



Impact Evaluation in the ILO

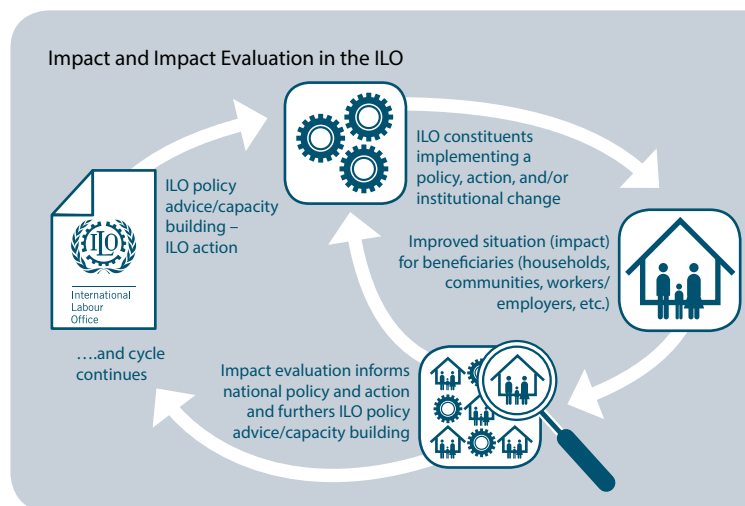
(June 2016)

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

There have been increasing requests for impact evaluations over the past decades to learn more about which interventions worked, in what contexts, and why. Since 2005, ILO has conducted more than 60 impact evaluations (IE).¹ IE is decentralized within the ILO to the technical departments as part of technical knowledge building, with EVAL gradually improving its facilitation role and ensuring that quality standards are met. In 2013, EVAL produced initial guidance on the topic.

To learn more about the state of IE in the ILO, EVAL prepared a Think Piece in 2014, which included an inventory of IE work in the ILO. It showed that many approaches are employed when undertaking impact evaluation and that quality varies. The study led to a chapter on impact evaluation in the 2013-2014 Annual Evaluation Report (AER) and contributed to the approved Governing Body recommendation:



“There is a need for office-wide impact and ex-post evaluation standards that provide sound methodological approaches. EVAL needs to work with the technical departments to ensure that they use the Office’s guidance, established definitions, and tools, in addition to conducting evaluability assessments to ensure quality and to justify investments.”

Impact Evaluation

The ILO aligns itself with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) definitions and methodologies for IE. Impact evaluation aims to determine changes in a given quality in individuals, households, communities or organizations that can be attributed to a particular intervention, programme or policy, and is primarily concerned with:

“Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.” (OECD/DAC)

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


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 Taqcem 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.

EVAL's Action Plan for Impact Evaluation in ILO

In response to the Governing Body recommendation and following meetings and an online survey with the informal impact evaluation network in the ILO, EVAL formulated in 2015 a **three tiered strategic** approach for further work on IE:

1. **Employing group concept mapping to develop an impact evaluation framework and vision for the ILO:** EVAL conducted a group concept mapping exercise with ILO staff in early 2016 with a results workshop on 4 March, 2016 for ILO staff and other interested individuals to further define, develop and apply impact evaluation in the ILO, including identifying a series of possible action steps. A position paper on the status of and vision for impact evaluation in the ILO has been produced as a follow-up to this.
2. **Quality review and assistance for designing impact evaluations (ex-ante):** This initiative, launched in April 2016, is now fully operational. Through it, EVAL provides technical review assistance to departments who are considering, designing or implementing impact evaluations. The type of services that can be requested through EVAL's new impact evaluation help-desk at EVAL_IMPACT@ilo.org are illustrated in the box.

SERVICES OF THE IMPACT EVALUATION REVIEW FACILITY (EVAL_IMPACT@ilo.org)

-  Provide advice on impact evaluation approach
-  Review evaluation questions
-  Review evaluation plans
-  Review threats to validity
-  Provide advice on ethical issues

3. **Impact evaluation quality appraisal (ex-post):** EVAL will be expanding its quality appraisals to include regular appraisals of the ILO's IE work. The purpose of this is to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of different impact evaluation designs, the extent to which designs are adhered to in practice, their appropriateness to the context, and how well the evaluation questions are addressed.

The informal impact evaluation network in the ILO will continue to serve as a Community of Practice for peer review, sharing experiences and facilitating work on IE throughout the ILO.

Resources for Impact Evaluation

- EVAL technical assistance for review and information: EVAL_IMPACT@ilo.org
- EVAL Impact Evaluation Guidance (**Guidance Note 13**): ilo.org/eval
- **Think Piece No. 6: Impact evaluation in the ILO: Stock-taking of current practice:** ilo.org/eval
- Subscribe to EVAL's **Knowledge Sharing Platform** (eval.ilo.org) for more info on IE and its inventory. It also provides easy access to information about similar studies so that those involved can share their experiences.
- **Group Concept Mapping Report:** *forthcoming*
- **Impact Evaluation Framework Position Paper:** *forthcoming*

VOICES FROM THE ILO

Selected quotes from a survey of ILO staff on impact evaluation:

- *"We should use impact evaluation to identify and develop policy solutions to support constituents emphasizing accountability and outcomes."*
- *"An impact evaluation alone is not what we require but an accumulation of impact evaluation to build a knowledge base."*
- *"We should train a focal person in each branch/department who has knowledge of IE to make information available more systematically."*

International Labour Office – Impact Evaluation Network

To share peer experience, get technical advice and to keep up-to-date on impact evaluation, join the informal Impact Evaluation Network by sending an email to EVAL: eval_impact@ilo.org