



Final independent evaluation of the Project “Accelerating action for the elimination of child labour in supply chains in Africa (ACCEL-I Africa)”

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda

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Administrative Office: ILO Regional Office – Africa

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

ACCEL-I Africa aimed to accelerate action for the elimination of child labour in selected supply chains (gold, cacao, cotton, tea, and coffee) in six African countries. The project started in November 2018-2023.

The donor chose the six countries based on concerns regarding the presence of child labour in their supply chains and aimed to reduce instances of the phenomenon. Meanwhile, the supply chains selected for the Project were based on their alignment with the donor’s prioritised supply. The Project’s design applied a novel “supply chain” approach. This meant that all parts of the supply chain were targeted – the beneficiaries, national constituents, local and national stakeholders, and private sector actors, including multinational organisations.

To create change, the Project relied on three pillars of action:

1. The first pillar focused on promoting public policy frameworks and government mechanisms that would accelerate child labour eradication.
2. The second pillar focused on ensuring that workers and communities are empowered and better represented to address the root causes of child labour in selected supply chains.
3. The third pillar focused on developing partnerships and knowledge-sharing mechanisms among national and international global supply chain actors in Africa to facilitate the reduction of child labour on the continent.

Present situation of the project

The Project has ended in four Project countries (Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda) with the implementation of ACCEL-I Africa II, which is expected to continue to build on the achievements of ACCEL-I Africa. Meanwhile, in Egypt and Malawi, the Project received an extension until 2024 to ensure a smooth exit of the Project from the two countries.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to take stock of the Project’s achievements and challenges, to ensure accountability, and to improve the future planning of ACCEL-I Africa and the ILO. The evaluation can guide ACCEL-I Africa’s project team by detailing what worked and where improvements should be considered.



Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation applied the key OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and complied with the ILO Policy Guidelines for results-based evaluation (2020) as well as the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Norms and Standards in the UN System. Additionally, during the evaluation, PPMI followed strict data protection policies aligned with the General Data Protection Regulation from the European Union.

The following evaluation relied on a mixed methods data collection and analysis approach using four types of data collection:

1. Desk research was used to support the methodological design, contribute to findings and complement interviews and FGDs.
2. Interviews were carried out with regional (9 ILO staff at regional and global levels and two donors) and national stakeholders (10 in Egypt and Uganda, 11 in Malawi, Mali, and Nigeria, and 13 in Ivory Coast) to inform on specific evaluation questions.
3. FGDs were conducted in 4 countries (2 in Cote d'Ivoire, 5 in Mali, and 6 in Nigeria and Uganda) to help understand how the targeted communities benefitted from the Project and the extent to which they became more capable of addressing the root causes of child labour.
4. Stakeholder workshops were used as an opportunity to present findings to national stakeholders across the six countries, receive feedback from stakeholders and provide general recommendations towards the Project's future implementation.

During data collection, the evaluation team also sought to ensure that the voices of female stakeholders and beneficiaries were included. This helped understand to what extent female voices were able to drive and benefit from activities while also supporting the shaping of recommendations.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

ACCEL-I Africa played an important role in responding to the needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders. By focusing on the root causes of



child labour, ACCEL-I Africa supported beneficiaries by informing communities about the dangers of child labour, improving social protection schemes, promoting safer working environments, and diversifying the incomes of those at the lowest level of the supply chain. Constituents also found the intervention relevant as it was designed in a highly consultative manner and supported social dialogue. However, some beneficiaries and stakeholders noted that more could have been done to protect farmers and workers in other sectors from predatory purchasing practices by intermediary private sector actors.

The design and implementation of ACCEL-I Africa were also in line with and successfully addressed most national needs and priorities regarding the reduction of child labour. Moreover, the Project was also found to support ILO's global framework and priorities as well as the priorities of subregional actors such as the East African Community (EAC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The priorities of regional actors, particularly the African Union, were also considered, given ACCEL-I Africa's alignment with the AU 2063 Agenda and various Action Plans and declarations. At the same time, the Project also aligned with and supported SDG 1, 5 and 8, the Alliance 8.7 and UNDAFs.

The Project also ensured its relevance even in difficult moments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ACCEL-I Africa undertook multiple adaptations and temporary measures to accommodate the implementation of lockdown and other sanitary measures. Despite some delays and difficulties, the Project managed to implement its outputs and satisfaction with the response was noted by multiple stakeholders.

