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Independent Cluster Evaluation of RBSA-funded outcomes in Moldova: MDA104, MDA130

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Evaluation Report

"Final, Cluster, Independent Evaluation of RBSA-funded outcomes in Moldova: MDA104, MDA130"

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MDA130"

<u>Country of Intervention:</u>	Moldova
<u>Evaluation commissioned by:</u>	ILO/EVAL
<u>Evaluation conducted by:</u>	Thomas Vasseur Independent Consultant

February 2024

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Full name
ACAM	Association of Management Consultants from Moldova
ACT EMP	ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities
ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers 'Activities
AFAM	Association of Women Entrepreneurs from Moldova
ANARM	National Beekeepers' Association of the Republic of Moldova
ANSA	Territorial Service of the Agency for Food Safety
BDS	Business Development Services
CNPM	National Confederation of Employers from Moldova
CNSM	National Confederation of Trade Unions from Moldova
CNTM	National Youth Council
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EA	Employment Agency
EESE	Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises
EU	European Union
GE	Gender Equality
ILO HQ	ILO Headquarters in Geneva
ILO	International Labour Organization
JT	Just Transition
DWT/CO-Budapest	Decent Work Technical Team and Country Office Budapest
LEP	Local Employment Partnership
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MSLI	Moldova State Labour Inspectorate
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MSA	Market Systems Analysis
NEA	National Employment Agency
ODA	Organization for Entrepreneurship Development
RBSA	Regular Budget Supplementary Account
SMM	Social Mass Media
SIYB	Start and Improve your Business
TCCCB	Territorial Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining
ToRs	Terms of References
UDW	Undeclared work
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator

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Executive Summary

Summary of the project purpose, logic, and structure

Two projects are included in this cluster evaluation.

“Stimulating the **green economy** in Moldova to create new and better jobs” aims at supporting Moldovan constituents in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis by stimulating the creation of new and decent jobs in one high-value-added sector of the green economy. It intends to do so through (1). Enhanced job creation potential knowledge of high-value-added sectors of the green economy, (2) Stimulating green jobs through generating business ideas, (3) Shaping a business environment encouraging green business investments. The project logic involved the formulation of tripartite policy recommendation on Just Transition towards environmentally sustainable economy and activities enabling a deeper understanding the main challenges of the core value chain, the promotion of Environmentally efficient practices, greening business support and other support function.

“Job creation at the local level in Moldova through the adoption of a new, gender-transformative National Employment Strategy and its decentralized implementation through Local Employment Partnerships” is a project aiming at contributing to a job-rich recovery. The intervention intends to develop an evidence-based policy, operationalized with piloted job creation, activation measures through local decentralised implementation, by equipping labour market institutions and social partners with knowledge, evidence and tools to formulate a new gender-transformative employment policy and offering a pragmatic response to the urgent need for job creation at the local level.

Present Situation of the Project

Both projects, singly worth \$400,000 and \$600,000 have been completed in December 2023 after respectively 26 and 27 months of implementation. Both interventions have timely delivered activities and fully reached its objectives, in a highly challenging and complex context, marked by the war in Ukraine, a refugee and an energy crisis.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The scope of this evaluation encompasses the overall duration of both projects, i.e., from respectively October and November 2021 until December 2023. The geographic scope is Moldova and the key topics covered are inclusive activation measures, decentralised operationalisation of measures and the Just, Green Transition. The main clients of this cluster evaluation include ILO management, HQ and CO technical specialists, projects’ staff and tripartite constituents in Moldova.

Methodology of evaluation

This evaluation has applied the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of **Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability and impact**, tackling the issues of **gender equality, women empowerment, and disability inclusion**. Evaluation information has been collected through documentation review and analysis, crossed with interviews of all key project stakeholders, either in a face-to-face or remote modality. The ability to collect the perspectives

of a wide range of actors has been instrumental in capture the complexities of the project and the context. The evaluation has faced no significant limitation during its implementation.

Relevance:

The degree of relevance of both projects is very high at all levels, including national policy priorities, ILO Moldova DWCP, UNSDCF and international development organisation's strategic priorities, the EU accession priorities, local and national institutions, the social partners, and the targeted individuals unable to access the labour market.

The implementation approach (combining policy development, operationalization of pilot measures through decentralized multi-stakeholder mechanism) of both interventions has been appropriate to tackle the root causes of systems inefficient in making labour market accessible to the marginalised unemployed and develop their skills to match the labour demand.

Both RBSA interventions are also relevant to key actual topics for Moldova: With the LEP project and the demonstration of the effective decentralization of activation measures, its convincing results call for the need of higher level of State budget. The Green Economy project is relevant as the Green Transition is both a national and EU priority while also a pressing need to the development of key economic sectors, to be addressed.

Effectiveness

Both projects have fully achieved its intended results, which given the country context (directly impacted by the war in Ukraine, the COVID crisis, the refugee, the energy crisis), and the complex nature of these interventions, can be considered as an outstanding performance.

The quality and the degree of trust of the constituents and other partners has rendered an intense and demanding tempo delivery of activities a possible achievement. Flexibility, ILO staff competence and the quality of expertise is also to be accounted for the effective realisation of the project's objectives and the quality of its results.

However, the individual involvement of each of projects teams' members, is to be recognised as instrumental and the key factor that has conditioned the project's high effectiveness.

Efficiency

The evaluation has found that both projects have used available resources with high efficiency; this, in consideration of the delays and effects of the context – principally the war in Ukraine – on the implementation of activities and the mobilisation of key stakeholders to deal with the refugee and economic crisis.

Coherence

While the RBSA projects do not necessarily directly interact with other interventions, they do mutually complement one another while they support several key strategic priorities, identified in the relevance section.

For instance, both projects, through its respective contributions to the employment and green economic legal framework, do strengthen an environment that is conducive to Moldova's future accession to the EU. Those interventions are mutually supportive of the EU accession assistance.

This, for instance, include a package from the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP), delivering projects worth over €170 million in access to finance for SMEs'. The LEP project provides a coherent contribution to EU support reforms to building stronger institutions, including those at the local level. The LEP territorial approaches is also coherent with the decentralisation of states services.

Sustainability and impact potential

The sustainability of systems has been established for the most part (e.g., outreach to NEETs) as the dimension was an integral part of both projects' intention with the initial phase of both projects aiming at the institutionalisation of the eco-system (integration of new piloted, decentralised services and decentralised capacities of local employment office branches in the development process of the new National Employment Strategy).

According to the elements the evaluation was able to capture, the impact potential is very high in many aspects. This includes in terms of the volume of job creation, of inclusiveness, gender equality, environmental preservation, district-level social dialogue practice and sector-specific economic growth. However, achieving the full potential requires specific actions, such as the monitoring of impact of a systematic and prolonged period of time and a deeper impact analysis per sector of economic activities.

Cross-cutting issues

(Gender equality, women empowerment, and disability inclusion)

At the strategic level, the project has supported a key advancement at the policy level with a document instilling a gender transformative approach in the employment policy formulation and implementation. More specifically, the new employment policy has aimed at tackling labour market exclusion, with a specific focus on inactive women and youth, as well as people with disability.

Conclusions

LEP has been crowned with successful implementation since 2018. Repeated LEP experiences and piloting feedback has helped improve the LEP approach and can be considered as the result of ILO and partners 'investment through a virtuous cycle consultation-assessment-piloting-evidence-based policymaking.

There is a lack of information on the LEP post-project implementation and indirect impact and benefits. This LEP project as well as previous LEP project in Moldova (and elsewhere, such as in Bosnia) are assessed as successful because of the effectiveness of the mechanisms to building local partners dynamics and creating job opportunities for NEETs.

Main lessons learned.

1. The effectiveness of "Not in Education, Employment or Training" (NEET) outreach mechanism is a good practice.
2. The concomitant implementation of the two RBSA interventions has allowed to create a synergy that opens to new policy and programmatic possibilities.
3. The systematic Training of Trainers (TOT) certification and TOT training is a good practice to ensure capacity building within institutions continues after the project ends.

4. Underlining the link between job creation and migration prevention indicates the potential contribution of both projects to migration prevention.
5. The involvement of the Association of Business Consultant is a crucial element and necessary to take supported businesses to a higher level.
6. The learning from both RBSA projects results is that it clearly shows that LEP can potentially increase its impact in terms of job creation and wider economic development if the support is economic sector-focused.
7. The LEP project support to specific sectors calls to provide support in organising the management, structure and economy of strategic sectors.
8. RBSA project need adequate human resource management support and that concretely means a full-time project manager and support staff.

Good practices

ILO Moldova's permanent dialogue through trustful relations with key institutions is playing an important role to mobilise State budget resources to support the implementation of the National Employment Strategy. However, a direct lobbying with crucial decision-making ministries/institutions (Ministry of Economy, Prime Minister Office...) could help reverse the trends towards reduced resources to Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and National Employment Agency.

The project support focusing on specific sectors (beekeeping, rural tourism...) is identified as good practice as economic sectors in the province need to get organised and supported. The project experience and results has indicated that focusing the support on targeted economic sectors is not only increasing the individual support to small economic actors but can also contribute to strengthening the sector as a whole and its ability to be competitive and create even more jobs, directly and indirectly. A sector approach could also help mobilise resources.

Recommendations

1. Support the strategic prioritisation of the green economy and just transition through several recommended actions.
2. Mobilise resources to continue developing support to the development of the Green Economy and Just Transition.
3. Further support to the continuation of the Green Economy project
4. Support the progressive integration of Green Transition in the Territorial and Sectoral Approaches.
5. Take LEP to the "next level" to maximise the approach's full job creation and sector support potential through a series of measures.
6. Consider conducting a simplified impact analysis of (ideally) all previous LEPs.
7. Make LEP professional sector-oriented with a view to increasing small business's competitiveness, formalisation, certification, and job creation. This could be achieved by concentrating LEP support scheme to specific economic/professional sectors in order to increase the sustainability and longer-term socio-economic development impact of a LEP.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings, conclusions, lessons learned, best practices and recommendations of the cluster final evaluation of two RBSA-funded interventions entitled “**Stimulating the green economy in Moldova**” (MDA104) and “**Job creation at the local level in Moldova through the adoption of a new, gender-transformative National Employment Strategy and its decentralized implementation through Local Employment Partnerships**” (MDA130). This evaluation assignment commissioned by the ILO Budapest Office for Central and Eastern Europe, has been conducted by an independent evaluation consultant and has taken place from November to December 2023, with the following key dates:

EVALUATION TIMELINE & KEY DEADLINES	
ACTIVITY	DEADLINE
1. Kick-off meeting	17 November 2023
2. Desk review of project documentation and inception report	By November 2023
3. Stakeholder interviews in Moldova	12 – 16 November 2023
4. Data analysis & Draft evaluation report	By 14 December 2023
5. Presentation of initial findings to stakeholders	14 December 2023
6. Final evaluation report	February 2024

Table 1. Evaluation timeline & key deadlines

2. Project background

Context

Both projects are responses to key labour market challenges of Moldova, in the context of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to an aggravation of pre-existing employment and high inactivity rates.

Relatively unscathed by the first wave, Moldova was heavily hit by the second wave of the pandemic, with a loss of working hours equivalent to 130,000 full-time jobs (ILO Nowcasting, 2020). Policy responses relied on tax and credit reliefs, less so on job and income protection schemes. The pandemic exacerbated underlying labour market problems. Main challenges include chronic employment deficits across sectors, high inactivity, particularly among youth and women, and high incidence of informal employment (around 200,000 workers). The pandemic contributed to an increase in inactivity (64% in rural areas), worsening job quality, and higher incidence of working poverty, with women suffering disproportionately.

Project Background

Both proposals were submitted under the second round of RBSA allocation in the biennium 2020-21. The 2nd round aimed to intensify support to tripartite constituents' efforts for a human-centered recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, guided by the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and consolidating the ILO's leading role in delivering the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The RBSA funding had to support work in one of the following areas of strategic focus:

- a. Promoting gender equality and non-discrimination.
- b. Addressing informality, with particular attention to groups that face greater challenges on the path to decent work.
- c. Addressing climate change and promoting a just transition to a greener world of work.

Projects overview

The respective project documents do not feature reciprocal references, which is making sense since projects are approved on an individual basis, independently from one another for RBSA funding. It is worth noting that the scope of both interventions has encompassed the "urgent response" track and ILO as well as the country's long-term strategic development priorities.

The two projects are pilot initiatives, driven by an approach involving a sequential logic of evidence-based policy development (involving diagnostics ⇒ policy review ⇒ policy design ⇒ action planning through constituents' support and tripartite dialogue facilitation; an application of ILO good practices), followed by policy implementation. However, one important difference is setting both projects apart: MDA 130 is an evolved (i.e., enriched with the learnings from previous LEP projects) version of previous comparable projects while MDA 104 is a precedent for ILO in Moldova as it introduces the topics of Green Economy and Just Transition in the portfolio of ILO interventions. While there was not a real purpose to look for synergies between two projects proposals submitted separately, the potential for synergies has emerged during the implementation and the present report is reviewing this aspect.

Project objectives and key facts

Below is a comparative of key information of projects, including strategic focus, expected outcomes and results.

KEY PROJECT FACTS		
	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT TITLE
RBSA proposal title	Stimulating the green economy in Moldova to create new and better jobs.	Job creation at the local level in Moldova through the adoption of a new, gender-transformative National Employment Strategy and its decentralized implementation through Local Employment Partnerships .
DC Code	MDA/21/01/RBS (108289)	MDA/21/02/RBS (108290)
CPO Code	MDA104	MDA130
CPO Title	Improved legal and regulatory framework for enterprise development	Improved human resources development and employment policies, with particular attention to youth, women, and migrants
Strategic focus	Support Moldovan constituents in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis by stimulating the creation of new and decent jobs in one high-value-added sector of the green economy.	Contribute to a job-rich recovery.
Expected outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced knowledge on the job creation potential of high-value-added sectors of the green economy. 2. Stimulating green jobs through generating business ideas in a selected high-value-added sector. 3. Shaping a business environment that encourages green business investments. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Equip labour market institutions and social partners with knowledge, evidence and tools to formulate a new, human-centered and gender-transformative employment policy. b. Offer a pragmatic response to the urgent need for job creation at the local level,
Expected Results & key activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1. At national level.</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A tripartite policy recommendation on Just Transition towards environmentally sustainable economy adopted by the National Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining of Moldova. <u>2. At sectoral level.</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Deep understanding of the main challenges of the core value chain and its supporting functions in a selected sector that has large potential to create decent jobs in the green economy. c. Potential entrepreneurs in the selected sector are equipped to start their businesses to support the green economy by providing green products and services. d. Environmentally efficient practices supported and promoted by launching a 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1. A new, gender-transformative NEP covering the period 2022-2026 adopted and implemented through LEPs.</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Development of an evidence-based new national employment policy. b. implementation of the NEP by supporting the establishment of an implementation mechanism (deliverable 1.5), piloting measures (1.6) and supporting the effective regionalization of employment policies (1.7) through LEPs. <u>2. Local employment partnerships implemented as models of decentralized implementation of employment policy to promote inclusive productive job creation and recovery in rural areas.</u>

	Green Business Innovation challenge for the selected sector. e. Improved delivery of support functions to green businesses.	
Lead technical and admin unit	ILO DWT/CO-Budapest	ILO DWT/CO Budapest
P&B Outcomes and Outputs	Output 4.2: Strengthened capacity of enterprises and their support systems to enhance productivity and sustainability	PRIMARY: 3.1 Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement national employment policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis - proposed target for 2022-23 3.2 Increased capacity of member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy
Contribution to SDGs	SDG 8, Targets 8.2, 8.3	SDG 1 (national target 1.b), 8 (national target 8.3) and 17 (national target 17.17)
RBSA budget	US\$ 400,000	600,000 USD
RBSA duration	27 months: (3 for inception + initial 18, extended by 6 months, i.e., from October 2021 to December 2023)	26 months: 3 (inception)+ initial 18 months, extended by 4 months, i.e., from November 2021 –to December 2023)

Theory of Change

As indicated earlier in the report, both interventions are just an opportunity seized from RBSA funding in the context of the response to damaging effects the COVID crisis, they have been designed, integral to ILO's DWCP and based on underlying Theories of Change (ToC). In other words, both projects are coherent to the DWCP (even though at the time of its elaboration the topic of Green Transition was not yet introduced) and propose a change-driven approach.

Even though none of the RBSA project documents feature a formally developed ToC, both interventions describe the expected change process and the related underlying assumptions.

In the case of the Green Economy Project, the proposal explains how the intervention not only addresses the causes of the COVID-19 crisis, but also the root causes of Moldovan's economy and labour market weaknesses, since the causes of the COVID-19 crisis can be viewed as the exacerbation of the same root causes.

The strategic focus of MDA 104, entailing the stimulation of a Green Economy in Moldova is clearly articulated around the three pillars, necessary for achieving this stimulation, i.e., (1), enhancing the knowledge on the job creation potential in relation to specific sectors of the green economy, (2), the stimulation of green jobs through the generation of business ideas and (3) shaping a green business supportive environment conducive to investments.

The MDA 104 project document also describes the expected observable change as a result of the intervention through: the development of environmentally efficient practices, but also describe other specific activities for which the end of the project cycle may be too early to capture observable changes that can be attributed specifically to the project (expected change from activities entailing, for instance: a deeper understanding of core value chain main challenges from conducting a Market System Analysis... as the related expected change will likely take time to be observed).

As for the MDA 130 project document, the expected change and the theory does not fundamentally differ from the underlying ToC for the LEP modelised approach. However, the ToC had been updated and enriched with a policy-level dimension, with the institutionalization of large parts of the LEP approach through the support to the development of the gender transformative National Employment Strategy.

Also, in the case of MDA 130, no ToC is formulated as such, though the change process is explained through specific sections of the project document. The expected change of achieving a job-rich recovery as a contribution of the project is explained in a causal manner as the proposed approach involving the policy level (gender-transformative employment policy combined with an operational response backed by the supported policy development addresses ILO's initial assumptions, based on learnings from implementation and a constant monitoring and analysis of the labour market situation by ILO. The change process is clearly and logically articulated from the strategic focus level to the expected results level and the results' measurement indicators allow for tracking progress towards the forecasted change.

