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First Independent Evaluation of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab – 2021 - 2023

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Indonesia and South-Africa (under the Multi-Partner Fund. Other countries under the 8.7 Accelerator Lab's umbrella projects are not covered).

Evaluation date: 27 March 2024

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: EVAL at ILO HQ

Technical Office: FUNDAMENTALS

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Global Affairs Canada, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany, USD 13.000.000 (only for the Multi-Partner Fund being evaluated. This does not include other projects under the 8.7 Accelerator Lab

Key Words: Capacity building, child labour, conditions of employment, decent work, equal rights, forced labour, labour migration, labour standards, poverty alleviation, social dialogue, social protection, sustainable development, vulnerable groups, worker's rights..





BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

To accelerate progress towards the eradication of forced labour and child labour, the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS) launched the 8.7 Accelerator Lab . The Initiative began in January 2021 and is scheduled to continue until the end of 2030, in line with the target date of the UN agenda. The The 8.7 Accelerator Lab Initiative relies on a two-pronged approach, with a system-level and an intervention-level approach.

At the system-level the aim was to improve development cooperation by FUNDAMENTALS, by focusing on three pillars of improvement: "targeting", "exchanging", and "accelerating".

At the intervention-level, 8.7 Accelerator Lab sought to implement concrete activities at the national, regional, and global levels. In particular, the Initiative sought to develop policy and legal mechanisms, support constituents in identifying and tackling forced labour, promote regional dialogue, and foster partnerships and knowledge exchange. The intervention targeted two sectors in four countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (mining sector), Ghana, Indonesia and South Africa (fishing sector).

Besides a Theory of Change, the Initiative relied on six acceleration factors (Afs): fostering and developing political commitment, addressing root causes, focusing on vulnerable populations, creating and sharing knowledge, sustainable financing, and innovation, which were supposed to improve effectiveness and increase impact. Similarly, Strategic Entry Points (SEP) were highlighted as opportunities to enhance impact by leveraging context-specific factors such as existing trade agreements and existing migration corridors.

The Initiative was funded by five development partners (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States), of which three (Canada, Germany, and Norway) joined the Multi-Partner Funding Mechanism. The goal of the pooled funding mechanism was to optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of the intervention through more flexible funding mechanisms.



Present situation of the project	The initiative is expected to continue until 2030. However, the current cycle of the Multi Partner fund will end in 2024.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	<p>The evaluation adopts a clustered approach by looking both strategically at the achievements and lessons learned in improving the system-level change by the Initiative at a global level, and operationally at the achievements and lessons learned at the intervention-level. It also comprises the system-level work executed to enhance development cooperation within FUNDAMENTALS itself.</p> <p>The evaluation covers the period between the launch of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab in December 2020 and July 2023. The geographical scope of the evaluation comprises global, regional and country level work in Indonesia, South Africa and Ghana (fishing sector) and DRC (mining sector). The evaluation only covers projects under the 8.7 Accelerator Lab funded by the MPF.</p> <p>The primary users of the evaluation are global and national stakeholders, the 8.7 Accelerator Lab staff, other ILO staff, and donors. At the system-level in particular, the evaluators closely cooperated with the staff and main stakeholders within FUNDAMENTALS to ensure that the conclusions and recommendations would be useful for the Initiative to move forward. Potential Secondary users are other organisations or stakeholders working in related thematic areas.</p>
Methodology of evaluation	<p>The design of the evaluation was guided by the ILO Evaluation Policy and aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, and UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.</p> <p>The evaluation team applied a mixed methods approach to collect data. For the system-level, the evaluation focuses more on an “institutional evaluation” approach by predominantly engaging ILO staff across FUNDAMENTALS and other units to determine the internal functioning of the unit in relation to forced and child labour. A more traditional “project evaluation” approach was used for the intervention-level with a heavy focus on engaging stakeholders who</p>



could describe the successes and challenges in their respective countries.

Desk research and interviews were commonly applied to both levels, although the questionnaires were tailored to the respondents and the dimension. A total of 15 virtual interviews were carried out at the international level with ILO staff and donors. At the country level, 40 interviews spread across the four countries, were conducted with key stakeholders at the national level, based on a list provided by the ILO.