Coherence

The Project exhibited a great degree of coherence between its three pillars of action as well as when collaborating with other interventions. Internally, ACCEL-I Africa's three pillars of action were sufficiently aligned, especially at the national level. As each pillar of the Project was considered for its specific targeted outputs, this helped ensure the mutual reinforcement and complementarity of



working with legal and policy frameworks, addressing root causes, and promoting knowledge sharing. Externally, the ILO managed to establish complementary partnerships and avoid overlap or duplication with other UN agencies, such as UNICEF and ION, as well as international organisations, such as GIZ.

Validity of design

The intervention was designed with three pillars of actions with standalone outputs providing a holistic approach towards each outcome. To ensure that these outputs and outcomes are achievable, an inception phase was implemented to consult key stakeholders and ensure that the Project could meet its objectives while maintaining relevance to those involved in the Project. This also enabled the creation of six specific theories of change that also fit into ACCEL-I Africa's main M&E framework, further supporting the relevance of the Project. At the same time, the Project was aligned with FUNDAMENTALS Integrated Strategy, supporting logic and coherence.

ACCEL-I Africa's design and ToC aligned with ILO's crosscutting concern on social dialogue and ILS. While gender and non-discrimination aspects were included in activities and outputs, the position of women and family dynamics could have benefitted from deeper consideration. Meanwhile, fair environmental transition concerns lacked comprehensive integration and addressed these concerns only indirectly.

Effectiveness

An evaluation of the provided data shows that the Project made significant progress in strengthening legal, policy, and institutional frameworks towards reducing child labour (Outcome 1). Similarly, visible progress was made towards the institutionalisation of innovative and evidence-based solutions that address the root causes of child labour in supply chains (Outcome 2), as well as strengthened partnerships and knowledge-sharing mechanisms among national and international supply chain actors in Africa (Outcome 3). However, some differences in progress can be observed across the six Project



countries, which can be attributed to the unique impact of COVID-19, climate events, differences in socioeconomic and political situations, and the differing levels of involvement among constituents and stakeholders.

Efficiency

In general, the available financial and human resources were sufficient to implement the Project. At the national and local levels, stakeholders were generally satisfied with the available financial resources allocated to them to implement activities. However, at the local level, some voiced the need for additional resources to be made available to them to implement activities. Similarly, some noted that additional human resources could have been useful to implement and reduce the burden when implementing activities. Yet, the capacity to achieve expected results at all levels shows that available human resources were, in general, sufficient, with management and governance mechanisms being valued by the constituents and stakeholders. Meanwhile, the granted cost extension and the additional extension in two countries where the Project is being phased out suggest that time resources were insufficient. Yet, this was due to the complexities created by the COVID-19 pandemic rather than issues in planning and design on behalf of the Project staff.

The implemented M&E framework and indicators allowed monitoring across the six countries and the different activities. Moreover, the DBMR was useful in providing an overview of the activities and beneficiaries who received support from the Project. However, an evaluation of the M&E framework revealed that some indicators needed to be more refined on what was being measured, while the DBMR needed more accuracy to provide accurate and credible insights into the Project's achievements.

Impact

The Project has already shown some decrease in instances of child labour. Families are starting to increasingly value the education of their children and are better able to understand the harm that



engaging in child labour could cause to their children. As a result, there has been an increase in the enrolment in schools, a perception that the number of children engaging in labour activities has decreased, and improvements in children's health. Moreover, there is potential to have further impact as private actors are engaged to support public policies around universal health coverage and the belief of stakeholders that working together can create synergies that will contribute to efficiencies that will reduce child labour.

However, establishing the true impact of the Project is difficult as there is little baseline data regarding the extent to which child labour is widespread in different supply chains and the lack of tools to quantify child labour at a systemic level. Moreover, in some cases, it was noted that the reduction of child labour was not as big as initially expected and that more could have been done to promote the independence of women who were targeted by the Project.

Sustainability

The constituents' and stakeholders' commitment towards eliminating child labour has grown during the Project, leading to a sense of ownership to continue the effort made under the Project. The achievements of the Project are also likely to be continued further by communities at the bottom of the supply chain. This is due to beneficiaries' determination to continue the fight against child labour even if external assistance would be reduced. Moreover, communities have also exhibited a better understanding of child labour as an issue in their community and are better placed to address it.

