



► High-level independent evaluation of ILO's strategies and actions for promoting decent work in the rural economy (with a focus on rural employment), 2016-2023

Synthesis review of ILO project evaluations

April 2023



Copyright © International Labour Organization 2023

First published 2023

Publications of the International Labour Organization enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to ILO Publications (Rights and Licensing), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: rights@ilo.org. The International Labour Office welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with a reproduction rights organization may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit www.ifrro.org to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

High-level independent evaluation of ILO's strategies and actions for promoting decent work in the rural economy (with a focus on rural employment), 2016-2023
Synthesis review of ILO project evaluations

ISBN 9789220395691 (web PDF)

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the ILO of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

Information on ILO publications and digital products can be found at: www.ilo.org/publns.

Printed in Switzerland

Preface

This report was prepared as an input into the High-level independent evaluation of ILO's strategies and actions for promoting decent work in the rural economy (with a focus on rural employment), 2016-2023. The study was prepared by Dr Julio Sa Rego, independent international evaluation consultant and managed by Patricia Vidal Hurtado, Evaluation Officer at EVAL. Guy Thijs, Director of EVAL, provided oversight to ensure the quality and independence of the study.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY	2
▶ Sampling of evaluation reports	2
▶ Data coding	4
▶ Data systematisation and analysis	4
▶ Rating of projects	6
▶ Limitations	7
3. BACKGROUND CHALLENGES FOR RURAL ECONOMIES	8
4. KEY FINDINGS	11
▶ Relevance of the ILO's interventions for decent work in rural economies	11
▶ Coherence of the ILO's interventions for decent work in rural economies	16
▶ Efficiency of the ILO's interventions for decent work in rural economies	20
▶ Effectiveness of the ILO's interventions for decent work in rural economies	26
▶ Impacts of the ILO's interventions for decent work in rural economies	31
▶ Sustainability of ILO's assessed interventions for decent work in rural economies	33
5. CONCLUSION: LESSONS FROM THE ILO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR DECENT WORK IN RURAL ECONOMIES	36
6. OVERALL ASSESSMENT	38
7. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SYNTHESIS REVIEW OF EVALUATION REPORTS	39
ANNEX A: BREAKDOWN OF RATINGS OF PROJECTS	40
ANNEX B: SAMPLE OF EVALUATION REPORTS	41

1. Introduction

The promotion of decent work (DW) in rural economies has been part of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) general efforts to advance economic and working conditions for all through the progress of labour standards. It has integrated the ILO's overall strategic framework for over a decade, as materialised under Outcome 5 (DW in the rural economy) for the biennia 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 and under Output 3.2 (Increased capacity of member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating DW in the rural economy), of Outcome 3, for the biennia 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 of the P&B.

The Evaluation Office is now undertaking a high-level independent evaluation (HLE) of the ILO's strategies and actions to promote DW in the rural economy (with a focus on rural employment and DW) in view of appraising their relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, orientation towards impact and sustainability of outcomes of interventions. This HLE was endorsed by the Governing Body in November 2022 to ultimately inform decision-making for the next strategic framework with findings, lessons, and good practices.

In the frame of this process, the ILO has commissioned the present synthesis review of the promotion of DW in rural economies to feed the HLE with qualitative inputs. The HLE is being carried out by a separate evaluation team working with separate TORs. The intention of this assignment is to provide input as closely aligned as possible to the evaluation framework of the full HLE.

This review is a qualitative meta-synthesis of selected evaluation reports of the ILO's development cooperation programmes and projects and RBSA-funded interventions related to employment and DW in rural areas. It aims at identifying findings, lessons learnt, and good practices to support triangulate the HLE findings and provide the ILO with relevant qualitative data on field interventions.

The report first presents a background of the observed realities and needs of rural areas according to the reviewed evaluations. This background establishes a baseline to support the findings of each DAC criterion sequentially presented. The report moves to present the findings related to the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts, and sustainability of the ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies. The report concludes with lessons from these past interventions and outlines main recommendations for future ones. It is important to emphasise that the findings from this report are bound to the universe of the reviewed sample. They highlight specific trends and arbitrary generalisations must be pursued with caution.

2. Approach and methodology

The synthesis review consists of a desk review of evaluation reports with recognised qualitative methodologies. It covers the period 2016-2022. Dominant narratives were drawn from a content analysis methodology and represented by visual mind maps to delineate the key findings, lessons learned, and good practices of the ILO's field interventions for DW in rural economies, with a focus on rural employment. The OECD-DAC evaluation framework was used to appraise the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, orientation towards impact, and sustainability of the outcomes of selected interventions through the analytical review of respective evaluation reports available at the ILO Evaluation Database ([i-eval Discovery](#)). Technically, the evaluation reports were deconstructed with a tailored coding system to analytically reconstruct the mechanisms underpinning these ILO interventions.

SAMPLING OF EVALUATION REPORTS

The sample is composed of 32 evaluation reports in English, French, and Spanish, from which five are RBSA-funded interventions. The sample covers different evaluation timings, evaluation nature geographic regions, themes, timeframes, and budgets in view of a balanced representation according to evaluation report availability (Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4, and Figure 1). The main selection criteria were the relevance and quality of information of evaluation reports. The criteria of exclusion were the overrepresentation of themes, and the preference for final to mid-term evaluation reports. Geography and temporal coverage were subsidiary used to respect the proportions of the baseline list only.

TABLE 1: EVALUATION TIMINGS AND NATURE DISTRIBUTION

	Final	Interim	Total
Independent	23	0	23
Internal	3	6	9
TOTAL	26	6	32

TABLE 2: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Regions	Distribution
Africa	28%
Arab states	13%
Asia	28%
Europe	9%
Inter-Regional	9%
Latin America	13%

TABLE 3: BUDGET DISTRIBUTION

Budget	Distribution
Projects over 5 million USD	13%
Projects under 5 million USD	87%

TABLE 4: TEMPORAL COVERAGE

Year of evaluation	Distribution
2016	9%
2017	9%
2018	9%
2019	25%
2020	7%
2021	19%
2022	22%

FIGURE 1: THEMATIC TAG CLOUD (ACCORDING TO TAGS OF EVALUATION REPORTS)



The sample of evaluation reports was obtained via an iterative selection mechanism of inclusions and exclusions based on logical and thematic criteria, discussed and agreed with the ILO Evaluation Office. This approach followed the standard methodology for synthesis reviews from the ILO Evaluation Office.

First, a list of 46 evaluation reports was compiled by EVAL with a targeted search based on outcomes and output indicators in addition to relevant keywords in the i-eval Discovery database¹. The outcomes and outputs were the Outcomes 5 and 3, with Outputs 3.2, 1.4, 4.2, 4.3, 5.3, 6.2, and 6.4. The keywords used were rural, rural economy, agriculture, mining, farm, plantation, fishery, informal, and vulnerable, with inflected forms in their respective English, French, and Spanish translations.

Fourteen evaluation reports were excluded based on the degree of relevance of the information provided and the overrepresentation of themes, with a preference for final evaluations over mid-terms, as final evaluation reports tend to comprise more robust information on results. The final list of 32 selected reports is presented in Annex B.

DATA CODING

Selected evaluation reports were uploaded to a content analysis software (Atlas.ti) to facilitate data management and analysis. No prior theoretical framework was used for coding to prevent analytical bias and privilege inductive constructions of reasonings. Reports were coded uniquely according to the nature of the identified content – (i) national realities and needs; (ii) development objectives; (iii) immediate objectives; (iv) inputs and labour standards; (v) intervention models; (vi) means of action; (vii) beneficiaries; (viii) products; (ix) areas of intervention; (x) lessons learned; (xi) good practices –, the ILO's areas of work on the promotion of rural employment – *(i) employment and economic growth, including sustainable enterprises (in this case SMSE), (ii) promotion of international labour standards, (iii) social protection and (iv) social dialogue* –, and the OECD-DAC evaluation framework – *(i) relevance; (ii) coherence; (iii) effectiveness; (iv) efficiency; (v) impact; and (vi) sustainability*.

DATA SYSTEMATISATION AND ANALYSIS

Data systematisation first focused on the establishment of an inductive analytical framework from the coded data. This analytical framework consisted of relevant typologies to establish an analytical baseline for the synthesis review, as presented below:

- ▶ Typology of realities and needs;
- ▶ Typology of interventions' finality (i.e., objectives²);
- ▶ Typology of means of action; and
- ▶ Typology of beneficiaries.

The analysis was then grounded in the emerging pattern of relationships between codes, quotes, and typologies. Meta-narratives were finally developed from these emerging patterns of relationships guided by the research questions identified below.

1 This first selection of reports also included the quality of the evaluation reports. For that, EVAL used the quality ratings from the ex-post quality assurance process. It should be noted that this rating was not available for reports completed prior to 2019.

2 The term finality has been preferred over objective. The finality is theoretically the immediate objective of the interventions, i.e., their purpose. Nonetheless, insufficiencies in the design of the reviewed interventions resulted in the definition of immediate objectives that does not necessarily correspond to outcomes as expected by the logical framework. They sometimes relate to outputs or are to be found in the development objective category. Occasionally, the logical framework is absent or does not precisely correspond to what is expected in project design practice, and the immediate objective is presented in an introductory narrative section.

TABLE 5: CATEGORISED MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Background	What are the observed realities and needs in terms of decent work in rural economies?
Relevance (Needs response)	▶ To what extent ILO DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions are relevant to the needs of Member States, constituents, and workers regarding decent work in rural economies? ▶ To what extent ILO DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions are relevant to the needs of vulnerable groups in rural areas? ▶ To what extent ILO DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions are responsive to global and local crises (i.e., armed conflicts, natural disasters, climate change, Covid-19) affecting rural areas?
Coherence (Compatibility)	▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are aligned with the relevant P&Bs, and with an overall strategy of the ILO on promoting rural employment and addressing DW deficits? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are embedded in ILO's normative and social dialogue mandate? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are aligned with relevant international labour standards? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are compatible with national strategies and CPOs, especially DWCPs? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are coherent with UNDAFs/UNSDCFs and the SDG targets?
Efficiency (Resources use and synergies)	▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are delivered/achieved in an economic and timely way? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are adequately monitored and evaluated? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are implemented in coordination with different ILO's departments and offices? ▶ To what extent tripartite constituents are engaged in the implementation of DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are implemented in partnership with other UN agencies, multilateral bodies, IFIs, etc.? ▶ To what extent the delivery of DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and other crises?
Effectiveness (Achievements)	▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy achieve their outputs and outcomes? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy contribute to gender equality and disability inclusion in rural areas? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy are beneficial to vulnerable groups?

Impact (Transformative effects)	▶ What are the principal types of products developed by DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy achieve their development objectives? Which countries and sectors could serve as example? ▶ To what extent the ILO's intervention models contribute to promote decent work and respond to the needs of rural areas? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy contribute place human-centred rural development at the core of national and international development strategies? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy contribute to advance ILO's four-pillars mandate on rural employment? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy contribute to ILO's outreach, credibility, and comparative advantage in the promotion of rural employment? ▶ To what extent DC programmes/projects and RBSA interventions related to decent work in rural economy contribute to advance the ILO's mandate on just transition?
Sustainability (Use lasting)	▶ To what extent ILO's intervention models contribute to maximise national and local ownership? ▶ To what extent outputs delivered are likely to be used and replicated? ▶ To what extent outputs delivered contribute to build national capacities related to the promotion of decent work in rural economy?

RATING OF PROJECTS

Evaluation reports were also rated to complement the qualitative analysis. Ratings were applied to each DAC criterion according to EVAL's six-point scale to score reports and examine the responsiveness of each evaluation report to the research questions. These ratings will be used by the High-level Evaluation. The ratings are presented in annex A.

TABLE 6: EVAL'S SIX-POINT SCALE TO SCORE REPORTS

Highly unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Somewhat unsatisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
1	2	3	4	5	6
Expected results have not been attained, and there have been important shortcomings. Resources have not been utilized effectively and/or efficiently.	Objectives have not been attained and the level of performance shows major shortcomings and is not considered fully acceptable in the view of ILO national tripartite constituents, partners and beneficiaries.	Objectives have been partially attained and the level of performance shows minor shortcomings and is not considered fully acceptable in the view of ILO national tripartite constituents, partners and beneficiaries.	Objectives have been partially attained and the expected level of performance could be for the most part considered coherent with expectations of national tripartite constituents, beneficiaries and of the ILO itself.	Objectives have been mostly attained and the expected level of performance can be considered coherent with expectations of national tripartite constituents, beneficiaries and of the ILO itself.	ILO performance has produced outcomes which go beyond the expectations of national tripartite constituents, beneficiaries, and the ILO, with expressed specific comparative advantages and added value, and emerging best practices.

LIMITATIONS

This synthesis review has been limited by two quality factors at the intervention design and evaluation levels. First, the design of interventions tends to be weak and unclear. Interventions may sometimes lack logical frameworks and theory of change³, and often present deficient ones. Objectives, outcomes, and outputs are not necessarily well defined, nor are their concepts understood. They tend to be catch-all, mixed up, and occasionally misleading. The RBSA intervention Jobs for Peace and Resilience⁴, for instance, has a misleading title related to employment, while the objective relates to environmentally resilient communities.

Likewise, evaluation reports have conceptual shortcomings. Evaluators are not totally confident with the application of the OECD-DAC evaluation framework. Confusion regarding the difference between the criteria of relevance and coherence, the criteria of effectiveness and efficiency, and the criteria of effectiveness and impact is common. In addition, there is a tendency for evaluators to justify one criterion by the other, such as affirming that an intervention is relevant because it is effective. Finally, findings may be affirmative without substantiating the argument.

3 Inclusive Economic Recovery through Sustainable Enterprises in the Informal Economies of Fiji, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu (RAS/20/53/UND).

4 Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in rural areas, especially in conflict-affected and economical lagging regions, have equitable and enhanced access to more and better jobs and expanded product markets (LKA/16/02/RBS).

▶ 3. Background challenges for rural economies

Rural economies appear to face seven interconnected challenges that ultimately affect livelihoods and lead to poverty and pressure to exodus

The majority of the world's poor are concentrated in rural areas. Agricultural wage workers tend to occupy the bottom of the social pyramid⁵, while peasants are confronted with extreme vulnerability despite being engaged in productive farming activities. In Haiti, for instance, 70% of farm families are in situation of poverty and complementary income from non-agricultural activities is often needed⁶. Agriculture undeniably has the potential to provide livelihoods and security, through the transformation of nature into food and materials, but it is also severely subjected to uncertainties that may affect its productive capacities.