Stakeholders to the project

In line with ILO Tripartite principles, both projects have primarily collaborated with the constituents (Government, Trade Unions, Employers' Associations) but have involved a much wider range of stakeholders, ranging from Central Institutions (MLSP, NEA, ODA) academia (Economic Studies' Academy), NGOs (AFAM), to territorial actors, encompassing municipal authorities, vocational training centers, professional associations, NEA branches, Business Incubators, district-level representatives of Social Dialogue partners.

3. Evaluation background

This is a final independent cluster evaluation of two RBSA-funded interventions in Moldova undertaken in the framework of the regional RBSA M&E plan for Europe 2022-2023. in accordance with the ILO Procedures for the use of the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA).

The overall purpose of RBSA-funded project evaluation is to assess the results achieved as well as its contribution to broader ILO programming and country cooperation frameworks (including DWCPs).

More specifically, the **purpose** of this assessment is to:

- Support organizational learning and accountability, i.e., to identify learning lessons to improve project present and future actions.
- Assess the extent to which the interventions have achieved the stated objectives and expected results, while identifying the supporting factors and constraints that have led to them.
- Establish the relevance of the project design and implementation strategy in relation to the ILO, UN and national development frameworks (i.e., DWCP, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNPFSD).
- Identify good practices and lessons learned that would contribute to learning and knowledge development of the ILO and project stakeholders, including models of interventions that can be further applied.

These insights will be used as technical input for further planning of activities with ILO constituents in 2024 and beyond.

Scope of the evaluation

This final evaluation has considered the overall duration of both projects, i.e., from its inception (respectively October and November 2021) until its completion in December 2023. The thematic scope of both projects is wide and covers several common areas ensuring equal access to opportunities and jobs, social dialogue on policies. The policy component of the MDA130 project also contributes to supporting the ILO Policy Employment Contribution Convention 122. The “LEP” project specifically contributes to supporting to decentralization (of the NEA capacity of decentralized service delivery) while the Green Economy project particularly tackles the topics of Green Transition and Just Transition.

The geographic scope of this evaluation is Moldova. While the scope is in essence, national from a policy perspective as both projects aim at piloting measures applicable across the countries, it does include a regional dimension through the LEP intervention, with field activities implemented in the two districts of Soroca and Rezina. The Green Economy project has been active in the districts of where five Business Incubators have presence (Nisporeni, Singerei, Calarași, Stefan Voda). Details of the clients of the evaluation and the sequence of activities involved in the evaluation assignment are provide under the methodology section.

Phases of the Evaluation Process

The evaluation process has involved the following phases:

1. Desk review of key project documents and initial briefing with project teams,
2. Drafting of the inception report,
3. Data collection (including face-to-face and remote stakeholder interviews in Moldova).
4. Presentation of initial findings.
5. Data processing and analysis.
6. Drafting of Evaluation Report.

4. Criteria and Questions

This evaluation has applied the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of **Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability and impact**, while it has also reviewed the issues of **gender equality, women empowerment, and disability inclusion** through the additional criteria listed under cross-cutting issues:

Relevance

1. To what extent are the project objectives and approach relevant to the constituents' needs and present country context? Implementation of activities in line with needs of constituents: to which extent the activities were aligned with the needs of constituents?
2. To what extent are the interventions relevant for the achievement of common objectives, the achievement of a thematic strategy or the DWCP in Moldova?
3. How well have the projects adapted to the changes in the country context and on working methods?
4. What is the relevance of the outcomes of the RBSA interventions for the overall economic development in the future?
5. To what extent do the ILO interventions contribute in an integrated manner to central ILO issues such as labour norms or social dialogue?

Effectiveness

6. What have been the major results and lessons learned during the implementation of the RBSA interventions?
7. What has been the progress made in the achievement of the projects' outcomes? Have there been any changes in the specific areas defined as project outputs?
8. What are the main constraints experienced by the two RBSA interventions (both in terms of methodology and context)?
9. What is the most effective way to provide technical support and follow up on the main areas tackled by the interventions?

Efficiency

10. Have resources available (time, funds, partnerships, knowledge, expertise and tools) been used efficiently?
11. Have there been any ways to enhance the efficiency?
12. What were their synergies among the interventions under review? How did they mutually reinforce each other?

Coherence

13. To what extent do the interventions strategies fit with other interventions in the country?
14. How do the interventions contribute to the overall achievement of the DWCP?

Sustainability and impact potential

15. Are the results achieved likely to continue after the end of the intervention? Are they likely to produce longer-term effects and benefits to the target groups? What could be done to improve sustainability?
16. What is the expected long-lasting effect after the activities are completed?
17. Is it likely that the government and social partners will develop new policies, laws, regulations, or design national programs based on piloted interventions, contributing to further progress in the areas tackled by the project?

Recommendations and next steps

18. What action might be needed to bolster the longer-term effects and to come to further policy measures generating a positive change?
19. What are the next steps to be undertaken? What is the best way to proceed? What would be the main issues to tackle?
20. Which actors and in which way should be engaged?

The evaluator will ensure that opinions and perceptions of women are equally reflected in the interviews and that gender-specific questions are included.

The list of questions can be adjusted by the consultant prior to field research in coordination with the ILO representatives.

Based on the analysis of the findings this assessment will aim at providing practical recommendations on the immediate next steps and technical assistance needs that could be incorporated into the design of future initiatives.

Cross cutting issues

Relevance and validity of design

21. Within the context of ILO goal of gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as well as national level policies in this regard, to what extent did the projects' design take into account:
 - i. Specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context.
 - ii. Concerns relating to inclusion of people with disabilities?

Effectiveness

22. Within the projects' thematic area, what were the facilitating and limiting factors in project's contribution/potential contribution to:
 - i. Gender equality and non-discrimination?
 - ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities?

Efficiency

23. To what extent did the project budget factor-in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to address: i. Gender equality and non-discrimination? ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities

Sustainability and impact

24. To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs³ that can have a long-term positive bearing on:

- i. Gender parity within the world of work?
- ii. Inclusion of women and men with disabilities within the world of work

The evaluation findings are gathered by each evaluation criteria and answer each of the evaluation questions formulated in the ToRs. The evaluation questions developed for this evaluation are covering the various aspects of each of the evaluation criteria.

The data collection has been organised, following the Evaluation Matrix (annexed to this report), which has served as the key instrument for the elaboration of data collection tools as well as for the collection, organisation, and analysis of data. Judgment criteria and judgment indicators, described below, have helped shape the formulation of questions used during stakeholder interviews:

- **Judgment criteria:** In order for the answers to evaluation questions (EQ) to be justified and clearly explained, the evaluation has identified criteria covering the crucial aspects to be looked at. Cross analysing the various aspects has helped establish findings for each EQ. Judgment criteria has guided the formulation of more specific evaluation questions or topics, which has sought an answer to the review of documents and/or from evaluation interviews.
- **Judgment indicators:** In order to gauge the performance of the project against each criterion, answers to sub-questions also need to be weighed against judgment indicators. Rather than scale indicators, those indicators aim at identifying into more details at the factors or reasons that explain the under or overperformance of the project. Thus, indicators do not systematically aim at measuring but also identifying underlying factors in order to produce, for instance, lessons learned.
- **Source of information:** Evaluation findings have to be based on evidence. However, evidence is not systematically an absolute truth, but can come from various published sources as well as interviewees statements. Thus, this evaluation has indicated the source of the data used to build the evidence, so the reader is able to situate and appreciate the information. Obviously, the information sources and veracity of statements has been systematically verified by the evaluator.
- **Method of analysis:** This column specifies how the data collected is analysed and used to produce findings. The analysis of documents from the desk reviews allows to identify key issues for evaluation and also contribute to shape interview questions to verify or enquire deeper on facts that matter for the evaluation. The evaluation also triangulates the information from different document sources. Triangulation often involves comparing information on similar topics.

5. Methodology

5.1. Evaluation Approach

The evaluation has applied a mix of quantitative and qualitative tools to analyse the performance of both projects 'interventions towards achieving its results, with a particular accent on the quality given the complexity of both projects and the importance of gathering stakeholders' respective perspective and analyses to grasp the effectiveness of the respective methodology of each intervention and its results at project's end cycle stage.

The evaluation has been conducted in a participatory manner, involving the interview of key stakeholders, the ILO project teams, the National Coordinator for Moldova, colleagues from ILO's DWT/CO Budapest. As per ILO's definition, cluster evaluation refers to "an envelope of evaluations of projects combined into a single evaluation based on results or strategic, thematic or geographical area or scope."

The methodology has taken into consideration the benefits of the cluster evaluation¹ approach, also in the review the relevance of both projects to the priorities of the Decent Work Country Programme in Moldova, DWT/CO Budapest. In principle, Cluster Evaluations only apply to development cooperation projects, including RBSA that have a common strategic, or geographical focus. The cluster approach to this evaluation has provided an opportunity to identify linkages, synergies and concrete and potential opportunities arising from the concomitant implementation of both projects.

The analysis of project and context-relevant data collected has been conducted, crossing the information for each Evaluation Question from interview notes, project documentation review and available relevant publication.

The gender and human rights dimensions, as well as other cross cutting issues, have been integral throughout the evaluation phases, in that gender and human rights specific data has been collected whenever available, thus allowing to conduct targeted analysis for these specific aspects.

Intended Users of this evaluation

The main clients of this cluster evaluation are ILO management, HQ and CO technical specialists, projects' staff, and tripartite constituents in Moldova.

5.2. Evaluation methods and tools

The evaluation has used mixed methods to guide the data collection, which has mostly involved a qualitative collection and analysis of information.

The mix method approach has involved the following activities:

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_746718.pdf

- **A desk review** of documents produced by the project and the ILO, complemented with context and thematic-relevant reports and publications gathered through the consultant’s research or shared by project teams and interviewees.
- **An Evaluation Matrix**, expanding evaluation questions into sub-questions, judgment indicators and means of collection to organize the data collected.
- **Evaluation interview topics, used during Key informant Interviews** developed for stakeholder interviews, and tailored to the different stakeholder categories.
- **Data analysis** was conducted in crossing evaluation interview notes with findings from the written documentation and complemented with additional available reports on the topic of the project.

5.3. Field interviewing

The direct feedback from stakeholders has been essential in informing this evaluation and the evaluation has made ample space for virtual interviews during The field interview phase, which has taken place from 13 to 16 November 2023 with most face-to-face meetings with national level State institutions and organisations taking place in Chisinau, while exchanges with project parties operating at the district level have been taking place remotely. Additional interviews with ILO DWT/CO-Budapest and ILO HQ in Geneva have taken place after the field mission in Moldova.

Selection of Stakeholders for interviewing

The list of most important interviewees has been established in consultation with both project teams. All of the central-level key stakeholders based in Chisinau have been interviewed face-to-face, while the majority of participants at the territorial level have been interrogated via online meetings.

Number of interviews by stakeholder category

Category of stakeholder	Nb
ILO Projects Staff	4
Other ILO Staff (National Coordinator, DW ILO Budapest Central and Eastern Europe Office)	3
Ministry (MLSP, MEDD)	
Subordinated Institutions (NEA, ODA)	5
Trade Union (Central and district level)	4
Employers’ Association	1
Professional Associations (beekeepers, handicraft)	4
Service providers (business incubators, consulting & experts)	2
Civil Society (Youth Association)	
Educational services providers (VET, SYIB trainers)	2
Territorial stakeholders (Local Public Administration...)	6
Total/Gender representation	29 (Female: 75%, Male 25%)

Table 2. Number of stakeholders interviewed by category.

5.4. Data sources and evaluation ethics

Data sources include projects-related documentation and ILO strategic publications, including the 2021-2024 DWCP Country Report for Moldova. Desk-based research has also included National (e.g., National Employment Strategy), International (EU strategic priorities) and thematic (Just Transition) policy documents. Interviewees' contributions in expressing their analytical perspectives have been instrumental to the understanding and analytical capacity of the evaluation.

This evaluation has been conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners, and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the 'do no harm' principle for humanitarian assistance. The evaluation consultant has committed to respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, ensuring that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source and must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information.

5.5. Limitations of the evaluation

There have been no major limitations to the implementation of this evaluation. The timeframe has been tight; however, this has been compensated by great efforts from project teams in arranging all interviews in a very efficient manner. Both teams have also given extra time to provide additional briefings to the evaluation consultant.

6. Evaluation Findings

6.1. Evaluation Criteria: Relevance

Both projects are scoring very high in relevance, at all levels: from the national sectoral policy, ILO DWCP, UN Country Development Framework, EU key policy instruments, but also on the thematic level (Leave No One Behind - LNOB, Green Economy GE, Just Transition JT). Both projects are also answering the needs of NEETs isolation, decentralisation of employment services, small business to thrive, constituents with stronger capacities in the Social Dialogue. The relevance is also timely as the thematic of LNOB, GE and JT are being prioritised globally but also by the EU that has recently granted the candidate status to Moldova.

EQ 1.1. To what extent are the project objectives and approach relevant to the constituents' needs and present country context? Implementation of activities in line with needs of constituents: to which extent the activities were aligned with the needs of constituents?

The evaluation has found, based on stakeholder interviews, the objectives of both projects to be very relevant to the constituents' needs and the actual context. The chosen approach is also appropriate to reaching results as it follows a gradual process (described in the answer to EQ 2.4) which follows a tested and effective process, that follows a logic, which can be simplified as: 1. Need is identified and/or expressed, 2. Initial design of response is the result of consultation and introduction of tested models, 3. Research/analysis is conducted to adjust tested existing models, 4. Systems and tools are integrated in the policy, 5. Systems and tools are piloted in the field.

The relevance of the respective approaches is driven, supported, and can also be verified by the theories of change (ToC) developed for each outcome of ILO Moldova's DWCP, apart from the topics of enterprise development and the Green Economy as it was not part of the DWCP at the time of its formulation. Each outcome-level ToC is sustained by an intervention model and related performance indicators. This formulation is conferring a very strong theory-based, model-driven, measurable framework to projects and provides a strong alignment between the project and the country-programmatic level.

The objectives and activities of both projects were also much aligned to the needs of constituents, summarized as following:

- Government and State institutions: The MDA 130 (LEP) project has answered the need of MLSP to solve the paradigm of labour shortage on the one and the high unemployment and activation of NEETs, through a two-level approach involving developing a supportive policy supporting decentralized and effective services. The project has also answered the need of the NEA to support the decentralization of its services by increasing the capacity of local branches to widen its competences and implement activation measures, while enhancing its efficiency to getting NEETs and the unemployed into the labour market. MDA 104 (Green Economy) has enhanced ODA's capacity to support start-ups and existing small businesses to thrive by engaging into the greening of their activities.
- Both projects have answered the needs of Trade Unions and Employers' Association, to enhance their contribution to policy formulation at the central level, while increasing the social dialogue around the key issues of labour inclusion, decent work, Just and Green transition through a results-oriented dialogue practiced by Territorial Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining.

The territorial approach of both projects is relevant to the decentralisation process in Moldova through the decentralisation of NEA capacities and services supported mainly through LEP, in a context where local NEA branches have seen their autonomy reduced (since branches have lost their status of a legal entity in the 2018 reform going against decentralisation). Ever since, capacities (Human Resources) of NEA have been on the decrease while the workload on the agency has increased. This initiative of the rapid functional audit of the NEA is the materialization of a request of MLSP to the ILO in Moldova, and favorably answered by the Moldova ILO Office.

Both projects are also relevant to sectoral priorities, both recognised as such by Moldova and the EU. In this context, agriculture is a key economic sector for the Republic of Moldova, the aforementioned measures should also be accompanied by support for the sustainability of Moldova's agricultural production; (European Parliament resolution of 19 April 2023 on the challenges facing the Republic of Moldova.²)

Also underlined an EC priority of relevance to the contribution of to the RBSA initiatives are supported by the EC findings³:

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0112_EN.html

³ Key findings of the 2023 Report on the Republic of Moldova

([https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/QANDA_23_5629_en % 20Moldova.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/QANDA_23_5629_en%20Moldova.pdf)) f8 November 2023

- On need to support quality of public services through better civil servant salaries (NEA) public administration reform: « Moldova needs to continue increasing its capacity to implement the reforms and provide good quality public services at all levels. ».
- About fundamental rights: “The Roma in particular continue to face discrimination, including in the labour market.” ».
- On the Green Agenda: « Moldova is at an early stage of preparation in the environment and climate change. »
- On Employment: Business creation/expansion support is the right answer to MLSP/NEA needs to address problem of low employment, high inactivity. Also responding to Employers needs unable to find qualified labour.

EQ 1.2. To what extent are the interventions relevant for the achievement of common objectives, the achievement of a thematic strategy or the DWCP in Moldova?

Both projects are highly relevant to the common objectives of key international and national stakeholders and their priority strategic objectives.

PROJECT LINKAGES TO MOLDOVA DWCP		
Moldova DWCP	MDA 130 LEP	MDA 104 GREEN ECO.
Priority 1 Inclusive and productive employment for youth		
Outcome 1.1 New gender-transformative National Employment Strategy (NES) with a focus on young people is adopted.	Result 1.a.: A new, gender-transformative NEP covering the period 2022-2026 adopted and implemented through LEPs	
Performance indicators:		
<i>- A new gender-transformative NES adopted by the government.</i>	- Result of LEP.	
<i>- Representatives of the social partners participate in both the Steering Committee and the Working Group for the elaboration of the NES (at least 45 per cent of the representatives are women).</i>	- Result of LEP	
<i>- The NES includes specific measures for the outreach and activation of women and youth, including through Local Employment Partnerships.</i>	- Implemented through LEP	
<i>- The NES includes demand side policies and reference to the Future of Work.</i>	- Implemented through LEP	
<i>- Number of new jobs created for rural youth and inactive women through local employment partnerships (disaggregated by sex).</i>	- Implemented through LEP	
<i>- Coverage of the registered unemployed with ALMPs (absolute number and percentage).</i>	- Implemented through LEP	
<i>- Job placement rates of young NEA clients (disaggregated by sex)</i>	- Implemented through LEP	
<i>- Number of inactive women covered by new outreach measures</i>	- Implemented through LEP	

<p>Outcome 1.2 Improved performance of the National Employment Agency.</p> <p><u>Performance indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Percentage of employers stating that TVET meets the needs of enterprises</i> - <i>Core employability and business skills integrated into TVET</i> - <i>Adoption of a lifelong learning strategy with a gender perspective endorsed by tripartite constituents</i> 	<p>- Implemented through LEP</p>	
	<p>Result 1.b.: Supporting the establishment of an implementation mechanism (deliverable 1.5), piloting measures (1.6) and supporting the effective regionalization of employment policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported by LEP. - Supported by LEP. - Supported by LEP. 	
<p>Outcome 1.3 An advanced skill needs anticipation system is operational and a lifelong learning strategy is adopted.</p>	<p>Territorial Employment Partnerships contribute to this outcome through (private sector) demand driven VET curriculum upgrade.</p>	<p>The project also contributes to this outcome</p>
<p>Priority 3 Improved social dialogue</p>		
<p>Outcome 3.1 Relevant and effective social dialogue platforms at national, territorial and enterprise level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New strategies developed and providing directions for organizational innovation and transformation.</i> - <i>Number of new or revised services introduced by employers' and workers' organizations</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The green transition supported by the project is a strong driver of innovation. - The greening of business involved a new range of business support services but also services developed by small businesses.
<p>Outcome 3.2 Strong Employers' and Workers' Organizations with expertise in policies and quality services for their members</p>	<p>- The project has supported Social Partners in contributing to the National Employment Policy.</p>	<p>- The policy recommendation formulated by Social Partners provides a contribution to this outcome.</p>

It is important to explain that the MDA 130 (LEP) project is “ticking” more boxes on linkages to the DWCP than the MDA 104 (Green Economy) mainly since the Just Transition and Green Transition thematic have been prioritised strategically by ILO recently and shortly after MDA 104 was developed. Thus, those topics are not integrated in the current DWCP but are planned to be mainstreamed in the future updated version of the DWCP.

