



International Labour Organization

iTrack

Evaluation Unit (EVAL)

# ILO – EVALUATION

<b>XB-Symbol:</b>	RAF/14/06/FLA
<b>Evaluation Title:</b>	Evaluation of the 'Job Creation through SME Development – A Knowledge Sharing Project'
<b>Type of evaluation</b>	Final Independent Evaluation
<b>Countries:</b>	South Africa with knowledge sharing activities in Malawi and Mozambique
<b>Date of the evaluation</b>	January - March 2018 (approved in Sept 2019)
<b>Name of consultants</b>	Capacitate (Jason Bygate and Trish Heimann)
<b>Administrative office:</b>	ILO Pretoria
<b>Technical backstopping office:</b>	EMP/ENTERPRISES
<b>Project end date:</b>	31 December 2017
<b>Evaluation manager:</b>	Anthony Rutabanzibwa
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<b>External implementing partners:</b>	Department for Small Business Development, Business Unity South Africa, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), The Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA), National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and Community
<b>Time frame:</b>	36 months (January 2015 – December 2017)
<b>Donor, country and Budget:</b>	Government of Flanders South Africa, US\$680'272 (€600'000) plus US\$85'000 (€75'000) from ITC, Turin towards the <i>African Talks on Entrepreneurship</i> (February 2015 exchange rate)
<b>Key words</b>	Final evaluation; knowledge sharing; policy; capacity building; African Talks on Entrepreneurship; informal economy; enterprise formalization, Future of Work, Decent Work

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BUSA	Business Unity South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DOL	Department of Labour
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
DSBD	Department of Small Business Development
EESE	Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises
FEDUSA	The Federation of Unions of South Africa
FOWI	Future of Work Initiative
GIBS	Gordon Institute of Business Science
IDC	Industrial Development Cooperation
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITC	International Training Centre
KS4SME	Job Creation through SME Development – a Knowledge Sharing Project
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NDP	National Development Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RISCC	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Programme
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SBD	Department of Small Business Development
SBP	Small Business Partners
SEA	ILO Sustainable Enterprise Academy
SIM	Systemic Intervention Mapping Methodology

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SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMME	Small, Micro and Medium Enterprise
TMS	Technical Management Support Project

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project evaluation team would like to acknowledge:

- Members of the Project Management Unit for providing the documentation in a timely manner, for giving freely of their time for interviews and for being approachable to answering queries and providing additional information.
- The persons interviewed for providing their time and their comments with regard to the project.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND AND PROJECT CONTEXT

The idea for the “Job Creation through SME Development – a Knowledge Sharing Project” known in short as KS4SME, was developed in 2014 by the ILO South African office, after positive response from the Government of Flanders to a knowledge sharing workshop on SME Development in South Africa that was presented on 30 July 2014 in Freedom Park, Pretoria. The project was a response to the request from government, organised business and organised labour (tripartite constituents) to undertake research and to share research and knowledge through national events, as well as to develop the capacities of constituents and other SME development partners to support the transition to formality and SME development based on effective programmes and intervention models.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAMME LOGIC

The KS4SME project was designed to address three key objectives, namely:

- Objective 1: Provide evidence-based research to inform government policies and programmes relating to SME development;
- Objective 2: To improve knowledge sharing, coordination and collaboration that contribute to innovative models for job creation; and
- Objective 3: To develop the capacities of policy makers and practitioners to inform new programme development.

The development objective of the KS4SME project was to contribute towards an improved enabling environment for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) where support programmes facilitate formalisation and enable enterprise development in an equitable and sustainable manner. The intended end-of-project outcome was the following:

An improved environment for SMEs where support programmes and technical assistance facilitate formalization and enable SME development...

As a result of...

**Increased knowledge sharing, improved coordination and collaboration between SME stakeholders, improved Government policies and/or strategies and new/improved programmes and/or plans.**

The KS4SME project was designed so that partners collaborated in providing activities/events to meet its objectives. It is noted that the project was designed to support events rather than deliver them in isolation. The project was also designed to align with the National Development Plan, the Decent Work Agenda for Africa as well as the South African Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP).

### EVALUATION BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Final Evaluation served the following main purposes, namely, (i) to assess the initiative’s achievement of outputs and the extent to which the project met its intended outcomes; (ii) to assess if the strategies, implementation modalities and partnership arrangements were appropriate in the context of the project operating environment; (iii) to assess if and how the project responded and acted on recommendations from the mid-term

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evaluation; and to provide recommendations for future projects in terms of design, strategies, institutional arrangements, partnership arrangements and other areas identified by the evaluator.

The primary clients of the evaluation are the project management unit within the ILO DWT Office of Pretoria and the Enterprises Department at HQ as implementers and the Government of Flanders as donor of the initiative.

This evaluation followed a utilization focused evaluation approach where the key project stakeholders were engaged from the onset to establish their involvement as facilitators and users of the evaluation. Data collection included the use of primary data (through interviews) and secondary data (document review of available project documentation).

For the purpose of the document review, 88 documents provided by the ILO office relating to the KS4SME were reviewed along with eight additional documents that were sourced. These included amongst others work plans, budgets, event documents (including flyers and attendance registers) and reports or briefs as an output from events. The evaluation questions guided the systematic review of documents received and where information gaps were identified, further sources of information were requested and evaluated as relevant.

