



Quick Facts

► Impact evaluation in the ILO

► November 2023

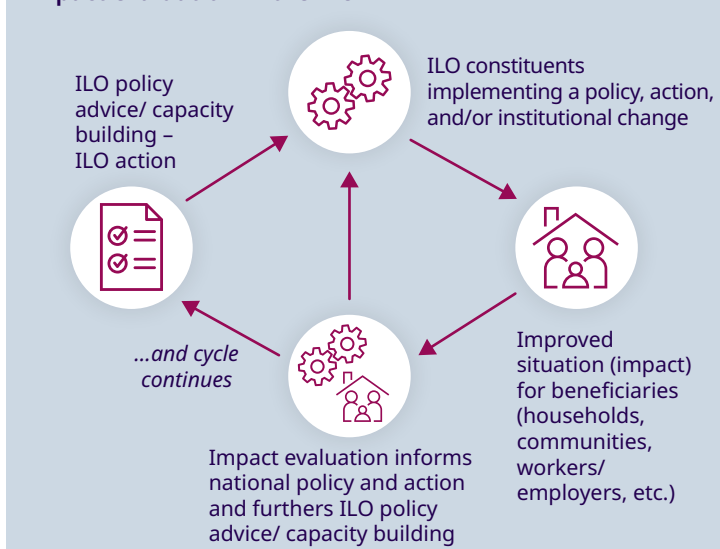
Impact evaluation is a key topic in development evaluation. Some appreciate the clear-cut focus on what impact can be documented, while others maintain that the “how” and “why” of impact is equally important. The right questions have to be asked and the right methodology used to make the most of impact evaluations for expanding knowledge on the topic. There is potential in ILO to expand the use of impact evaluations to learn about intervention effects through proper, credible and efficient use of impact evaluations in the right contexts as part of identifying and advocating effective policy solutions.

► Background

The [ILO Evaluation Policy of 2017](#) promotes the use of impact evaluations to support organizational learning and for knowledge building on effective policy interventions. Certain departments, within the ILO have been undertaking impact evaluation or impact assessments prior to the 2017 policy. EVAL first began work on impact evaluations in the ILO in 2009 and developed the first version of the [guidance note](#) and checklist on impact evaluation in 2013. Subsequent [evaluation strategies, including the latest one \(2023-25\)](#) have called for reinvigorated action on the subject. Since then, EVAL has undertaken several initiatives to enhance the ILO's impact evaluation efforts. However, resource constraints have restricted their scope and magnitude.

In 2016, EVAL launched the Impact Evaluation Review Facility (IERF) to provide institutional support and quality check of impact evaluation and assessment designs. The IERF has conducted a review of the designs of impact evaluation/assessments and provided inputs into a selected number of impact evaluation over the years but was overall not able to get traction.

Impact evaluation in the ILO



2014

Think Piece: Impact evaluation in the ILO: Stock taking of current practice- this included the first inventory of IEs in the ILO which has been updated in 2017 and 2020



October 2014

GB endorses EVAL recommendation in the AER to strengthen IE in the ILO



May 2016

Launch of the Impact Evaluation Review Facility to provide institutional support and quality check of IE designs



November 2015 - March 2016

Office wide consultation on IE through Concept mapping methodology resulting in a position paper on IE



2017

ILO Evaluation Policy includes reference to IEs as one tool to strengthen institutional learning in the ILO



July 2021

Concept note on next steps on ex-post evaluations endorsed by the Evaluation Advisory Committee



May 2022

Ex-post quality control of IEs undertaken covering the period of 2013 to 2021



► A renewed effort to improve assessment of the impact of ILO's projects and priorities