ILO has also identified relevant contributions of its DWCP to UNSDCF 2023-2027 in relation to Economic development and Employment. The Green Economy emerged after the DWCP was drafted but the open attitude of ILO to update its DWCP in consultation with constituents, will most likely provide opportunities to include indicators specifically relating to the Green Economy and Just Transition, using the results of the Green Economy project.

LEP building capacities of institutions while enhancing its mutual interactions also answer EU priority of building stronger institutions.

Both projects are also contributing to the achievement of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)** for Moldova. The interventions fall under several of the challenges identified by the UN common country analysis, especially, in relation to the issues of (a.) access to basic quality services, (b.) human right and non-discrimination, (c.) availability and use of quality disaggregated data, (d.) gender equality and social norms, (e.) economic diversification and green economy, (f.) high-skilled human capital, and indirectly but importantly to (g.) peace, security and social cohesion and (h.) harnessing the potential of migration. In terms of identified challenges, the relevance of the two projects combined amount to a coverage of close to 80%: a substantial coverage of the scope of important issues.

Further, altogether, these RBSA initiatives contribute to 100% of the four UNSDCF strategic priorities, i.e., 1. Just and Inclusive Institutions and Equal Opportunities for Human Development, 2. Participatory Governance and Social Cohesion, 3. Enhanced Shared Prosperity in a Sustainable Economy and 4. Green Development, Sustainable Communities and 4. Disaster and Climate Resilience.

The target groups of the MDA 130 (LEP Project), and to some extent to the MDA 104 (Green Economy project) are highly represented in those targeted by the UN Framework as they make at least 50 % of the groups identified as the most vulnerable & discriminated populations, including the NEETs, small agricultural producers, or persons with disabilities.

EQ 1.3. How well have the projects adapted to the changes in the country context and on working methods?

The country context during implementation has been the subject to profound effect of important events. The world has been marked by various shocks with a global effect and Moldova has been particularly heavily impacted by those shocks⁴, because those were powerful, consecutive and Moldova's economy and labour market was already vulnerable.

In parallel, advancement towards EU integration has given a greater significance on the topics tackled by both projects.

The evaluation has found that both projects have not only adapted very well to those changes, but also very rapidly, considering, on the one hand, that both have been operating within

⁴ Those shocks can be counted as three consecutive shocks with one provoking two additional shocks: First, the COVID crisis and the impact of lockdown measures, 2. The war in Ukraine and the influx of refugees in Moldova, followed by the peak in energy prices.

relatively short timeframes, and that, any adaptation can be, in principle, time-consuming as it requires consultation and the validation of the several project partners.

The evaluation identifies the following reasons explaining the ability of both projects to adjust promptly and appropriately:

- Working Methods: Tripartite agreement and approach.
- Culture of work and partnership: This can be often overlooked and taken for granted as the routine practice makes it invisible, though the feedback from project partners reflects on their perception of ILO and its staff as partners, in the sense of a joint commitment towards the same goals. This allows for a continuous dialogue, where trust is established, partners are not only involved but pro-active. In terms of implementation this has translated into project partners discussing and approving promptly adaptive measures.
- The strategic and long-term driver.
- The individual competence, attitude, and commitment.

While the LEP approach is not new in Moldova, its ability to offer a prompt crisis response and its effect on employment, labour shortages have proven appropriate also in the COVID-response context. With the Green Economy project, ILO has managed to adapt its green job approach to the context of Moldova for the first time, thus making the intervention even more country-relevant, at a time where the green transition was marking a new strategic orientation.

EQ 1.4. What is the relevance of the outcomes of the RBSA interventions for the overall economic development in the future?

The evaluation has found the two RBSA-funded projects to be of very high relevance and importance to the stakes influencing the future economic development of Moldova. These projects are important, not only because they tackle the root cause of the economy and labour market's dysfunctions but also because their implementation coincides with the political momentum of EU accession. The timing is crucial as the strong results achieved by both projects offer positive indicators that more resources should be invested in inclusive, just and green job, small business creation and cooperative organization. From the value perspective, the strategic value of both projects outclasses its financial value as the potential of its longer-term impact appears promising.

Funded out of RBSA's allocation round aimed at intensifying support to tripartite constituents' efforts for a human-centered recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, both projects are appreciated as ticking all the RBSA's valuation criteria for selection as indicated in the below table.

RELEVANCE LINKAGES OF PROJECTS WITH RBSA CRITERIA			
RBSA Criteria	MDA 104 (Green Economy)	MDA 130 (LEP)	
Areas of strategic focus			
1	Promoting gender equality and non-discrimination.	Highly gender inclusive (majority of project users are women), mainstreams gender and non-discrimination principles in Green Transition Policy	Youth, Women, person with disabilities targeted, NEET category targeted.
2	Addressing informality, with particular attention to groups that face greater challenges on the path to decent work.	Green and Just Transitions apply inclusiveness principles and support formalization.	Advocacy and set of measures supporting formalisation.
3	Addressing climate change and promoting a just transition to a greener world of work.	Just and Green Transition as central topics.	Initial synergy through some cases of integration of Green Transition support to small business. Potential for progressive systematic integration of Green Transition in LEP.
Allocation criteria			
1	Contribute to the achievement of results in countries under the corresponding Country Programme Outcomes (CPOs) and cover different ILO technical areas.	Direct contribution to several Country Programme Outcomes and support to anticipated Green Transition ILO DWCP Priority.	Direct contribution to several Country Programme Outcomes. <i>(Listed in the previous table "project linkages to Moldova DWCP" in the section under EQ 1.2.</i>
2	<u>Integrated programming approach:</u> strengthening tripartism, constituent capacity building.	Project activities support capacity development of constituents and the social dialogue.	Project activities support capacity development of constituents and the social dialogue.
3	<u>Application of international labour standards, policy coherence and leveraging financing for the achievement of decent work results.</u>		Support to international labour standards application.
4	<u>Linking to multiple P&B outcomes and outputs</u>	Output 4.2: Strengthened capacity of enterprises and their support systems to enhance productivity and sustainability.	3.1 Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement national employment policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis. 3.2 Increased capacity of member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy
5	<i>Delivery performance</i>	Strong delivery in tight timeframe and challenging context.	
6	Country eligibility: situations of fragility	Consecutives shocks of COVID, Ukraine war, energy crisis	
7	Duration: 18 months.	Tight implementation cycles for complex projects requiring a substantial inception phase, during a period of successive shocks.	

EQ 1.5. To what extent do the ILO interventions contribute in an integrated manner to central ILO issues such as labour norms or social dialogue?

Though relatively modest in financial value, both projects provide contribution to several central ILO issues; and in an integral manner as each of the project results can relate to the ILO DWCP for Moldova. While the thematic of Just Transition and Green Economy are not referred as indicators to the current 2021-2024 DWCP for Moldova, yet, the evaluation understands that, in consultation with constituents, the ILO DWCP will be updated to both thematic in the future. The Green Economy project funded by the RBSA has actually provided solid ground to mainstream and advance the topic of the Green and Just transition as it is now considered as a strategic priority at various policy levels, including for the EU accession.

Both projects, in their design and results not only make direct contributions to **4 of the 8** ILO Moldova's DWCP Priority Outcomes (1.2., 1.3, 3.1, 3.2) but are also effectively achieving the Outcome 1.1. *Outcome 1.1 New gender-transformative National Employment Strategy (NES)*.

The NES also reflects the commitment to effective policy implementation, its monitoring and implementation, aligned with the integrated approach and provisions of ILO Convention No. 122.

6.2. Evaluation Criteria: Coherence

EQ 2.1. To what extent do the interventions strategies fit with other interventions in the country?

As described in the relevance section of this report, both projects are strategic fits directly contributing to several national sectoral policies as well as international strategic objectives and instruments, including those of the UN system and the EU.

While the RBSA projects do not necessarily directly interact with other interventions, they do complement mutually contribute to the strategic priorities evoked in the relevance section.

For instance, both projects, through its respective contributions to the employment and green economic legal framework, do strengthen an environment that is conducive to Moldova's future accession to the EU. Those interventions are mutually supportive of the EU package provided through the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) is delivering on flagship projects in key sectors and worth over €170 million in access to finance for SMEs'.

The LEP and to some extent the Green economy projects are supporting the need for a decentralisation of (public employment) services in Moldova so it contributes to ODA's efforts both in its commitment to support the development and the greening of small businesses.

The Project Objectives are not only relevant to key EU policy and programme priorities, but its implementation also provides a coherent contribution to EU support reforms to building stronger institutions, including those at the local level. The LEP territorial approaches is also coherent with the decentralisation of states services. This coherence is not an unexpectedly happy coincidence but rather a carefully designed approach which has improved over the previous LEP iterations from the lessons of the analysis of previous RPs.

The LEP project also offers coherence and complementarity with the GiZ interventions in Moldova, including the agency's support to the NEA or its support to the dual education system so that vocational training gives job-seekers prospects and helps businesses to find qualified personnel.

Since the Green Economy project was a pilot project, it was too early to interact directly with other coherent initiatives. However, the learnings from the implementation experience are indicating that the tools and expertise provided by other agencies could be complementary to ILO business greening skills in the context of a follow-up case. As such, UNEP has developed tools for greening businesses. IFAD EU Green for Growth Fund.

EQ. 2.2. How do the interventions contribute to the overall achievement of the DWCP?

The answer to the EQ 1.2. (To what extent are the interventions relevant for the achievement of common objectives, the achievement of a thematic strategy or the DWCP in Moldova?) of the present report list the correspondences between both projects’ results and the DWCP outcomes and related indicators. “On the paper”, both projects are contributing to a great deal of DWCP’s priorities (particularly 1 and 3) and its outcomes. As explained, the Green Economy project features less references as its thematic priorities were only about to be in the process of being prioritised by ILO globally and so the Moldova DWCP has also not integrated the topics of the Just Transition and Green Economy at the time it was drafted. In the meantime, and recently, those issues have been prioritised and have also become of horizontal importance both globally and in Moldova.

At this conclusive stage, both projects have boosted results which have brought a significant contribution to the 2021-2024 DWCP.

6.3. Evaluation Criteria: Effectiveness

EQ 3.1. What have been the major results and lessons learned during the implementation of the RBSA interventions?

Both projects have fully achieved its intended results, which given the country context (directly impacted by the war in Ukraine), the delays occurred to Green Project (due to the departure of the first project backstopping officer) and the thin timeframe in relation to the project results framework, lead to assess that both interventions have outperformed.

Below is a summary of the respective key achievements of each project:

MDA 104 – GREEN ECONOMY
RESULTS 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report on the analysis of constraints faced by the private sector in the process of just transition to a green economy aimed at strengthening an enabling environment to facilitate the just green transition. ▪ Results discussed with members of the Economic Council of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova. ▪ Policy document on a Just Transition toward an environmentally sustainable economy developed by social partners and the government and proposed for adoption by the National Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining in November 2023. ▪ Draft Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) guide for SMEs developed by the Employers Association from Moldova.
RESULTS 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhanced productivity ecosystem for sustainable enterprises through equipping 5 incubators with the SIYB-based Training Curriculum, and 10 business support organizations. 32 ToT, including 26 with SIYB trainer certification. ▪ SIYB curriculum integrated into ODA's entrepreneurial development program and continuous education school curricula of the Academy of Economic Studies from Moldova.

RESULTS 3

- **Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) program, was introduced in Moldova.**
- **1,001 potential entrepreneurs, including 705 women, trained on SIYB.**
- **Including 200 in launching green businesses and greening businesses.**
- **95 entrepreneurs, of which 64 women, incl. 10 refugee women developed business plans for launching green businesses.**
- **61 entrepreneurs applied to financing programs for green investments.**
- **5 SMEs (3 rural businesses led by women) have benefited from small grants for the implementation of green processes and technologies.**
- **35 new, green and sustainable businesses registered will contribute to the creation of 70 new and decent jobs.**

MDA 130 – NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY & LEP

RESULTS 1

- **Comprehensive labor market diagnosis developed by the Government and social partners with the support of the project.**
- **Policy options formulated into the new employment policy document (NEP) through a tripartite dialogue supported by the project.**
- **NEP 2022-2026 officially endorsed.**
- **Functional Audit of National Employment Agency (to assess the effectiveness of the new employment promotion law and recommend strengthening NEA’s institutional capacity to achieve policy goals).**
- **Pilot-testing of Active Labour Market Measures.**

RESULT 2

- **Capacity enhancement of 12 districts tripartite territorial committees for consultation and collective bargaining (TCCCB) to design, implement, and monitor employment interventions and promoting a partnership approach to job creation through LEPs.**
- **2 TCCBs formalized their activity and supported the development of Districts’ Territorial Audits, leading to the development of 2 LEPs (in Rezina and Soroca districts).**
- **Key results of those 2 LEPs: 2400 young NEETs identified, including 1385 women.**
- **From 2400 NEETs: 420 individuals received entrepreneurial and specialized trainings, new employment opportunities to 260 NEETs, 150 have launched their new businesses with success.**
- **New outreach measures targeting inactive youth piloted and the outreach bylaw drafted.**

EQ 3.2. What has been the progress made in the achievement of the project’s outcomes? Have there been any changes in the specific areas defined as project outputs?

Both MDA 104 and MDA 130 have fully achieved its planned outcomes, despite a highly instable geopolitical, security, migration, energy, and economic context, which has delayed implementation. The project experienced a significant delay in recruiting staff, resulting in a direct impact on the project's timelines. As a result, a 6-month extension was necessary to complete the project. This extension required a reorganization of project activities, which placed a heavier workload on the existing team members. Moreover, it implied a reduced time available for coaching grantees on investment implementation and offering post-investment support for job creation.

The challenges, described in the response to the following Evaluation Question has required both project teams to show flexibility and adjust to the impacts of the turbulent context. Implementation plans have been revised though activities have not changed creating to the intended outputs and producing planned outcomes.

The human factor, or more figurately expressed, the individual involvement of each of projects teams members, is to be recognised as instrumental in the intense delivery of activities.

EQ 3.3. What are the main constraints experienced by the two RBSA interventions (both in terms of methodology and context)?

In terms of the wider context-related constraints, both projects have been exposed to challenges which can be characterised as shocks to the Moldovan society, which have obviously also affected the implementation of activities. The war in Ukraine, the influx of Ukrainian refugees through and into Moldova, ensued by the energy crisis, has mobilised the efforts of the constituents and most other project actors. One of the main constraints experienced by both projects has been the 18 months (extended) timeframe of RBSA. First, both projects involved the introduction of complex multi-stakeholders, multi-level mechanism, the introduction of new concepts and follow a lengthy research/assessment-policy formulation – filed piloting implementation sequence. The inception phase involves the introduction of new concepts (e.g., green and just transition) and approaches (reach out to NEETs), not just requiring awareness raising but also training on new practices.

The Green Economy project has experienced a challenging context in terms of management as the evaluation understands no full project management staff has been planned for this project, in the sense that important activities of the project were planned to be implemented remotely. Then, followed what the evaluation understands as a change of project strategy, involving the implementation of a Market System Analysis which took time to develop and implement. A national project officer was recruited a year after the implementation has started. A clear lesson learned is that the level of complexity and the density of project activities, the number of stakeholders involved amply justifies the need for a full-time project manager for this RBSA project. The evaluation appreciates the deep and genuine dedication of both project teams to deliver timely, remarkably qualitative results in the respective extended RBSA timeframes. The evaluation has noted the efforts of the Green Economy project officer who joined the project in the last 18 months of implementation, as her commitment has allowed to catch up on the delivery of numerous activities in a compressed period of time. In both cases, the dedication of both project teams is to be strongly commended.

Additional encountered project-specific challenges include:

- **For MDA 130:** A four-month delay occurred in the selection of districts for LEP implementation. Delayed approval of the National Employment Programme. ODA's reorganizational process meant the institution was only available to launch LEP start-ups and business extension in rural communities, later in the process.
- **For MDA 104:** Delay in the approval of sectoral strategies, including the concept of the promotion of the Green Economy. As a consequence, the policy recommendation formulation support on Just Transition was also postponed. ODA's reorganizational process has delayed the institutions 'availability to implement project activities, i.e., ODA

capacity building in upgrading its training curriculum and delivering SYIB-based trainings, and ODA's sub-contracted agricultural training providers.

Both project teams showed responsiveness in adjusting to the above challenges by revising workplans, postponing activities without interrupting the implementation.

EQ 3.4. What is the most effective way to provide technical support and follow up on the main areas tackled by the interventions?

The evaluation has identified a sequencing of activities as the *modus operandi*, understood as guided by the underlying strategic process: 1. Introduction of awareness raising on new concepts (LEP, Green Economy, Just Transition). 2. Research on adaptability and adaptation of concepts to the Moldova context, 3. Translation of adapted concept into the policy formulation. 4. Operationalisation of concepts into systems, measures, tools (e.g., NEET reach out). 5. Institutionalisation of/ Training on tools and systems, Piloting concrete measures in the field. Obviously, this process fits into a constant dialogue between ILO and partners, where interventions respond to a need emerging from context analysis or a request from one of the constituents.