Aridity and water scarcity are one of the major issues, especially in marginal drylands that are naturally on the edge of arability. Egypt is mostly occupied by deserts and agriculture must be squeezed along the banks of the Nile River⁷, while Jordan faces significant temperature increases and precipitation decreases⁸. Other communities are periodically hit by extreme weather events and natural disasters, such as in Cambodia wherein agriculture is challenged by cyclones, flooding, and drought episodes⁹. Climate uncertainties and variability threaten harvests and ultimately jeopardise community livelihoods.

Peasants are usually the most vulnerable populations. They tend to rely on rudimentary agricultural techniques with insufficient yields to counter climate uncertainties and variability. These productivity challenges expose them to food shortages, such as those reported in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR). There, the dependence on subsistence farming is correlated with the temporary and seasonal situations of food insecurity⁴. Environmental and productivity challenges are therefore intertwined and have been progressively amplified under the effects of climate change. Unpredictability and extreme weather events are becoming more recurrent and destructive of arable lands as observed in Afghanistan¹⁰. Agriculture is evolving into an extremely high-risk investment.

The lack of adequate insurance systems for rural activities does not allow this risk to be absorbed. The insurance business model is normally not oriented towards the coverage of rural households, as reported in Uganda⁸, and rural areas are chronically underserved by financial services¹¹. This situation limits the capacity of rural communities to access insurance products and loans to protect and develop their activities. For instance, female rural entrepreneurs experience difficulty accessing financial services, in Tunisia, due to the inadequacy of financial products for their needs¹². Investments are therefore restricted at a personal level.

5 National Rural Employment Strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas (LAO/16/01/CHE).

6 Combat child labour in domestic work and the worst forms in Haiti (HAI/14/04/NOR).

7 Egypt youth employment (EYE): Jobs and private sector development in rural Egypt (EGY/17/06/NOR).

8 Job creation for Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities through green works and agricultural industry (JOR/19/02/AUS).

9 INSURED-Partnership with Insurance for Rural Resilience & Economic Development (GLO/18/15/IFA).

10 Road to Jobs: Bringing decent work to rural households of the Northern Provinces in Afghanistan (AFG/14/01/SID).

11 Building capacity for social compliance of investments in agriculture in Africa (GLO/12/08/AAT).

12 Programme d'appui à l'autonomisation économique des femmes rurales (TUN/18/01/CAN).

The inadequate access to financial services also restrains the expansion of local infrastructures. Decent road systems are often rare, as reported in Timor Leste, while they are critical to break the isolation of rural territories and support their socio-economic development¹³. Access to services and markets is prevented, and communities find it challenging to sell their production, purchase goods and productive inputs, as well as benefit from quality education and healthcare¹⁴. This panorama is, of course, adverse for the development of the private sector; rural populations struggle to access funds, transport, and skill development opportunities.

The development of the private sector also encounters challenges by cultural issues. Evaluations have reported on several facets of peasantry worldviews related to the reminiscence of the ideals of tradition and continuity. In Pakistan, the ancient moral arrangement between landlords and Hari peasants (tenant farmers according to the 1950 Sindh Tenancy Agreement) are still in force. Hari peasants are bonded to the landlords by a strict social hierarchical patronage system and exploitation is accepted as a form of due retribution¹⁵. In Peru, peasants from Ayacucho demonstrate resistance to change, grounded in distrust towards urbanites and non-indigenous practices and technologies¹⁶. These cultural traits may hinder the organisational and technological innovations needed to develop the private sector in rural areas.

Furthermore, culture may play a significant role in shaping the available opportunities for different populational groups in several rural communities. Gender-based roles are often customary, with women in subordinated positions¹⁷, and gender equality advocacy may be perceived as an acculturation attempt with foreign concepts, as expressed by employers and workers in Zambian tobacco farms¹⁸. Similarly, child labour may be culturally common, even in upper-middle income countries such as Türkiye. Turkish national statistics reveal that agriculture is the most important employer of working children in the country, with negative consequences regarding schooling¹⁹.

Cultural traits may thus lead to some DW deficiencies in rural areas, such as the prevalence of child labour and gender discrimination and inequality. They also retro-feed the stagnant general socio-economic environment challenged by environmental, productivity, financial, and infrastructural issues. Consequently, rural areas are characterised by high rates of unemployment and informality, as well as limited social and labour protection. Rural workers may, for instance, face unacceptable forms of work with precarious working conditions, no social security, and daily exposure to the occupational risks of pesticides and other agrochemical products⁴.

The common response of social dialogue to improve these DW deficiencies in rural areas may nonetheless be ineffective. Peasant families culturally work in seclusion from each other and are reticent to collective movements. Unionisation is then feeble in rural areas when not stigmatised, such as in Colombia. There, an evaluation reported the existence of anti-union attitudes with aggressivity towards union members²⁰.

This general environment therefore encourages the exodus of the young population; their homeland rural areas do not offer opportunities to work and make a decent living. This results in a rural youth drain towards urban centres and the loss of the future active force of rural areas, as observed in Haiti; educated rural adolescents have no use for their productive skills and end up migrating to cities⁵.

13 R4D: Roads for Development-Phase II (TLS/16/03/AUS).

14 Enhancing Rural Access - Rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance (TIM/11/01/EEC).

15 Livelihood restoration and protection and sustainable empowerment of vulnerable peasant communities in Sindh Province (PAK/13/01/HSF).

16 Inclusión económica y desarrollo sostenible de productores de Granos Andinos en zonas rurales de extreme pobreza (PER/14/52/UND).

17 Decent work for food security and sustainable rural development in Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia (INS/13/50/LUX).

18 DWiT: Addressing Decent Work Deficits in the Tobacco Sector of Zambia and Tanzania Projects (ZMB/18/02/RBS).

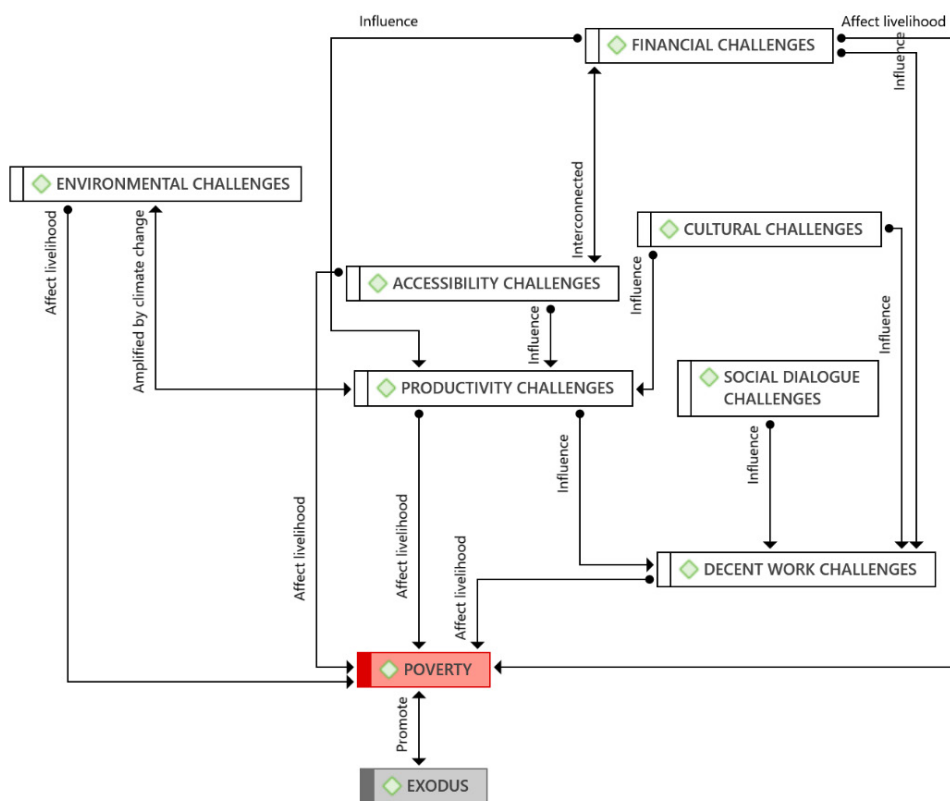
19 An integrated model for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in seasonal agriculture hazelnut harvesting in Türkiye (TUR/15/02/CAB).

20 Strengthening of rural trade union organization in post-conflict Colombia (COL/17/01/NOR).

Nonetheless and despite the global picture of poverty related to rural areas, rural communities constitute an important portion of developing countries' populations and are still responsible for sustaining urban life with family agriculture, such as in Mozambique wherein almost 70% of the Mozambican population are smallholder farmers. Thus, the implementation of interventions tailored to the challenges of rural areas is needed to reverse the context of poverty and improve rural livelihoods.

The evaluation reports permitted to identify seven interconnected challenges that affect livelihoods and lead to poverty and pressure to exodus in rural areas (Figure 2). Rural communities face serious environmental challenges. They are vulnerable to climate uncertainties and variability that subject them to extreme weather events and natural disasters. These environmental challenges undermine productivity and expose rural communities to food insecurity. In addition, the productivity challenges are fed by the persistence of traditional subsistence farming approaches. This derives from cultural traits of peasantry, grounded in the ideal of tradition and continuity, and may even lead to the acceptance of exclusive gendered social roles and child labour.

FIGURE 2: SEVEN CHALLENGES FOR RURAL ECONOMIES IDENTIFIED IN EVALUATION REPORTS



The consequence is the observation of DW deficits, with high rates of unemployment, informality and limited access to social and labour protection. Additionally, the fragmentation of workers together with feeble unionisation rates and animosity towards unions create challenges at the social dialogue level. Finally, the limited accessibility caused by a lack of infrastructures and adequate financial services promotes isolation and deficient care by public services. These appear to be the needs that should be addressed by the ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies.

4. Key findings

RELEVANCE OF THE ILO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR DECENT WORK IN RURAL ECONOMIES

Assessed interventions are found to be relevant when they address the undermining causes of precarious livelihoods and improve the living standards of vulnerable populations in rural areas.

Targeted rural areas are characterised by precarious livelihoods due to cultural, environmental, structural, and technical issues that limit productivity and accessibilities. The ILO shifted its business as usual to tackle these issues by converting to a more livelihood-oriented approach, rather than the traditional rights-based development approach.

The livelihood approach is aligned with the idea of capabilities as opposed to sole notional rights²¹. Having the right does not necessarily imply the capability to exercise that right. The idea of capabilities then intersects with the concepts of 'negative' and 'positive' liberty²². Positive liberty refers to the ability of individuals to control their own lives and achieve their full potential, while negative liberty refers to the absence of external interference or coercion, allowing individuals to pursue their goals without interference from others. Livelihood-oriented interventions therefore aim at directly enhancing people's access to the resources and tools that enable them to lead a fulfilling life.

Responsiveness of the ILO's interventions to the needs in rural economies

As per the assessed initiatives, the ILO intervenes to address environmental, cultural, structural, and technical gaps that hinder productivity and accessibility in rural areas.

The ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies, assessed as part of this review, are sui generis and packaged to increase the livelihoods of the targeted communities. They respond to the needs in rural areas by bridging the observed gaps. Projects may introduce new seeds to enhance environmental resilience²³, promote family counselling to shift child labour culture²⁴, build roads to improve the physical structure of the territory²⁵, or deliver trainings to strengthen market development techniques²⁶. Overall, projects intervene in environmental, cultural, structural, and technical dimensions to leverage productivity and accessibilities²⁷ that ultimately deprive livelihoods in rural areas.

21 Sen, Amartya (2001). Development as freedom. Oxford New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780192893307.

22 Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty." In Four Essays on Liberty, edited by Isaiah Berlin, 118-172. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969. ISBN 9780192810342.

23 Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in rural areas, especially in conflict-affected and economical lagging regions, have equitable and enhanced access to more and better jobs and expanded product markets (LKA/16/02/RBS).

24 An integrated model for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in seasonal agriculture hazelnut harvesting in Türkiye (TUR/15/02/CAB).

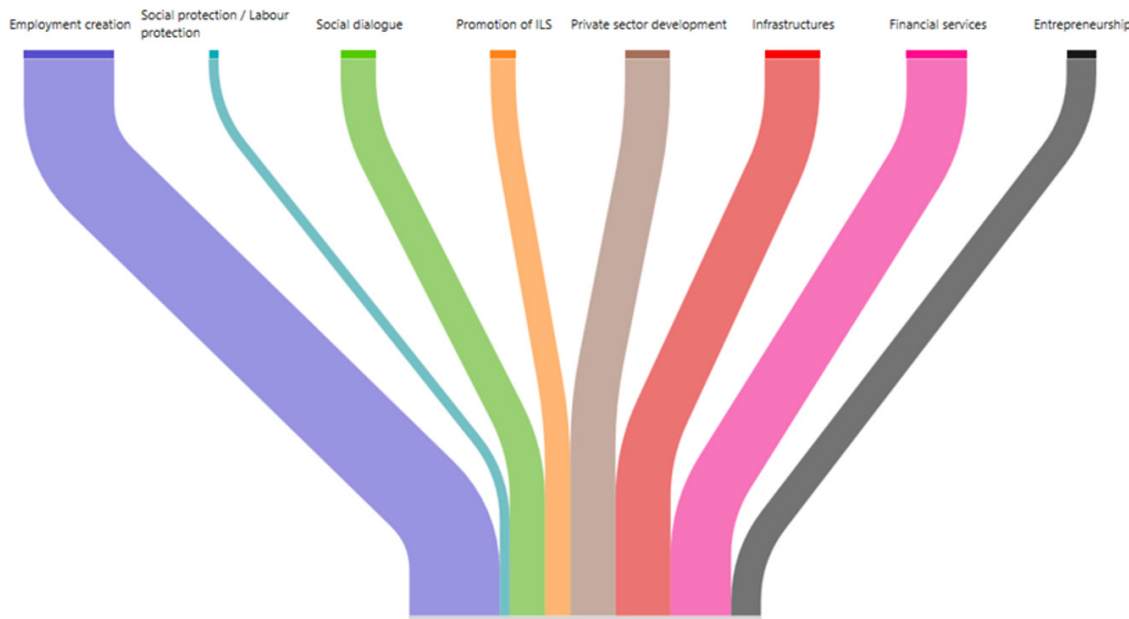
25 Enhancing Rural Access - Rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance (TIM/11/01/EEC).

26 Inclusión económica y desarrollo sostenible de productores de Granos Andinos en zonas rurales de extreme pobreza (PER/14/52/UND).

27 Accessibilities are understood holistically to comprise tangible and intangible dimensions, such as accessibility to markets, to public services, to financial services, or to decent work.

Most of the assessed projects adopt a multidimensional approach to consider the interconnectivity of the challenges. They deal with different thematic areas (Figure 3), under diverse modalities of action.

