is needed to ensure that this work does not lose sight of these results and, wherever possible, can materially contribute to their achievement.

Conclusions

- Through the *Call for Action*, the ILO played a **significant role in elevating youth employment as an international development priority**. It also developed knowledge of the factors influencing outcomes, such as the transition from school to work and of “what works”. The ILO now needs to apply this knowledge to its development cooperation work.
- The ILO’s relations with constituents and **its specialisation of youth employment issues** are an asset that can be used to position the organization as the global leader in this field.
- More could be done to **promote work quality issues**, including the promotion of youth rights at work, formalization, youth wages and conditions, and occupational safety and health.



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Recommendations

Recommendations

- 1** Operationalize the lessons learned from ILO's past knowledge development work in the design of development cooperation projects and in the refinement of ILO tools and products. Focus new knowledge development work on responses to the situation of youth in the changing world of work.
- 2** Give more attention to developing and applying practical tools and approaches that promote employment quality and equity.
- 3** Give more attention to the cost-effectiveness of interventions in future "what works" research and pilot projects and programmes.
- 4** Review and find opportunities to support youth engagement, especially at country-level in policy and programme development.
- 5** In the development and appraisal phase of new development cooperation projects, ensure that all relevant technical inputs are obtained, and ensure that the right choices are made in how project outcomes can best be achieved and what ILO programme approaches should be applied.
- 6** Establish a mechanism to systematically measure ex post the impact and sustainability of the ILO's policy and institutional development work in youth employment.
- 7** Renew the Call for Action, stress the importance of continuing action, and update its messages to address emerging issues in the youth labour market and the need to prepare young people for the changing future of work context.



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