

# Quick Facts

## ► ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work: Evaluative lessons on how to build a better future of work after the pandemic Synthesis review

► December 2021



### ► Background

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the ILO has had to rapidly adapt its program tools, intervention models and development cooperation projects to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Without question, the pandemic will have an enduring impact on the ILO's work and the organisation will need to continue to adapt its strategy and actions.

Recognizing the importance of evaluating the ILO's work during the pandemic and of identifying lessons that might guide future action, the ILO's Evaluation Office (EVAL) established in early 2020 a [framework](#) and [protocol](#) to ensure high-level and decentralized evaluations conducted in this period collected relevant data about how the Organization was responding to new challenges and the effectiveness of its actions. *Evaluations of projects and areas of work conducted at this time can provide valuable lessons on how the needs and priorities of constituents might have changed, what issues are emerging that require urgent attention, and whether the ILO is well positioned to respond.*

### ► Objective

The objective of the [synthesis review](#) is to analyse the performance and emerging lessons of the Office's response to COVID-19 at the outbreak of the pandemic. Overall, the review intends to contribute to:

1. Changes in the environment and the drivers of change the ILO needs to be aware of and work with;
2. Different delivery models and points of intersection of existing projects to tackle the effects of the pandemic on the world of work;
3. Ways to extend the reach and the scope of ILO's work through the interventions;
4. Lessons learned from ILO's current approach to the crisis and future areas of work to ensure a resilient recovery; and
5. Any early evidence of effectiveness and orientation towards impact.

### ► Methodology

This synthesis review describes the results from a two-phased process. The first phase reviewed 22 evaluation reports completed in 2020 to early 2021 (report published Oct. 2021). The second phase reviewed 19 completed evaluation reports starting from mid-2021. Altogether, a total of 41 evaluation reports were analysed to identify findings related to several sub-areas of analysis, according to evaluative dimension (below).

Evaluative dimension	Sub-areas of analysis
 <p>Institutional readiness and capacity to deliver timely support in a responsive manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strategic planning and monitoring</li> <li>➤ Interdepartmental coordinated response approach</li> <li>➤ Consultation and continuous engagement with constituents</li> <li>➤ Response adaptability and timeliness</li> <li>➤ Resources</li> <li>➤ Implementation management</li> <li>➤ Strategic use of knowledge and partnerships for promoting decent work</li> <li>➤ Visibility and communication</li> </ul>
 <p>The ILO's policy action at national, regional and global levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Outcomes/impact of the ILO's response (as per relevant Programme and Budget outcomes) and focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive economic growth and employment</li> <li>• Protection of all workers</li> <li>• Universal social protection</li> <li>• Social dialogue</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## KEY FINDINGS

### 1 What is working, for whom and why?

ILO strategies and actions remain broadly relevant in the context of the pandemic and can make an important contribution to a human-centred recovery, as envisaged in the [Centenary Declaration](#) and the [ILC resolution on a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis](#).

ILO interventions were forced to adapt to the unexpected restrictions imposed by the pandemic. They experienced implementation delays and were often unable to implement activities as planned. Despite these challenges, and to varying degrees, projects were able to adjust their planned activities to ensure they remained relevant to the suddenly changed circumstances and to the changing needs and priorities of constituents during the crisis.

The use of cost-effective virtual/remote delivery methods in ILO interventions greatly increased during the pandemic, overcoming a past hesitancy to use these methods. Their continued use in the post-pandemic recovery phase is likely and this may have an enduring and positive effect on ILO's efficiency.

In terms of the visibility of the ILO's work in response to the pandemic, its research and knowledge management capabilities were especially effective. This was evident through various publications and policy guides developed by the reviewed projects in response to the pandemic, but especially through the ILO Monitor serial publication.

### 2 What has changed and why?

The ILO's work aligned with global, regional and national development strategies and priorities in place at the time. New priorities are now emerging in the wake of the pandemic and the ILO will need to maintain an ability to adapt its approach to ensure that it coheres with plans and strategies as they evolve. Tripartite mechanisms and strategic partnerships need to be maintained to advance progress towards achieving the Decent Work Agenda and the Centenary Declaration goals.

The challenges posed by the pandemic will lead some countries and constituents to change their priorities and this may have implications for the ILO's work, including its commitments to sustainable development, social inclusion, international labour standards and social dialogue. While the ILO needs to be responsive to these changing priorities, it should continue to be a strong advocate for a human-centred approach in shaping a future of decent work for all.

### 3 What's next?

The reports provide valuable operational insights into some of the new priorities and drivers of change that the ILO will need to consider going forward to maximise its relevance.

Considering the radically changed circumstances in which the reviewed projects found themselves as a result of the pandemic, the evaluation reports offered a number of insights into the sustainability of the ILO's work and its possible future directions.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is still too early to capture from the available evaluation reports information from projects that were conceived as a direct response to the pandemic and which embodied the principles set out in the global call to action.

Nevertheless, this synthesis review provides valuable insights for the forthcoming high-level evaluation of the ILO's COVID-19 response, which should include an examination of more recent projects that have not yet reached the formal project evaluation stage.

### SOME KEY CONCLUSIONS



Interventions that were in a position to have their directions significantly changed in response to the shock brought about by the pandemic showed that the ILO could be agile in developing highly relevant activities and resources that meet stakeholder needs.



In some locations (such as Latin America), the deterioration of economic conditions and loss of jobs and livelihoods may be reversing progress in some fundamental areas of the ILO's work, including eliminating child labour/trafficking and gender-based discrimination and violence.



Repairing the damage caused by the pandemic on labour markets by stimulating economic growth and employment is a priority articulated in the call to action.



The ILO will need to maintain an ability to adapt its approach to ensure that it coheres with strategies as priorities evolve and new ones emerge.



The task ahead for the ILO will be to use tripartite mechanisms to maximize the alignment of its work with national and global priorities, which are currently in a state of flux.



Sustaining results will include, but not be limited to, regulatory reforms that encourage business diversification; expansion of online training, collaboration, consultation and information-sharing; and revising strategies and programmes to ensure they support women in a changed post-COVID-19 world.