



Quick Facts

► Independent high-level evaluation of ILO's strategies and action on fundamental principles and rights at work, 2018-23



► October 2023

► Description and purpose of the evaluation

This independent high-level evaluation (HLE) examines the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and emerging impact of ILO's strategies and actions on [Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#) (FPRW) between 2018 and early 2023. The HLE assesses how the ILO integrated FPRW-related objectives in its strategic and programme frameworks, the extent to which it achieved planned results, how the results were achieved, and the contextual factors that affected the outcomes.

The HLE identifies good practices, lessons learned and recommendations to guide future ILO strategies and actions on FPRW and to inform the next recurrent discussion on the topic (112th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2024). The ILO Governing Body is responsible for governance-level decisions on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation.



The FPRW declaration affirms that all ILO Members States, even if they have not ratified the Conventions in question, have an obligation arising from the very fact of membership in the Organization to respect, promote and realize the principles and fundamental rights which are the subject of "fundamental" Conventions. These principles include Freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced labour, the elimination of child labour, the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, and the promotion of safe and healthy working environment.



KEY FINDINGS

- The ILO's country-level strategies and actions engaged constituents to define priorities for ILO support which is reflected in their generally high levels of satisfaction. However, FPRW programmes were often driven by external reputational, trade and investment concerns. While these programme drivers are often aligned with national and donor interests and facilitated relatively strong political engagement with national leaders, other equally or more significant FPRW gaps were not addressed.
- An [integrated strategy on FPRW \(2017-2023\)](#) was developed but it was not used, monitored or evaluated. Impact of the strategy was limited in its own portfolio and ILO-wide with some respondents not knowing of its existence.
- Institutional mandates and technical expertise on FPRW are spread widely across the ILO, leading to overlaps and complementary mandates. Inconsistent with its role to lead promotional efforts on all FPRW, the FUNDAMENTALS Branch remained mainly focused on child labour and forced labour.

► Methodology

The evaluation followed [Eval's high-level evaluation protocol for strategy and policy evaluation](#). Results were derived from various methods:

- Comprehensive document review
- Synthesis review of 33 evaluation reports
- 9 country case studies: Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Kenya, Peru, Guatemala, Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan and Qatar
- 3 thematic case studies: ILO promotion and contributions to core convention ratifications 2018-2023, ILO action on Committee on the Application of Standards recommendations for follow-up by the Office 2018-2023, FPRW integration in DWCP 2018-2023
- 188 interviews with constituents, staff and partners (93 women and 95 men)
- 3 online surveys administered to staff (19% response rate), constituents (26% response rate) and partners (24% response rate)





KEY FINDINGS (CONT'D).

- Few ILO projects addressed structural gaps in fundamental Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining (FACB) rights. Where they did, examples of positive outcomes include tripartite FACB action plans and social dialogue forums, legal reforms, streamlined trade union registration processes and reinforced capacity in the judiciary.
 - The ILO extended the Equal Pay International Coalition and the Global Business Disability Network to country offices.
- Nevertheless, except in the area of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and other persons in vulnerable situations, the Office struggled to achieve some of its P&B objectives.
- The ILO contributed to many positive results on eliminating child labour and forced labour, an area where it continues to have high volumes of activity.



KEY LESSONS LEARNED



The ILO effectively tackled fundamental labour rights challenges through impactful programming when national and external interests aligned, leading to strong political will and increased resources. However, it neglected to prioritize freedom of association and collective bargaining (FACB) as critical enabling rights, which remained inadequately addressed.



The ILO excelled in conducting research and knowledge sharing on FPRW and adapted well during the COVID-19 pandemic by assisting tripartite constituents in addressing labour rights issues. Yet, it missed opportunities to fully integrate the 2017-23 strategy on FPRW across different parts of the Office.



The intersection between the ILO's supervisory body and development cooperation activities remained narrow, with limited holistic responses to FPRW deficits. Dependence on donor priorities added complexity to align efforts with high-level FPRW objectives.



While the ILO made progress in promoting the universal ratification of core labour standards, there were lessons to be learned in setting coherent country-level priorities and providing long-term assistance. The ILO effectively mainstreamed FPRW in strategic workstreams thus showcasing the potential for greater impact.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The ILO should:

- Expedite its ongoing efforts to strengthen its strategy and actions in promoting FACB, which were initiated late in the evaluation period. Similarly, it should continue efforts to reinforce work on gender equality, non-discrimination and forced labour.
 - Formalize what is de facto the case: responsibility for FPRW related resource mobilisation and technical services is distributed across various technical and responsible units.
 - Continue to strongly promote ratifications and greater synergies between the operation of the supervisory bodies and development cooperation programmes.
- Apply the evaluation's lessons learned and strengthen promotion of ratification and supervisory mechanism on C155 (Occupational Safety and Health Convention in 1981) and C187 (Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention in 2006), with the aim of embracing Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) as the newly elevated FPRW.
 - Continue to invest in and capitalize on strategic partnerships with other UN organizations, regional economic organizations and International Financial Institutions to integrate FPRW in international development frameworks on sustainable development, responsible business, human rights and inclusive and equitable economic growth.

QUOTES

► Voices from constituents

"If the ILO had not initiated this program to promote fundamental principles and rights at work, the situation would have been more catastrophic, especially in developing countries where labour ministries have limited means of enforcing compliance with standards."

► Voices from ILO staff

"There is room for improvement as more sophisticated approaches should be taken to provide assistance and achieve durable solutions."

"All the projects under FPRW umbrella are aligned with one or more pillars of FPRW. The specialist and country programme officer ensures alignment of pillars of FPRW with the objectives of the project."