A Policy Delphi was used at the system-level, to identify how FUNDAMENTALS’ development cooperation is perceived and what opportunities exist for improvement.

Field visits and case studies were used at the intervention-level, to collect information on the intervention’s effectiveness at the community level.

Following the data collection stage, and having received comments on the Draft Evaluation Report, the evaluation team organised a validation workshop to discuss findings and lessons learned and to provide opportunities to discuss ideas for the 8.7 Accelerator Lab’s further implementation.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The evaluation found that the two-pronged approach was mutually reinforcing and managed to address some of the main needs and challenges of the FUNDAMENTALS branch, namely the siloed work of the unit and its limited exchange of knowledge and experiences within the branch.

The application of strategic entry points and acceleration factors were also relevant factors of the Initiative. Stakeholders noted that it is important to establish and support human rights due diligence mechanisms, as well as leverage trade agreements. Moreover, the selected acceleration factors responded to the needs and opportunities identified by national stakeholders. These methods included building upon existing political commitment to improve the



situation in the mining and fishing sectors, sharing knowledge among stakeholders, targeting vulnerable populations, and ensuring sustainable financing to maintain results after completion.

Migrant workers were also able to benefit from the reliance on strategic entry points and acceleration factors, as addressing their needs requires not only working with vulnerable populations and addressing root causes but also requires focusing on migration corridors.

Coherence

The Initiative had a well-designed approach, with both levels of intervention reinforcing each other. It was able to causally link its intended short-term and medium-term outcomes. This was possible due to the creation of logical causal links between the ToC's vertical pathways, the four expected outcomes and the holistic expected impact. Similarly, with the elaborate chronological assumption of cause and effect within each pathway, it is expected that if results are achieved across all four pathways, the prevalence and scope of child and forced labour in selected countries and sectors would be reduced. Moreover, the system- and intervention-level approaches aligned with the overall objectives of the Initiative, as both were able to reinforce each other.

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab's approach and design ensured a great degree of adaptability and flexibility. Stakeholders were consulted and engaged in its design at the system and intervention-levels, which helped tailor the interventions to the local context. Furthermore, changes were implemented at the intervention-level based on needs expressed by stakeholders during the Initiative.

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab has shown a degree of coherence with other strategies and frameworks related to child and forced labour in FUNDAMENTALS. The Initiative has also shown a great degree of coherence with the broader objective of the ILO such as the P&Bs, DWCPs of the ILO as well as with other projects implemented by the ILO. The evaluation also found that the Initiative aligns with key national, regional strategies and priorities on forced labour child



labour as well as with the strategies and frameworks of other international organisations.

The approach used by the 8.7 Accelerator Lab which works at system and intervention levels while also identifying SEPs and AFs adds a unique value and plays on ILO's comparative advantages. The current Initiative seeks to implement a new way of implementing transformative change by shifting the focus away from single projects to reduce forced and child labour all the while building upon ILO's integrated approach.

Effectiveness

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab Initiative has made improvements in its system-level goals towards enhanced targeting, exchange and evidence-based development cooperation. Although the introduced tools are new, ILO staff consider that they will soon have an impact on development cooperation.

Nevertheless, there are still areas for improvement at the system-level. It is important to continue to use tools and approaches that are effective to spread them across ILO and facilitate widespread change. Although knowledge exchange and communication mechanisms have improved, there is still a need to upscale existing communication mechanisms to ensure a more systematic approach.

At the intervention-level the Initiative has made progress across all four outcomes. At the national level, the 8.7 Accelerator Lab has stimulated the cooperation and capacity building of employers' organisations and workers towards reducing forced and child labour. Similarly, progress was made on awareness raising and capacity building of communities about tackling the issue. Across the four countries, there was increased willingness to approve laws and policies against child and forced labour as well as to ensure that they are implemented. Regionally, the Initiative managed to establish cooperation structures with regional organisations and to make progress in creating action plans to reduce child labour. At the global level, the Initiative achieved most of its targets and contributed clearly to global initiatives to reduce child and forced labour. To



achieve these goals the most visible AFs were the development of political commitment, addressing root causes, and creating and sharing knowledge. At the same time, the focus on sustainable financing and leveraging innovation was less visible.