6.4. Evaluation Criteria: Efficiency

EQ 4.1. Have resources available (time, funds, partnerships, knowledge, expertise, and tools) been used efficiently?

Overall, the evaluation has found that both projects have used available resources with high efficiency; this, in consideration of the delays and effects of the context – principally the war in Ukraine – on the implementation of activities and the mobilisation of key stakeholders to deal with the refugee and economic crisis.

Most of the resources of both projects have been distributed among policy-support activities, capacity-building training sessions, the provision of expertise and grants to support the creation of job and the greening of businesses. The budget allocations have been driven according to the needs assessed and the balance of budgetary allocation among the four types of activities is coherent. Interviewees have expressed strongly positive opinions on the support provided by the ILO staff, the quality of the trainings, systems (partnerships), tools and the relevance of the expert inputs. The ability of both projects to not sacrifice quality despite contextual challenges is considered by the evaluation as a central indicator of efficient use of resources.

An important part of this efficiency, as much as it also contributes to the effectiveness of the results has to be credited to the teams' efforts, to adjust, re-plan, pay careful attention to details, allowing to monitor implementation and proceed with adjustment with great rapidity.

Efficiency of expertise, tools and approaches introduced by the project should be measured in coherence with the nature of the intervention and the intention of testing the validity and effectiveness of introduced piloted measures. Indeed, measuring the efficiency of inputs should not be done by using the numbers of jobs and businesses created, because it is still early to tell and because the limited resources available means there was a limited number of end-users could benefit from the application of those technical elements.

EQ 4.2. Have there been any ways to enhance the efficiency?

There are not many alternatives to the approach applied to implementing both projects. First, because the approaches are the results of continuous improvements where lessons from previous interventions are being factored in new projects. This has been the case for both MDA 104 and MDA 130. Second, a lot of the efficiency depends on the quality the relationships entertained by ILO with the constituents and other stakeholders. The respect and trust institutions have for ILO is fundamental to the smoothness of the implementation of activities because the motivation and willingness is there. Third, the quality of the expertise and the tools/approaches introduced by both projects is highly relevant and appreciated by stakeholders overall.

The tools are focused on analysis of the challenges (territorial audit, institutional functional audit, market analysis...) and permit a deep understanding of specific real challenges. Fourth, the reality of dealing with institutions in a context which can be characterised as transitional, implies, the necessity to recognise that the implementation has to follow a tempo that is highly conditioned to the context and its challenges (institutions overloaded with reforms, understaffed, high staff turnover, political instability...).

Fifth, the context has been itself exposed to a series of various shocks, from the COVID crisis to the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis and the economic instabilities Moldova's economy is highly vulnerable to.

Sixth, and most importantly, both projects involve lengthy processes, especially in their inception phase as it involves awareness raising and stakeholder mobilisation. The process of building outreach and inclusive mechanisms to activate NEETS, and their inclusion as well are also long practices. Thus, all in all, the evaluation understands that a deep analysis leading to a accurate understanding of the challenges to be addressed associated with a capacity to listen to actors, leading to trustful relationships cannot be traded for more efficient approaches but require to acknowledge this is what conditions efficiency.

EQ 4.3. What were the synergies among the interventions under review? How did they mutually reinforce each other? To what extent do the interventions strategies fit with other interventions in the country?

The evaluation has identified a number of synergies established between the projects and a future potential for an intensification of those synergies. The opportunities for synergies have been limited by, at least, two factors: 1. The challenging implementation context has reduced the project cycle duration, requiring both teams to intensively concentrate on an activity-rich implementation in order to deliver timely. 2. The one-year delay experienced by the Green Economy project has also reduced the implementation period shared by both projects. 3. The Green Transition being a newly introduced topic, it has required the project to engage firstly in an awareness-raising curve, before considering establishing synergies.

Synergies have however been taking place as an intention to create synergies whenever such opportunities existed. As such, opportunities to include the Green Economy project services to small businesses in the two districts targeted by LEP has provided a very relevant first initiative to

mainstream the greening of businesses, as well as raising awareness on the necessity to engage in the Green Transition as well as the Just Transition. Both projects are coherent complementary practices of the Just Transition as it fundamentally relies on the principle of “Leave No One Behind”.

Among other instances of synergy, there has been over 30 out of 90 applicants to greening of businesses were existing ODA clients. ODA as a service provider is well positioned to provide services so that LEP-supported businesses also benefit from ODA support to engage in their greening transition. This is an indicator there is further potential for futures synergies between the two projects through ODA.

While the approaches and tools introduced by the ILO can be considered as having contributed to the effectiveness of both projects in reaching results, the capacity building activities should also be appreciated from the perspective of its contribution of the efficiency of the project, i.e. its contribution to reach effective results in an efficient manner. This can be explained by the fact the tools have proven very relevant to the situation. Through international previous, contextualization and testing, the capacity building component (the territorial approach can also be considered as a capacity-building element owing to its proven efficiency in multistakeholder engagement. The adaptation of ILO’s SYIB tool to Moldova offers a successful illustration of the contribution of technical support tools to project efficiency.

The feedback from interviewees is that SIYB may be more relevant to those who already own a business as it is exhaustive and rather advanced in financial management aspects for instance. SYIB certification is now a condition to obtain ODA loan. It will be interesting to assess over time whether SIYB is more adapted to NEETs without prior business experience or to business owner intending to expand and hire workers. Based on the feedback from interviews, the SIYB is a well-adapted tool to a variety of business situations, including business start-ups , but also first timers in business (for instance, the Center of continuous education in Chisinau has adapted the SIYB curricula to its students in a simplified, more accessible version) as it is a level up from basic business training where beginners are not trained in depth about all aspects of business, including financial and business planning.

The SIYB as a support tool to small business creation addresses a crucial problem in Moldova; as businesses are unable to develop to the « next level » where new market opportunities can be accessed, jobs can be created and professional (occupational, among others) standards are implemented. This type of enterprise making the majority of businesses in Moldova is in dire need of business counselling to reach this next level, while the consulting offer is still very scarce. ACAM has conducted a Market Research Analysis in 2022 on services to develop the sector of agriculture. This analysis led to two key recommendations involved three levels: 1. The business needs assessment indicate that economic growth requires small businesses to go “next level” and that reaching this “next level” means businesses have to engage in the green transition and that they need to apply standards in all dimensions of activities (promotion, marketing, packaging...), 2. In order to reach this “next, more competitive level”, small businesses need to be trained. In turn, this requires for Moldova to develop a small business development training capacity. A project stakeholder suggested to adapt ILO business development training material to Moldova for this purpose.

In conclusion, it is interesting to appreciate the adaptability of SIYB to the various situation of business existence, from start-up to expansion, potentially the integration of the Green Transition dimension into it. This adaptability is one powerful asset of the SIYB training and thus its appropriateness to different business situations but also business environment evolution, including the projected necessity of all businesses to comply to a more constringent “greened” business legal framework.

When it comes to the greening of businesses, the Green Economy project appears to have grasped well the fact that the Green transition is involving more than adjusting businesses to environment; it requires a completely different perspective. In that respect, the feedbacks from interviewees converge towards the idea that a “Greening” specialist is a needed expertise to support the Green transition of small businesses and that some of the existing green transitions tools for small businesses could be adapted to the context of Moldova. As ACAM’s director (who plans to create a platform to communication and promote greening of business) stated: “Today, Greening is an opportunity. Tomorrow, it will be a requirement.”

There has also been an interesting intra and inter-project synergy: First, within the LEP project – the evaluation understand it is both an intention and a synergy: The employment activation measures from the LEP project have enabled the beneficiaries of the first activation measure (business creation) to stabilise their businesses so they could access to the second activation measure (business expansion). In addition, synergy has been created between the two RBSA projects since some of the LEP-supported businesses have received training on the greening of their businesses from the Green Economy project so that those small compagnies could already apprehend the Green transition challenge but also become eligible to the support provided in the improving Green Transition framework.

6.5. Evaluation Criteria: Sustainability and impact potential

EQ 5.1. Are the results achieved likely to continue after the end of the intervention? Are they likely to produce longer-term effects and benefits to the target groups? What could be done to improve sustainability?

The sustainability of systems has been established for the most part (e.g., outreach to NEETs) as the dimension was an integral part of both projects’ intention with the initial phase of both projects aiming at on the institutionalisation of the eco-system (integration of new piloted, decentralised services and decentralised capacities of local employment office branches in the development process of the new National Employment Strategy)

Aside of sustainability, the evaluation was able to grasp the impact of the intervention, as witnessed by the stakeholders as it was important to understand impact through stakeholder’s knowledge, individual perspectives, stories as well as information feedback. The informal, likely less reported aspect tells that LEP has also been largely promoted through the word of mouth, directly among the various local stakeholders, but also among stakeholders from different districts, including districts where LEP have not been implemented. The territorial approach has impuled an intensification in the interaction of stakeholders, sparked discussion, ideas, and initiatives, for instance among beekeepers, beekeepers’ cooperation and associations. The success stories of NEETs finding employment or those expanding their businesses seems to have acted as an efficient promotion as this has brought more applicants to apply for ODA services.

One important effect resulting of LEP/NEA local branches outreach activities, is that, by recording identified NEETs as unemployed into NEA registers, this has resulted in an increase of the unemployment rate. This may appear as a negative impact if taking this statistic out of context while it actually is an encouraging change toward a more realistic picture of unemployment as well as a step towards NEET's path to employment.

At the social dialogue level, both projects have stimulated the dialogue but also stimulated the intention of new initiative. For instance, Social Partners have developed their own brochures on specific thematic such as the Green Transitions. Trade Unions are preparing a policy recommendation for integrating the greening of economy into collective bargaining.

The ToT and the ToT certification capacity has played a central role to both RBSA interventions, and this capacity will obviously continue to play a key role in deploying the potential for NEETs, small business creation or expansion and the further greening of business as the support, accompanying and advisory function of training is highly needed by training institutions and for small businesses.

Both projects have introduced skills essential to business solidity as it is addressing the very risks small start-up or expanding business are exposed to. Qualified and certified trainers are needed to support more businesses and the ability of institutions to "deliver" more trainers is important to ensuring sustainability in business development support services. The training capacity is especially required at the district level so that creating a formal network of certified trainers is expected to consolidate and maintain an updated capacity of trainers. The ToT capacity could be nested within ODA and/or Business Incubators owing to their coverage of districts.

This situation leads to suggest that developing and nesting a ToT capacity within ODA would answer a need to have trainers locally available) since ODA currently misses the capacity to deliver SYID Greening training. (ODA could be supported ODA with a specialist on greening business).

The lack of resources and budget cuts (in comparison to resources requested) to MLSP and consequently to NEA can be considered as a threat to the sustainability of the support to job creation (for instance, only 2 activation measures were funded out of 11 priorities in national strategy from last year's budget). MLSP wants to analyse to activation measures implemented.

There is an obvious link between local job creation and (not only) circular migration since rural districts are the place of origin of many workers who have migrated and who send remittances as a main source of income to NEETS, and also considering that some of Business Incubators Greening business trainings were dispensed to Moldovan returnees.

Thus, both RBSA projects do, while somehow indirectly, make an important contribution to preventing the acceleration of migration, as the job creation support processed is connected and coherent with territorial asset-based labour market opportunities with a strong sustainability dimension. The long-term nature of the alternative employment solutions developed co-jointly by the two interventions is essential as only durable solutions will offer a credible alternative to migration, but also there is the importance of the "critical mass" aspects. Isolated employment opportunities are synonym to fragility. On the contrary, an organised, sector-based economy offering as many job opportunities as it offers an economic development potential, is a minimal requirement to help reverse the emigration trend. And both LEP and the Green Economy project are supporting the establishment of systems effectively preventing migration. Indeed, emigration

prevention is not only a job-creation stake, but a strategic economic sector-based system development. (Linking to Conclusion “Sector-support strategic development).”

A reinforced M&E capacity of NEA and data collected from LEP after its implementation would help produce relevant information which could help inform the migration management policy of Moldova (“Diaspora 2025” Strategy and Action Plan for 2016-2018, the Action Plan for Reintegrating Returning Migrants).

Through the feedback of interviewees, it is hard to gather all of the possible future initiatives the Social Partners will be taking as the forward-looking intentions are many. What came out strongly, is the collective willingness of moving ahead. TU have developed awareness-raising brochures on the Green Economy, Employers’ Associations are also willing to deep integration the Green dimension in business while taking small business to a stronger level. The MLSP is eager to implement additional measures even though it lacks the resources. The evaluation could really grasp a momentum of converging intentions to (1) take small business impact higher through enhanced business support services and (2) do more than just “integrate” the Green dimension but use it as a lever to future-proof economic development.

Among the other impacts of both projects, the evaluation could record the following elements hinting at further local policy-level development:

- Interviewed territorial stakeholders have explained that LEP activities have sparked the interest of many rural localities, in joining or replicating the various local initiatives started under LEP in both targeted districts.
- The Soroca is planning to update its newest version of its strategic development document using the mechanisms established by LEP.
- The SIYB has sparked deal of interest and its versability and adaptability has inspired its possible use and relevance in various small business support situations. For instance, the University of continued education in Chisinau has taken parts of the SIYB components to form a training content for students willing to start its own education. SIYB has been recognised across as an effective and potentially even more impactful tool.
- The new law on dual education (50% in training, 50% at school) is a measure supportive of sustainability as it creates incentives for companies who commit to employ students. This law can be considered as an echo of the private sector-driven VET curricula design, developed thanks to local partnerships of LEP.

6.6. Evaluation Criteria: Recommendations and next steps

EQ 6.1. What action might be needed to bolster the longer-term effects and to come to further policy measures generating a positive change?

There are several actions the evaluation recommends taking, in order to support of potential longer-term effects. These recommendations, further developed in the recommendation section include:

- Mobilise funds to support the continuation of the Green Economy project: The delays experienced by this project have not left much time to observe the benefits of the policy and capacity-building activities of the project. The results indicators are encouraging while it is still at an early stage and more awareness-raising, and capacity first indicators of the project. Considering that the Green and Just Transition has been introduced for the first time in Moldova,

The reluctance of small business to formalise and to organise in cooperative is still present and involves a change of culture that can hardly be achieved without external support and incentives. The characteristics of the rural economy in Moldova, constituted of small individual businesses for a large part, means the business are isolated the more it is exposed to shocks. Organised professional sectors and cooperatives are the most effective protection against those shocks. By supporting professional associations (beekeepers...), and the formalisation of businesses, LEP has achieved a first step in this direction.

Consider concentrating LEP support scheme to specific economic/professional sectors in order to increase the sustainability and longer-term socio-economic development impact of a LEP intervention (sector specific LEP can include several districts provided cross-districts cooperation within the same sector, strengthens both the sector and the district. This should imply several measures aiming at strengthening of professional structuring of the sector (support to professional sector organisations, support to cooperative development, support to value-chain development...).

Consider the appropriateness and adaptability of LEP as an effective decent job-creation mechanisms in challenging context, including conflict context. The LEP implementation experience has shown that, while LEP implementation was delayed because of the impacts of the repeated crisis, the implementing mechanisms, combined with the adaption of the stakeholders (for instance, during the massive inflow of Ukrainian refugees into Ukraine, LEP not only adjusted promptly to this next context but remained highly efficient as it showed the mechanism was able to address refugee situation.

Fundraise for the continuation of both projects with two possible programmatic approaches (depending on donor's interest and strategic priorities): 1. Develop two distinct project proposals (1) supporting the further implementation of LEP (with a higher quantitative target), (2). Developing further the Greening approach, 2. Develop an integrated proposal with LEP and GREEN ECO as two distinct independent components. Whatever the option, it is recommended that synergies are built in the design of each component/project. A single integrated project would be a preferred option as it would ensure both components are funded, and synergies can be established. Alternatively, in case only the Green Economy (or Green Job Creation) project is funded, synergies could be established with the recently funded LEP project by SECO.

Projects were also prepared in response to the damaging impact of COVID on the labour market and job creation in Moldova. Though projects were (COVID) response-driven, they have both kept a strong strategic validity as both initiatives have been addressing deeper and long-standing Moldovan labour market, employment, and job creation challenges.

The Green Economy project has also made a contribution to the issue of inclusiveness of categories marginalised by the labour market as the integration of the principles of Just Transition in the project also encompasses LNOB principles into the transition to Green jobs by making it accessible to small businesses, that can either be run by individuals from marginalised groups or create jobs for those belonging to these excluded population groups.

In terms of synergy: Both projects offer a holistic approach to inclusive (and green) job and small business creation: Address both the demand (market and employers) and offer side, enhance the role of constituents by using the Social Dialogue in the piloting and policy-making process.

The project data (also confirmed by the MLSP) indicate that jobs and business created or further expanded are sustainable as monitoring indicate jobs have been maintained and businesses are stable to date. However, this is indicative sustainability as the job and business creation/support provided by the project have only occurred a few months, possibly a year after this evaluation took place, leaving too little of time to observe business and job stability and draw conclusions on sustainability.

EQ. 6.2. What are the next steps to be undertaken? What is the best way to proceed? What would be the main issues to tackle?

The answer to this question is captured into more details under the recommendation section.

In essence, the recommended next steps are the following:

- Prioritise the continuation of both projects through a resource mobilisation effort, primarily enquiring RBSA funding availability for both projects with the purpose of (a) increasing the impact of LEP interventions in the Soroca and Rezina districts by supporting a sector support approach targeting economic sectors (as a pilot measure) from the activities targeted in the RBSA LEP (e.g., beekeeping). This could lead to developing a sector-based LEP for which additional resources could be mobilised (b) continue the mainstreaming of Greening the economy through a second phase of the Green Economy project (this mainstreaming could, for instance, also be applied through a sectoral prism (the same sector that would be targeted so the Greening effort could be concentrated and made more strategic to the selected sector).
- Impact diagnosis: Taken on a higher, more strategic scale, the LEP model could be made more impactful in the districts where it has already been implemented. However, perfecting the model requires a deeper understanding of its short-term but also longer-term impact, in order to draw informed-based, valid recommendations. This requires conducting an impact analysis or impact diagnosis of previous LEPs implemented in Moldova. The learnings from such an exercise could contribute to developing a more relevant approach, identify areas where specific consolidation is needed, but also inform highly targeted LEP economic sector support approach. A more impactful model both in terms of job creation and sectoral economic development could be used as a tool to mobilise adequate resources from the State budget.

E.Q. 6.3. Which actors and in which way should be engaged?