FIGURE 3: MAIN THEMATIC AREAS ADDRESSED



The RBSA Jobs for Peace and Resilience project in Sri Lanka²⁸, for instance, aimed at building the resilience of disaster-vulnerable communities and showcasing the ILO's competencies in the domain of climate change adaptation. It developed a multidimensional approach that integrated livelihood resilience into land and water management infrastructures. It foresaw the planning and construction of water tanks with participatory assessments, the introduction of flood-resilient farming technologies through capacity-building, and the strengthening of relevant value chains to expand markets for local products with studies and awareness. It was a fine-tuned mix of resilient infrastructures, enhancement of productivity, and the development of the private sector from a perspective of just transition.

In the same vein, the intervention TUR/15/02/CAB aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour in seasonal agriculture in hazelnut harvesting in Türkiye. Child labour is an issue in Turkish agriculture, mostly correlated with seasonal working family migrations. The project mainly planned to build the strategic organisational capacities of local and national institutions, deploy direct interventions with families and children through counselling, and raise awareness within the supply chain of hazelnuts. The project was a public-private partnership with the top tier of the hazelnut value chain in Europe, the Association of Chocolate, Biscuit and Confectionery Industries of Europe, that expected to use the buyer position to influence its hazelnut supply chain in Türkiye.

It is also worth looking at the INSURED project in Indonesia, Cambodia and Uganda²⁹. It aimed at fostering and promoting agricultural and climate insurance to cope with the environmental risk of variability. It proposed intervening at political, sectorial, and community levels to promote climate insurance strategies and facilitate its access to farmers with assessments, policy recommendations, trainings, technical assistance, knowledge sharing, and advocacy.

²⁸ LKA/16/02/RBS.

²⁹ GLO/18/15/IFA.

Finally, livelihood-oriented projects aimed at promoting DW in rural areas provide opportunities for innovative, labour-intensive interventions. These interventions are grounded in the concept of pump-priming public works to stimulate economic activity and create employment opportunities. The ERA intervention³⁰ presents a clear case-study.

The project intended to rehabilitate rural roads with local labour-intensive employments in Timor Leste. It planned to strengthen the capacities of contractors in human resource and contract management, invest in rural road rehabilitation, and employ many unskilled rural workers while simultaneously offering them the possibility to upskill through learning-by-doing. The project had a synergetic intervention logic that permitted creating rural employment and generating direct income, developing the local private sector and ensuring a sustainable work demand, and constructing infrastructure and improving rural accessibilities.

These **interventions appear to have different finalities or objectives**³¹, such as training contractors to build roads, advocating for climate insurance, and publishing studies to enhance the knowledge of specific value chains as reviewed above. Despite this variety, however, a systematic review permitted to reduce their finalities into a typology of five objectives that are leveraged by four means of action (Figure 4). The identified objectives relate to the dimensions of **awareness, capacities, knowledge base, infrastructures, and the economic environment**. **Changes in these dimensions (e.g., increases) are mostly promoted by a combination of the different means of actions** that transform inputs into outputs through activities and produce the outcomes (i.e., objectives). The main means of action identified in this synthesis review are (i) the development of capacities, (ii) the production and dissemination of knowledge, (iii) the provision of direct technical assistance, and (iv) advice on policies. More details follow:

- ▶ The development of capacities aims at building and maintaining the capabilities of individuals and organisations such as training farmers in new agricultural technologies³². It refers to functional and technical activities oriented towards increasing the skills and competencies of individuals, in addition to supporting organisations to fulfil their missions.
- ▶ The production and dissemination of knowledge aim at enhancing global and individual knowledge notably through publications, studies, and informative materials, such as the preparation of country briefs on young women's employment and empowerment in the rural economy³³. It refers to research, analysis, and communication activities oriented towards creating scientific, technical, informative, and promotional products.
- ▶ The provision of direct technical assistance aims at providing constituents, the private sector, and communities with targeted technical support and guidance to, for instance, design climate insurance products³⁴. It refers to a set of customised interventions to directly develop normative or technical solutions.
- ▶ The advice on policies aims at supporting improvements in legal and regulatory frameworks (i.e., plans, strategies, norms, law, and policies) such as policy proposals to promote fundamental labour rights in agriculture³⁵. It refers to advisory activities oriented towards supporting constituents to promote an enabling economic environment.

30 TIM/11/01/EEC.

31 The discussion about objective is presented in the methodology section.

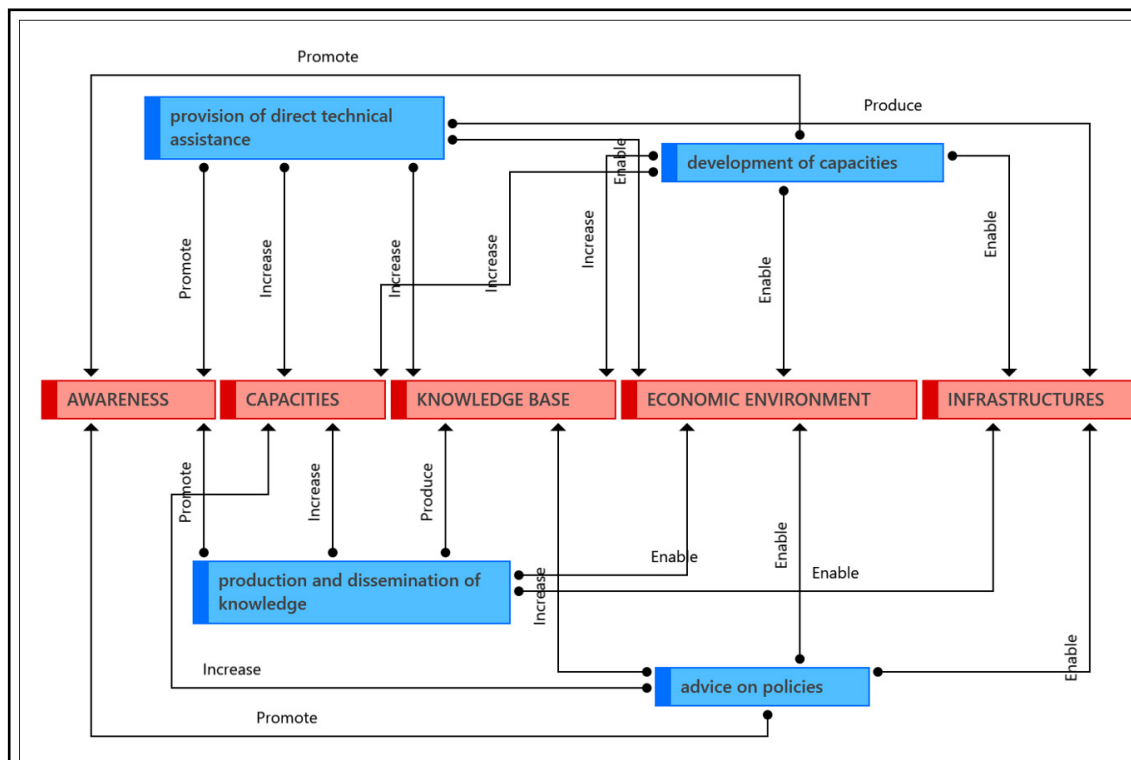
32 LKA/16/02/RBS.

33 GLO/14/24/IFA.

34 GLO/18/15/IFA.

35 Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Morocco's Agricultural Sector (MAR/16/01/USA).

FIGURE 4: OBJECTIVES AND MEANS OF ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE SAMPLE OF ASSESSED REPORTS



Responsiveness of the ILO's interventions to the four thematic pillars of decent work in rural economies

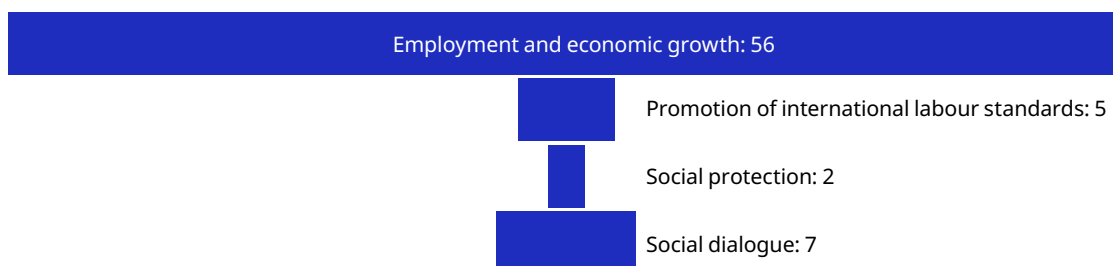
Assessed interventions contributed mainly to the employment and economic growth pillar

The ILO's livelihood-oriented approach for the promotion of DW in rural economies has unsurprisingly privileged the contribution to the thematic pillar of employment and economic growth, as it directly relates to the increase in community livelihoods [Figure 5]. The other three pillars – promotion of international labour standards, social protection, and social dialogue – are related to rights and were treated more subsidiary, as normative backgrounds.

The project TUR/15/02/CAB in Türkiye provides a clear example in that sense. The activities to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in seasonal agriculture in hazelnut harvesting were implicitly guided by the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), but the intervention was not explicitly about promoting these international labour standards. They were not part of the intervention's logical framework and theory of change.

A few projects, however, were found to contribute directly to the rights-based thematic pillars, such as the MAR/16/01/USA in Morocco. This project aimed at promoting effective social dialogue and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work in the agricultural sector. It was expected to develop national and regional tripartite social dialogue mechanisms, improve the capacity of constituents in collective bargaining, and give voice to formal and informal workers. The project described the ILO business as usual of tripartite social dialogue through collective bargaining to enhance workers' rights.

FIGURE 5: CONTRIBUTION OF ASSESSED INTERVENTIONS TO THE FOUR STRATEGIC THEMATIC PILLARS



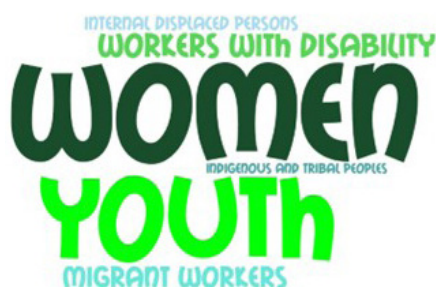
Responsiveness of the ILO's interventions to the needs of vulnerable groups in rural areas

Assessed interventions responded to the needs of the young rural population by targeting the increase in livelihood opportunities and were concerned with gender-based restrictions affecting female workers. Disability inclusion was though insufficiently addressed.

Rural populations are the main targeted beneficiaries of the reviewed interventions, whether they are peasants, agricultural wage workers, or non-agricultural workers, to a lesser extent. Most of them may be considered vulnerable due to the general exposure of their lifeworld to poverty, inaccessibility, and uncertainties, although it is important to acknowledge the existing heterogeneity among the various population groups. Youths are the most exposed to the lack of opportunities and pressures to leave, while women may be restricted to traditional gender-based roles.

The specific needs of the most vulnerable groups in rural areas tended to be addressed in the design of the interventions. The majority of interventions aimed at improving livelihood opportunities, directly benefitting the young population, and were concerned with women's needs, thanks to the ILO's ongoing efforts to mainstream gender equality. These are the two groups that benefited the most from the interventions (Figure 6). For instance, the EYE project in Egypt³⁶ planned to upskill rural young people with entrepreneurial abilities for the emergence of youth-led agricultural MSME and, in Jordan, the project JOR/17/09/NOR planned a nursery service to free women of childcare responsibilities during working hours in greenhouses.

FIGURE 6: RELEVANCE TO THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS AS IDENTIFIED IN ASSESSED REPORTS



36 EGY/17/06/NOR.

The needs of other vulnerable groups were more occasionally considered when relevant to the context of respective projects. Migrant workers and internally displaced populations, for instance, were mainly a concern in the context of armed conflicts with the intention of bridging their skill gaps and promoting employability, such as for Syrian refugees in the Jordanian floriculture sector³⁷ or displaced Afghans in the informal economy of their own country³⁸.

In contrast, workers with disabilities could have been considered more in interventions as their needs transcend specific political contexts. However, only a few projects had an orientation towards disability inclusion, mostly through the design of related performance indicators or training targets³⁹.

Finally, although interventions may not explicitly address the needs of indigenous and tribal peoples, many rural populations in these countries are indigenous. Thus, their needs are intertwined with those of the general rural population.

To conclude, the ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies are relevant to the extent that they sharply respond to the factors undermining livelihoods in rural areas, including their exposure to environmental uncertainties and conflicts, and increase the living standards of rural populations despite their vulnerability.

COHERENCE OF THE ILO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR DECENT WORK IN RURAL ECONOMIES

Coherence of assessed interventions with the ILO's programme and budget framework

Interventions were embedded in the ILO's institutional strategic framework and aligned with its different outcomes.

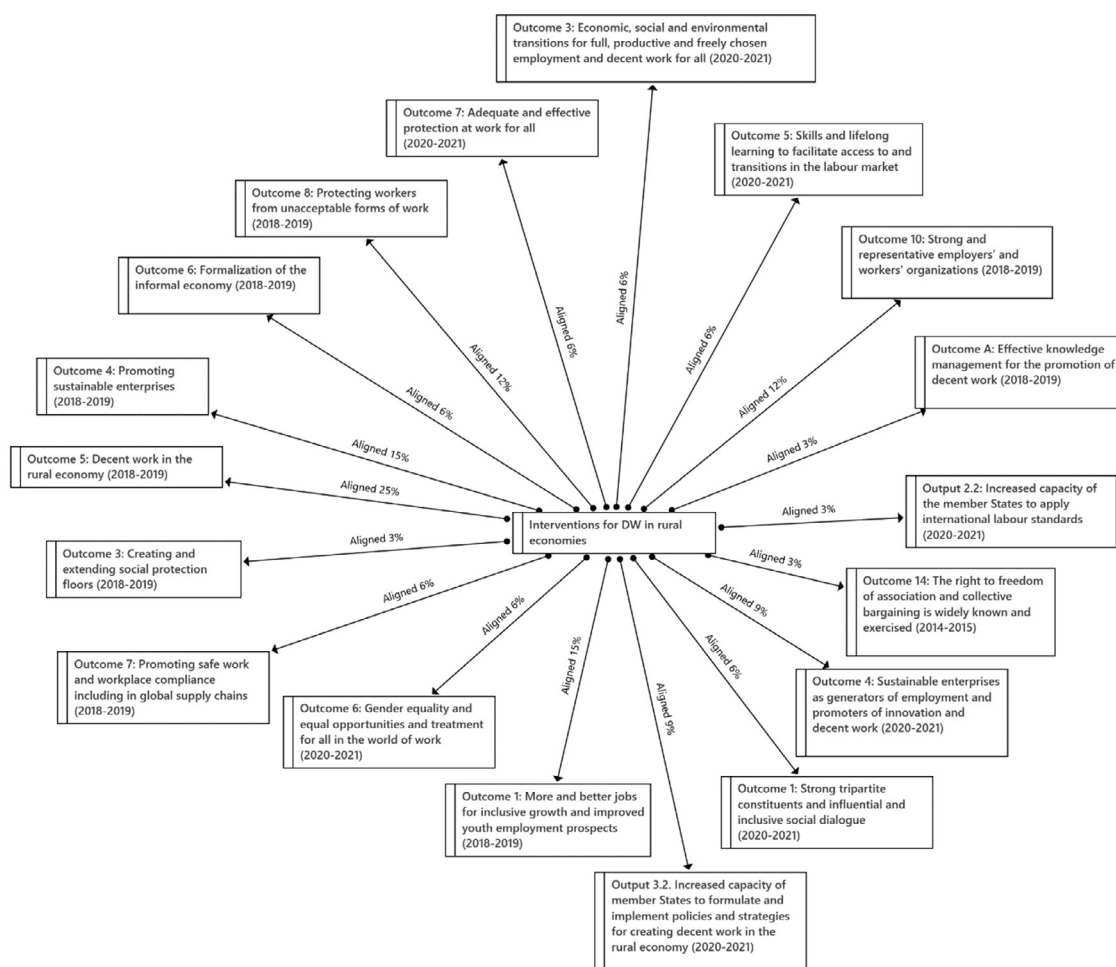
The majority of the assessed interventions on DW in rural economies are designed in the mould of the ILO programme and budget framework. Undeniably, the primary P&B outcomes are those directly associated with DW in rural economies, i.e., Outcome 5 and Output 3.2 according to the biennium in force. Interventions are nonetheless aligned with a myriad of other outcomes (Figure 7), such as Outcome 4 which is related to the promotion of sustainable enterprises under the 2018-2019 biennium, in coherence with their objectives.