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

### **FINDINGS RELATING TO RELEVANCE:**

The project is relevant in terms of national development plans, complements other ILO programmes in South Africa, aligns with other regional imperatives and fits well with the Government of Flanders' country strategy for South Africa. Events and topics were relevant to constituents, guided by the current global and regional debates, as well as by feedback and requests received at NEDLAC meetings and by constituents.

The key role players understood their roles and were involved appropriately and sufficiently. However, for some events, those interviewed believed that although there was good participation by Government Departments, some key Departments were absent. Interviewees also identified the Business Sector as under-represented and Financial Institutions as missing.

The KS4SME project activities and events were hosted as ILO supported initiatives rather than branded as a specific project under the ILO, hence stakeholders who participated in project events did not know that an event they attended was part of a knowledge sharing project. However, participants were able to accurately describe the broad objectives of the project in relation to the event that they participated in as either knowledge sharing, stakeholder collaboration or capacity development

### **FINDINGS RELATING TO PROJECT DESIGN:**

The project design was generally adequate and six (6) design strengths were identified. However, the programme design was not sufficiently defined upfront and an assessment of the actual project outputs versus the planned outputs shows that the project design was not entirely realistic. Seven (7) project design challenges were identified. Whereas the project collected data, no consolidated monitoring system was developed to track the contribution to the broader development objectives of the project.

### **FINDINGS RELATING TO EFFICIENCY**

Resources were allocated strategically to provide necessary support and to achieve broader project objectives. The ability of the ILO project team to leverage necessary resources, expertise and relationships, increased the value of

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the project's activities. Although project activities were generally in line with the schedule of activities, not all activities were implemented as planned.

The project received political, technical and administrative support internally within the ILO and externally from partners. The project is commended for good financial management, stakeholder management, for the management of high-quality events and activities, as well as being responsive to needs and priorities of ILO constituents. However, findings show that project monitoring and some aspects of project governance and project communication were identified as inadequate.

#### **FINDINGS RELATING TO PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS**

Project outputs did not reach the quantity of events and beneficiaries that were planned for as per the work plan. At the outcome level, the project contributed towards (i) increasing knowledge, (ii) improving understanding, (iii) increasing the sharing of knowledge amongst beneficiaries, (iv) improving collaboration and coordination, (v) building institutional capacity, (vi) contributing towards continued dialogue and further actions on key topics, and (vii) informing improved policies, strategies and/or programmes.

Positive unintended results of the project were that it minimised silo syndrome and enhanced collaborative working relationships within the ILO as well as within other partner organisations.

#### **FINDINGS RELATING TO SUSTAINABILITY**

Although a sustainability plan was put in place for the project, its aim to share project content on existing platforms, was not fulfilled. Action Plans and Communities of Practice were identified as key to enhancing sustainability

#### **LESSONS AND GOOD PRACTICES**

**Lesson 1:** A specialist communications resource to assist with the communication functions for the project could have improved the delivery against the objectives and stated targets.

**Lesson 2:** The project would have benefited from a consolidated monitoring mechanism to track collective attendance and project activities. This would have fulfilled not only some of the M&E requirements, but it would have assisted with further engagement with participants as well as with targeted communication.

**Lesson 3:** It is important to appropriately define and track what happens at the outcome level to provide a good reflection of the value delivered.

**Lesson 4:** Time is an important consideration, both in terms of coordination and scheduling (so that participants are able to attend an event). The duration of events is also an important consideration in terms of participant attendance. The aspect of 'time' needs to be considered at the design stage to maximise attendance and engagement by participants. Advanced notice could improve attendance as well as considering the segmentation of content across the days of the event – making the content more modular.

**Lesson 5:** There is a need to look at an integrated approach across government and also to find a way to engage at a higher level within government to drive collaboration across various departments. In addition, there is a need to find an alternative way to build capacity and awareness throughout the constituent structures.

**Good practice 1:** The participatory methodology applied to the design of events was extremely successful in

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achieving and sustaining high levels of engagement and participation throughout the events hosted. Disrupting expectations of the traditional format was well received by participants and allowed for deeper engagement with the content and between participants themselves.

**Good practice 2:** Breaking down silos within the ILO to drive internal collaboration and leverage existing resources enhances project outcomes and contributes toward collective organisational objectives. While the funding for the KS4SME project was relatively small, significant value was leveraged through the investment, specifically from the broader ILO infrastructure. The ILO needs to find a way to institutionalise this practice in a sustainable and scalable way.

#### MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE KS4SME PROJECT

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that The ILO should consider tracking project benefits and progress towards achieving the desired project impact indicators for the KS4SME project. It is seldom that projects continue to be tracked after they are closed. However, because of the nature of the knowledge sharing project, impact indicators will take time before they are realised. Through the e-platform created for ongoing collaboration and networking, it would not be difficult to send out surveys and to track participants over time to follow-up on the benefits and ongoing efforts of participant.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended that the KS4SME project team present all project material and information to owners of other e-platforms relating to SME development so that they might link to or integrate the content into their e-platforms with the intention that more stakeholders have access and benefit from what was produced by the KS4SME project.

**Recommendation 3:** The ILO should develop a clear communication strategy to maintain engagement with event participants before, during and after events, as well as with the project Donor and key ILO Constituents. As part of the communication strategy, communicating earlier (at least three months before an event) and providing clarity on who events are targeted at (types and level of stakeholders), would benefit all stakeholders and would ensure that all relevant stakeholders would be involved, especially the business sector.

