



Quick Facts

► Independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's post-conflict and recovery work in the Arab States region, with emphasis on Iraq and Yemen (2019-23)



► October 2023

► Description and purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this [independent high-level evaluation](#) (HLE) is to inform strategic decision-making at the ILO by providing insights into future policies and programmes in crisis and post-conflict recovery settings in the Arab States region. The HLE mostly analysed recovery efforts in Iraq and Yemen from 2019-23 and examined the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the programmes in each country. It explores the accomplishments, challenges and potential avenues for promoting the Decent Work Agenda in countries marked by fragile socio-political contexts and crises, while also situating the ILO within ongoing shifts towards a humanitarian-development-peacebuilding HDP nexus. The HLE addresses accountability objectives, provides opportunities for organizational learning and intends to contribute to policies and programmes in the Arab States region as well as in countries in other regions that are in similar crisis and post-conflict recovery settings. The HLE generates lessons that can help to:

- Improve country programme planning and implementation
- Enhance accountability for results
- Inform future programmes and projects
- Identify approaches to better support the priorities and outcomes of national tripartite constituents



The HDP nexus calls for increased coherence between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors and objectives. It recognizes that traditional humanitarian assistance - that is, providing short-term emergency relief and essential services - is a necessary but not sufficient means to address the root causes of today's crises.

► Methodology

The evaluation followed [EVAL's high-level evaluation Protocol for Strategy and Policy evaluation](#). The evaluation used a mixed methods approach to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Data was derived from various methods:

- Comprehensive document review
- Synthesis review of ILO project evaluations in the region
- Grounded theory approach
- 54 interviews with ILO staff, tripartite constituents, implementing partners, and other stakeholders.
- 9 focus group discussions with beneficiaries.
- Online surveys



KEY FINDINGS

- The ILO's model of intervention in the Arab States is relevant to post-conflict recovery contexts. The Decent Work Agenda was appreciated by tripartite constituents as being pertinent for periods of transition between larger-scale crises and longer-term sustainable development.
- The ILO programme design in the Arab States often lacks a coherent shared results framework for collecting data on cohesion indicators or any other peacebuilding outcome. Addressing such gaps will allow the ILO to better situate itself within emergent HDP nexus strategies.
- The ILO has effectively engaged in post-conflict recovery contexts by tackling unemployment, social protection and the erosion of labour standards. Even in challenging contexts, there are examples of successful policy engagement, capacity-building programmes and employment generation. Notable achievements include Iraq's ratification of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102).
- While the ILO has, in some countries in the region, effectively leveraged its normative mandate to engage other UN agencies in the Decent Work Agenda more can be done. By not always asserting itself in relevant humanitarian forums, the ILO is missing opportunities to complement and enhance those programmes in upholding principles and values of decent work.
- The ILO's operational procedures, security protocols, bureaucratic mechanisms and contracting rules hamper project efficiency, impact and sustainability, particularly in high-risk settings where essential external expert deployment is restricted.
- When countries emerge from conflict, the ILO Regional Office for Arab States requires resources and institutional

efficiency to swiftly increase the presence of international staff with relevant skills and experience. In Yemen, the current team relies on national colleagues without diplomatic immunities, operating in a challenging and fractured political environment. This hampers permissions, approvals and efficient resource allocation for implementation and monitoring purposes.





KEY LESSONS LEARNED



Lessons from Iraq underscore the vital role the ILO can play in assisting with the transition of moving from short-term needs into longer-term development. Despite various challenges, good progress has been made on social protection reform, labour rights advocacy, Conventions adoption and policy dialogue. Lessons from Yemen underscore the need for greater efficiency, agility in relation to operational constraints, and readiness to change programming in line with fluid conflict dynamics.



While the decent work pillars tackle key conflict drivers, more strategic thought is needed on how to deal with discord among tripartite constituents and their role in the HDP nexus. Effective social dialogue between representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations is key to achieve the Decent Work Agenda.



Recovery contexts are rarely safe and stable. If the ILO wishes to be a key player in these contexts, then it needs to learn lessons from countries such as Iraq, reform operational procedures and address bureaucratic bottlenecks, to ensure a more agile and streamlined response.



Development-driven employment generation matches the needs of affected populations, where dignified livelihoods are typically listed as one of the biggest needs for refugees and displaced persons.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The ILO should:

Engage effectively and efficiently in post-conflict settings by reforming its operational, logistical and security procedures that are in line with other UN agency standards. This would improve the use of resources, monitoring and oversight.

Match its commitment of engaging in post-conflict country settings with a robust presence of international staff possessing relevant skills and experience.

Develop distinct theories of change for post-conflict recovery contexts that can help explain what the ILO hopes to contribute towards peace and recovery efforts.

Develop a coherent strategy on how to work with tripartite constituents in fragmented political contexts.

Design and implement an accountability strategy that is in line with the Accountability to Affected Population (AAP). Improved accountability policies and monitoring will enhance lesson learning across programmes.

Review project design and monitoring processes in post-conflict settings to identify data gaps, missing indicators and address them going forward.

Ensure swifter engagement with other UN agencies at the onset of a crisis which would lead to a coordinated humanitarian response.



QUOTES

► Voices from constituents

"Better capacity development and hiring practices. ILO, like most UN entities, is more focused on perceptions and hiring staff that make them look diverse rather than effective. My country needs urgent support from qualified individuals, not for ILO to have a diverse and inclusive workplace, which does not inherently make things more effective on the programming side."

"It is essential to allocate the necessary and substantial funding for a partnership programme that extends over two years."

► Voices from ILO staff

"I feel there is a great need and demand for ILO to ensure that the principles of social justice are extended to those most vulnerable and that of course means working in fragile contexts and post-conflict settings."

"I would suggest headquarters and regional level specialists to offer much needed support to Country Offices especially during the project design phase. A fund mobilization and proposal development unit that can coordinate between technical specialist and the Decent Work Team can be instrumental."