37 Decent Work in Jordan's Floriculture Sector (JOR/19/02/AUS).

38 AFG/14/01/SID.

39 i.e., Formation en Approche HIMO Structurée des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises PME) et des Bureaux d'études et réalisation des chantiers écoles (MDG/19/04/IFA).

FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF ALIGNMENT OF ASSESSED INTERVENTIONS WITH ILO'S PROGRAMME AND BUDGET⁴⁰



For instance, the project to build capacity for social risk and impact management in agricultural finance in Africa⁴¹ targeted the incorporation of social concerns in the decision-making process of the financial industry. Its goal was to promote DW opportunities with improved access to adequate financial services provided by sustainable financial enterprises. It was coherent with both Outcome 5 and Outcome 4 of the 2018-2019 biennium.

This diversity of outcomes reflects the multidimensional efforts of the ILO to reduce DW deficits in rural areas and the embeddedness of the reviewed interventions within its institutional strategic framework. There is the understanding that these deficits are generated by a variety of obstacles and the demonstration that the ILO possesses the required strategic framework to address them.

⁴⁰ Percentage of alignment represents the proportion of reports aligned with the outcome over the total number of reports in the sample.

⁴¹ Building capacity for social compliance of investments in agriculture in Africa (GLO/12/08/AAT).

Coherence of the assessed interventions with the ILO's mandate and international labour standards

The ILO's normative and social dialogue mandate fostered tripartite partnerships but the integration of international labour standards in project designs was limited.

Constituents are mostly involved in the management and implementation of the interventions for DW in rural economies. In Argentina, for instance, the OFFSIDE project benefited from the close participation of governmental bodies, employers' organisations, and unions to tackle child labour in agriculture⁴².

This tripartite approach derives directly from the ILO's normative and social dialogue mandate. However, evaluation reports do not provide consistent descriptions of how this mandate contributed to the operationalisation of tripartism, largely because social dialogue was not an explicit priority of the majority of interventions. Thus, the ILO's normative and social dialogue mandate influenced the interventions to the extent that it fostered tripartite partnerships but had a limited impact on their design.

The review identified a weak link of interventions with international labour standards across evaluation reports. Some conventions are sporadically cited, such as the already mentioned ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), but the relationship between interventions and these normative standards is largely unestablished. International labour standards do not seem to have been explicitly integrated into the design of projects. Rather, they were implicit compasses providing a normative frame of action.

Alignment of interventions with national strategies and Country Programme Outcomes

Interventions were strongly aligned with country-level frameworks. They intended to respond to the pragmatic needs of rural communities identified at a national level.

The livelihood orientation of the interventions for DW in rural economies fostered a strong, explicit alignment with strategies and programme outcomes at the country level (e.g., CPOs and DWCPs). For instance, the Jordanian intervention for DW in the floriculture sector⁴³ was aligned with the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2020-2022 in bridging the socio-economic needs of Syrian refugees, but also with the Decent Work Country Programme 2018-2022 in leveraging the potential of employment creation in the private sector. In the same vein, the Colombian intervention⁴⁴ to strengthen unions in post-conflict rural areas was coherently aligned with the 2016 Peace Agreement that proposes labour and social protection for rural workers after the demobilisation of armed groups.

National frameworks, strategies, and action plans were often thoroughly described and coherence with interventions was established. CPOs and DWCPs were mostly cited, sometimes briefly or for pro forma, e.g., "the project benefited from and contributed to [...] the Decent Work Country Programme 2016-2020"⁴⁵, or "the project contributed to the Decent Work Country Programme (2017-2021)"⁴⁶. In any case, the interventions related to DW in rural economies were strongly coherent with country-level frameworks to the extent that they intended to respond to the pragmatic needs of rural communities.

42 Offside Project: Marking the field! Improving the Capacity of Labour and Agriculture (ARG/18/01/USA).

43 JOR/19/02/AUS.

44 COL/17/01/NOR.

45 Increased progress in attaining SDGs through the promotion of Decent Work and inclusive economic growth in rural and urban areas in Azerbaijan (AZE/16/02/RBS).

46 LAO/16/01/CHE.

Coherence of interventions with United Nations' development frameworks

Assessed interventions were aligned with UNDAFs to the extent that both were oriented to respond to agreed national needs for rural areas as reflected in the specific SDGs cited.

United Nations' development frameworks appear to guide the interventions in response to national development priorities. Projects were mostly coherent with United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. For instance, the Road to Jobs project in Afghanistan⁴⁷ was coherent with the first outcome of the national 2014-2018 UNDAF "inclusive, more equitable and sustainable economic growth with reduced dependency on the illicit economy", while the MOZTRABALHA project in Mozambique⁴⁸ was coherent with the second outcome of the national 2017-2020 UNDAF "poor people benefit equitably from sustainable economic transformation". The coherence with UNDAFs derives directly from the interventions' orientation to respond to country needs in terms of rural development. UNDAFs are also designed to respond to national development priorities in consultation with national key institutions and actors.

The interventions were also aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The main cited sustainable development goals were mostly related to the agreed common needs of rural areas (Figure 8). Eleven sustainable development goals stood out in evaluation reports: the SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, directly correlated with the ILO's mandate, but the SDGs also linked with the livelihood challenges identified in targeted rural areas, i.e., SDG 1 on the end of poverty, SDG 2 on the end of hunger, SDG 4 on the access to quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 6 on access to water and sanitation, SDG 7 on access to affordable and clean energy, SDG 10 on reducing inequalities, SDG 12 on ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, and SDG 17 on strengthening partnerships.

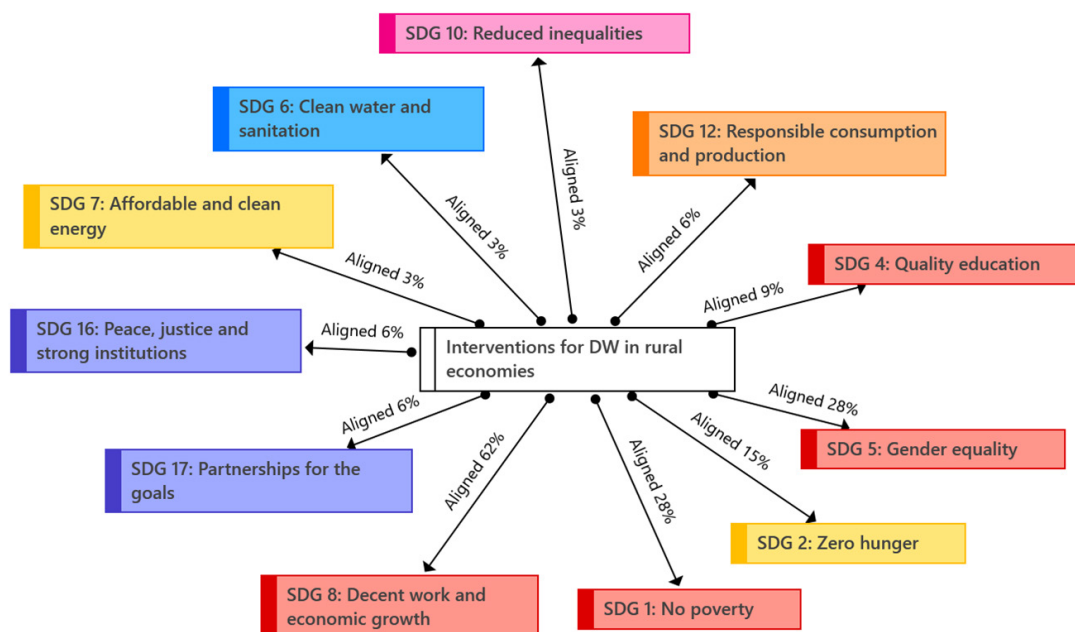
However, SDG 13, on climate action, and SDG 15, on life on land, were not mentioned although they closely relate to modern rural challenges as well. The evaluative judgement of the author suggests that this shortcoming may reflect a lack of familiarity with the rural theme from project designers and evaluators, rather than a lack of alignment of interventions with these two particular SDGs. The sole RBSA Jobs for Peace and Resilience intervention in Sri Lanka⁴⁹, for instance, was designed to strengthen both the community resilience to climate change (SDG 13), with flood-resilient rice seeds, and the conservation of soils (SDG 15), with water management technologies. The evaluation report, however, mentioned the alignment with the SDGs 5, 8, and 10 only.

47 AFG/14/01/SID.

48 Decent work for sustainable and inclusive economic transformation in Mozambique (MOZ/16/01/SWE).

49 LKA/16/02/RBS.

FIGURE 8: PERCENTAGE OF ALIGNMENT OF ASSESSED INTERVENTION WITH THE 2030 AGENDA



In conclusion, interventions were embedded in the ILO's institutional strategic framework, but its normative mandate was not fully mainstreamed into their designs. The livelihood-based approach triggered a stronger alignment with national frameworks and UNDAFs as they all target the response to agreed needs of rural areas.

EFFICIENCY OF THE ILO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR DECENT WORK IN RURAL ECONOMIES

Assessed interventions were mostly efficient when they were grounded in solid internal coordination and external partnerships

The reviewed interventions for DW in rural economies stood out for their implementation strategy based on multi-level coordination and collaboration. They were implemented in tight internal coordination and mobilised national and international partners. This promoted an efficient delivery of activities and products.

Efficiency of internal coordination and decentralisation mechanisms

Decentralisation to country offices increased the coverage of interventions, while the tight coordination with central departments and programmes ensured institutional consistency.

Interventions counted with a tight coordination between country offices and the ILO's central departments and programmes (Figure 9).

FIGURE 9: CONTRIBUTION OF THE ILO'S DEPARTMENTS AND OFFICES TO DW IN RURAL ECONOMIES



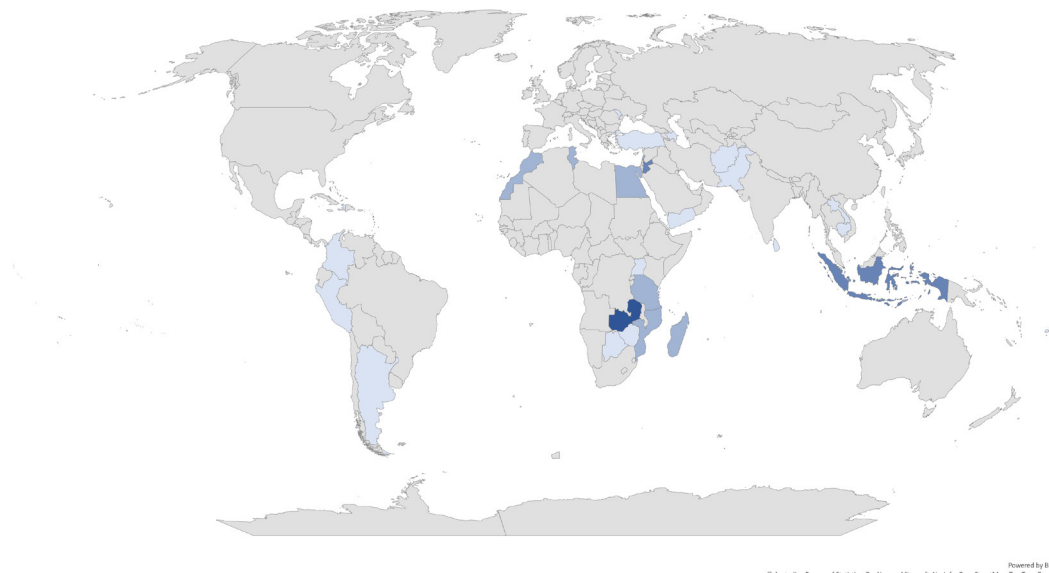
Country offices (emphasised in green) were mostly responsible for the operational implementation, while departments and programmes (emphasised in red) for providing technical backstopping. This shared role permitted to increase the coverage of interventions, tailor them to specific national needs (Cf. Relevance), and ensure a cohesive institutional framework.

The decentralisation of the operational implementation to country offices bestowed the ILO with the capacity to extend its action range to a large number of countries. The ILO benefits from an extensive network of field offices and interventions for DW in rural economies were implemented in all five regions of cooperation: Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean, Arab States, Asia & the Pacific, and Europe & Central Asia (Figure 10). The majority of the reviewed interventions were concentrated in Africa and Asia & the Pacific, driven by Zambia and Indonesia which respectively received four⁵⁰ and three⁵¹ projects.

50 GLO/12/08/AAT, ZAM/13/04/SID, ZAM/14/01/USA, and ZMB/18/02/RBS.

51 GLO/18/15/IFA, IDN/18/02/USA, and INS/13/50/LUX.

FIGURE 10: GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF DW IN RURAL ECONOMIES' AS PER ASSESSED INTERVENTIONS⁵²



Country offices were mostly supported by the ILO's central departments and programmes. EMPLOYMENT and ENTERPRISES detached from this peloton, in coherence with the ILO's overarching goal of promoting employment and economic growth in rural areas. Thus, ILO-CO Algiers implemented a project in Tunisia⁵³ to economically empower entrepreneur rural women with the technical support of ENTERPRISES, while the Regional Office of the Arab States (ROAS) enhanced the employability skills of youths with the technical support of EMPLOYMENT in a project in Yemen⁵⁴.