**Recommendation 4:** A knowledge sharing project, even one with a small budget, should dedicate a full-time staff resource from the start of the project.

**Recommendation 5:** ILO project teams should make time during project inception to **define the logical framework** in a way that maps out the intervention logic and provides clarity on key terms (definitions) and clarity on how, when and in what timeframes indicators will be measured. This includes defining what sustainability is for a knowledge sharing project.

As part of the process, it is suggested that the ILO map the journey of key organisations across ILO constituents towards reaching project outputs and outcomes during (and possibly after) project implementation so that the effectiveness in reaching programme goals can be measured. By collaborating on such an activity, the ILO could increase the accountability for project results in the hands of partners.

**Recommendation 6:** The ILO should **clearly define a monitoring system** along with a monitoring plan that includes how to measure output, outcome and impact indicators, as well as a clearly defined reporting modality. As part of the monitoring plan, there should be clarity on when to measure progress against targets during project implementation (annual review of actual progress against targets is considered sufficient for similar knowledge sharing projects). A database should be developed to provide consistency in the collation of data on the number of institutions and individuals who participated in all events across the project. This database should be linked to an

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online platform to drive traffic to it while tracking attendance. Participant evaluations should take place after each event as part of monitoring.

Should partners take ownership of the project and want to continue activities, it is suggested that the ILO consider a mechanism to capacitate partners to enable them to manage the process going forward.

**Recommendation 7:** A **formal reflective session (annual)** to review and consider refinement of the Theory of Change, logframe and targets, is recommended.

**Recommendation 8:** It is recommended that future similar projects put in place a Project Steering Committee represented by relevant Government Departments, the Donor and other relevant ILO constituents (business, labour and civil society). It may be worthwhile identifying whether the same members of the PSC represent a range of projects. If this is the case, consolidating the PSC across projects could be more effective.

**Recommendation 9:** A project that aims to improve policies, strategies, plans and/or programmes should include more practical support to achieve its outcomes. It is recommended that for future similar projects the ILO budget for further engagement amongst stakeholders after events to develop action plans so that ownership across stakeholders is increased.

**Recommendation 10:** The ILO should engage with existing online platforms to collaborate and cross-pollinate where possible so as to drive engagement within the stakeholder community and awareness about the project. This would also extend the channels for the distribution of knowledge content.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The “KS4SME programme” started in January 2015 and came to an end in December 2017. This Report presents the findings of a Final Independent evaluation conducted from January to March 2018 to assess the level of achievement of the outputs and the extent to which the project met its intended outcomes, as well as to document learnings and good practices from the project and propose recommendations for improved design and delivery of future similar projects.

The sections of this report include a brief summary of the project’s purpose, logic, structure and objectives (Section 2), the evaluation background (section 3) and methodology for data collection and analysis (Section 4), followed by a discussion on the key findings as a response to each of the evaluation questions. Findings are reflected upon by considering the findings presented from the Mid-Term Evaluation and reflecting on how findings have changed in the final year of implementation based on project progress and achievements. An overview of project implementation is presented in Section 5. Section 6 reflects on findings relating to relevance. Programme design findings are presented in Section 7. Findings relating to project efficiency are described in Section 8. Project effectiveness is presented in Section 9. Section 10 reflects on sustainability of the project. The conclusions of the evaluation are summarised in Section 11. Section 12 presents the lessons learned and good emerging practices and recommendations are documented as part of Section 13.

Appendices include lessons learned (Annexure A), emerging good practices (Annexure B), the terms of reference (Annexure C), the inception report submitted as a first deliverable for the Final Independent evaluation (Annexure D), a list of persons interviewed (Annexure E), Data collection instruments (Annexure F), a bibliography and list of references provided by the KS4SME project team (Annexure G), and a summary of initial project objectives and outputs compared to the revised ones that were implemented and measured (Annexure H).

## 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

### 2.1. CONTEXT OF THE KS4SME PROJECT

The idea for the “Job Creation through SME Development – a Knowledge Sharing Project” (RAF/14/06/FLA SUB ZAF 2014 2152) known in short as KS4SME, was developed in 2014 by the ILO South African office, after positive response from the Government of Flanders<sup>1</sup> to a knowledge sharing workshop on SME Development in South Africa that was presented on 30 July 2014 in Freedom Park, Pretoria, South Africa<sup>1</sup>.

The project was a response to the request from government, organised business and organised labour to undertake research and to share research and knowledge through national events with the aim of developing the capacities of constituents and other SME development partners.

The KS4SME project is part of the technical cooperation project funded by the Government of Flanders. It was considered to be a relatively small project within the programme of the ILO enterprise development engagements.

### 2.2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the KS4SME project was to establish a knowledge-sharing network around a common shared

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<sup>1</sup> KSW Final Report (pdf) from 2014 Knowledge sharing workshop and video folder received from ILO South Africa Office as part of the Folders with Key Documents provided for the desk research

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goal of job creation through SME development within and between South Africa, Mozambique and Malawi. The purpose of the network was to bring organisations and individuals together to share existing knowledge as well as develop, distribute and apply new knowledge.

The KS4SME project was designed to address three key objectives, namely:

- **Objective 1:** Provide evidence based research to inform government policies and programmes relating to SME development;
- **Objective 2:** To improve knowledge sharing, coordination and collaboration that contribute to innovative models for job creation; and
- **Objective 3:** To develop the capacities of policy makers and practitioners to inform new programme development.