The evaluation recommends the following as optional ways to be undertaken in the coming period (the below suggestions are consolidated in the recommendation section):

- Resources mobilisation will be key, not so much for ILO but for MLSP and NEA so they can implement activation measures after ILO projects have ended (MLSP has only been allocated a third of its resources requested for 2024).
- Training of ODA, NEA is crucial to the quality and efficiency of services (to address barriers to PwD, young NEETs, provision of career guidance, process of activating NEET, training new staff of NEA), ToT capacity within NEA, implementation of start-ups and business expansion programmes.
- Invest in capacity of Social Partners so Social Dialogue contributes to the transition towards green economy.
- Through the LEPs, the SIYB trainers can be involved to provide entrepreneurial support services and mentorship support to green the existing businesses or support the launch of green start-ups.
- A LEP impact analysis could greatly contribute to make LEP more efficient and bring evidence of its effectiveness and longer-term impact as a key element demonstrating why LEP, even more so Greened LEP as a worthy investment.

6.7. Evaluation Criteria: Cross-cutting issues

EQ. 7.1. Within the context of ILO goal of gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as well as national level policies in this regard, to what extent did the projects' design take into account:

- Specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context.**
- Concerns relating to inclusion of people with disabilities?**

In the light of the RBSA project proposals, there is more than just an intention of “addressing” non-discrimination issues, including, and especially gender equality, disability inclusion. The core mechanisms of LEP are designed with outreach and inclusion in mind, by addressing of the factors of exclusions (that are specific to youth, women, disability) and it is reflected and framed in the gender-transformative National Employment Strategy. More than just “filling the gender-balance contract” with quantitative achievements, the project has been designed with a full integration of the Gender Equality dimension, rather than having GE added as an additional dimension, in the post project design stage. All activities have been designed with (training, capacity-building content made relevant to the specific situations of population groups to whom accessing the labour market is a challenge. This includes women, youth, people with disability, Roma, NEETS. For all results, and including results obtained from district-level activities, numbers show women have been in majority of participants across all activities, whether from institutions or as the user of job creation services. As an example, the home-based handicraft activity support is a very concrete illustration of the inclusive intention translated in concrete processes.

The Green Economy project has provided a complementary and supportive approach to inclusiveness through the introduction of the principle of Just Transition and also by making the Green Transition not only accessible to population groups subject to discrimination but also by

equipping the beneficiaries of small business grants and training with appropriate training on engaging in the greening transition. This way, business owners were not only able to adjust to the Green adaptation challenges, but used the acquired knowledge and skills as an asset for further developing their business potential. The finding from the evaluation is that the project's support to business creation has not only been favourable to create job and activities to local nationals from rural areas, but also to create inclusive employment opportunities to Ukrainian refugees, including women refugees.

EQ. 7.2. To what extent did the project budget factor-in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to address: i. Gender equality and non-discrimination? ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities?

Both projects have been designed with a user-centered approach; more so LEP as the main target group of activation measures is the NEETs (Actually, not only NEETs, but also, rural population, informal workers, low-skilled individuals, PwD, seasonal workers, women with care responsibilities). While the Green economy project has aimed at a wider group. Rather than using exclusion or discrimination as eligibility criteria, LEP has outreached vulnerable groups on labour/employment exclusion/rights basis.

This is relevant since job-marginalised groups often belong to the NEET category, for instance women represent 62,9% among 15-24 years old, 71,3% among 15-29 years old and 68,7% among 15-34 years old, among NEETs⁵).

The LEP mechanisms and partnership set-up have enabled access of marginalised, often discriminated population groups to the labour market and concrete job opportunities. All activities have been designed to address the specific obstacles pertaining to Gender equality and non-discrimination, inclusion of people with disabilities. This way, through access to a decent job, the LEP project has contributed for the targeted vulnerable groups to their fundamental rights to a decent life.

When it comes to gender, the new NEP policy has mainstreamed gender by establishing the employment of women as a strategic priority of the Strategy. The labour code has also been amended: more flexible working hours have been introduced for young mothers.

When it comes to Roma, the Soroca district is hosting a large Roma community, marginalised from the labour market as many have no identity documents with elementary education, and are working in the grey economy. Because of their marginalisation, an important part of the Roma community belongs to the NEET category, thus the increased reach out to this category contributes to the labour inclusion of Roma, including Roma women. The LEP approach, by mobilising actors to bring NEETs into formal employment contributes to raise their understanding of the specific barriers Roma face when it comes to employment, thus replacing prejudices with increased awareness.

⁵ https://statistica.gov.md/en/youth-neet-in-the-republic-of-moldova-for-the-first-quarter-of-2023-9430_60458.html

EQ. 7.3. To what extent did the project budget factor-in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to address: i. Gender equality and non-discrimination? ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities?

The extent which LEP project's budget has factored in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to address gender equality, non-discrimination and Inclusion of people with disabilities is assessed as very high. When assessing these cross-cutting issues, one should not look at activities earmarked under the label of gender equality, non-discrimination, or disability inclusion, but rather look at the underlying mechanisms that have guided the design of project activities.

For instance, the support costs for the development of the gender-transformative National Employment Strategy have allowed to translate gender, disability and non-discrimination into policy terms, and this way, as to ensure all policy measures and its concrete implementation arrangements would be developed reflecting these (gender, disability, and non-discrimination) dimensions, through the various territorial initiatives inclusion schemes made accessible specifically, though not exclusively.

The Green Economy project has proceeded in a similar manner, making its support services (sustainable entrepreneurship, green business creation...) particularly accessible and adapted to women. The results of both projects, and the involvement of targeted population groups in the activities illustrate the elevated rate of access of the targeted groups who have enjoyed access to project business support or job creation activities, especially women.

These are the results of the budget of both projects systematically integrating the gender/disability/non-discrimination dimension in its activities.

EQ. 7.4. To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs that can have a long-term positive bearing on:

- i. Gender parity within the world of work?**
- ii. Inclusion of women and men with disabilities within the world of work?**

At the strategic level, the project has supported a key advancement at the policy level with a document instilling a gender transformation of employment. More specifically, the new employment policy has aimed at tackling labor market exclusion, with a specific focus on inactive women and youth, as well as people with disability.

Both projects have also tackled the aspect of tripartism as MDA104 has supported and trained social partners to collectively engage in the process of formulating policy document to facilitate the just transition to the green economy. In addition, the The Employers Association from Moldova, the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting guide for SMEs has been developed by the Employers Association from Moldova, while the Trade Union confederation did publish several brochures on the Green transition. The LEP project also promoted tripartism as it did support the practice of social dialogue to serve the concrete objectives of the territorial job creation activities in the district of Soroca and Rezina.

Standards pertaining to international conventions promoting equality (such as the equality-focused conventions and the Convention C122 on Employment Policy) have also been supported mainly by the LEP RBSA intervention but also by the Green Economy project.

When it comes to the sustainability of systems institutionalised by both RBSA projects: This is achieved for the most part (e.g., outreach to NEETs), as the sustainability was an integral part of both projects as the initial part of both projects focused on the institutionalisation of the ecosystem (support to the development of the new National Employment Strategy).

7. Conclusions

1. There is a lack of information on the LEP post-project implementation and indirect impact and benefits. This LEP project as well as previous LEP project in Moldova (and elsewhere, such as in Bosnia) are assessed as successful because of the effectiveness of the mechanisms to building local partners dynamics and creating job opportunities for NEETs. However, there is a potentially missed opportunity of not assessing LEP, in its post implementation period. This period is probably the one that can bring essential learning to identify more accurately where further support can be provided to increase the post project impact. This can potentially contribute to aid effectiveness and greatly increase the value for money of assistance through the follow up of LEP as an initial investment.

The evaluation understands the NEA local branches will continue collecting data on registered NEETs as part of its planned M&E activities. However, it is unclear whether there will be a systematic collection of data on the individuals who have received job, educational or business creation assistance through LEP. This is identified as a gap which could be answered with a reinforced M&E capacity of NEA and data collected from LEP after its implementation would help produce relevant information which could help inform the migration management policy of Moldova (“Diaspora 2025” Strategy and Action Plan for 2016-2018, the Action Plan for Reintegrating Returning Migrants).

2. It is interesting to appreciate the adaptability of SIYB to the various situation of business existence, from start-up to expansion, potentially the integration of the Green Transition dimension into it. This adaptability is one powerful asset of the SIYB training and thus its appropriateness to different business situations but also business environment evolution, including the projected necessity of all businesses to comply to a more constringent “greened” business legal framework.

3. LEP has been crowned with successful implementation since 2018. Repeated LEP experiences and piloting feedback has helped improve the LEP approach and can be considered as the result of ILO and partners ‘investment through a virtuous cycle consultation-assessment-piloting-evidence-based policymaking. A large part of the resources has been investing in piloting and improving the process, though with job creations in limited numbers. If the effectiveness of LEP is demonstrated through qualitative indicators (high rate of jobs and small business stability and sustainability), the limited allocation of State resources to support the (LEP) process and support environment (more budget to NEA and grants) leaves to wonder whether LEP needs more

convincing arguments, i.e., that the system can « deliver» (quantitatively). Indeed, cost-efficiency is an important criterion to decision-makers. To the extent cost-efficiency is measured against the ratio cost per job created, with the cost including the activities related to developing the process (LEP), then the cost efficiency will increase with the number of jobs created. Another important convincing indicator is the cost effectiveness (and sustainability) of LEP over time. And this can be determined by several indicators: the number of jobs indirectly created (or created over a longer period of time), the sustainability (business still existing, possibility expanding and hiring).

4. Because the RBSA projects have been developed with longer-term development objectives in mind, and that both objectives (job creation, especially in rural areas, Green Transition) are among EU accession priorities for Moldova, those projects are allowing to introduce (Green transition) or advance further key topics (inclusive labour market access system). The results obtained and learning from those projects are also worth being promoted as, from the fundraising perspective, RBSA projects can be seen as seed investment to attract larger EU funding.

5. The Green job creation process need more time and requires additional resources to further develop and capitalise on the results recently achieved to progress further in the institutionalisation of the Just and Green Transition process.

6. The analysis made by the evaluation, identifying a LEP impact analysis as a best practice leads to the conclusion that there is a need for a closer LEP impact assessment and analysis in order to make recommendations to formulated more impactful LEP-based interventions and stronger LEP modelling.

8. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: Raise the importance of the green economy and just transition at the strategic and programmatic level.

The Green Economy project has been a successful pilot venture in establishing convincing results and promising perspectives for the Green Transition and Just Transition. Since these topics are also a national and EU accession strategic priority, the evaluation recommends (a) for ILO Moldova to adjust to this high level of strategic importance by integrating the Green Transition and Just Transition as country and outcome priorities into the current DWCP for Moldova, in consultation with the social partners. At the programmatic level, it is recommended (b) that ILO should actively mobilise resources to continue and expand the Green Economy RBSA project objectives.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO Country Office	High	Low	Short-term

RECOMMENDATION 2: Further support to the continuation of the Green Economy project (either as a standalone project or integrated in a territorial and sectoral job creation project) should include:

- Further support to Social Partners' capacities on Green Social Dialogue contributes to the transition towards green economy.
- Support LEP Trainers to obtain certification in greening of businesses.

- Consider building service providers capacity (Business Incubators, ODA) by including other greening business development tools, such as the UNEP regional SME greening toolkit⁶.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO Country Office	High	Medium	Short-term

RECOMMENDATION 3: Support the progressive integration of Green Transition in the Territorial and Sectoral Approaches.

- Invest in capacity of Social Partners so Social Dialogue contributes to the transition towards green economy.
- Support LEP Trainers to obtain certification in greening of businesses.
- Consider building service providers capacity (Business Incubators, ODA) by including other greening business development tools, such as the UNEP tool.
- Support the process of having ODA Green Business trainer certification.
- Consider concentrating LEP support scheme to specific economic/professional sectors in order to increase the sustainability and longer-term socio-economic development impact of a LEP intervention (sector specific LEP can include several districts provided cross-districts cooperation within the same sector, strengthens both the sector and the district. This should imply several measures aiming at strengthening of professional structuring of the sector (support to professional sector organisations, support to cooperative development, support to value-chain development...).

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO LEP Project Team	Medium	Medium	Medium-term

RECOMMENDATION 4: Take LEP to the “next level” in order to maximise the approach’s full job creation and sector support potential through a series of measures.

DETAILS: The LEP project results have confirmed the approach is very relevant to the mezzo level, to pilot activation measures, support the Social Dialogue at the district level, enhance district-level actors’ capacity and commitment and ultimately create decent and sustainable jobs. Now that LEP has demonstrated its effectiveness as a system, it is time that further investment is made to increase the number of job creation and its correlated benefits such as sectoral specific development (which requires a “critical mass” of small business units).

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO Country and LEP Project Team	High	Medium	Medium-term

RECOMMENDATION 5: Consider conducting a simplified impact analysis of (ideally) all previous LEPs pursuing four objectives:

- Use the data analysis of LEP post-project implementation results, including indirect results to equip MLSP with evidence-based advocacy instrument to lobby for State budget allocation commensurate to the need to support inclusive job creation.
- Use the analysis from LEP impact analysis for ILO to return to promoting the idea of integrating LEP’s territorial approach in the National Employment Policy given its appropriateness in supporting the piloting of new activation measures.

⁶ https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9451/-EaP_GREEN_country_updates_series_Moldova-2015EaPGREEN-Moldova-update-spring-2015.pdf?sequence=3&%3BisAllowed=

- Use the learnings from the impact analysis to (a). improve future LEP-related proposals, (b). identify the needs and opportunities to enhance the impact of post-project phase LEPs and the appropriateness of developing, highly targeted LEP consolidation interventions.
- Possibly integrate the tools developed to conduct LEP impact surveys into the NEA's M&E system.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO LEP Project Team	High	Medium	Medium-term

RECOMMENDATION 6: Consider concentrating LEP support scheme to specific economic/professional sectors in order the increase the sustainability and longer-term socio-economic development impact of a LEP.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO LEP Project Team	High	High	Medium-term

RECOMMENDATION 7: Make LEP professional sector-oriented with a view to increasing small business's competitiveness, formalisation, certification, and job creation. This could be achieved by concentrating LEP support scheme to specific economic/professional sectors in order the increase the sustainability and longer-term socio-economic development impact of a LEP.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO LEP Project Team	High	High	Medium-term

DETAILS: It is recommended to widen the scope of LEP by including sector-support services in order to stimulate and protect sector with high, greening, sustainable and strategic potential.

This should imply several measures aiming at strengthening of professional structuring of the sector (support to professional sector organisations, district-level sector development strategy support, cooperative development support, support to value-chain development...). Sector-specific LEP can include several districts provided cross-districts cooperation within the same sector, strengthens both the sector and the district.

A preliminary activity should include a study of the potential economic development and weaknesses of selected districts and sectors (criteria for selection may include possibilities for NEET inclusiveness, Greening and environmental protection...).

It is no secret that sustainable biological agriculture and derived healthy food belong to Moldova's natural assets. However, the potential of those assets remains untapped, and those sectors are insufficiently structured, strategic and its economic operators are often isolated.

The previous recommendation suggests supporting some strategic sectors in appropriate districts of Moldova. Supporting specific sectors are recommended to be accompanied by taking small businesses to the next level, i.e., to strengthen small business's robustness and resilience to the shocks it has proven highly vulnerable to. Greening of business should be an integral part of business development services and should also be tailored in coherence with sector specific LEP support.

9. Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices

9.1 Lessons Learned

1. The effectiveness of “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (NEET) outreach mechanism.

The Local Employment Partnership outreach activities lead to higher registration of NEET at local Employment Agency branches and thus this showed an increase in unemployment rate. This may appear as a negative impact if taking this statistic out of context while it actually is an encouraging change toward a more realistic picture of unemployment as well as a step towards NEET’s path to employment. In this context, it is relevant to note that considering the high unemployment rate alone can be misleading if not also having in mind that the inactivity rate is quite high in Moldova. Thus, the outreach activities supported by the LEP project to inactive NEETs is an opportunity to bring 'to light' these people which are not under the radar of any institution.

2. The concomitant implementation of the two RBSA interventions has allowed to create a synergy that opens to new policy and programmatic possibilities: At the operational level, this simultaneous implementation has created to the opportunities to include a green transition dimension to a few businesses supported by LEP. There are probably opportunities to mainstream more systematically the green transition to all future jobs and small businesses supported by LEP.

At the policy level, it also means the Just Green Transition could also be integrated to the National Employment Strategy, in a way similar to the gender transformative character of the existing NES.

3. The systematic Training of Trainers (TOT) certification and TOT training is a good practice to ensure capacity building within institutions continues after the project ends.

Both projects have introduced skills essential to business solidity as it is addressing the very risks small start-up or expanding business are exposed to. Qualified and certified trainers are needed to support more businesses and the ability of institutions to “deliver” more trainers is important to ensuring sustainability in business development support services.

The training capacity is especially required at the district level so that creating a formal network of certified trainers is expected to consolidate and maintain an updated capacity of trainers. The ToT capacity could be nested within ODA and/or Business Incubators owing to their coverage of districts. RECO: Develop and nest ToT capacity with ODA (support ODA with a specialist on greening business since ODA currently misses the capacity to deliver SYID Greening training.

4. Underlining the link between job creation and migration prevention indicates the potential contribution of both projects to migration prevention.

There is an obvious link between local job creation and (not only) circular migration since rural districts are the place of origin of many workers who have migrated and who send remittances as a main source of income to rural population (who are economically inactive), NEETS, and also considering that some of Business Incubators can provide Greening business trainings to Moldovan returnees.

5. The involvement of the Association of Business Consultant is a crucial element and necessary to take supported businesses to a higher level.

The reluctance of small business to formalise and to organise in cooperative is still present and involves a change of culture that can hardly be achieved without external support and incentives. The characteristics of the rural economy in Moldova, constituted of small individual businesses for a large part, means the business are isolated the more it is exposed to shocks. Organised professional sectors and cooperatives are the most effective protection against those shocks. By supporting professional associations (beekeepers...), and the formalisation of businesses, LEP has achieved a first step in this direction.

6. The learning from both RBSA projects results is that it shows that LEP can potentially increase its impact in terms of job creation and wider economic development if the support is economic sector-focused.