The synergetic coordination between central services and country offices appears to have leveraged an institutional consistency within interventions through enhanced access to similar performant tools and instruments. Interventions were able to ground their activities in established training, toolkits, and methodologies.

The main identified tools were unsurprisingly related to the promotion of employment and economic growth (Figure 11), such as GET Ahead and Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training. GET Ahead, which stands for Gender and Entrepreneurship Together, is a training package that was for instance used for upskilling women's entrepreneurial aptitudes in Egypt⁵⁵, while SIYB is a management training programme with a focus on starting and improving small businesses as a strategy for creating more and better employment. It was for instance used in Indonesia⁵⁶. Both training packages are supervised by ENTERPRISES.

⁵² Afghanistan (1); Argentina (1); Azerbaijan (1); Botswana (1); Cambodia (1); Colombia (1); Egypt (2); Fiji (1); Haiti (1); Indonesia (3); Jordan (3); Laos (1); Lebanon (2); Madagascar (2); Moldova (1); Morocco (2); Mozambique (2); Pakistan (1); Palau (1); Peru (1); Sri Lanka (1); Tanzania (2); Timor-Leste (2); Tonga (1); Tunisia (2); Turkey (1); Uganda (1); Vanuatu (1); Yemen (1); Zambia (4); Zimbabwe (1).

⁵³ Programme d'appui à l'autonomisation économique des femmes rurales (TUN/18/01/CAN).

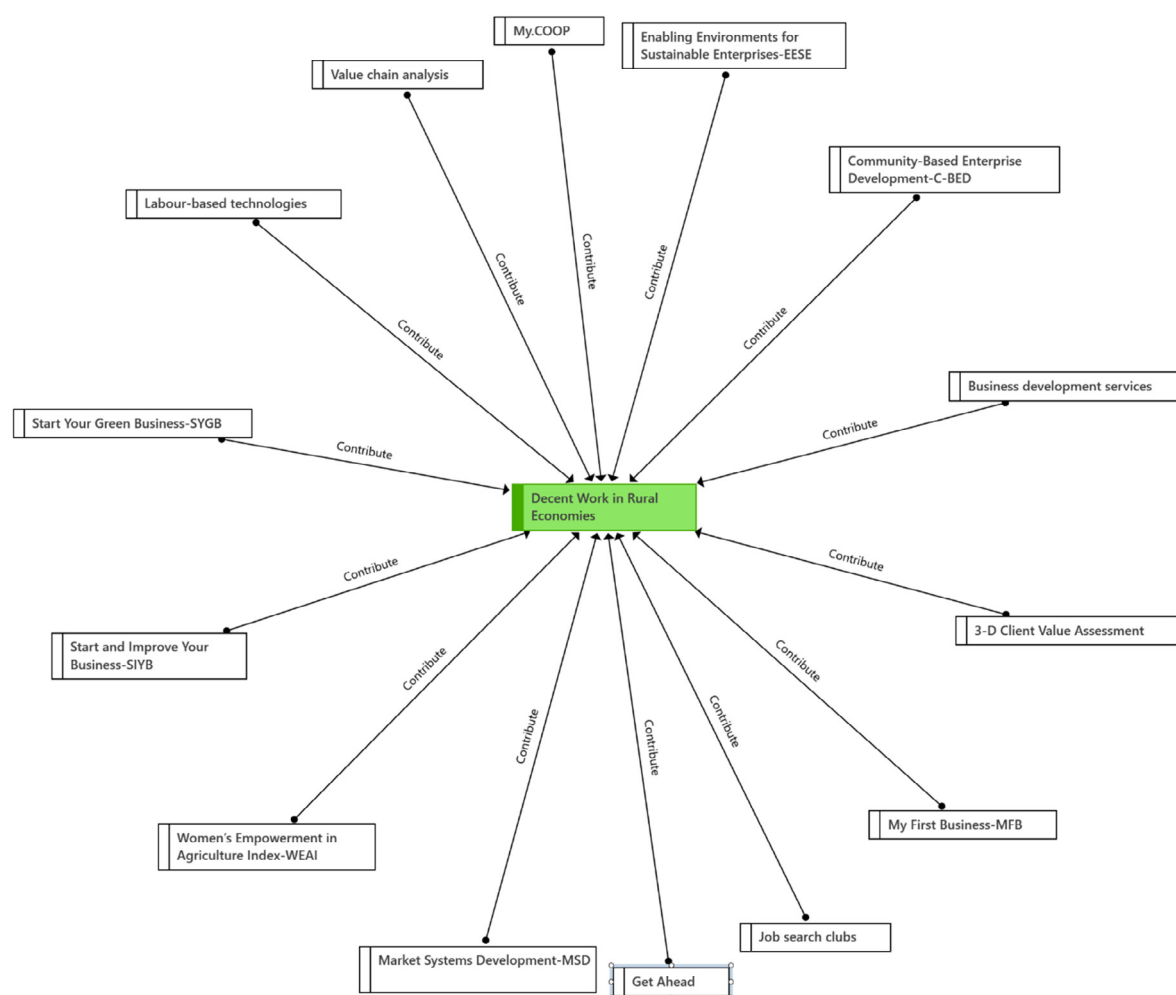
⁵⁴ Enhance the resilience and self-reliance of crisis-affected rural communities (YEM/15/01/UND).

⁵⁵ EGY/17/06/NOR.

⁵⁶ INS/13/50/LUX.

The coordination between country offices and central services was therefore crucial. Country offices and implementation teams may not have enough knowledge of or familiarity with these generic tools which could hinder the efficient implementation of activities. Mozambique, for instance, depends on CO Lusaka and does not have a permanent representation of the ILO in the country. The implementation team of the MOZATRABALHA intervention⁵⁷ had no prior experience with the Market Systems Development approach and no in-field supervision which posed challenges. Consequently, the timely completion of certain processes and the quality of some deliverables, specifically the market analyses of three value chains, were negatively impacted.

FIGURE 11: ILO'S TOOLKITS, TRAININGS, AND METHODOLOGIES USED FOR DW IN RURAL ECONOMIES



57 MOZ/16/01/SWE.

Efficiency of national collaboration with constituents and international partnerships with multilateral bodies

Partnering was a winning strategy to explore thematic and expertise synergies despite organisational constraints, mainly due to budget and timeframe discrepancies.

Interventions counted with a tight collaboration with constituents and other national actors. This national participation was critical in ensuring efficiency through more grounded project management in daily local contingencies. Constituents and other national actors were involved in the implementation of trainings, in the preparation of assessments, or in the intermediation with beneficiaries. They also joined steering committees that revealed a successful coordination strategy.

In Peru, regional technical bureaux were formed to participate in the coordination of the project to foster the economic inclusion and sustainable development of quinoa producers in rural areas in Ayacucho and Puno⁵⁸. These bureaux comprised officials, NGO representatives, and producers of quinoa to serve as dialogue platforms for better local governance. They allowed for an efficient approach to the entire quinoa value chain and provided the intervention with legitimacy to fully mobilise at the local level.

Similarly, in Tunisia, a ministerial decree created a steering committee and regional monitoring committees to backstop the management of the project⁵⁹. These committees have established themselves as platforms for collaboration and dialogue among the critical ministries involved in the project, including agriculture, gender, and employment, in addition to relevant social partners.

Interventions counted also with a tight partnership with multilateral bodies. Their livelihood-oriented approach encouraged the ILO to partner with more experienced international organisations (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12: PANORAMA OF MULTILATERAL PARTNERS FOR DW IN RURAL ECONOMIES



Unsurprisingly, the FAO was the most common partner. The agency has a long-term field experience in developing sustainable agriculture to improve nutrition and promote food security. Other agencies such as UNESCO unexpectedly brought their expertise in intangible cultural heritage to inventory, valorise, and inscribe the local knowledge and traditional practices related to the seeds and agriculture of indigenous quinoa⁶⁰.

58 PER/14/52/UND.

59 TUN/18/01/CAN.

60 PER/14/52/UND.

In general, no duplication of efforts was found between these partner organisations in the implementation of interventions. Each of them provided contributions within their competence range. UNEP, for instance, was essential in feeding the GLO/12/08/AAT intervention with competencies in terms of waste treatment, water management, and forest conservation, while the FAO supported the YAPASA intervention⁶¹ with expertise in food security for the development of sustainable rural enterprises.

Certainly, the coordination between all these national and multilateral institutions was not perfect and faced organisational constraints, mainly due to budget and timeframe discrepancies. Delays in fund transfers⁶², differences in administrative processes⁶³, and personnel shortcomings⁶⁴ posed real implementation challenges that affected schedules.

The DW4FS-NTT intervention⁶⁵, for instance, was intended to be a collaborative effort between the ILO, the Indonesian Ministry of Village Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration (MoV), and the FAO to promote food security and sustainable poverty reduction in rural communities in the disadvantaged districts of the East Nusa Tenggara province of Indonesia. Unfortunately, the implementation and coordination of the project between the three institutions were constrained due budget timing differences. The ILO was the first to access funding, followed by MoV. Both institutions initiated the programme without the FAO, which could only join at a later stage, due to funding delays as well. Activities had to be postponed.

Efficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic

Most interventions coped with the COVID-19 pandemic through the adaptation of their activities to virtual modalities and the obtention of no-cost extensions.

The ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies were somewhat efficient in the delivery of activities and products in an economic and timely way. Partnering was a winning strategy to explore the thematic and competency synergies between all involved stakeholders, whether local, national or multilateral. The interventions also demonstrated adaptation capacities and flexibility to cope with the major global health crisis of the period, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite isolated interventions that did not undertake any specific measure to tackle the impact of COVID-19⁶⁶, most of them developed mitigating strategies to ensure the delivery of the activities. The most commonly explored measure was the adaptation of activities to the virtual modality. The intervention to advance workers' rights in Indonesia's palm oil sector⁶⁷, for instance, transformed offline trainings and meetings into online ones. The intervention implemented a virtual academy on fundamental principles and rights at work in rural economies, held by the ITC-ILO, and promoted virtual discussions on the development of a labour inspection guide for the palm oil sector.

However, connectivity was an issue in many rural areas as evidenced in evaluation reports. The digital gap with urban areas is often huge and activities had to be delayed. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the delivery of activities in Fiji, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu due to the

61 Decent jobs for youth and improved food security through the development of sustainable rural enterprises (ZAM/13/04/SID).

62 LAO/16/01/CHE.

63 COL/17/01/NOR.

64 JOR/19/02/AUS.

65 INS/13/50/LUX.

66 e.g., LAO/16/01/CHE.

67 Advancing Workers' Rights in Indonesia's Palm Oil Sector (IDN/18/02/USA).

low internet penetration in different islands⁶⁸. The solution was to secure no-cost extensions; the second measure of mitigation.

A few interventions were redesigned to incorporate the mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic into its original activities. In Argentina⁶⁹, for instance, the ILO worked with UNICEF to propose connectivity alternatives for adolescents in rural areas and guarantee learning continuity in the secondary school system. The intervention also prepared advocacy campaigns to address topics related to occupational safety and health in the context of COVID-19 and adapted methodologies to provide evidence on the pandemic's impact on child labour.

Efficiency of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

M&E mechanisms were deficient due to the absence of dedicated budgets and relevant key performance indicators.

The main shortcoming in terms of efficiency was found in the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place. Deficiencies in the design of the interventions did not permit the establishment of relevant indicators and strong follow-up mechanisms, or the allocation of sufficient funds for monitoring and evaluation.

In the Lao PDR, for instance, the intervention⁷⁰ did not plan a budget for a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning system that would have permitted to track relevant data and enabled systematic learning and knowledge creation from the implementation of the intervention. In the same vein, the intervention in Fiji, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu⁷¹ missed out on key indicators of socio-economic empowerment that would have facilitated data for decision-making processes. In contrast, the intervention in the Jordan floriculture sector⁷² compensated for its weak design by adopting Better Work Jordan monitoring and evaluation mechanisms after a needs assessment at the inception phase.

The implementation of decentralisation to country offices and partnership with other organisations were effective strategies to increase the coverage of interventions and explore synergies despite budget and timeframe constraints. However, the absence of dedicated budgets and relevant key performance indicators resulted in deficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ILO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR DW IN RURAL ECONOMIES

Interventions were effective in addressing human rights issues, improving individual economic opportunities, and promoting an enabling economic environment, but failed to fully bridge the gender gap and enhance the employability of workers with disabilities.

Interventions for DW in rural economies were overall effective in the achievement of their objectives. They were able to raise awareness, build capacities, favour the construction of infrastructures, enable the economic environment, and enhance the knowledge base through the efficient implementation of planned activities.

68 RAS/20/53/UND.

69 ARG/18/01/USA.

70 LAO/16/01/CHE.

71 RAS/20/53/UND.

72 JOR/19/02/AUS.

Achievements in human rights and economic opportunities

Establishing links with the top tier value chain through cooperative strategies enhances access to markets and the value of products.

Awareness was raised about many themes related to the identified cultural challenges that deprived livelihoods in rural areas. Activities mainly targeted issues related to human rights and economic perspectives, although a few were found to target labour-rights subjects, such as social protection floors⁷³ or labour inspection⁷⁴.

For instance, the Decent Work Deficits in the Tobacco Sector (DWiT) project⁷⁵ successfully advocated for prevention mechanisms to stop child marriages in the Urambo district of Tanzania. The district council and village officials consequently implemented by-laws that required the legal approval for any marriage, reducing the incidence of child marriage locally. Similarly, the OFFSIDE project made an effective contribution to strengthening the agenda of DW and child labour within agricultural institutions in Argentina and shifted the national perception of the intersectional nature of the fight against child labour⁷⁶. Finally, in Peru, the intervention PC-Granos Andinos⁷⁷ effectively communicated to generate a systemic vision of the value chain of quinoa and its significance in Andean culture and society, emphasising the need for collaborative and coordinated efforts among different actors to achieve dynamic economic growth and overcome livelihood challenges.

This economic perspective was also the dominant target of activities aimed at building capacities in rural areas. Activities were particularly effective in upskilling farmers and entrepreneurs to improve the quality of production, access to markets, and productivity.

In Azerbaijan, for instance, trainers were trained with the SIYB programme to support new rural entrepreneurs in establishing cooperatives to improve their access to markets. The trainers ultimately reached 140 young farmers and also assisted them in securing grants from the joint governmental-FAO rural employment programme⁷⁸.

The establishment of cooperatives seemed to be an effective way to access markets. In the Sofala province of Mozambique, five cooperatives bloomed out after a capacity-building process that included business and legal training⁷⁹. These cooperatives were able to secure supply contracts with the Mozambican Red Cross for their production of soil-cement materials. Finally, in Peru, quinoa farmers had their capacities in contract negotiation improved to effectively sell their production through newly created cooperatives and abandon their historic dependence on intermediaries⁸⁰. Establishing links with the top tier value chain through cooperative strategies enhances access to markets and represents a way to improve control over the value of products.