The development objective of the KS4SME project was to contribute towards an improved enabling environment for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) where support programmes facilitate formalisation and enable enterprise development in an equitable and sustainable manner. The intended end-of-project outcome was the following:

An improved environment for SMEs where support programmes and technical assistance facilitate formalization and enable SME development...

As a result of...

**Increased knowledge sharing, improved coordination and collaboration** between SME stakeholders, **improved Government policies and/or strategies** and **new/improved programmes and/or plans**<sup>4</sup>.

A logical framework specified a variety of activities with outputs and outcome indicators. The logical framework was slightly amended by the project team after the Mid-Term Evaluation and shared with the donor. The revisions made did not affect the overall objectives of the project and formal revision to the logframe was not considered to be urgent, because of two main reasons:

- The discussions at NEDLAC, which was considered to be the project steering committee, were at too high a level for the project team to reflect on logframe amendments; and
- The project team could not justify the costs associated with the additional amount of time it would have taken to formally revise the logframe.

### 2.3. PROGRAMME DESIGN

The purpose of creating a knowledge sharing network was to bring organisations and individuals together to share existing knowledge as well as develop, distribute and apply new knowledge. The intention of the project was to inform policy, strategies and programmes for job creation through i) a strengthened coordination and collaboration across organisational, disciplinary and geographical boundaries; ii) increased evidence of effective job creation models and iii) capacity development of government officials and practitioners. The main focus area was South Africa but some events were extended to Mozambique, Malawi and other African countries.

The KS4SME project was designed so that partners collaborated in providing activities/events to meet its objectives. It is noted that the project was designed to support events rather than deliver them in isolation. To support the

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project design, it was based on close partnerships with Department for Small Business Development (DSBD), Department of Labour (DOL), Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), The Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA), the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and with Community representatives.

The project was also designed to align with the National Development Plan, the Decent Work Agenda for Africa as well as the South African Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP).

The project aimed to deliver the following outputs<sup>2</sup>:

- At least three research studies published and debated by at least 300 representatives of government, organised business and labour over the project period;
- At least three policy briefs/practice notes on SME development disseminated to at least 3'000 stakeholders in the SME sector in the SADC region;
- An SME knowledge sharing network aimed at reaching at least 1'500 members;
- Three national knowledge sharing events reaching 1'000 policy makers and practitioners; and
- Learning courses on sustainable enterprises to develop capacities of at least 500 representatives from government, organised business and labour over the project period.

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#### 2.4. FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

The approval minutes for the project<sup>3</sup> confirmed the allocation of EURO 600 000 / US\$ 680 272 (based on the exchange rate at December 2017). An additional US\$85'000 (€75'000) from ITC, Turin was secured towards the African Talks on Entrepreneurship (February 2015 exchange rate)<sup>4</sup>.

Funding was stipulated to cover project expenditures and support costs which are calculated at the rate of 13 percent of direct project costs. Programme funds were spent primarily in South Africa, with Malawi and Mozambique benefitting from the knowledge sharing activities.

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#### 2.5. ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS

The Government of Flanders (Kingdom of Belgium), represented by the Department of Foreign Affairs, was the donor of the programme.

The initial management arrangement of the project (2015 and 2016) made provision for the recruitment of a part time international project coordinator (25%) and a part time administrative and financial assistant (25%) that are full time employees of ILO in the Pretoria office with cost sharing contributions being made from the project<sup>11</sup>. In total, three work months were allocated annually for the overall management of the project in 2015 and 2016. In 2017, as a response to a recommendation made in the Mid-Term Evaluation that there was a need for a full-time resource to be committed at 100%, an ILO Junior Technical Officer (enterprise) was engaged to take provide project coordination support to the project.

Over the project duration, the project coordinator was technically backstopped by the enterprise development specialist in the Pretoria office, who took a more pro-active role in overall project management given the workload of the existing international staff in the ILO Pretoria office. Support was also provided from other ILO specialists and

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<sup>2</sup> The list includes the revised outputs made as a response to the Mid-Term Evaluation. Refer to: Management Response KS4SME Mid-Term Evaluation, Proposed Revision to Logframe

<sup>3</sup> Approval Minute RAF1406FLAJan2015 authored by Lovera, Rossells dated 14 January 2015 provided by ILO South Africa in Folder with Key Documents

<sup>4</sup> Cleaned version Revised Prodoc 1406FLA 21 May 2015 provided by ILO South Africa in Folder with Key Documents

overall supervision of the project was provided by the ILO director.

The project planned to have a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) consisting of these partners and with the Government of Flanders (as the donor) and the ILO (as the lead implementer), with the intention to meet every 6 months to guide project implementation or on ad-hoc basis when needed. However, the PAC was not formalised. The project reported to the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) under the labour market chamber overseeing the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in South Africa.

### 3. EVALUATION BACKGROUND

#### 3.1. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND USE

The Final Independent Evaluation followed a participatory process and served the following purposes:

- (i) to assess the initiative's achievement of outputs and the extent to which the project met its intended outcomes;
- (ii) to assess if the strategies, implementation modalities and partnership arrangements were appropriate in the context of the project operating environment;
- (iii) to assess if and how the project responded and acted on recommendations from the mid-term evaluation; and
- (iv) to provide recommendations for future projects in terms of design, strategies, institutional arrangements, partnership arrangements and other areas identified by the evaluator.

#### 3.2. EVALUATION AUDIENCE

The primary clients of the evaluation are the project management unit within the ILO DWT Office of Pretoria and the Enterprises Department at HQ as implementers and the Government of Flanders as donor of the initiative.