The evaluation understands small businesses, from specific sectors, have been successful in stabilising after receiving support from LEP or the Green Economy project (even though the period of existence of business supported by this project is short given this project started late). The LEP project support to organise targeted economic sectors such as beekeepers or handicraft's sector has been a learning experience underlining the vulnerability and risks inherent to business isolation (fierce competition of low quality, low prices products, certification to access markets, cooperative and associations to ensure a higher production, investments in technical knowledge, digital marketing & promotion, training, equipment only accessible if resources are mutualised, access to funding opportunities.) Additional, small businesses managing to stabilise seem be unable to thrive further, due to either the lack of access to finance, equipment, additional technical or marketing skills. The lesson learned from this observation is that the benefits of LEP can be multiplied and take a greater, more impactful dimension if small businesses belonging to the same professional area can be supported from a sector perspective, so each sector benefits from the strategic vision and strategy. A professional sector approach is also likely to increase the stability, and expansion to small businesses. Hence, a sector approach goes hand-in-hand with a small business consolidation approach.

7. The LEP project support to specific sectors calls to provide support in organising the management, structure and economy of strategic sectors.

The testimonies from beekeepers' economy stakeholders, complemented by other territorial stakeholders and ACAM is clearly pointing towards to the relevance of applying an economic sector support perspective. In a complementary manner, both projects have been contributing to developing area-based job creation and economic, institutional development systems. This evaluation's findings echo with the evaluator's previous observations in a previous evaluation of ILO LEP project phase 1 in Bosnia: A system that would only allow the creation of a jobs scattered on the basis and location of unemployed needs alone is likely to produce positive results but at low scale only. Quantitative results are a must to effectively and positively impact on the job creation and labour market development. To the evaluation, the "critical mass" expected effect requires three concrete measures: 1. Economic Sector Development orientation, 2. Prioritization and substantial increase of State resource allocation in order to reach the critical mass effect, 3. The mainstreaming of the Green Economy dimension, as it is not only a policy priority but also a key aspect to the development of one of Moldova's strategic sector: (Green) agriculture, food production and food processing.

8. RBSA project need adequate human resource management support and that concretely means a full-time project manager and support staff.

The context and events, including COVID and the war in Ukraine, at the time of implementation were particularly challenges to implementation. Even though, this can be regarded as an exceptionally challenging situation, there are no simple context as these RBSA interventions touches upon complex issues related to the political sphere and political reforms. This means that implementation needs not only to be carefully monitored but that diplomacy, relation management and activities required a level of attention that only a full-time project management position can take care of. Regardless of the size of the budget, the complexity of RBSA projects (at least, based on the learning from evaluating two RBSA projects), having a fully dedicated project manager appears to be a standard requirement to manage BRSA projects.

9.2 Emerging good practices

Good Practice 1

The lack of resources (to job creation and labour inclusion) and budget cuts (in comparison to resources requested) are a threat to the sustainability of job creation measures. (Due to the budgetary constraints, the MLSP lacked the resources to implement all of the eleven priority measures listed in the National Employment Strategy. The LEP project has allowed to implement several of those measures, including outreach measures). MLSP is interested in analysing the results of the activation measures implemented including the earlier LEP supported intervention. Thus, capturing the longer-term effects of LEP interventions could be identified as a best practice as the results of an impact analysis could contribute to improve the efficiency of LEP in terms of the number of job creation.

The best practice identified is that **the project is the direct support of the project to the National Employment Policy Formulation, which increased ILO's leverage in terms of advocacy to increase the State budget allocation to MLSP.** This best practice however has a limitation as the project involvement into policy formulation has not allowed to yield more State resources. This indicates the need for stronger, strategic advocacy with key State decision-makers.

Good Practice 2

The project support focusing on specific sectors (beekeeping, rural tourism...) is a good practice as economic sectors in the province need to get organised and supported.

Agriculture, healthy food, natural medicinal products are among the sectors with the highest potential in terms of economic development, job creation, preserving the environment, mitigating climate changes effects, reviving traditional skills, supporting the Just Transition. Moldova enjoys natural assets; however, those remains largely unexploited, financially unsupported while these assets and its potential is also its vulnerability if no sector specific support is provided. Whether it is honey and derived product, traditional handicraft skills, several sectors remain vulnerable (to economic shocks, market price fluctuation, low prices {value chain, absence of international certification}, foreign competition...) because its potentials are unexploited, sectors are not efficiently organised, producers are isolated, sector-specific social dialogue is weak (...). Sector development and promotion need to be more strategic, and a priority involves producers getting organised in cooperatives as isolation is one of the highest threats to the survival and development of several sectors.

10. Annexes

Appendix A. List of key documents available to the evaluation

PROJECT DOCUMENTS	
1.	RBSA Project documents MDA 106 and MDA 130
2.	National Employment Strategy_
3.	Employment Policy priorities
4.	NEET Reach out district methodology
5.	Policy priorities- MLD_rev1_09.03.2022
6.	NEA rapid functional assessment 2022
7.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the National Employers Association
8.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the National Confederation of Trade Unions
9.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the Association national youth council from moldova
10.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the National Association of Beekeepers
11.	Territorial Audit Soroca
12.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the UNION OF FOLK CRAFTSMEN FROM MOLDOVA
13.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the Union of craftsmen
14.	• Local Employment Partnership Soroca District
15.	Local Employment Partnership Rezina District
16.	• Implementation agreement between the ILO and the implementing partner “IAS Gunnar Due Gundersen”
17.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the implementing partner «Resource Center Pentru Tineret Dacia
18.	Implementation agreement between the ILO and the implementing partner Stupina
19.	Territorial Audit Rezina
20.	Letter of Intent for collaboration for the development of LEP National Program.
21.	Request for no-cost extensions of the RBSA projects MDA 106 and MD 130
22.	ILO Programme and budget for the biennium 2022–23
23.	Output indicators Technical notes for planning, monitoring and reporting on results Programme and Budget for 2022-23
24.	MDA 104- information on country results
25.	RBSA allocations approval 2020-21 MDA 106 and MDA 130 Approval minutes

Appendix B. List of interviewees

LIST OF INTERVIEWED STAKEHOLDERS			
N	Name	Type of stakeholder/Institution	Position/RBSA project
1.	Violeta Vrabie Carolina Chicus-Bodean	ILO Moldova staff	Project Coordinator /MDA130
2.	Natalia Iachimov Cornelia Juncu		Project Coordinator /MDA104
3.	Ala Lipciu		National Country Coordinator
4.	Maria Borsos	ILO Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe in Budapest	Programme Officer
5.	Claire Harasty		Direcot
6.	Daniela Zampini		Employment Specialist
7.	Felicia Bechtoldt	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	State Secretary
8.	Anna Gherganova	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	Chief of Employment & Migration Policy division/MDA130
9.	Raisa Dogaru	National Employment Agency	Director/MDA130
10.	Tatiana Cristafovici	National Employment Agency	Chief of implementation of employment policies department
11.	Valentina Lungu	National Employment Agency	
12.	Vlad Caminschi	National Confederation of Employers from Moldova	Executive Director/MDA130
13.	Sergiu Sainciuc	National Confederation of Trade Unions from Moldova	Vice-president/MDA130
14.	Sergiu Iurcu	National Confederation of Trade Unions from Moldova	Deputy Chief of legal economic protection/MDA130
15.	Polina Fisticanu	National Confederation of Trade Unions from Moldova	Head of the Department of Social – Economic Protection
16.	Roman Banari	National Youth Council	General Secretary/MDA130
17.	Dumitru Pinte	ODIMM	Executive Director/MDA130 Şef Direcție finanțarea start-up
18.	Diana Dicusari	Handicraft Union of Moldova	President/MDA130
19.	Ion Maxim	National Beekeeping Association	President
20.	Cristina Dragalin	Territorial Employment Subdivision - Soroca	Representative/MDA130

21.	Ana Negura	Territorial Employment Subdivision - Rezina	Representative/MDA130
22.	Tatiana Robu	District Council Soroca	LEP Soroca facilitator/MDA130
23.	Doina Pantaz-Sirbu	District Council Rezina	LEP Rezina facilitator/MDA130
24.	Ion Lica	The Organization for Entrepreneurship Development, ODA	Chief of the Eco IMM program/ MDA104
25.	Anatol Palade	The Association of Management Consultants from Moldova, ACAM	The president/ MSA 104
26.	Iuliana Dragalin	the Association of Women Entrepreneurs from Moldova, AFAM	Project manager/ MDA 104
27.	Mihaela Grumeza	Certified SIYB trainer, Ltd Azemurg Grup, Business Development Services Provider for the Business Incubator from Singerei district	Director/ MDA 104
28.	Adelina Barbăneagră	The Business Incubator from Stefan Vodă District	Administrator /MDA 104
29.	Ludmila Prociuc	The Business Incubator from Singerei district	AdministratorMDA104
30.	Ion Mocanu	Certified SIYB trainer, Ltd BDS Consulting, Business Development Services Provider for the Business Incubator from Calarasi and Stefan Voda districts	Director/ MDA 104
31.	Lucia Uşurelu	Certified SIYB trainer, Ltd ProEntrance, Business Development Services Provider for the Business Incubator from Nisporeni district	Director/MDA 104
32.	Aurelia Braguta, PhD	Certified SIYB trainer, School of Continues Education the Academy of Economic Studies from Moldova	Director/ MDA 104



Appendix C. Lessons learned.

Final, Cluster, Independent Evaluation of RBSA-funded outcomes in Moldova: MDA104, MDA130

Project DC/SYMBOL: MDA/21/01/RBS (108289) and MDA/21/02/RBS (108290)

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur

Date: 12.01.2024

The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	1.The effectiveness of “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (NEET) outreach mechanism is a good practice.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	The Local Employment Partnership outreach activities lead to higher registration of NEET at local Employment Agency branches and thus this showed an increase in unemployment rate. This may appear as a negative impact if taking this statistic out of context while it actually is an encouraging change toward a more realistic picture of unemployment as well as a step towards NEET’s path to employment. In this context, it is relevant to note that considering the high unemployment rate alone can be misleading if not also having in mind that the inactivity rate is quite high in Moldova. Thus, the outreach activities supported by the LEP project to inactive NEETs is an opportunity to bring 'to light' these people which are not under the radar of any institution.
Context and any related preconditions	Prior to the project, the absence of reach out to the unemployed meant there was no visibility, neither recording of both the effectively inactive and vulnerable population groups.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	NEETs, NEETs belonging to vulnerable groups
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	The one negative challenge is that outreach measures are expensive to implement as it involves mobility (vehicles, fuel, staff...) and that State resources are insufficient. Then, once, NEETs are identified, resources are also needed to finance their labour market inclusion process.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The outreach measures have allowed to get closer to a realistic picture of NEETs and allow to get a much refined understanding of the challenges specific to each vulnerable population group.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	2. The concomitant implementation of the two RBSA interventions has allowed to create a synergy that opens to new policy and programmatic possibilities.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<p>At the operational level, this simultaneous implementation has created opportunities to include a green transition dimension to a few businesses supported by the Local Economic Partnership (LEP). There are probably opportunities to mainstream more systematically the green transition to all future jobs and small businesses supported by LEP.</p> <p>At the policy level, it also means the Just Green Transition could also be integrated to the National Employment Strategy (NES), in a way similar to the gender transformative character of the existing NES.</p>
Context and any related preconditions	The Territorial approach to employment partnership is new to neither Moldova nor ILO while the Green Economy intervention is a precedent for ILO in Moldova.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	NEETs, NEETs from vulnerable groups, businesses going green
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	There are no negative challenges but the challenge of mainstreaming the green transition and advocate for green transition to be implemented in an inclusive manner.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Linkages and cooperation have occurred between both projects and the potential for future synergies (especially for sectors which growth highly depends on the green transition, such as healthy agriculture).
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	3. The systematic Training of Trainers (TOT) certification and TOT training is a good practice to ensure capacity building within institutions continues after the project ends.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<p>Both projects have introduced skills essential to business solidity as it is addressing the very risks small start-up or expanding business are exposed to. Qualified and certified trainers are needed to support more businesses and the ability of institutions to “deliver” more trainers is important to ensuring sustainability in business development support services.</p> <p>The training capacity is especially required at the district level so that creating a formal network of certified trainers is expected to consolidate and maintain an updated capacity of trainers. The ToT capacity could be nested within ODA and/or Business Incubators owing to their coverage of districts. RECO: Develop and nest ToT capacity with ODA (support ODA with a specialist on greening business since ODA currently misses the capacity to deliver SYID Greening training.</p>
Context and any related preconditions	Newly created and existing business lack the knowledge on how to manage the green transition and no institutions are equipped with a green transition training capacity

Targeted users /Beneficiaries	NEETs, businesses going green
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	There are no negative challenges but the challenge of mainstreaming the green transition involves developing a training capacity within all institutions supporting small business creation and small business in transition towards green.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Availability of ToT capacity within institutions
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A
LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	4. Underlining the link between job creation and migration prevention indicates the potential contribution of both projects to migration prevention.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	There is an obvious link between local job creation and (not only) circular migration since rural districts are the place of origin of many workers who have migrated and who send remittances as a main source of income to rural population (who are economically inactive), NEETS, and also considering that some of Business Incubators can provide Greening business trainings to Moldovan returnees.
Context and any related preconditions	The lack of employment opportunities to NEETs translates in an increased likelihood of NEETs staying unemployed or turning to emigration to seek livelihood.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	NEETs, NEETs from vulnerable groups, businesses going green
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	The challenges is to create a sufficient number of jobs and economic activity so that proper economic sectors thriving and create not only opportunities but a real sector based strategy to reach all the population tempted by emigration.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Moldova has serious potential to develop key economic sector healthy agriculture, healthy food production, rural tourism.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A
LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	5. The involvement of the Association of Business Consultant is a crucial element and necessary to take supported businesses to a higher level.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	The reluctance of small business to formalise and to organise in cooperative is still present and involves a change of culture that can hardly be achieved without external support and incentives. The characteristics of the rural economy in Moldova, constituted of small individual businesses for a large part, means the business are isolated the more it is exposed to shocks. Organised professional sectors and cooperatives are the most effective protection against those shocks. By supporting professional associations (beekeepers...), and the formalisation of businesses, LEP has achieved a first step in this direction.
Context and any related preconditions	One of the strengths of Moldova's economy is at the same time the illustration of the country's reliance: venture into small business creation as the primary alternative to the lack of employment opportunities and the inadequate situation between job demand and offer.

	However, there is a limit to small business contributing to the country's growth because there is a limit to its expansion as they lack the skills, sometimes the vision to do so. This is why business development support is so crucial to increase the impact of a small business-based economy.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	NEETs, unemployed small business owners. businesses going green
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	There are no negative challenges but the challenge of mainstreaming the need of business development support and advocate for the State to answer this need.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Both projects have started to highlight the need to take business to the next level.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	6. The learning from both RBSA projects results is that it shows that LEP can potentially increase its impact in terms of job creation and wider economic development if the support is economic sector-focused.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	The evaluation understands small businesses, from specific sectors, have been successful in stabilising after receiving support from LEP or the Green Economy project (even though the period of existence of business supported by this project is short given this project started late). The LEP project support to organise targeted economic sectors such as beekeepers or handicraft's sector has been a learning experience underlining the vulnerability and risks inherent to business isolation (fierce competition of low quality, low prices products, certification to access markets, cooperative and associations to ensure a higher production, investments in technical knowledge, digital marketing & promotion, training, equipment only accessible if resources are mutualised, access to funding opportunities.) Additional, small businesses managing to stabilise seem be unable to thrive further, due to either the lack of access to finance, equipment, additional technical or marketing skills. The lesson learned from this observation is that the benefits of LEP can be multiplied and take a greater, more impactful dimension if small businesses belonging to the same professional area can be supported from a sector perspective, so each sector benefits from the strategic vision and strategy. A professional sector approach is also likely to increase the stability, and expansion to small businesses. Hence, a sector approach goes hand-in-hand with a small business consolidation approach.
Context and any related preconditions	The Territorial approach to employment partnership has been successful in Moldova and has committed to support certain type of business based on its territorial relevance.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	All LEP territorial actors with support from central institutions
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	There are no negative challenges, but the time has come to concentrate the support according to a sector-based strategic development approach.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The support to beekeeper associations and the beekeeping sector provides an encouraging example, further detailed in the following lesson learned number 8.

ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A
LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	7. The LEP project support to specific sectors calls to provide support in organising the management, structure and economy of strategic sectors.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<p>The testimonies from beekeepers' economy stakeholders, complemented by other territorial stakeholders and ACAM is clearly pointing towards to the relevance of applying an economic sector support perspective. In a complementary manner, both projects have been contributing to developing area-based job creation and economic, institutional development systems. This evaluation's findings echo with the evaluator's previous observations in a previous evaluation of ILO LEP project phase 1 in Bosnia: A system that would only allow the creation of a jobs scattered on the basis and location of unemployed needs alone is likely to produce positive results but at low scale only. Quantitative results are a must to effectively and positively impact on the job creation and labour market development. To the evaluation, the "critical mass" expected effect requires three concrete measures: 1. Economic Sector Development orientation, 2. Prioritization and substantial increase of State resource allocation in order to reach the critical mass effect, 3. The mainstreaming of the Green Economy dimension, as it is not only a policy priority but also a key aspect to the development of one of Moldova's strategic sector: (Green) agriculture, food production and food processing.</p> <p>Agriculture, healthy food, natural medicinal products are among the sectors with the highest potential in terms of economic development, job creation, preserving the environment, mitigating climate changes effects, reviving traditional skills, supporting the Just Transition. Moldova enjoys natural assets; however, those remains largely unexploited, financially unsupported while these assets and its potential is also its vulnerability if no sector specific support is provided. Whether it is honey and derived product, traditional handicraft skills, several sectors remain vulnerable (to economic shocks, market price fluctuation, low prices {value chain, absence of international certification}, foreign competition...) because its potentials are unexploited, sectors are not efficiently organised, producers are isolated, sector-specific social dialogue is weak (...). Sector development and promotion need to be more strategic, and a priority involves producers getting organised in cooperatives as isolation is one of the highest threats to the survival and development of several sectors.</p>
Context and any related preconditions	The Territorial approach to employment partnership has been successful in Moldova and has committed to support certain type of business based on its territorial relevance.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	All LEP territorial actors with support from central institutions
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	There no negative challenges but the challenge of mainstreaming the green transition and advocate for green transition to be implemented in an inclusive manner.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The support to beekeeper associations and the beekeeping sector provides an encouraging example, further detailed in the following lesson learned number 8

ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A
LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	8. RBSA project need adequate human resource management support and that concretely means a full-time project manager and support staff.
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	The context and events, including COVID and the war in Ukraine, at the time of implementation were particularly challenges to implementation. Even though, this can be regarded as an exceptionally challenging situation, there are no simple context as these RBSA interventions touches upon complex issues related to the political sphere and political reforms. This means that implementation needs not only to be carefully monitored but that diplomacy, relation management and activities required a level of attention that only a full-time project management position can take care of. Regardless of the size of the budget, the complexity of RBSA projects (at least, based on the learning from evaluating two RBSA projects), having a fully dedicated project manager appears to be a standard requirement to manage BRSA projects.
Context and any related preconditions	Budgeting for a full time project manager position
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	ILO, donors
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Prevents project manager to be overwhelmed.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Enable the project to handle the issues related to complexities of the socio-political context.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Full-time project manager position.