At the system-level the key factors to ensuring progress were identified, despite some resistance to change. These factors include staff's open attitude towards responsiveness to context and their capacity to participate in consensus-based decision-making. At the intervention-level the strong engagement of stakeholders, and capacity to leverage existing projects and knowledge were also important. Meanwhile, at both levels, the creation of partnerships which support stakeholder collaboration have also supported the achievement of outcomes.

Efficiency

At the system-level, financial resources were used effectively to identify the most useful activities and outputs to enhance coordination and efficiency of development cooperation. The presence of a Multi-Partner Fund contributed to greater flexibility and enhanced the efficient use of different funding streams compared to previous more siloed work. However, some challenges persist due to continued earmarking of funds by some donors and due to some donors' internal reporting and accounting mechanisms that do not allow participation in a Multi-Partner Fund. Similarly, the evaluation found that human resources were sufficient. According to the evaluation, the ILO provided sufficient administrative, technical support towards ensuring that the Initiative's objectives are met. The communication between ILO HQ and country offices was also in line with both sides' expectations and contributed to the Initiative's smooth implementation.

At the intervention-level, the Initiative has also been able to use its financial resources effectively. Outcome 1 is the only outcome that has surpassed its allocated budget. Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 still have budget available, and their objectives are either in the process of being achieved or have already been exceeded. Human resources at the intervention-level are also sufficient to ensure that targets can be



met. However, some staff have noted that at times their workloads become overwhelming due to the variety of tasks required for implementation.

In terms of monitoring results of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab, some differences are evident between the system and intervention-levels. The intervention-level comprises an overarching results framework which sets out the Harmonised ToC, AF and SEPs and a harmonised logframe. However, at the system-level there is no separate ToC or M&E framework for the three pillars making it difficult to measure progress.

Sustainability

At the system-level the 8.7 Accelerator Lab's sustainability is supported by the policy and M&E framework produced during the implementation of the Initiative. The reviews and adjustments to these frameworks that are carried out periodically can help ensure that the Initiative remains relevant in changing contexts and supports the identification of direct beneficiaries. ILO staff have also noted that there is growing ownership towards the Initiative, and any potential limits to ownership stem from the relatively short time frame that has passed since the 8.7 Accelerator Lab began. Another aspect that enables sustainability, was the alignment of the initiative with SDG 2030; the Alliance 8.7 further supports the sustainability of the Initiative. Other factors that can help increase the impact of the Multi-Partner Fund and Initiative structure, include knowledge sharing and coordination with other projects. These factors can help scale up efforts and support synergies.

However, some internal and external challenges towards ensuring system-level sustainability were mentioned. Internally, the existing policies and M&Es, while being updated, lack an outlined process on how this should be carried out. Meanwhile, the Multi-Partner Fund system could also make it difficult to attract some donors, as some must adhere to strict internal funding procedures. The Initiative's implementation could also be affected by external factors such as disasters or emerging challenges, which might require the funders to

divert some of the available resources to find solutions for those issues.

At the intervention-level there are also signs that the progress achieved by the Initiative can be sustained. This stems from the 8.7 Accelerator Lab leveraging existing strategies at the national and regional levels, and institutionalising the initiatives undertaken by the Initiative. The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and constituents encouraged their engagement and has led to a strong sense of ownership among the parties involved in the Initiative's implementation. Moreover, continuing the Initiative's activities, such as on-site education and training and the further development of legislation can help achieve greater reductions in forced and child labour.

Nevertheless, there are potential challenges to sustaining the results of the Initiative. At the national level, some stakeholders noted that additional resources are needed to carry out activities particularly in remote and difficult to access areas. Further, changes in political priorities following elections and the lack of well-developed governance mechanisms could make it difficult to ensure sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1: Develop a more detailed framework for the system-level activities in terms of how activities are meant to create outputs and contribute to the objectives under each of the three pillars.

The Accelerator Lab's system-level currently lacks a framework or intervention logic that explicitly outlines what is expected to be achieved through the implemented activities. As a result, the existing monitoring mechanisms lack indicators to measure progress – indicators which should, at the same time, not be overly restrictive. This will require a continuation and potential increase of funding for the system-level.