The tripartite constituents and other parties involved in the execution of the project or as beneficiaries of the project may also find it of value to review the evaluation findings and lessons learnt.

#### 3.3. EVALUATION: TIMING AND OPERATIONAL SEQUENCE

The evaluation reviewed all the KS4SME project's activities that were funded (either directly or co-funded) in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The evaluation also considered some activities currently being concluded in 2018, even though the project officially ended in December 2017. The evaluation was completed during the period of January to February 2018.

The evaluation took place across three phases, namely, (i) project inception, (ii) data collection and (iii) analysis and reporting. An inception meeting (face-to-face) was held at the ILO office on 12 January 2018 where key project documentation was sourced and the evaluation plan was confirmed. An inception report was submitted as part of the inception phase (refer to Annexure D). Data collection commenced, which included a desk review of all available documents provided by the ILO project team, an initial set of interviews with ILO officials and the Government of Flanders and a second round of interviews with beneficiaries who attended the events hosted in 2017 as deliverables of the project. Analysis commenced after data collection and to enrich the findings from the Final Independent Evaluation, findings were triangulated with findings presented in the Mid-Term Evaluation (concluded in February 2017).

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A draft report was submitted on 28 February 2018, with time set aside by ILO to review and provide inputs. A findings and recommendations workshop was held at the ILO office on 7 March 2018 and a Final Evaluation Report submitted on 12 March 2018.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This evaluation followed a utilization focused evaluation approach (Patton, 2008<sup>5</sup>) where the key project stakeholders were engaged from the onset to establish their involvement as facilitators and users of the evaluation.

### 4.1. DATA SOURCES AND RATIONALE FOR STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

The sources of information and data used included documents as made available by the ILO Office, open source documents on various stakeholder websites and primary interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries.

For the purpose of the document review, 88 documents provided by the ILO office relating to the KS4SME were reviewed along with eight additional documents that were sourced. These included, amongst others, work plans, budgets, event documents (including flyers and attendance registers) and reports or briefs as an output from events. The evaluation questions guided the systematic review of documents received and where information gaps were identified, further sources of information were requested and evaluated as relevant (a list of references and a bibliography is listed in Annexure G).

The evaluation included initial interviews held with (i) the ILO officials in the South African office; (ii) officials involved with the academy based in the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin) and (iii) the Government of Flanders to gain a better understanding of the project. Tier 2 interviews were held with (iv) NEDLAC constituents who form part of the NEDLAC DWCP steering committee and participants from various events (The Future of Work National Dialogue and the Decent Work Academy) who attended one or more events, represented by government (both national and provincial), organised business, organised labour and the community (refer to Annexure E for a list of persons who were interviewed across each stakeholder group).

The sample was purposively selected to include representatives who attended one or more event from Government, organised business, organised labour and the community. In this way, the evaluation team could obtain more feedback related to each of the events hosted or co-hosted by the project in 2017. Some participants who were interviewed also attended events in 2015 or 2016. Because the Mid-Term Evaluation was concluded less than one year prior to the commencement of the Final Independent Evaluations and findings reflected on 2015 and 2016 events, the findings from both evaluations were triangulated. Thus, the findings presented in this report reflect the three year implementation period (2015 to 2017).

### 4.2. PARTICIPANTS OF THE EVALUATION

A total of 26 interviews were conducted with 27 interviewees. Three interviews were scheduled with participants who either did not arrive for their interview on the day or the interview could not continue as the interviewee did not attend the event (this was likely because the attendance registers received by the evaluation team were not the final registers captured for the event).

The data was collected over a period from 22 January to 5 February 2018. The following table provides a breakdown

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<sup>5</sup> Patton, M.Q. (2008). Utilization-focused evaluation, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

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of participants who were interviewed and KS4SME events that were attended:

Table 1: Assessment of quantitative targets reached

Stakeholder group represented by beneficiaries	Events attended by beneficiaries who were interviewed during the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations							TOTAL NUMBER INTERVIEWED
	SEA	EESE Assessment	African Talks	NIES	Blended Learning Course	Future of Work Dialogue	Decent Work Academy	28 beneficiaries
Funder			N/A					2
Project team								2
ILO Pretoria, extended project team								8
ITC of the ILO								1
RSA Organised Business		2	1			1		1
RSA Organised Labour				1		2	1	2
RSA Government	1				4	2	3	4
RSA Civil Society	1		1		1		2	2
RSA Enterprise	1		2				1	1
Malawi	1				1			0
Mozambique	1				2		1	1

#### 4.5. EVALUATION NORMS, STANDARDS AND ETHICAL SAFEGUARDS

The evaluation team has, to the best of their ability, conducted this evaluation in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.