Appendix D. Emerging Good Practices

Final, Cluster, Independent Evaluation of RBSA-funded outcomes in Moldova: MDA104, MDA130

Project DC/SYMBOL: MDA/21/01/RBS (108289) and MDA/21/02/RBS (108290)

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur

Date: 12.01.2024

The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	1. ILO Moldova’s permanent dialogue through trustful relations with key institutions is plays an important role to mobilise State budget resources to support the implementation of the National Employment Strategy. However, a direct lobbying with crucial decision-making ministries/institutions (Ministry of Economy, Prime Minister Office...) could help reverse the trends towards reduced resources to Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and National Employment Agency.
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	<p>The lack of resources (to job creation and labour inclusion) and budget cuts (in comparison to resources requested) are a threat to the sustainability of job creation measures. (Due to the budgetary constraints, the MLSP lacked the resources to implement all of the eleven priority measures listed in the National Employment Strategy. The LEP project has allowed to implement several of those measures, including outreach measures). MLSP is interested in analysing the results of the activation measures implemented including the ealier LEP supported intervention. Thus, capturing the longer-term effects of LEP interventions could be identified as a best practice as the results of an impact analysis could contribute to improve the efficiency of LEP in terms of the number of job creation. The best practice identified is that the project is the direct support of the project to the National Employment Policy Formulation, which increased ILO’s leverage in terms of advocacy to increase the State budget allocation to MLSP. This best practice however has a limitation as the project involvement into policy formulation has not allowed to yield more State resources. This indicates the need for stronger, strategic advocacy with key State decision-makers.</p>
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	<p>ILO in Moldova has all the human resource, the talent, the experience and the willingness to deploy a strong advocacy effort. However, this needs to be supported by expertise and resources from within ILO.</p>
Establish a clear cause- effect relationship	<p>ILO, through its past and current projects and advisory role has introduced repeatedly measures that answer the actual needs of Moldova, which are effective solutions to problems. However, the government is too shy in allocating the</p>

	resources to effectively take pilot measures to a proper national scale.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	An impact assessment of LEP would be a central element of the advocacy strategy. This is an investment worth to be made for ILO, not only in Moldova but in other countries of the region. The investment is fully justified as the stake is high.
Potential for replication and by whom	ILO in other countries of the region.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Advocacy could have more direct upward links to higher ILO goals, especially if advocacy is approach as a stand-alone activity, driven by a strategy, expected results, supported with expertise and resources.
Other documents or relevant comments	N/A

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	2. The project support focusing on specific sectors (beekeeping, rural tourism...) is a good practice as economic sectors in the province need to get organised and supported.
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Agriculture, healthy food, natural medicinal products are among the sectors with the highest potential in terms of economic development, job creation, preserving the environment, mitigating climate changes effects, reviving traditional skills, supporting the Just Transition. Moldova enjoys natural assets; however, those remains largely unexploited, financially unsupported while these assets and its potential is also its vulnerability if no sector specific support is provided. Whether it is honey and derived product, traditional handicraft skills, several sectors remain vulnerable (to economic shocks, market price fluctuation, low prices {value chain, absence of international certification}, foreign competition...) because its potentials are unexploited, sectors are not efficiently organised, producers are isolated, sector-specific social dialogue is weak (...). Sector development and promotion need to be more strategic, and a priority involves producers getting organised in cooperatives as isolation is one of the highest threats to the survival and development of several sectors.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The findings from this evaluation is aligned to the evaluations' findings of the evaluation who has conducted the evaluation of LEP's first phase in Bosnia: LEP projects have been relevant in targeting sector with economic growth potential. An economic sector development focus requires a strategic approach (sector development/support strategy). The two limitations identified are: (1). This strategic direction needs to be supported by the line ministries and the social partners, (2) Resources are required to support a focus on an economic sector as it the support is more than developing a strategy but also convince the actors of the sector of the necessity to do so (this may involve training in forming cooperatives, export groups...)

Establish a clear cause- effect relationship	One of the main barriers to economic development in key sectors of Moldova's economy is the lack of sector organisation (weak cooperatives) and (structuring sector specific technical support). This prevents economic sectors with growth and high value-chain potential to perform and market high quality standards. For instance, high quality Moldovan honey cannot compete price-wise with lower quality honey prices from mass producers. If sectors are strengthened through structuration, key sectors will be able to become more strategic, boosting economic performance and increasing the job creation potential.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Indicators include: Identified capacity building needs to develop key sectors, availability of sector specific strategies, degree (rate of isolated small economic actors having joined cooperatives or similar forms of association), identified potential of increased value chain.
Potential for replication and by whom	ILO in other countries of the region, by LEP stakeholders or equivalent in countries where LEP has not been established.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	The upward links are multiples as with sector-focused support expected to lead to an increase in the number of job created, this will offer an opportunity to mainstream decent job practices in the sector, promote formality, more safety on the job, more space to promote social dialogue within targeted economic sector, as well as promoting gender equality and mainstreaming the green transition (especially in the field of agricultural and healthy food production as well as rural tourism).
Other documents or relevant comments	N/A

Appendix E. Evaluation Matrix

EVALUATION MATRIX

CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTIONS	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	JUDGEMENT INDICATOR	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	METHOD OF ANALYSIS
1. Relevance	1.1 To what extent are the project objectives and approach relevant to the constituents' needs and present country context? Implementation of activities in line with needs of constituents: to which extent the activities were aligned with the needs of constituents?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Needs of constituents have been assessed, identified, and are documented. 2. Projects documents feature references to constituents needs and national development/policy context. Projects documents articulate the causal links between activities and objectives, i.e. how activities contribute to objectives and how 3. Project document features explanation on how objectives, outcomes, outputs and rationale is aligned with constituents needs national development framework. 5. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of evidence of constituents needs assessed. 2. Availability of evidence 3. Availability of Theory of Change, rationale of the process of expected change, i.e. the causal relations explain how activities contribute to the projects' objectives and project objectives address constituents needs. 2. 	Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project documents - Strategic, policy, context related documents or publications, - Remote interview notes - Complementary report or publication relevant to the topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification and analysis of relevant information identified during the desk review. - Feedback on crucial (qualitative/quantitative) findings from stakeholders and/or relevant publication. - Triangulation of desk review findings with stakeholder statements, and complementary info from research (verification of source). Comparative analysis to establish findings.
	1.2. To what extent are the interventions relevant for the achievement of common objectives, the achievement of a thematic strategy or the DWCP in Moldova?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project document refers to common objectives, a specific thematic strategy and/or the DWCP in Moldova. 2. Projects documents features explanation on how objectives, outcomes, outputs and rationale support the realization of common objectives, a specific thematic strategy and/or the DWCP in Moldova. 3. Project results provide measurable evidence of its contribution to the realization of common objectives, a specific thematic strategy and/or the DWCP in Moldova. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project document refers to common objectives, a specific thematic strategy and/or the DWCP in Moldova. 2. Projects documents features explanation on how objectives, outcomes, outputs and rationale support the realization of common objectives, a specific thematic strategy and/or the DWCP in Moldova. 3. Project results provide measurable evidence of its contribution to the realization of 	Idem	Idem
	1.3. How well have the projects adapted to the changes in the country context and on working methods?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in the country context, its impact of working methods have been identified by both projects. 2. Appropriateness of adaptation, adjusted working methods, if any, by both projects 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identified changes in the country context, its impact of working methods have been identified by both projects. 	Idem	Idem

		3. Results of adaption measures taken by both projects.	2. Evidence of analysis of context changes guiding the logic of the projects's adaption, if any. 3. Availability of results/benefits from adapted working methods. Related lessons learned.		
	1.4. What is the relevance of the outcomes of the RBSA interventions for the overall economic development in the future?	1. There are clear linkages between the outcomes of both projects and how it contributes to future economic development of Moldova. 2. The outcomes provide a successful example, potentially a model for future, sustainable economic development.	1. fact-based evidence of clear linkages between the outcomes of both projects and how it contributes to future economic development of Moldova. 2. Evidence, recognition by stakeholders that projects outcomes provide a successful example, potentially a model for future, sustainable economic development.		
	1.5. To what extent do the ILO interventions contribute in an integrated manner to central ILO issues such as labour norms or social dialogue?	1. Indicators, concrete examples of interventions contributing to central ILO issues in an integrated manner. 2. Indicators characterizing the integration of approaches of both projects, and identified evidence that the integrated manner, if any, provides added-value to addressing central ILO issues.	1. Degree of evidence of Indicators, concrete examples of interventions contributing to central ILO issues in an integrated manner. 2. Extent to which Indicators characterizing the integration of approaches of both projects, and identified evidence that the integrated manner, if any, provides added-value to addressing central ILO issues.		
2. Effectiveness	2.1. What have been the major results and lessons learned during the implementation of the RBSA interventions?	1. List and description of identified major results 2. Lessons learned identified from projects results. 2. Potential lessons learned from results identified that can be used for recommendations.	1. Evidence of major results identified. 2. Extent to which lessons learned are identified by the projects or the evaluation. 2. Degree to which lessons learned identified that can be used as a basis for recommendations. 2.	Idem	Idem
	2.2. What has been the progress made in the achievement of the projects outcomes? Have there been any changes in the specific areas defined as project outputs?	1. Records of progress made in the achievement of the projects outcomes. 2. Identified, if any, changes in the specific areas defined as projects outputs	1. Evidence of progress made in the achievement of the projects outcomes. 2. Evidence of changes in the specific areas defined as projects outputs	Idem	Idem

	<p>2.3. What are the main constraints experienced by the two RBSA interventions (both in terms of methodology and context)?</p>	<p>1. Identified constraints experienced by the two RBSA interventions.</p> <p>2. Project measures or strategies to constraints experienced by the two RBSA interventions.</p> <p>3. Synergies between both projects in addressing constraints.</p>	<p>1. Evidence of Identified constraints experienced by the two RBSA interventions.</p> <p>2. Degree to which strategies, activities, data collection are addressing gender equality and non-discrimination situations.</p> <p>4. Extent to which repurposed activities have included specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns.</p>	I	Idem	Idem
	<p>2.4. What is the most effective way to provide technical support and follow up on the main areas tackled by the interventions?</p>	<p>1. Identified lessons from both projects on the most effective way to provide technical support and follow up on the main areas tackled by the interventions.</p> <p>2. Based on implementation experience of both projects, identification of elements/factors that have made technical support effective.</p>	<p>1. Extent to which lessons learned have been identified.</p> <p>2. Extent to which lessons learned contribute to identify reasons/factors of technical support effectiveness and how it can support future recommendations.</p>		Idem	
3. Efficiency	<p>3.1. Have resources available (time, funds, partnerships, knowledge, expertise and tools) been used efficiently?</p>	<p>1. Explanations/rationale on the use of resources (time, funds, partnerships, knowledge, expertise and tools) to deliver activities and reach projects objectives are available.</p> <p>2. Identified reasons/factors allowing to link use of resources with results obtained.</p> <p>3. Identified gaps, incoherence, constraints affecting the efficient use of resources.</p>	<p>1. Extent to which Explanations/justifications on the use of resources are clear and needs-based. Cost-efficiency rationale is available.</p> <p>2. Extent to which reasons/factors are clearly explaining the link between use of resources and results obtained.</p> <p>3. Extent to which inefficient, if any, use of resources is identified and lead to recommendations.</p>	Idem	Idem	Idem
	<p>3.2. Have there been any ways to enhance the efficiency?</p>	<p>1. Alternative ways to enhance the efficiency have been identified and applied during implementation.</p> <p>2. Alternative ways to enhance the efficiency have been identified and applied by the evaluation.</p>	<p>1. Availability of alternative ways identified or applied by one or both projects.</p> <p>2. Clarity of causal link between alternative ways identified or applied and effect on efficiency.</p> <p>2. Degree to which alternative ways have been applied to both projects and comparison of results.</p>	Idem	Idem	Idem
	<p>3.3. What were the synergies among the interventions under review? How did they</p>	<p>1. There have been (intended or unintended) synergies among the interventions.</p> <p>2. There have been interactions of synergies between projects.</p>	<p>1. Evidence of (intended or unintended) synergies among both interventions.</p> <p>2. Extent to which underlying mechanisms mutually reinforcing synergies exist and</p>	Idem	Idem	Idem

	mutually reinforce each other?	3. Best practices from mutually reinforcing synergies are identified.	are identified. Identified examples of benefits from mutually reinforcing synergies . 3. Extent to which mutually reinforcing synergies lead to best practices.		
4. Coherence	4.1. To what extent do the interventions strategies fit with other interventions in the country?	1. Relevant project documents feature an explanation on its strategic fit with other interventions. 2. Availability of coherent, corresponding elements in strategies towards common goals in both and other projects. 3. Availability of complementary or incoherence/inconsistency among project strategies and interventions. If any, incoherence/inconsistency have been addressed.	1. Clarity of relevant project documents' explanation on its strategic fit with other interventions. 2. Clarity of coherence on of logic guiding distribution of resources. 3. Extent to which complementary or incoherence/inconsistency among project strategies and interventions are identified and addressed.	Idem	Idem
	4.2. How do the interventions contribute to the overall achievement of the DWCP?	1. Both projects designs and results provide a clear description of its contributions to the overall achievement of the DWCP . 2. Identification of how the approaches of both projects and its synergies have produced an added value also contributed to the overall achievement of the DWCP .	1. Availability of description of contributions to the overall achievement of the DWCP in both project designs . 2. Degree to which both projects and its synergies have produced an added value also contributed to the overall achievement of the DWCP .	Idem	Idem
5. Sustainability and impact potential	5.1. Are the results achieved likely to continue after the end of the intervention? Are they likely to produce longer-term effects and benefits to the target groups? What could be done to improve sustainability?	1. Both projects 'documents describe how it intends to support sustainability of the project results. 2. Identified elements indicating the likely continuation of results after both projects end. 3. Identified elements indicating intended/possible longer-term effects and benefits to the target groups. 4. Identified opportunities/measures likely to improve sustainability?	1. Availability and clarity of projects documents' description on how project results will remain after projects end. 2. Evidence of identified elements indicating the likely continuation of results after both projects end. 3. Availability of identified elements indicating intended/possible longer-term effects and benefits to the target groups. 4. Availability of identified (by the project or the evaluation) opportunities/measures likely to improve sustainability	Idem	Idem
	5.2. What is the expected long-lasting effect after the activities are completed?	1. Expected long-lasting effect after completion are described in both project documents. 2. Evidence that expected long-lasting effect after completion are a reality at project's end. 3. Identified changes, threats or reasons jeopardizing expected long-lasting effect after completion.	1. Availability of expected long-lasting effect after completion are described in both project documents. 2. Extent to which there is evidence of long-lasting effect towards the end of both projects. 3. Extent to which there are identified changes, threats or reasons jeopardizing expected long-lasting effect after completion.	Idem	Idem

			Extent to which remedies to sustainability threats exist.		
	5.3. Is it likely that the government and social partners will develop new policies, laws, regulations, or design national programs based on piloted interventions, contributing to further progress in the areas tackled by the project?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of indications, commitment, measures by government and social partners to develop new policies, laws, regulations, or design national programs based on piloted interventions. Identification of factors, constraints or threats to government and social partners' further engagement in developing supportive laws or programmes. Identified strategies to address limited engagement of government and social partners. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of indications, commitment, measures by government and social partners and degree to which it will be likely implemented. Degree to which factors, constraints or threats to government and social partners' further engagement exists and can be addressed. 		
6. Recommendations and next steps	6.1. What action might be needed to bolster the longer-term effects and to come to further policy measures generating a positive change?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identified threats/factors influencing interventions' longer-term effects. Identified concrete actions which can boost factors enhancing longer-term effects. Identified threats/factors influencing the future development of policy measures generating a positive change. Identified concrete actions which can positively influence the development of supportive further policy measures. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which identified threats/factors are influencing interventions' longer-term effects. Degree to which concrete actions have been or will be identified by the evaluation. Degree to which threats/factors influencing the future development of policy measures generating a positive change. Degree to which threats/factors influencing the future development of policy measures generating a positive change have been or will be identified by the evaluation. 	Idem	Idem
	6.2. What are the next steps to be undertaken? What is the best way to proceed? What would be the main issues to tackle?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Next steps identified by the projects, reviewed, identified by the evaluation. Identified ways to proceed. Identified key opportunities and risks to address. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Steps identified by the projects, reviewed, identified by the evaluation. Identified ways to proceed. Recommendations based on identified key opportunities and risks to address. 	Idem	Idem
	6.3. Which actors and in which way should be engaged?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Specific actors and related engagement strategies are identified. Related recommendations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clear logic of intervention guiding engagement strategies. Formulation of recommendations. 	Idem	Idem

Cross-cutting issues

7.Relevance and validity of design	<p>7.1. Within the context of ILO goal of gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as well as national level policies in this regard, to what extent did the projects' design take into account:</p> <p>i. Specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context;</p> <p>ii. Concerns relating to inclusion of people with disabilities?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategy, approach, activities and results specifically addressing gender equality and non-discrimination concerns are described in projects documents. 2. Strategy, approach, activities and results specifically addressing inclusion of people with disabilities concerns are described in projects documents. 3. Concrete, specific, measurable results from specific project design addressing gender equality and non-discrimination, inclusion of people with disabilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extent to which the project documents feature clear strategies and related results specific to the issues of gender equality and non-discrimination. 2. Extent to which the project documents feature clear strategies and related results specific to the issues of inclusion of people with disabilities. 3. 	Idem	Idem
8.Effectiveness	<p>8.1. Within the projects' thematic area, what were the facilitating and limiting factors in project's contribution/potential contribution to:</p> <p>i. Gender equality and non-discrimination?</p> <p>ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitating and limiting factors in project's contribution/potential contribution to gender equality and non-discrimination are identified. 2. Possible lessons learned and recommendations emerging from identified facilitating and limiting factors to project's contribution in relation to gender equality and non-discrimination. 3. Facilitating and limiting factors in project's contribution/potential contribution to inclusion of people with disabilities. 4. Possible lessons learned and recommendations emerging from identified facilitating and limiting factors to project's contribution in relation to inclusion of people with disabilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extent to which identified facilitating and limiting factors have effectively influenced the project's contribution to gender equality and non-discrimination. 2. Identification of lessons learned and recommendations emerging from identified facilitating and limiting factors to project's contribution in relation to gender equality and non-discrimination 3. Extent to which identified facilitating and limiting factors have effectively influenced the project's contribution to inclusion of people with disabilities. 4. Identification of lessons learned and recommendations emerging from identified facilitating and limiting factors to project's contribution in relation to inclusion of people with disabilities. 	Idem	Idem