Recommendation 2: Enhance the focus on dissemination, and particularly promotion, of the tools and mechanisms developed at system-level, to ensure that all staff engaged in ILO’s work on child and forced labour know about the tools and understand their value.

Some staff involved in the 8.7 Accelerator Lab Initiative were not aware of the tools and mechanisms put in place to tackle forced and child labour. Furthermore, it was noted that some colleagues working in the field are unsure of how HQ-level tools would affect their responsibilities and autonomy at the regional and country level.

Recommendation 3. Enhance the (visibility of) alignment of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab with the Alliance 8.7. in terms of the selection of (pathfinder) countries, and demonstration of the position and contribution of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab within the Alliance 8.7.

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab connects in several ways with the Alliance 8.7, in terms of the use of indicators that require data from the Alliance 8.7, the inclusion of some Alliance Pathfinder countries, and the overall objective of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab to support Alliance 8.7 in reducing child and forced labour.

However, some interviewees do not see the connection between the two or believe it should be stronger. Furthermore, existing annual reports show activities of the Alliance 8.7 that the 8.7 Accelerator Lab participated in, but the evaluation did not find information on how the role of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab is perceived or how it contributes to the Alliance 8.7.

Recommendation 4. Explore opportunities to refine the indicators in the Harmonised Logframe to provide better insights into the achieved changes at national, regional, and global levels.

The harmonised logframe is of high quality and incorporates a different range of data sources and indicators. Nevertheless, the indicators for Outcomes 1 (people-centred), 3 (regional), and 4 (global) could be adjusted to provide additional depth to understanding the progress of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab intervention.

Recommendation 5. Continue and strengthen efforts to engage (more) donors in the Multi-Partner Fund, with an aim to renew the fund at the end of the current cycle. In particular, try to further expand the current concept of the Multi-Partner Fund to enhance flexibility of funding even further.

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab envisages the elimination of child labour by 2025 and forced labour by 2030, but its Multi-Partner Funding ends in 2024. Furthermore, the current round includes some earmarked funding, from a limited number of donors.

Recommendation 6. Explore opportunities for the next evaluation (when impact can be expected) to measure the added value of the Acceleration Factors.

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab Initiative staff are aware of AFs and can explain how they were used in the Initiative. However, the Initiative's documentation and M&E frameworks do not provide guidance on how to integrate and measure the integration of AFs at country level. Furthermore, some of the implemented activities are yet to produce measurable impact

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned

1. The ToC at the system-level seeks to address specific difficulties but does not show how they link with the pillars of targeting, exchanging, and accelerating. **A dedicated Table of Contents (ToC) for the 8.7 Accelerator Lab's system-level is necessary to properly monitor and evaluate activities that enhance the functioning of FUNDAMENTALS.**
2. **In some countries, improvements in employment law achieved by the 8.7 Accelerator Lab do not benefit workers on service contracts.** This creates a disparity in the accessibility of employment benefits and social security for those working on a commission or under service contracts. Therefore, the scope of protection under employment law would need to be expanded as well.
3. **Stakeholders noted that issues of forced labour in the fishing sector often have a migration dimension. This creates specific challenges for migrant workers, which cannot be addressed at the**



national level alone. Instead, it requires the involvement of stakeholders from countries of origin, transit and destination

Good practices

1. Typically, interventions relied on separate projects funded by different donors and used different ToCs and M&E frameworks, making cross-country and project comparisons **impracticable.** **The introduction of a Harmonised ToC and logframe under the 8.7 Accelerator Lab allowed practices between Multi-Partner Fund countries to be compared and exchanged and facilitated interaction between MPF countries and affiliated project countries.**

2. **Training workers and unions had a mutually reinforcing effect on their capacity to utilize social dialogue.** Fishers felt more secure and protected voicing their concerns knowing that they would be represented by their organisation. Meanwhile, unions became respected partners in political dialogue and decision-making as well as acting as a policy body monitoring policy implementation and reporting existing violations and policy gaps.

3. Regional differences between countries regarding migration and legal regulation in targeted sectors mean that tackling forced, and child labour requires a holistic approach. **The inclusion of a Regional Path Change creates opportunities for national stakeholders to share lessons, create partnerships, develop systems and frameworks, and identify solutions to forced and child labour.**