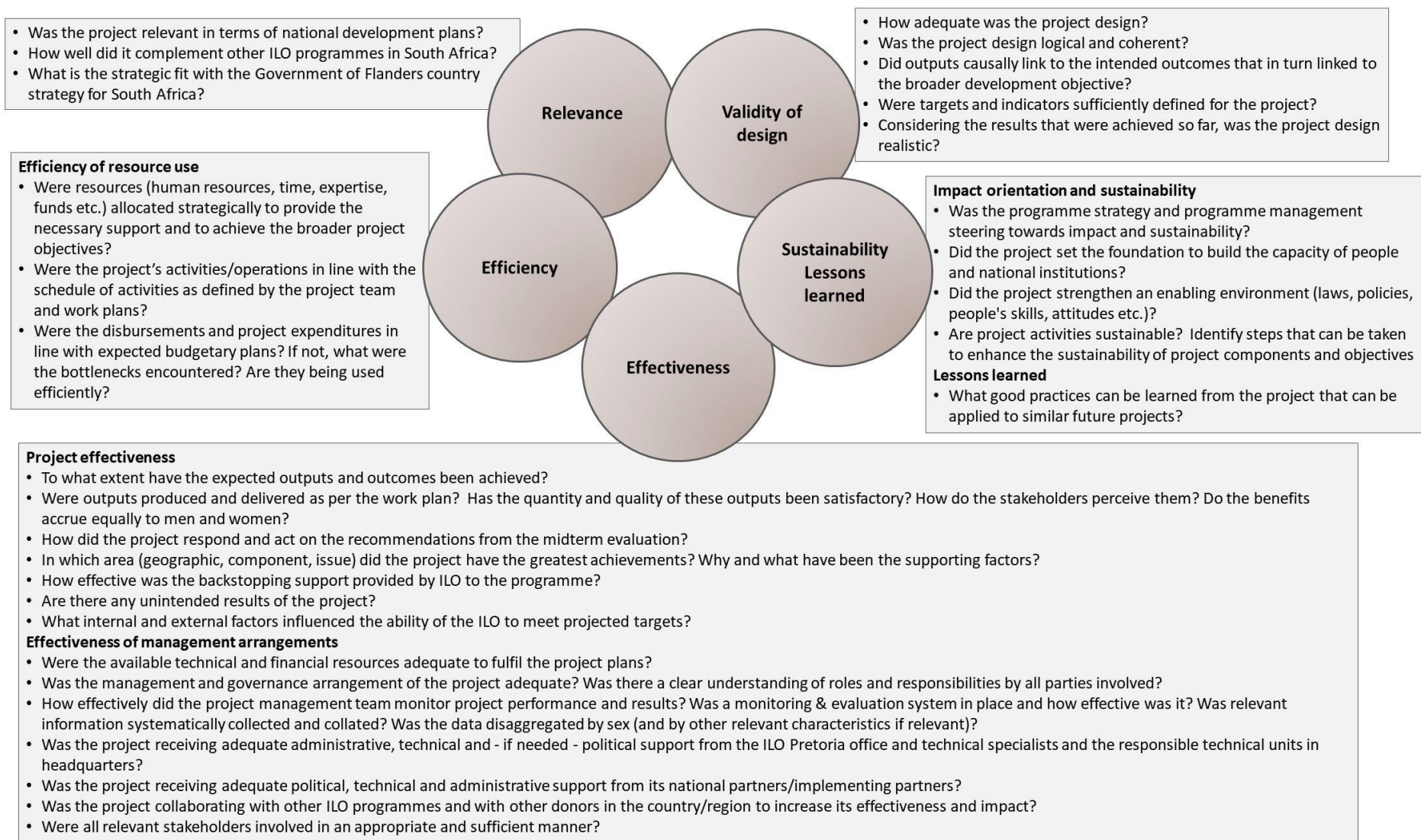
#### 4.3. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation team adhered to the criteria defined for many international development project evaluations as set out by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The specific areas of focus and evaluation questions are outlined in the conceptual framework reflected in the figure 1.

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**Figure 1: Evaluation focus areas and evaluation questions**

### Conceptual Framework for the Final Evaluation of the KS4SME Programme



#### 4.4. EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

Evaluation findings are based on content analysis from interviews and triangulation of findings<sup>6</sup> across qualitative data based on self-reported perceptions of stakeholders interviewed in response to structured interview questions. Although systematic analysis was done on both data sources, and researcher bias minimised through interrogation of findings, testing and verification of results achieved was not done beyond these sources of information.

Sampling varied opinions from stakeholders across the events hosted as part of the KS4SME project, allowed for less bias in interpretation of findings.

The Final Independent Evaluation team randomly sampled participants from Malawi and Mozambique so that their experiences could also be considered as part of the review. However, participants from Malawi who were listed as part of the participants who attended the Decent Work Academy, had not attended the event and the timeframe for interviews did not allow sufficient time to replace the selected participants with other interviews. Only one interview could be scheduled with a participant from Mozambique. Although the sample was expanded to invite other participants from Mozambique, they were unresponsive, hence, interviews could not be scheduled.

### 5. FINDINGS: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

The roll out of the programme centred on key themes each year which were identified through ILO constituents. The key focus of the programme in 2015 was placed on the transition of SME's from the informal to the formal sector of the economy. While this theme overflowed into 2016, the programme seemed to reposition its focus to social innovation and job creation towards the end of the year. In 2017, the key theme was on the future of work and decent work, with emphasis on gender equality and social protection. Activities were mostly co-funded and included the following (a more detailed outline of activities is included as part of Annexure I):

- The **Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises assessment** (referred to as the **EESE assessment**);  
An '**EESE Policy Brief**';  
A report called '**the Cost of Red Tape**', along with the '**Red Tape Reduction (RTR) Guidelines**';
- The **Sustainable Enterprise Academy (SEA)**;
- The **African Talks on Entrepreneurship Futures**;
- Finalising and updating a tool called the **compendium of SADC Labour Laws**;
- The the second National Informal Economy **Summit (NIES)**;
- A **blended learning course on policies and practices for enterprise formalisation and SME development**;
- Two working papers on **Social Innovation and the Future of Work**;
- An **ILO/Flanders event** (25 year celebration);
- A video that shared different aspects of **social protection** across sectors and across four countries;
- The **Decent Work Academy**;
- The South Africa **National dialogue on the future of work**;

Although not yet complete, the KS4SME project continues into 2018 with the following activities:

- **Knowledge Sharing Network**;
- **Social Protection and Informal Economy videos**; and
- **Promoting Gender Equality Practice note**.