While the previous Evaluation Strategy decentralized impact evaluation responsibilities to the regions and departments, there are some important changes. The current strategy provides a more proactive role to EVAL and the departments and regions to jointly identify impact evaluation needs as part of the Criteria-based Integrated Evaluation Planning process (CIEPS). It also reiterates the role of the Impact Evaluation Review Facility (IERF) for review of impact evaluations carried out in the ILO at various stages of an impact evaluation. Furthermore, an ex-post quality assessment framework for impact evaluations is to be operationalized and applied to impact evaluations undertaken by ILO to facilitate methodological learning from and validate the quality of the ILO impact evaluation work. The Strategy clarifies EVAL's role in identifying and articulating how evaluations can support to complement ILO's learning and knowledge agenda and to fill needs and gaps for further evidence-based decision-making information and data. The recent [ex-post review study](#) further reaffirms the need for an entity to oversee the quality of impact studies and evaluations and to work together with regions and technical departments to bring the data and information from these IEs to an institutional decision-making level. The review further confirmed the need for further quality assurance and assessments of the myriad of impact studies and ex-post evaluations being undertaken by the Office to strengthen the credibility and use of these evaluations. Moreover, the strategy considers the use of new funding modalities for IE (such as the ILO Evaluation Trust Fund) to implement IEs of projects and activities.



IMPACT EVALUATION

In the ILO, the definition of impact follows the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) definition on impact evaluations: they aim to assess “the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended higher-level effects”. A fundamental element of impact evaluation is establishing cause and effect chains to show if an intervention has worked and, if so, how. It aims to determine the level of attribution that can be given to specific factors – including policies, programmes or other interventions, for observed and measured changes. It aims to answer the fundamental question of how Cause C influences Effect E. There is usually a sequence of “cause and effect” mechanisms, so effect 1 becomes cause 2 resulting in effect 2 and so on. This can also be expressed as the sequence: input, output, outcome, goal.

A range of methodologies and approaches can be used, often in combination, depending on evaluation questions, focus, context, required credibility and validity, resources, ethical concerns and time-frames.

EVAL, as laid out in the current ILO Evaluation Strategy period, will pursue a six-pronged approach to strengthen the quality assessment of evaluations in order to ensure that impact studies and evaluations can serve as important knowledge sources for evidenced-based decision-making.

- Upgrade the IE inventory to become an annual exercise that is put together with the consultations during the CIEPS process with departments and regions. The CIEPS process will identify upcoming evaluations and other learning opportunities and all planned impact evaluations should be identified by DEFP and REOs with the regions and departments. All completed impact evaluations would be included during this process in the rolling inventory list.
- Revitalize the institutional review board of impact evaluations pre-implementation through, the EVAL's Impact Evaluation Review Facility (IERF). This service has had so far limited uptake by the technical departments and regions. EVAL has found that a technical review of new impact evaluation designs can contribute to a more rigorous designs and therefore for more valid and credible results of the impact evaluations
- Institutionalize ex-Post quality assessments of impact evaluations to be conducted by a reliable independent entity based on the tool developed in the context of the review above.
- Reconstitute the Communities of Practice on impact evaluation to be created and moderated by EVAL for department and regional colleagues to exchange information and communicate on impact evaluation related issues and questions and to request peer to peer support and share opportunities for trainings.
- Assess the potential of using the ILO Evaluation Trust Fund modality to serve as a resource pool which interested ILO departments/offices could access via competitive internal mechanisms to implement IEs of their projects and activities.



FURTHER RESOURCES

- EVAL technical assistance for review and information: EVAL_IMPACT@ilo.org
- [i-eval Think Piece no 25: Impact evaluation ex-post review and way forward, October 2023](#)
- [EVAL Impact evaluation guidance note 2.5](#)
- [Checklist 9 for impact evaluation planning](#)

¹ Such as the Social Finance Programme with an Impact Insurance facility that has been conducting and publishing impact evaluations since 2011, and Youth Employment Programme through its Taaqum facility promoting and supporting impact evaluation amongst and by partners. The increasing number of IEs being requested and conducted has led to an increased investment and interest in IE at the ILO.