The enhancement of product quality is another strategy to progress into the respective value chains. Interventions also demonstrated effectiveness in building the capacities of producers in terms of technologies, mostly agricultural, to enhance both the quality of their products and productivity. In Egypt⁸¹, for instance, a market systems development approach was implemented in the Gharbia Governorate for dairy production. It focused on qualitative and

73 AZE/16/02/RBS.

74 MAR/16/01/USA.

75 ZMB/18/02/RBS.

76 ARG/18/01/USA.

77 PER/14/52/UND.

78 AZE/16/02/RBS.

79 MOZ/16/01/SWE.

80 PER/14/52/UND.

81 EGY/17/06/NOR.

quantitative improvements. Trainings were delivered to the Milk Collection Centre Al Phara'onia (a dairy cooperative) and pastoralists with positive results in terms of upgrading milk quality and productivity. A label was also created to distinguish this quality milk in partnership with the Faculty of Agriculture of Ain Shams University and the consultancy firm North Africa Agribusiness Development.

Achievements towards gender equality and disability inclusion

Capacity-building and cultural advocacy were not enough to bridge the gender gap and enhance the employability of workers with disabilities.

Most of the interventions did not neglect addressing the capacities of women. In Colombia, for instance, 70 indigenous female victims of the armed conflict participated in a training programme aimed at strengthening their skills in production, marketing, and improving product quality⁸². In Madagascar, 28% of female manual labourers were upskilled as specialised workers in the male-dominated construction industry⁸³. However, the interventions were not always effective in promoting further gender equality in rural areas. The need to bridge the gender gap may require more than just capacity strengthening and cultural advocacy and some projects have failed to establish a more conducive entrepreneurial ecosystem for rural women entrepreneurs⁸⁴ or to ensure equal pay⁸⁵.

Likewise, disability inclusion was mainstreamed in a few projects but was not completely effective. In the Jordanian floriculture sector⁸⁶, workers with disabilities were included in capacity-building activities to enhance employability but faced accessibility issues to effectively access employment. Farms were not accessible to people who use wheelchairs, as flower lanes are too narrow, and the flowers grow on the ground.

Achievements towards a dynamic economic environment

Labour-intensive interventions were highly effective in improving basic infrastructure and income.

The enhancement of accessibility is often a matter of infrastructures, one of the major challenges depriving livelihoods in rural areas. The ILO's interventions for DW in rural areas effectively targeted this shortcoming, mostly with labour-intensive approaches. Trainings of contractors and of workers permitted, for instance, to build 205 classrooms in 102 schools in rural Madagascar⁷⁶, renovate three war-dilapidated tanks that supply 175 rural households with water in Sri Lanka⁸⁷, or rehabilitate 140 km of rural roads to improve the accessibility of 7.300 households in Timor Leste⁸⁸. Labour-intensive infrastructure interventions also had the benefit of directly improving the income of rural workers through employment in these public works.

Infrastructures are critical to improve access to basic and public services or to financial institutions and markets that contribute to promote a more propitious, dynamic economic environment. The latter is also favoured by the establishment of relevant legal frameworks and the transformation of business practices. Other initiatives targeted then more directly these two topics.

82 COL/17/01/NOR.

83 Education for all Madagascar (MAG/15/03/CEF).

84 e.g., TUN/18/01/CAN.

85 Women workers in rural road construction in Timor Leste earned less than men workers due to their engagement in low-skilled work and shorter working hours. Nevertheless, their earnings were primarily directed towards fulfilling household needs that are vital for sustaining livelihoods. This underscores the critical role that women play in ensuring the survival of rural areas, which should attract the attention of intervention programs (TIM/11/01/EEC).

86 JOR/19/02/AUS.

87 LKA/16/02/RBS.

88 TIM/11/01/EEC.

In Jordan, a Tripartite Working Group was formed to discuss, create, and approve bylaws for agriculture workers, in accordance with the labour code⁷⁹. In Mozambique, there was progress in the development of the policy framework and institutional environment, with indications that national institutions are now more capable of implementing DW policies⁸⁹. In the Lao PDR, the National Rural Employment Strategy was approved by the government to increase opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas⁹⁰. In Azerbaijan, the capacity of workers' and employers' organisations was improved to effectively engage in tripartite social dialogue with the government to promote and advocate for DW⁹¹. Finally, the promotion of enterprise-level collective bargaining in Morocco was effective in establishing a culture of trust and negotiation, among participants, and in giving voice to the concerns of agricultural workers⁹².

The establishment of legal frameworks and the transformation of business practices are, of course, facilitated by an enhancement of the individual and collective knowledge base related to the challenges depriving livelihoods in rural areas. The knowledge base may be enhanced by different means of action (e.g., development of capacities or advice on policies). Nonetheless, the production and dissemination of knowledge appear to have been critical in that sense and have informed decision making and strategy formulation.

Achievements in the delivery of knowledge products

Knowledge products represented the massive horde of products, but others also contributed to informing decision making and promoting DW in rural areas.

The intervention in the Lao PDR⁸³, for instance, developed 14 knowledge products, including national surveys (e.g., "2017 Labour Force Survey"), needs assessments (e.g., "Options for improving income-generating capacity of coffee farmers in Dak Cheung district, Sekong province"), guidelines (e.g., "Value Chain Development (VCD) for the enhancement of smallholder farmers' income and livelihoods"), and impact studies (e.g., "Rural Employment Project in Sekong Province. Report: Progress, Stories, and Monitoring for Year 2020"). In particular, a study on local governance was found to have influenced the design of the National Rural Employment Strategy. Similarly, the INSURED intervention⁹³ developed country assessments for Cambodia, Indonesia, and Uganda that were considered instrumental to advise decision makers on the inclusive climate insurance market and identify opportunities for climate insurance solutions.

Among all the interventions, "strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa"⁹⁴ stood out for the quality and quantity of its knowledge products. Between impact reports, impact briefs, and country briefs, there are 19 publications listed in the evaluation report. The intervention had, of course, a knowledge orientation related to gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment and its publications permitted to enlighten on a variety of topics. They enhanced the knowledge base on the role of mass media in addressing social norms and gender-specific barriers that hinder women's entrepreneurship, the need for improving and upgrading non-formal apprenticeships in agriculture, or the limitation of training to ameliorate women's social condition in conservative societies.

All in all, knowledge products represented the massive horde of products developed by the ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies. Other products were also identified. Schematically, it was possible to identify six main types of products related to (i) training materials, (ii) information systems, databases, platforms, (iii) advocacy campaigns, (iv) assessments and reports, (v) studies and publications, and (vi) technical manuals (Figure 13). These products had an effective

89 MOZ/16/01/SWE.

90 LAO/16/01/CHE.

91 AZE/16/02/RBS.

92 MAR/16/01/USA.

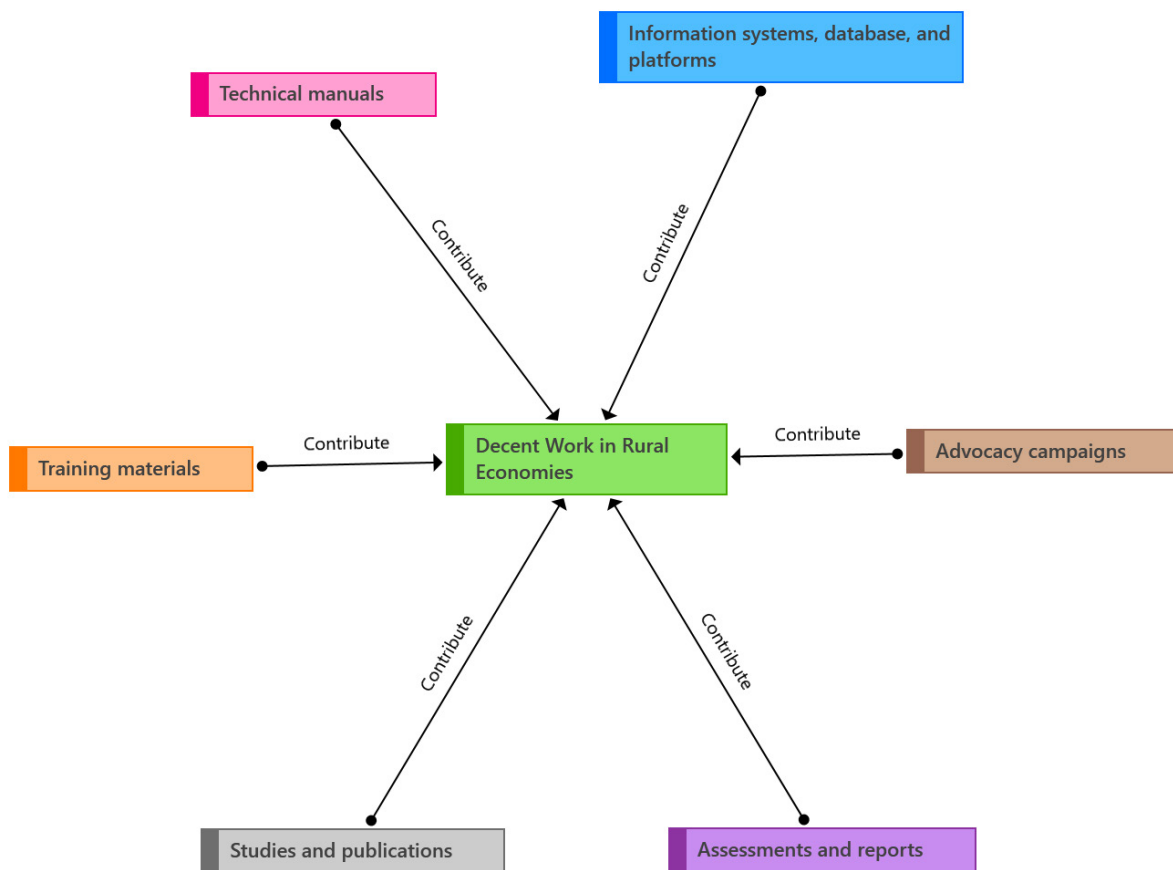
93 GLO/18/15/IFA.

94 GLO/14/24/IFA.

contribution to promote DW in rural economies, together with the previously mentioned knowledge products (assessments, reports, studies, and publications).

In Argentina⁹⁵, a manual on the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) was produced to support officials in mainstreaming the rights and priorities of indigenous peoples into the operations of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology [technical manuals]. In Zambia⁹⁶, a child labour data centre was established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to support data collection and enable effective reporting [information systems, database, and platforms]. In Haiti⁹⁷, a national media campaign was conducted to raise awareness on domestic child labour in partnership with the NGO Save the Children [advocacy campaigns]. In Indonesia⁹⁸, training packages in gender, rights, and collective bargaining were produced and delivered in 97 training sessions [training materials].

FIGURE 13: PRINCIPAL TYPES OF PRODUCTS DEVELOPED FOR DW IN RURAL ECONOMIES AS PER ASSESSED INTERVENTIONS



In conclusion, the ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies were effective in enhancing the individual capacities and the economic environment in rural areas. They nonetheless struggled to reduce the gender gap and achieve the inclusion of workers with disabilities.

95 ARG/18/01/USA.

96 ZMB/18/02/RBS.

97 HAI/14/04/NOR.

98 IDN/18/02/USA.

IMPACTS OF THE ILO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR DECENT WORK IN RURAL ECONOMIES

The interventions enabled the generation of rapid, concrete transformative changes in terms of employment creation and private sector development, as well as the promotion of international labour standards, social dialogue, and social & labour protection, although the evaluation reports were less detailed on these rights-based impacts.

Evaluations are somewhat limited in their description of impacts. They are compiled to close to the end of interventions. Impacts are generally fruit of le temps long while evaluations locate themselves in le temps court. Structural changes take time to become visible. Nonetheless, some transformative effects related to the enhancement of livelihoods and labour rights were highlighted.

Transformative effects related to enhanced livelihoods

Assessed interventions positively impacted the livelihoods of rural communities through dialectical, synergetic relationships between the development of the private sector and the creation of employment.

The private sector in rural areas seems to have been the first to be positively impacted by the reviewed ILO's interventions. The emergence of prepared cooperatives and groups of producers, mostly in agriculture, in one hand, and the strengthening of local companies, in the other, have favoured a beneficial dynamization of rural economies. Production and productivity were enhanced, new employment opportunities were created, new markets were accessed, and new goods and equipment were purchased in a mutually reinforcing pattern of growth and development.

In Indonesia⁹⁹, for instance, the ILO's efforts to ensure food security and sustainable rural development in the East Nusa Tenggara province transformed the business approach of local seaweed and livestock producers. Seaweed farmers in South Sema shifted from a family-only farm model to a family-run farm business and combined forces to collectively market their products. The change in the business approach created employment in the farms, doubled seaweed production to reach at least one tonne per village, each harvest period, and favoured knowledge sharing of market prices among producers. Similarly, the association of cattle producers of the Kupang district enabled them to increase their bargaining power with livestock collectors and enhance their pricing methods by using objective animal weight criteria. All of this has positively impacted the local economies and improved the livelihoods of targeted farmers and pastoralists in the province.

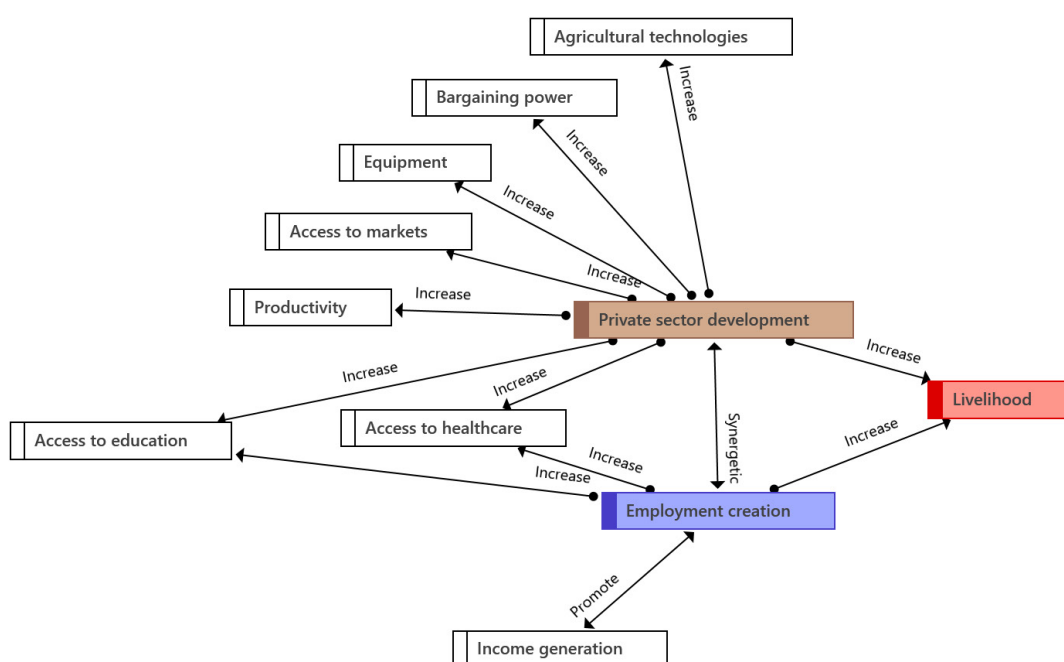
Similarly, in Timor Leste¹⁰⁰, the labour-based road construction had a synergetic impact on the local private sector and villagers' livelihoods in the western districts of Aileu, Ainaro, Bobonaro, Covalima, Ermera, and Liquica. Eight thousand employments were directly created by the construction of the roads. Family incomes have increased. Some were even able to afford to reinvest in new income-generating agricultural businesses and purchase motorbikes and trucks for transportation services as the access to markets was improved via the rehabilitated roads. Farmers were able to transport and negotiate larger volumes of production and access better seeds and technologies. Traders also started coming to the villages, competing for crops. This resulted in a significant increase in agricultural production and selling prices, thereby in food security and livelihoods. The original off-farm intervention trickled down to an in-farm development. Smaller improvements in access to education and health services were also reported.