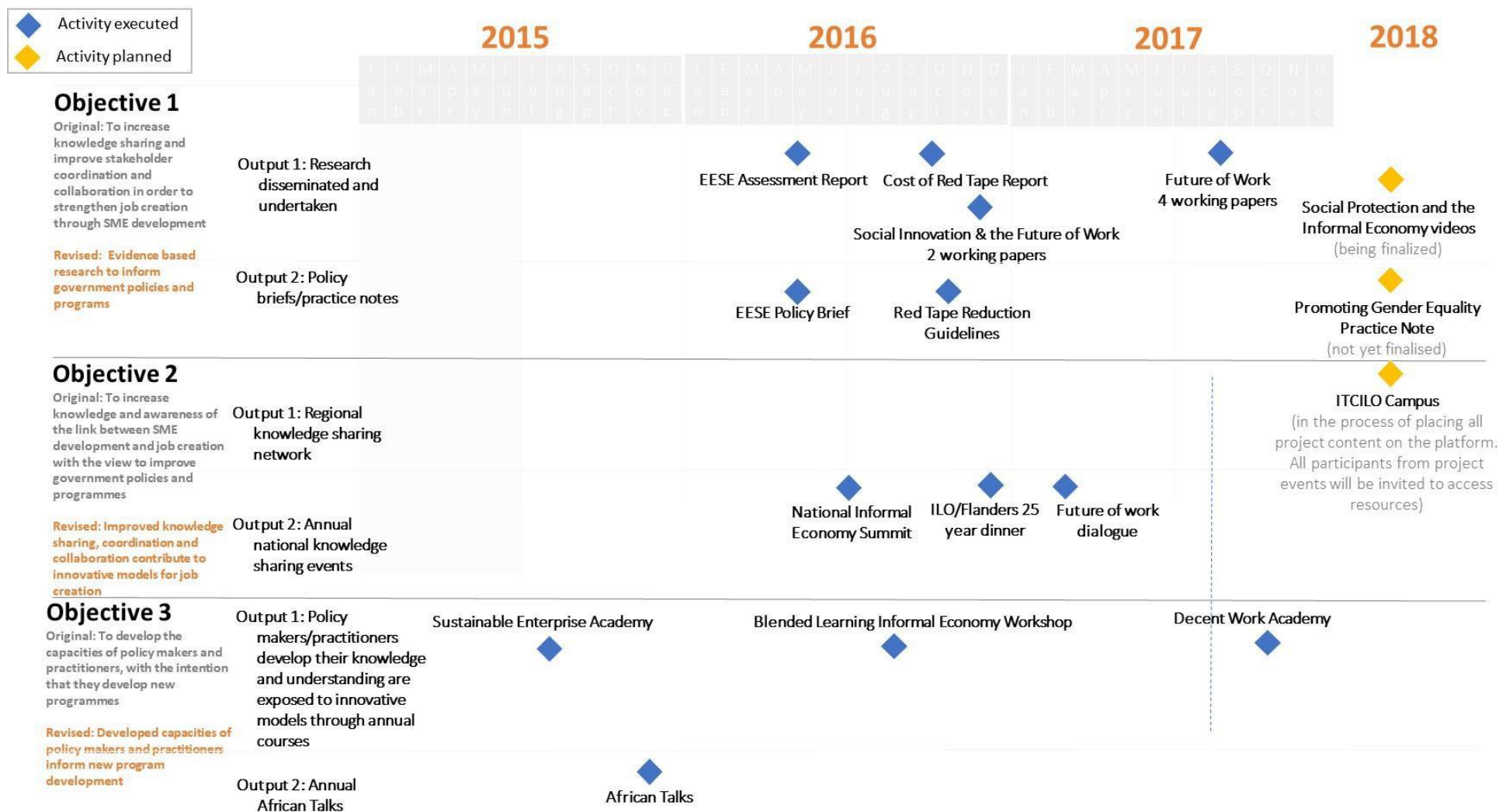
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<sup>6</sup> Triangulation means that the same themes (stories) were identified across stakeholders interviewed and across the Mid-Term and Final Independent Evaluations

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The programme implementation can be summarised by the key activities/events identified in Figure 2:

**Figure 2: Timeline indicating activities across objectives and outputs**



## 6. FINDINGS RELATING TO RELEVANCE

Finding 1: The project is relevant in terms of national development plans, complements other ILO programmes in South Africa, aligns with other regional imperatives and fits well with the Government of Flanders' country strategy for South Africa.

The Final Independent Evaluation found that the KS4SME project is consistent with South Africa's national development plans, ILO constituent priority areas, global priorities and the strategy of the Government of Flanders.