The Project's sustainability is further supported by its reliance on existing government structures and the introduction of new or strengthened laws and policies. This will enable constituents and stakeholders to ensure that lasting change can be continued, given the existence of frameworks targeting child labour while relying on existing foundations. Similarly, the establishment of dialogue and other exchange platforms, together with increased collaboration among communities and stakeholders, also reinforces the capacity to reduce child labour at the national level. Nevertheless, the lack of

resources and some stakeholders' lack of capacity to autonomously maintain results combined with potential natural disasters and political instability could potentially undermine the progress made during the Project.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1: Promote the exchange of experiences and good practices between project countries, both for stakeholders and for ILO project teams.

Despite an overarching ToC and an M&E framework, there was a limited exchange of experiences and practices between the countries where the Project took place. Moreover, the presence of an integrated mechanism to facilitate information flows could have contributed to supporting activity implementation and increased their effectiveness.

Recommendation 2: Improve gender mainstreaming within the project design.

The M&E framework did not sufficiently detail the Project's impact on women and how gender equality was measured in different outputs. It was also noted that it did not adequately consider the capacity of women to exercise their agency in family settings and needed further exploration of the transformative roles that women could play in combating child labour.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that the supply chain approach aims to involve all relevant supply chain actors at local, national, and global levels.

The Project's focus on the supply chain approach needed to have a bigger integration of private sector intermediaries and multinational companies. During the Project, it was noted that intermediaries implement predatory purchasing practices, which contribute to the presence of child labour in the supply chain.



Recommendation 4: Continue active engagement with other (UN) agencies and seek out opportunities for collaboration to ensure a greater impact on beneficiary populations.

The existence of child labour is caused by multiple factors and root causes. At times, this requires holistically addressing an issue, and a labour-based mandate might not be fully sufficient to tackle all aspects that lead to child labour.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that laws and regulations adopted at the national level are complemented by clear guidance for implementation at the level of local administration.

The Project has built capacity to support the adoption of appropriate laws, regulations, policies, and action plans to eradicate child labour. However, interviews indicated that these national-level measures have not been complemented by clear guidance at the level of local administration regarding their implementation.

Recommendation 6: Improve identification and monitoring of the incidence of child labour and its worst forms in supply chains and the impact of measures to accelerate its eradication.

The clandestine nature of child labour makes it hard to gather data about the phenomenon. Hence, the Project had a lack of systemic data about the impact it had on reducing child labour. Meanwhile, the evaluation team could only measure the extent to which instances of child labour fell based on anecdotal and circumstantial evidence.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned

1. **The Project could have benefited from gender mainstreaming in its design and implementation.** The lack of a strategic gender approach in Project design, variations in the extent to which gender considerations have been integrated during implementation, and the need to elaborate “gender consideration” in monitoring and evaluation show that the role of women in combatting child labour could have been used more effectively.

2. Private sector intermediaries and multinational organisations also play a key role in addressing poverty and the root causes of child labour.

The focus on the supply chain approach in the Project mostly focused on working with communities. Communities could see various improvements in terms of legal improvements, income diversification, and OSH standards. Nevertheless, examples of private sector intermediaries which pressure workers to sell cocoa below market rates were found.

Good practices

1. The use of existing ILO tools can enhance effectiveness and replicability. The implementation of the WIND and SCREAM methods have proven to be adaptable, relevant, and effective. Continued use of these tools is more efficient than designing new tools and has a near-guaranteed effectiveness based on past practice. These tools can also be upscaled and replicated by training local and national actors and could facilitate the exchange of experience.

2. The use of an overarching Theory of Change with activities and implementation approaches adaptable to local contexts.

All six Project countries followed the three pillars of action and had quite similar indicators but were flexible in adopting the activities needed to achieve the outcomes and targets. Therefore, stakeholders and beneficiaries noted the relevance of the Project in their country, while regional ILO management could monitor and manage ACCEL-I Africa through the overarching ToC and M&E framework.

3. Vocational training programmes are a key strategy in the reduction of child labour.

VET was successful in multiple countries as it provided an alternative to merely relocating children to schools. Instead, it empowered the younger beneficiaries to choose professions they were interested in. This helped ensure their motivation and raised parental awareness about opportunities outside child labour. Despite the lack of precise measurement tools, beneficiaries noted the positive influence of VET on reducing child labour and contributing to child labour prevention efforts.