99 INS/13/50/LUX.

100 TIM/11/01/EEC.

The livelihood-based development approach permitted then to trigger transformative effects (Figure 14). The path of change leaned on a dialectical, synergetic relationship between the development of the private sector and the creation of employment. The first permitted for instance to increase access to new agricultural technologies and equipment, enhance the bargaining power of producers, reach new markets to sell the production, or increase the overall productivity; the second allowed for the generation of income. Access to basic services (e.g., education, healthcare) were also improved. Together, they resulted in an overall retro-fed increase in community livelihood.

FIGURE 14: PRINCIPAL PATTERN OF LIVELIHOOD-BASED TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL ECONOMIES AS IDENTIFIED IN ASSESSED INTERVENTIONS



Transformative effects towards enhanced labour rights

Impacts in the advancement of labour rights were also observed in assessed interventions due to the ILO's comparative advantage in implementing social dialogue for DW.

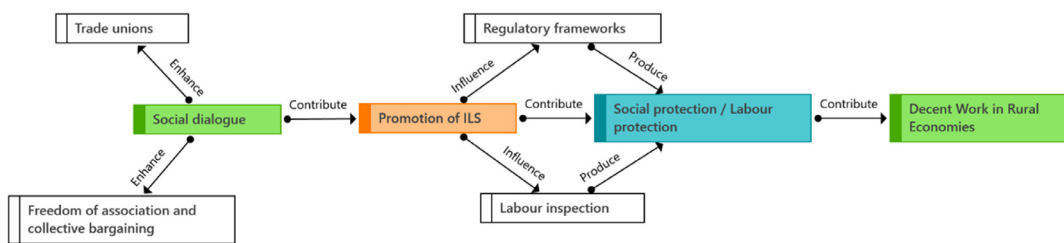
This pattern of synergetic impact in the development of the private sector, creation of employment, and increase of livelihoods may be put in contrast with some rights-based transformations as well. Despite their subsidiarity in the reviewed interventions, social dialogue, international labour standards promotion, social and labour protection have also progressed and contributed towards DW in targeted rural economies.

In Jordan¹⁰¹, social dialogue was fostered through the establishment of Labour Management Committees, at the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), and cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Vocational Training Corporation and the Jordanian Association for Cut Flowers & Ornamental Plants. This paved the way for improving the regulatory framework in the floriculture sector, which has a high proportion of informal economy, and laid the foundation for promoting DW among vulnerable groups, Syrian refugees in particular. Progress was witnessed with the enforcement of unified work contracts for Jordanians and non-Jordanians that immediately benefitted 116 workers, 81 of which were women and two were male workers with disabilities.

Similarly, in Indonesia¹⁰², positive impacts on trade unions were observed. Unionists of the palm oil sector were motivated to recruit new members, resulting in an increase in both membership numbers and union fees. In addition, attitudes towards social dialogue evolved from confrontation to negotiation. The strengthening of the workers' organisations led to further bipartite dialogues and collective bargaining. FSB-KAMIPARHO union, for instance, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with KPN CORP, a palm oil company corporation, and achieved the implementation of the first Collective Bargaining Agreement of the sector at the field level. Four others followed.

The ILO has a comparative advantage and legitimacy in implementing social dialogue to foster DW. This positive background supported the rights-based development approach pattern of change in which social dialogue promoted the mainstreaming of international labour standards which resulted in enhanced social and labour protection in rural areas (Figure 15). Although evaluations are often not sufficiently detailed, scattered affirmations are presented in different reports in that sense.

FIGURE 15: PRINCIPAL PATTERN OF RIGHTS-BASED TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL ECONOMIES AS EVIDENCED IN ASSESSED INTERVENTIONS¹⁰³



In Azerbaijan¹⁰⁴, the ILO assisted the government in identifying discrepancies between national policies and international labour standards, which is expected to expand the country's social protection system. In Colombia¹⁰⁵, compliance with labour standards was improved for rural workers in the peacebuilding process. In Fiji, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu¹⁰⁶, the fostering of social dialogue with national governments facilitated the advances towards the social protection of workers of the informal economy.

In conclusion, the ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies mostly impacted the level of livelihood of communities in targeted rural areas, although advancements in labour rights were also observed.

SUSTAINABILITY OF ILO'S ASSESSED INTERVENTIONS FOR DECENT WORK IN RURAL ECONOMIES

Interventions were sustainable largely when they produced an enabling environment and ensured the takeover at the national level. Some nonetheless lacked solid exit strategies to cope with financial and cultural issues.

The transformative effects of the reviewed ILO interventions for DW in rural economies are likely to continue. The livelihood-based pattern of change in which they were grounded has enabled a favourable environment for the continued increase in livelihoods. The private sector is strengthened, agricultural techniques improved, and accesses widened to support a gradual, retro-fed motion towards progress as described in the impacts section.

¹⁰² IDN/18/02/USA.

¹⁰³ The synthesis review found that the role of employers was mostly not discussed in the evaluation reports or cited with no much detail. The review found evidence of the engagement of workers in labour-intensive interventions, supply chain, etc. This is the reason why the review reflects this worker-centred focus.

¹⁰⁴ AZE/16/02/RBS.

¹⁰⁵ COL/17/01/NOR.

¹⁰⁶ RAS/20/53/UND.

For instance, the quality milk label delivered through the Al Phara'onia Milk Collection Centre, in Egypt¹⁰⁷, must comply with milk quality specifications developed by the intervention. These specifications are encoded into Standard Operating Procedures to ensure that the quality certification process is consistently upheld and permit the certification of other milk collection centres in the country.

Certainly, quality production processes are not necessarily sufficient to move upmarket and guarantee a steady progression in respective value chains. Small producers and rural cooperatives may struggle to scale up, grow and significantly create employment, despite being profitable. As observed in Mozambique¹⁰⁸, the engagement of major stakeholders of the value chains may be necessary in order to magnify the process. Regrettably in Egypt, the lead firm of the milk value chain left the intervention.

In addition, nascent markets may quickly reach maturity due to low demand. The strengthening of suppliers, whether agricultural or infrastructural, may lead to a situation of overproduction with markets being unable to absorb it. The continued training and mentoring in rural road construction and maintenance in Timor Leste¹⁰⁹, for instance, led contractors towards a situation of market saturation. Governmental budget allocations for rural infrastructures are low and irregular.

National takeover for continuity of interventions: ownership and capacities

The maximisation of national ownership and capacity building contributed to the continuity and replication of the interventions.

The integration of interventions' legacies in governmental programmes appears to be the most successful recipe for sustainability. This may relate to existing national initiatives, as for the Sri Lankan smallholder tea and kithul producers englobed within broader governmental efforts to develop agrarian value chains¹¹⁰, or derive from simple, maintainable and potentially replicable technologies, such as labour-based technologies¹¹¹. These two factors contributed significantly to maximising national and local ownership. In Timor Leste¹¹², for instance, the labour-based technology maintenance systems and techniques for rural roads are now employed by the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications.

Replicability, nonetheless, also relies on capacity. Existing training programmes insufficiently responsive to national and local needs may hinder the multiplier effect of interventions. In Timor Leste¹¹³, it was observed that training packages were inadequate in meeting the requirements of emerging small road contractors to execute rural road rehabilitation and maintenance tasks with minimal supervision; hence the need to not neglect capacity-building at the national level.

In any case, the interventions for DW in rural economies tended to absorb knowledge materials and internalise toolkits in view of increasing capacities. In this vein, partnerships with Egyptian governmental institutions promoted the internalisation of several ILO toolkits, such as the SIYB and GET Ahead training programmes⁹⁹, while in Azerbaijan, the rural youth entrepreneurship programme's sponsorship has been taken over by the Presidential Reserve Fund¹¹³. Youths trained in the SIYB programme will henceforth receive priority access to public funding to ensure the sustainability and expansion of the newly established businesses. This success story of promoting youth employment and entrepreneurship was shared as a good practice by the Azerbaijani regional cooperation with Moldova, Uzbekistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Albania.

107 EGY/17/06/NOR.

108 MOZ/16/01/SWE.

109 TLS/16/03/AUS.

110 LKA/16/02/RBS.

111 e.g., MAG/15/03/CEF.

112 TIM/11/01/EEC.

113 AZE/16/02/RBS.

However, money is the lifeblood to ensure the appropriation of materials and the continuation of learning and training activities. As evidenced in assessed interventions, constituents do not necessarily possess the needed funds, neither the interventions have thoroughly considered sustainable exit strategies. For instance, most of the knowledge materials on gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment have not been fully absorbed by governments of the targeted Middle Eastern and North African countries¹¹⁴. Resources lacked and the intervention management was centralised in Geneva. This resulted in limited policy influence. Similarly, in Jordan¹¹⁵, it was lately discovered that the members of the Labour Management Committees had initially expected to be financially compensated for their participation, which has undermined national ownership.

Exit strategies for continuity of the interventions: key challenges

The lack of solid exit strategies at the design level hindered the sustainability of some interventions.

The absence of solid exit strategies, which involve funding plans and anchorage in ongoing national programmes and policies, remains the main obstacle to achieving sustainability. This issue, for instance, hindered the scaling-up process of climate insurance products in remote rural areas of Cambodia¹¹⁶. Needed public-private partnerships did not spontaneously emerge and resources missed to favour the access of the poor rural population to climatic insurance schemes.

In addition to financial questions, solid exit strategies can also permit to anticipate and act on cultural challenges to avoid compromising the sustainability of interventions as in Colombia¹¹⁷ or Zambia¹¹⁸.

The lack of specific ad-hoc institutional strategies impeded to overcome the stigmatisation of unions in conflict-affected rural areas in Colombia. Only 2.6% of rural workers are unionised and this low unionisation rate is mostly influenced by the serious problems of violence in large agricultural regions of the country, wherein an anti-union culture has been imposed with no tolerance for autonomous workers' organisations. In Zambia, the socio-cultural barriers and beliefs hindered effective gender equality and the prevention of child labour in tobacco farms. These concepts were perceived as colonial forms of acculturation and the intervention struggled to sustainably address the related deficits of DW.

In conclusion, sustainability remains a key challenge, but as per the assessed ILO's interventions for DW in rural economies have shown promising signs when promoting national ownership. Their integration into existing governmental programmes has favoured continuity and replicability, despite often lacking exit strategies.

114 GLO/14/24/IFA.

115 JOR/19/02/AUS.

116 GLO/18/15/IFA.

117 COL/17/01/NOR.

118 ZMB/18/02/RBS.

5. CONCLUSION: LESSONS FROM THE ILO'S INTERVENTIONS FOR DECENT WORK IN RURAL ECONOMIES

Assessed interventions demonstrated the ILO's competencies in responding to the livelihood challenges in rural areas and its comparative advantage related to labour rights.

Rural areas face multiple challenges that ultimately hinder the livelihoods of their populations. To address them, the ILO shifted its intervention strategy to a more livelihood-oriented approach rather than its traditional rights-based development approach. This shift permitted the ILO to respond to the direct needs of targeted rural communities, by bridging the observed gaps, and prepare interventions that were globally relevant, coherent, efficient, effective, impactful, and sustainable.

Reviewed labour-intensive interventions, in special, were able to engender retro-fed and enabling economic environments through the creation of employment, the generation of immediate incomes, the construction of infrastructures, and the strengthening of the private sector. They improved productivity and accessibilities to represent an excellent good practice in rural areas. Nonetheless, these interventions depended on strong theories of change to be effective. As identified in evaluation reports, it was imperative to identify needs, underlying assumptions, key drivers, key partners and pathways of change at the design project phase. In addition, preliminary country assessments help to ensure a solid understanding of the targeted markets, of their structure of supply and demand, to avoid situations of market saturation, as previously described in Timor Leste¹¹⁹.

Similarly, market systems development interventions supported producers to move upmarket and strengthen their position within respective value chains. The improvement of the quality and quantity of the products, in addition to better capacities for benchmarking, marketing studies, and negotiation abilities permitted to increase productivity, create employment, and augment incomes. Certainly, as evidenced in reports, small producers and rural cooperatives may reach a glass ceiling, despite their profitability. They may struggle to further scale up, grow, and create employment which makes it necessary to bring in major stakeholders of respective value chains to magnify the process. Also, big players of the value chain can give more legitimacy to interventions to deal with rights-based topics as well, such as the elimination of child labour that is still widespread in farming.

The interventions were globally beneficial to the targeted rural communities and notably supported the empowerment of the young population by creating economic and livelihood opportunities in their homelands. This was a contribution to staunch the rural exodus and fix the population in rural areas through the enhancement of livelihood possibilities.

Changes for women and workers with disabilities, however, were found to be more limited. The reviewed interventions were confronted with cultural and infrastructural obstacles that were not fully anticipated. This hindered efforts towards gender equality and disability inclusion. Further understanding of their specific needs is required to advance employment and address related DW deficits. For instance, the enhancement of the accessibility of workplaces may favour the employment of workers with disabilities.

119 TLS/16/03/AUS.

Nevertheless, “productive projects have [ultimately] brought hope to very marginalised populations”¹²⁰ in general. They placed humans at the centre of their development strategies by focusing first on quality livelihoods through a balanced mix of enhanced production and advanced rights. They did not fail to consider the severe exposure of rural communities to environmental challenges as well, and supported their transition to more climate-resilient livelihood practices. While the concept of just transition was rarely mentioned in the reviewed evaluations, as the shared benefits of the transition to low-carbon economies were not a central theme of the interventions, the targeted rural communities were firmly supported in the development of adaptive practices to climate change in view of minimising its socio-economic costs.