9. Efficiency	<p>9.1. To what extent did the project budget factor-in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to address: i. Gender equality and non-discrimination? ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of a rationale between the costs of budget activities specifically related to gender equality and non-discrimination, Inclusion of people with disabilities and its expected outputs and outcomes. 2. Evidence of budget cost specifically allocated to outputs and outcomes addressing gender equality and non-discrimination? ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities. 3. Activities under other budget lines having addressed gender equality and non-discrimination, inclusion of people with disabilities, embedded in other budget lines. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extent to which there is a rationale between the costs of budget activities specifically related to gender equality and non-discrimination, Inclusion of people with disabilities and its expected outputs and outcomes. 2. Extent to which the budget cost specifically allocated to outputs and outcomes addressing gender equality and non-discrimination, Inclusion of people with disabilities has proven efficient. (indicators). 3. Extent to which other budget lines not specifically addressing these crosscutting issues have proven efficient in producing benefits on those issues. 		
10. Sustainability and impact	<p>10. 1. To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs that can have a long-term positive bearing on: i. Gender parity within the world of work? ii. Inclusion of women and men with disabilities within the world of work</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of tangible results or indicators of advancement of strategic gender-related needs that can have a long-term positive bearing on gender parity within the world of work. 2. Availability of tangible results or indicators of advancement of strategic gender-related needs that can have a long-term positive bearing on inclusion of women and men with disabilities within the world of work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extent to which these advancements are valuable, measurable and institutionalised. 2. Extent to which these advancements are valuable, measurable and institutionalised. 	Idem	Idem

Appendix F – ToRs

Terms of Reference - Final, Cluster, Independent Evaluation of RBSA-funded outcomes in Moldova: MDA104, MDA130

Key Facts

RBSA proposal title	Stimulating the green economy in Moldova to create new and better jobs	Job creation at the local level in Moldova through the adoption of a new, gender-transformative National Employment Strategy and its decentralized implementation through Local Employment Partnerships
DC Code	MDA/21/01/RBS (108289)	MDA/21/02/RBS (108290)
CPO Code	MDA104	MDA130
CPO Title	Improved legal and regulatory framework for enterprise development	Improved human resources development and employment policies, with particular attention to youth, women, and migrants
Type of evaluation	Final, Cluster, Independent	Final, Cluster, Independent
Lead technical and admin unit	ILO DWT/CO-Budapest	ILO DWT/CO Budapest
P&B Outcomes and Outputs	Output 4.2: Strengthened capacity of enterprises and their support systems to enhance productivity and sustainability	PRIMARY: 3.1 Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement national employment policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis - proposed target for 2022-23 3.2 Increased capacity of member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy
Contribution to SDGs	SDG 8, Targets 8.2, 8.3	SDG 1 (national target 1.b), 8 (national target 8.3) and 17 (national target 17.17)
Contribution to gender equality and non-discrimination	2	2
RBSA budget	US\$ 400,000	600,000 USD
RBSA duration	3 (inception)+18 months, October 2021 – June 2023 (extended to December 2023)	3 (inception)+18 months January 2022 – September 2023 (extended to December 2023)

Introduction

This is a final independent cluster evaluation of two RBSA-funded projects in Moldova undertaken in the framework of the regional RBSA M&E plan for Europe 2022-2023. The clustering approach is applied for several reasons: the projects contribute to priority 1 of the DWCP Moldova 2021-2024 and address similar and interlinked range of issues in

Moldova implemented within the same timelines. DWT/CO-Budapest is the responsible office.

The project's performance will be reviewed with strict regards to ILO's evaluation criteria and will mainstream gender equality and environmental sustainability:

- 1) Relevance and strategic fit of the intervention
- 2) Validity of intervention design
- 3) Intervention progress and effectiveness
- 4) Effectiveness of management arrangements
- 5) Efficiency of resource usage
- 6) Impact orientation and Sustainability of the intervention

Interventions' background and objectives

Background

Both proposals were submitted under the second round of RBSA allocation in the biennium 2020-21. The 2nd round aimed to intensify support to tripartite constituents' efforts for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, guided by the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and consolidating the ILO's leading role in delivering the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The RBSA funding had to support work in one of the following areas of strategic focus (MINUTE issued by PROGRAM and PARDEV dated 7 May 2021):

- a. Promoting gender equality and non-discrimination;
- b. Addressing informality, with particular attention to groups that face greater challenges on the path to decent work;
- c. Addressing climate change and promoting a just transition to a greener world of work.

Relatively unscathed by the first wave, Moldova was heavily hit by the second wave of the pandemic, with a loss of working hours equivalent to 130,000 full-time jobs (ILO Nowcasting, 2020). Policy responses relied on tax and credit reliefs, less so on job and income protection schemes. The pandemic exacerbated underlying labour market problems. Main challenges include chronic employment deficits across sectors, high inactivity, particularly among youth and women, and high incidence of informal employment (around 200,000 workers). The pandemic contributed to an increase in inactivity (64% in rural areas), worsening job quality, and higher incidence of working poverty, with women suffering disproportionately.

Expected results under MDA104:

At national level :

- a) A tripartite policy recommendation on Just Transition towards environmentally sustainable economy adopted by the National Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining of Moldova. The intervention will facilitate tripartite dialogue and equip constituents with knowledge to formulate such recommendations.

At sectoral level

b) Deep understanding of the main challenges of the core value chain and its supporting functions in a selected sector that has large potential to create decent jobs in the green economy. This will include actionable recommendations with a particular focus on women as the target group of the research. The ILO will carry out a Market System Analysis (MSA) in one sector, selected based on a Rapid Sector Selection report.

Expected results linked to SDG Targets 8.2 and 8.3.

Expected results under MDA130:

1. A new, gender-transformative NEP covering the period 2022-2026 adopted and implemented through LEPs

2. Local employment partnerships implemented as models of decentralized implementation of employment policy to promote inclusive productive job creation and recovery in rural areas

Expected results linked to SDGs Targets 1.b, 8.3 and 17.17.

Institutional and management structure

MDA104: A National Project Coordinator in Chisinau and a project assistant based in Chisinau on a part time basis (50%). For technical backstopping 4 working months of a Technical Officer on Enterprise Development was foreseen to support the implementation of the project.

MDA130: A National Project Coordinator and a project assistant based in Chisinau as project staff in Moldova. All financial transactions are administratively managed by DWT/CO-Budapest (IRIS location), therefore, a Programme Assistant was assigned to this RBSA-funded intervention. The estimated budget for the work time represents 4 months. For monitoring and evaluation and technical backstopping 4 work months of a P3 Technical Officer based in the Regional Office and 1 work month of a P2 Technical Officer on Enterprise development and job creation in Budapest was foreseen.

Evaluation background, purpose, clients

The evaluation is conducted in the framework of the regional RBSA Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan for 2022-2023 and in accordance with the ILO Procedures for the use of the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) stipulating that RBSA-funded outcomes are being subject to evaluation in order to examine the results achieved with RBSA resources and their contribution to broader ILO programming and country cooperation frameworks (i.e. UN PFSD, Moldova 2030, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), including DWCPs.

The **purpose** of this assessment is to:

- Support organizational learning and accountability, i.e. to identify learning lessons to improve project present and future actions
- Assess the extent to which the interventions have achieved the stated objectives and expected results, while identifying the supporting factors and constraints that have led to them;
- Establish the relevance of the project design and implementation strategy in relation to the ILO, UN and national development frameworks (i.e. DWCP, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNPFSD);

- Identify good practices and lessons learned that would contribute to learning and knowledge development of the ILO and project stakeholders, including models of interventions that can be further applied.

These insights will be used as technical input for further planning of activities with ILO constituents in 2024 and beyond.

The **main clients** of this analysis will be ILO management, HQ and CO technical specialists, projects' staff and tripartite constituents in Moldova.

Scope of the assessments

The evaluation will cover the period from the start of the projects October 2021 to December 2023 to create an accurate and comprehensive picture of the context and ILO interventions funded by the RBSA.

The evaluation will evaluate the progress of the RBSA funded interventions in Moldova, through desk review, discussions with constituents and Implementing Partners, including through country visits by the evaluator.

The evaluation should look at the linkages between the two interventions and generate findings on the six evaluation criteria and generate lessons learnt that can be applied in Moldova and other countries and other initiatives that might want to apply the approach.

Gender equality and inclusion, including for the people with disability, will be addressed as a cross-cutting consideration throughout the methodology and deliverables. To the extent possible data collection and analysis will be disaggregated by gender. The evaluation will integrate other ILO's cross-cutting issues, i.e. norms, social dialogue, effects of capacity development initiatives - throughout its methodology and deliverables.

The evaluation will pay attention to how the projects are relevant to ILO's programme and policy framework, UNSDCF and relevant national development strategies.

Criteria and questions

The assessment will apply the key OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and will provide recommendations in the definition of the key actions to be undertaken. Impact potential will be assessed to the extent possible given the limited scope of the interventions.

The assessment will seek answers to the following questions:

Relevance

25. To what extent are the project objectives and approach relevant to the constituents' needs and present country context? Implementation of activities in line with needs of constituents: to which extent the activities were aligned with the needs of constituents?
26. To what extent are the interventions relevant for the achievement of common objectives, the achievement of a thematic strategy or the DWCP in Moldova?
27. How well have the projects adapted to the changes in the country context and on working methods?

28. What is the relevance of the outcomes of the RBSA interventions for the overall economic development in the future?
29. To what extent do the ILO interventions contribute in an integrated manner to central ILO issues such as labour norms or social dialogue?

Effectiveness

30. What have been the major results and lessons learned during the implementation of the RBSA interventions?
31. What has been the progress made in the achievement of the projects outcomes? Have there been any changes in the specific areas defined as project outputs?
32. What are the main constraints experienced by the two RBSA interventions (both in terms of methodology and context)?
33. What is the most effective way to provide technical support and follow up on the main areas tackled by the interventions?

Efficiency

34. Have resources available (time, funds, partnerships, knowledge, expertise and tools) been used efficiently?
35. Have there been any ways to enhance the efficiency?
36. What were there synergies among the interventions under review? How did they mutually reinforce each other?

Coherence

37. To what extent do the interventions strategies fit with other interventions in the country?
38. How do the interventions contribute to the overall achievement of the DWCP?

Sustainability and impact potential

39. Are the results achieved likely to continue after the end of the intervention? Are they likely to produce longer-term effects and benefits to the target groups? What could be done to improve sustainability?
40. What is the expected long-lasting effect after the activities are completed?
41. Is it likely that the government and social partners will develop new policies, laws, regulations, or design national programs based on piloted interventions, contributing to further progress in the areas tackled by the project?

Recommendations and next steps

42. What action might be needed to bolster the longer-term effects and to come to further policy measures generating a positive change?
43. What are the next steps to be undertaken? What is the best way to proceed? What would be the main issues to tackle?
44. Which actors and in which way should be engaged?

The evaluator will ensure that opinions and perceptions of women are equally reflected in the interviews and that gender-specific questions are included.

The list of questions can be adjusted by the consultant prior to field research in coordination with the ILO representatives.

Based on the analysis of the findings this assessment will aim at providing practical recommendations on the immediate next steps and technical assistance needs that could be incorporated into the design of future initiatives.

Cross cutting issues

Gender equality and women's empowerment in the world of work are critical to achieving the ILO vision of decent work for all. The ILO is committed to examine project's responsiveness to issues relating to gender equality and disability inclusion issues.

Relevance and validity of design

45. Within the context of ILO goal of gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as well as national level policies in this regard, to what extent did the projects' design take into account:

- i. Specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context;
- ii. Concerns relating to inclusion of people with disabilities?

Effectiveness

46. Within the projects' thematic area, what were the facilitating and limiting factors in project's contribution/potential contribution to:

- iii. Gender equality and non-discrimination?
- iv. Inclusion of people with disabilities?

Efficiency

47. To what extent did the project budget factor-in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to address: i. Gender equality and non-discrimination? ii. Inclusion of people with disabilities

Sustainability and impact

48. To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs³ that can have a long term positive bearing on:

- iii. Gender parity within the world of work?
- iv. Inclusion of women and men with disabilities within the world of work

Methodology

The methodology should include multiple methods, both qualitative and quantitative. The evaluation consultant will review the available literature and materials. The methodology should take into consideration the benefits of the clustered evaluation and review the relevant priority of the Decent Work Country Programme in Moldova. As such, the methodology should include examining the Theories of Change of the interventions under review and also capture the achievement of expected and unexpected outcomes.

Then the consultant will prepare an inception report to describe the methodology, set an action plan to carry out interviews. The methodology should state the limitations of the evaluation. The evaluator may adapt the methodology, but any fundamental changes should be agreed with the evaluation

manager and reflected in the inception report. The inception report will be approved by the evaluation manager. An orientation meeting (on-distance) may be organized with the ILO/Budapest.

It will be followed by interviews with the DWT/CO Budapest staff (Senior management, Sr. Specialists, Programme Officer and other colleagues as appropriate), in-country research, including interviews with the ILO National Coordinator in Moldova and tripartite constituents, i.e., the government, trade unions and employers' organization, and other relevant government institutions, and other development cooperation partners as appropriate.

Information will be collected by means of group and/or individual interviews with key actors. Data and information should be presented with appropriate gender disaggregation. Interviews will be arranged in country. Stakeholders' survey questionnaire might be also applied if relevant and appropriate. Upon completion of the interviews, a debriefing to be organised with the National Coordinator, Project Staff and Evaluation Manager.

The recommendations need to have set of strategic and systemic aspect while other more operational recommendations will focus on its individual projects or components. Lessons learned and good practices should have a more strategic focus.

Main deliverables/outputs

The consultant will provide an inception report, a draft report in English (preferably up to 30-40 pages in length, without annexes). The report will follow the format recommended by the ILO Evaluation Office⁷ and include:

- ✓ Title Page ([Checklist 4.3: Filling in the Evaluation Title Page](#))
- ✓ Table of Contents
- ✓ Executive Summary with key findings, conclusions and recommendations ([template](#))
- ✓ Project background
- ✓ Evaluation background
- ✓ Criteria and Questions
- ✓ Methodology
- ✓ Findings
- ✓ Conclusions
- ✓ Lessons Learnt and Good Practices (using the [templates](#))
- ✓ Recommendations
- ✓ Annexes, including the TOR, a list of those consulted, interview guide, list of generic interview questions, and other documents

The draft report will be circulated by the evaluation manager and shared for comments with the stakeholders. Further to receipt of combined comments from the evaluation manager, the evaluator will prepare a final report that will be subject to approval by the ILO Regional Office for Europe and EVAL. The quality of the report will be assessed against the relevant EVAL checklists.

⁷ Please refer to the ILO Evaluation Office Checklist [#4.2 Preparing Evaluation Report](#)

Management arrangements and professional requirements

The assignment will be conducted by an external consultant who will report to the evaluation manager appointed by the ILO. The assignment will require approximately 25 working days (non-consecutive), in October – December 2023. The ILO will cover the consultancy fee.

Timelines

A tentative timeline can be found below (to be adjusted):

TASK	TIME	# DAYS
Desk review	By 6 November	4
Inception report	By 10 November	2
Meetings/interviews	Week 13 th November in MDA	6
Data analysis and draft report		8
Circulation of the draft report for comments (by the evaluation manager)	By 27 November	(Ten days)
Final report	15 December	5
Total		25

Requirements:

- University degree in social sciences or economics
- understanding of the ILO's tripartite foundations and standards
- expertise in the issues of employment, enterprise development, COVID-19 impact on the world of work
- knowledge of the country context and the region
- knowledge of assessment methods, qualitative and quantitative research skills
- excellent analytical skills
- fluency in English
- knowledge of Moldovan or Romanian

Legal and ethical matters

The assessment will be carried out in adherence with the ILO evaluation policy guidelines, UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance.

The evaluator will abide by the ILO EVAL's Code of Conduct for carrying out the evaluations⁸.

Ethical considerations will be taken into account in the process. As requested by the UNEG Norms and Standards, the consultant will be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs, act with integrity and honesty in the relationships with all stakeholders.

The gender dimension should be considered as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables and final report of the evaluation. In terms of this assessment, this implies involving both men and women in the consultation, analysis. Moreover, the consultant should review data and information that is disaggregated by gender (if available) and assess the relevance and effectiveness of gender-related

⁸ [Template 3.1: ILO Code of Conduct: Agreement for Evaluator](#)

strategies and outcomes to improve lives of women and men. All this information should be accurately included in the report.

The consultant should not have worked or have any prior relation with the project.

ANNEXES

Annex I. Relevant ILO evaluation policies, guidelines and standard templates

- [ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations 4th edition](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the ILO](#) (to be signed and returned by evaluator to the evaluation manager)
- [Protocol on collecting evaluative evidence on the ILO's COVID-19 Response measures through project and programme evaluations](#)

Guidance Notes

- ✓ [Guidance Note 3.1 Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation of projects](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 3.2 Adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 3.3 Strategic clustered evaluations to gather evaluative information more effectively](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 4.3 Data collection methods](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 4.5 Stakeholder engagement](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 5.5 Dissemination of lessons learned and good practices](#)

EVAL Checklists and Templates for the Evaluator:

- ✓ [Checklist 4.8 Writing the inception report](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.2 Preparing the evaluation report \[including the templates for completing lessons learned and emerging good practices, as well as the templates for the title page and executive summary](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.3 Filling in the title page](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.4 Preparing the Evaluation Report Summary](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.5: Documents for Project Evaluators](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.9 Rating the quality of evaluation report](#)

ANNEX 2. Projects' proposals (come as separate files)