The decentralisation of interventions to country offices bestowed the ILO with the capacity to extend its action range to a large number of countries and provided the required management flexibility to cope with field contingencies. The institutional cohesion between the different interventions was, in turn, ensured by the involvement of the ILO's central departments and programmes.

The multi-level coordination and partnership strategy were of course critical to ensure the effectiveness of these interventions. First, constituents were tightly involved. National participation was critical to ground projects in local needs, but also to ensure ownership for further sustainability. Some projects even established joint steering committees that revealed themselves to be extremely effective as coordination tools and institutional intermediaries for the local and national uptake of products and activities.

The uptake was also favoured when the interventions were embedded within pre-existing, broader governmental programmes or based on simple, maintainable and potentially replicable technologies, such as labour-based technologies. These two factors significantly maximised local and national ownership. Additionally, the uptake depended on the degree of representativity of local groups in the targeted communities and on the strength of social dialogue mechanisms to foster their social participation and engagement.

Second, the interventions tended to benefit from partnerships with other multilateral bodies, such as the FAO. These partners are more experienced than the ILO in implementing livelihood-oriented projects. They thus enriched the interventions with expertise in varied domains, such as agriculture, food security, environment, or heritage, and they contributed to build the ILO's capacities in rural development through a process of learning-by-doing.

The joint participation in these rural development projects bestowed the ILO with an opportunity to showcase its competencies and the adequacy of its institutional instruments in responding to the livelihood challenges that affect rural areas. The ILO could additionally bring in its comparative advantage and legitimacy related to labour rights.

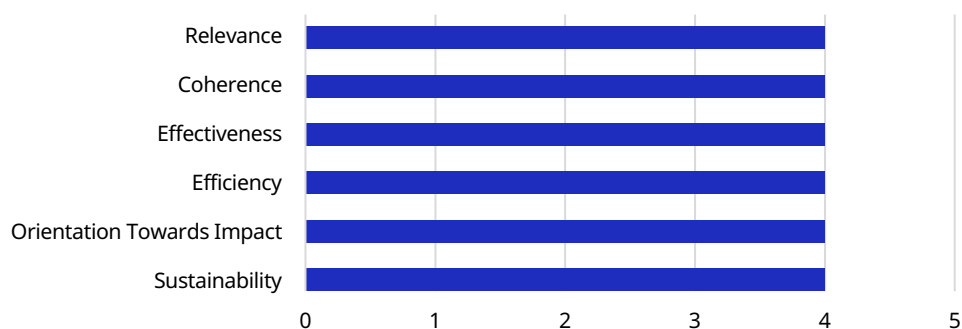
The strategic productive pillar of employment and economic growth of the ILO's mandate on rural employment was fully mobilised, while the rights-based pillars revealed themselves structural. Social dialogue, the promotion of international labour standards, and social protection offered a normative ground to frame and guide the interventions. This resulted in a practical field demonstration for multilateral partners and constituents of the ILO's outreach and credibility to promote decent work and livelihoods in rural areas.

120 COL/17/01/NOR.

6. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Figure 16 presents the overall assessment of the ILO's actions in promoting DW in rural economies, based on the sample of assessed reports.

FIGURE 16. RATINGS BY CRITERION



6 = Highly satisfactory, 5 = Satisfactory, 4 = Somewhat satisfactory, 3 = Somewhat unsatisfactory, 2 = Unsatisfactory, 1 = Highly unsatisfactory

7. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SYNTHESIS REVIEW OF EVALUATION REPORTS

- ▶ R1: The ILO should prioritise interventions that directly address the development needs of rural communities, as they have been found to have a greater impact in rural areas.
- ▶ R2: The ILO should encourage labour-intensive interventions in rural areas as they have a proven potential to generate enabling environments, thus ensuring the continuation of benefits over the time.
- ▶ R3: Project designers should be better equipped with project lifecycle methodologies to strengthen interventions' logical frameworks and theories of change.
- ▶ R4: Market systems development interventions should involve top tier value chain actors to magnify the growth process and also foster rights-based transformations.
- ▶ R5: Interventions should be decentralised to country offices in order to extend the action range to a large number of countries and provide the necessary management flexibility to cope with field contingencies.
- ▶ R6: Interventions should be implemented in partnership with other multilateral bodies to enrich projects with livelihood-oriented expertise and support the ILO's capacity-building process in rural development.
- ▶ R7: Joint steering committees should be established to improve coordination strategies and favour national ownership for further sustainability.
- ▶ R8: To maximise local and national ownership, interventions should be integrated into pre-existing governmental programmes or based on simple and maintainable technologies.
- ▶ R9: Local groups in targeted communities should be strengthened to favour local social dialogue and uptake of products and activities.
- ▶ R10: Livelihood-oriented approaches should rely further on the Regular Budget Supplementary Account modality to benefit from its flexibility and capacity to fund interventions aligned with concrete livelihood needs.
- ▶ R11: Interventions should target the accessibility of workplaces to enhance the employability of workers with disabilities.
- ▶ R12: Prior assessments and focus groups should be implemented to capture the employment needs of women and design responsive interventions for gender equality.
- ▶ R13: Budgets should be allocated to design and implement robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems to track, assess, and learn from the impacts of the interventions.
- ▶ R15: Male-female cohabitation in workplaces should be promoted, as it supports overcoming cultural resistance to women's work.

Annex A: Breakdown of ratings of projects

TC SYMNOL	RELEVANCE	COHERENCE	EFFICIENCY	EFFECTIVENESS	IMPACT	SUSTAINABILITY
AFG/14/01/SID	4	4	3	4	4	4
ARG/18/01/USA	4	4	5	5	4	4
AZE/16/02/RBS	4	4	4	4	4	5
COL/17/01/NOR	4	5	3	4	4	3
EGY/17/06/NOR	4	4	4	4	4	5
GLO/12/08/AAT	4	4	4	4	4	4
GLO/14/24/IFA	4	4	4	4	3	3
GLO/18/15/IFA	4	4	3	4	3	3
HAI/14/04/NOR	4	4	3	4	3	3
IDN/18/02/USA	5	4	4	4	5	4
INS/13/50/LUX	4	4	3	4	5	4
JOR/17/09/NOR	4	4	3	4	4	3
JOR/19/02/AUS	5	5	3	4	5	4
LAO/16/01/CHE	4	4	3	4	3	4
LBN/12/02/RBS	4	4	3	4	3	3
LKA/16/02/RBS	5	4	4	4	4	5
MAG/15/03/CEF	4	4	4	4	4	5
MAR/16/01/USA	4	4	3	3	3	3
MDA/20/01/RBS	4	4	4	4	3	3
MDG/19/04/IFA	4	4	4	3	4	4
MOZ/16/01/SWE	4	4	3	4	4	4
PAK/13/01/HSF	4	4	4	4	4	4
PER/14/52/UND	4	4	4	5	4	4
RAS/20/53/UND	3	4	3	4	4	4
TIM/11/01/EEC	5	4	4	5	6	6
TLS/16/03/AUS	5	4	3	4	4	3
TUN/18/01/CAN	4	4	4	4	4	4
TUR/15/02/CAB	5	4	4	4	4	4
YEM/15/01/UND	4	4	3	4	3	3
ZAM/13/04/SID	3	4	4	4	3	3
ZAM/14/01/USA	4	4	3	4	4	3
ZMB/18/02/RBS	3	4	4	4	4	3

Annex B: Sample of evaluation reports

Evaluation title	Region	Country	Theme	Completion date	Funding source	TC symbol
Road to Jobs: Bringing decent work to rural households of the Northern Provinces in Afghanistan - Final Evaluation	Asia	Afghanistan	Employment creation Rural economy	01/04/2021	Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	AFG/14/01/SID
Offside Project: Marking the field! Improving the Capacity of Labour and Agriculture - Midterm evaluation	Latin America	Argentina	Agriculture Child labour	01/05/2021	USA, United States Department of Labour	ARG/18/01/USA
Increased progress in attaining SDGs through the promotion of Decent Work and inclusive economic growth in rural and urban areas in Azerbaijan - RBSA independent evaluation	Europe	Azerbaijan	SDG/2030 Agenda Rural economy	01/12/2019	ILO Internal Customer	AZE/16/02/RBS
Strengthening of rural trade union organization in post-conflict Colombia - Final evaluation	Latin America	Colombia	Workers' organization: Capacity Building	01/06/2021	Norway, The Norwegian Agency for Development	COL/17/01/NOR
Egypt youth employment (EYE): Jobs and private sector development in rural Egypt - Midterm evaluation	Africa	Egypt	Youth employment Rural economy	01/02/2020	Norway	EGY/17/06/NOR
Building capacity for social compliance of investments in agriculture in Africa - Midterm internal evaluation	Inter-Regional	Inter-regional	Social finance	01/03/2019	Africa Agriculture and Trade Investment Fund	GLO/12/08/AAT
Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa - Final evaluation	Inter-Regional	Inter-regional	Gender equality Rural economy Monitoring and Evaluation	01/05/2019	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	GLO/14/24/IFA
Combat child labour in domestic work and the worst forms in Haiti - Final evaluation	Latin America	Haiti	Child labour	01/08/2017	Norway, The Norwegian Agency for Development	HAI/14/04/NOR
Decent work for food security and sustainable rural development in Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Indonesia	Asia	Indonesia	Decent work Rural economy Sustainable development	01/06/2017	Luxembourg, ministère de la Coopération internationale	INS/13/50/LUX

Evaluation title	Region	Country	Theme	Completion date	Funding source	TC symbol
Job creation for Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities through green works and agricultural industry - Final evaluation	Arab States	Jordan	Agriculture Employment creation Vulnerable groups	01/07/2019	Norway, The Norwegian Agency for Development	JOR/17/09/NOR
National Rural Employment Strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas - Final evaluation	Asia	Lao People's Dem Rep	Productivity Rural economy	01/01/2022	Switzerland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	LAO/16/01/CHE
Enabling job resilience and protecting decent work conditions in rural communities affected by Syrian Refugee crisis in North Lebanon - Final evaluation (RBSA components)	Arab States	Lebanon	Vulnerable groups Working conditions Decent work Humanitarian and Crisis Response	01/04/2018	Italy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	LBN/12/02/RBS
Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in rural areas, especially in conflict-affected and economical lagging regions, have equitable and enhanced access to more and better jobs and expanded product markets	Asia	Sri Lanka	Vulnerable groups Working conditions Decent work Humanitarian and Crisis Response	31/12/2019		LKA/16/02/RBS
Education for all Madagascar - Final evaluation	Africa	Madagascar	Skills Development Training Education Vocational Training	01/12/2019	UNICEF	MAG/15/03/CEF
Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Morocco's Agricultural Sector	Africa	Morocco	Agriculture Workers' rights Employment policy	01/09/2018	USA, United States Department of State	MAR/16/01/USA
Decent work for sustainable and inclusive economic transformation in Mozambique - Final Evaluation	Africa	Mozambique	Sustainable development	01/01/2022	Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	MOZ/16/01/SWE
Livelihood restoration and protection and sustainable empowerment of vulnerable peasant communities in Sindh Province - Final joint evaluation	Asia	Pakistan	Economic and social development	01/11/2016	United Nations Human Settlements Programme	PAK/13/01/HSF

Evaluation title	Region	Country	Theme	Completion date	Funding source	TC symbol
Inclusión económica y desarrollo sostenible de productores de Granos Andinos en zonas rurales de extreme pobreza - Evaluación final interna	Latin America	Peru	Poverty Alleviation Sustainable enterprises Rural economy	01/03/2017	Multi Donor Trust Fund Office Partnership Bureau-UNDP	PER/14/52/UND
Inclusive Economic Recovery through Sustainable Enterprises in the Informal Economies of Fiji, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu - Final joint evaluation	Asia	Palau	19 Enterprise development Informal economy	01/06/2022	ILO Internal Customer	RAS/20/53/UND
Enhancing Rural Access - Rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance (RDP IV) - Final Evaluation	Asia	Asian Regional	Rural economy Road construction	01/02/2016	Delegation of the European Union to Timor-Leste	TIM/11/01/EEC
Roads for Development (R4D) Phase II - Final evaluation	Asia	East Timor	Employment creation Sustainable development Road construction	01/03/2021	Australia, Australian Agency for International Development	TLS/16/03/AUS
Programme d'appui à l'autonomisation économique des femmes rurales - Midterm evaluation	Africa	Tunisia	Gender equality	01/03/2021	Canada, Canadian International Development Agency	TUN/18/01/CAN
An integrated model for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) in seasonal agriculture hazelnut harvesting in Türkiye - Midterm internal evaluation	Europe	Türkiye	Agriculture Child labour	01/04/2018	ILO Internal Customer	TUR/15/02/CAB
Enhance the resilience and self-reliance of crisis-affected rural communities (...) - Final evaluation	Arab States	Yemen	Economic reconstruction Sustainable enterprises Humanitarian and Crisis Response Armed conflict/ crisis Income-generating activities Local economic development Rural economy Labour administration	01/07/2019	Multi Donor Trust Fund Office Partnership Bureau-UNDP	YEM/15/01/UND

Evaluation title	Region	Country	Theme	Completion date	Funding source	TC symbol
Decent jobs for youth and improved food security through the development of sustainable rural enterprises - Final Evaluation	Africa	Zambia	Sustainable enterprises Rural economy Youth employment Employment creation	01/01/2019	Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	ZAM/13/04/SID
Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in the Zambian Mining Sector - Internal Evaluation	Africa	Zambia	Mining Freedom of association	01/10/2016	USA, United States Department of State	ZAM/14/01/USA
Addressing Decent Work Deficits in the Tobacco Sector of Zambia and Tanzania Projects (DWiT) - Final cluster evaluation	Africa	Zambia	Child labour Occupational safety and health 19 Tobacco industry Vulnerable groups	01/12/2020	ILO Internal Customer	ZMB/18/02/RBS
Formation en Approche HIMO Structurée des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises PME) et des Bureaux d'études et réalisation des chantiers écoles	Africa	Madagascar	Roads	31/12/2022		MDG/19/04/IFA
The effectiveness of the labour inspection system and of social dialogue mechanisms is strengthened	Europe	Republic of Moldova	Social dialogue	31/12/2022		MDA/20/01/RBS
Decent Work in Jordan's Floriculture Sector	Arab States	Jordan	Rural economy Employment	31/10/2022		JOR/19/02/AUS
Advancing Workers' Rights in Indonesia's Palm Oil Sector	Asia	Indonesia	Social dialogue	27/08/2021		IDN/18/02/USA
Partnership with Insurance for Rural Resilience & Economic Development (INSURED)	Global	Global	Insurance Rural economy	30/06/2022		GLO/18/15/IFA

Learn more



www.ilo.org/eval



eval@ilo.org



[ILO_EVAL](#)



[ILO_EVALUATION](#)