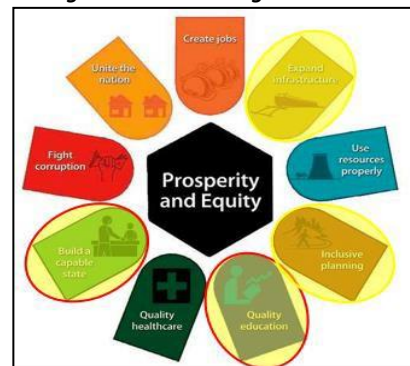
### ALIGNMENT TO NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The KS4SME project addresses South Africa's key social and economic challenges such as **Presidential Outcome No 4: Decent employment through inclusive economic growth**, which is one of twelve presidential outcomes.

The KS4SME project was aligned with two of the nine strategic thrusts of the National Development Plan (NDP)<sup>7</sup>. The strongest alignment was to 'creating jobs' and a priority of the NDP to 'develop and grow the SMME sector'.

Critical to the success of the NDP is effective government, strong leadership and active citizenry. The KS4SME's project objectives 2 and 3<sup>8</sup> were directly aligned to the NDP's goals to drive the **development of capabilities** to build **effective government**.

**Figure 3: NDP Strategic Thrusts**



The KS4SME project was aligned to key strategies of the NDP, namely, the New Growth Path, the **Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP)** and the Social Economy Accord (signed by Business and Labour).

The KS4SME project was further aligned with the mandate of the DSBD, which is 'to create a policy enabling environment and to support the upliftment of SMMEs and cooperatives, including informal businesses.

### LINK TO THE ILO STRATEGIC POLICY FRAMEWORK AND COMPLEMENTS OTHER ILO PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

For South Africa, the proposed project objectives were in accordance with the Strategic Policy Framework of the ILO that seeks to strengthen national technical capacities, building a knowledge base and encouraging partnership development as well as Outcome 4: Promotion of Sustainable Enterprise of the ILO Programme & Budget for 2014/15<sup>9</sup>.

The KS4SME project aligned to the **Decent Work agenda for Africa** and to the **Decent Work Country Programme**

<sup>7</sup> Nine strategic thrusts are identified in the NDP: Create Jobs; Expand Infrastructure; Use Resources Properly; Inclusive Planning; Quality Education; Quality Healthcare; Build a Capable State; Fight Corruption and Unite the Nation

<sup>8</sup> Objective 2 is to increase knowledge and awareness of the link between SME development and job creation with the view to improve government policies and programmes. Objective 3 is to develop the capacities of policy makers and practitioners.

<sup>9</sup> Cleaned version Revised Prodoc 1406FLA 21 May 2015 provided by ILO South Africa

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**(DWCP)** for South Africa 2010 – 2014. The DWCP for South Africa was extended to 2017 and was still being revised at the time of the evaluation. The DWCP guides the ILO's activities within South Africa and identifies the support areas prioritised by ILO Constituents. More specifically, the project is a direct response to Outcome 4 of the DWCP for South Africa; *Sustainable and competitive enterprises (including cooperatives) create productive and decent jobs especially among women, youth and persons with disabilities* and the related outputs, which seek to i) facilitate access to markets by SMEs, ii) improve the policy environment for sustainable enterprises and iii) support the upgrading and promotion of social economy enterprises.

The DWCP also guides the NEDLAC discussions. NEDLAC was established in law through the National Economic Development and Labour Council Act, Act 35 of 1994 and is the vehicle by which government, labour, business and community organisations seek to cooperate, through problem-solving and negotiation, on economic, labour and development issues and related challenges facing the country. The KS4SME project's steering committee was NEDLAC and it reported on activities and progress to NEDLAC every six months. In this way, the project has allowed a platform for constituents to articulate themselves and participate in a thought process around how to unfold more knowledge so that stakeholders were able to articulate themselves around key topics relating to SME development and job creation.

Finally, the project was linked to the ILO's work under its so-called 'Area of Critical Importance' on the Informal Economy. During the inception phase of the programme, a priority identified by the tripartite constituents was to support the joint tri-partite efforts on **the transition of informal SME's to formality**. The project's activities in 2016 aligned to the 'Future of work' national dialogue events that were run by ILO constituents and explored the topic of 'transition to formality'. The KS4SME project was used as a platform to discuss Recommendation 204, a key international labour standard talking to transition to formality that was set by the ILO.

The ILO project team and extended project team members further confirmed that the KS4SME was aligned to other ILO programmes and collaborated with ILO Departmental specialists, for example, the Labour Standards Specialist and the Gender Specialist.

## ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER REGIONAL IMPERATIVES

The project was aligned to the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, which has been developed, in-part, to address several key challenges related to labour in Southern Africa. Some of these challenges include addressing Gender inequalities in the labour markets and inadequate mainstreaming of gender concerns in the policy formulation and programme implementation; as well as addressing the lack of comprehensive regulatory mechanisms to promote the informal sector<sup>10</sup>. The project was also aligned with the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and with the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Programme (RISCC).

Findings from both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations demonstrated that for South Africa, Malawi and Mozambique, the KS4SME project objectives support their DWCPs<sup>11</sup>. Those stakeholders who partook in capacity building activities as part of the KS4SME project, namely, the Sustainable Enterprise Academy, the Blended Learning Enterprise Formalisation Course and the Decent Work Academy, described the importance of developing the SME sector and that sharing experiences and learning about best practice from other countries could assist in improving the conditions for informal businesses. The following illustrates the relevance of the

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.sadc.int/themes/economic-development/industry/employment-labour/>

<sup>11</sup> Pillar 2 on employment promotion with a focus on Priority 1 (Poverty Reduction through Creation of Decent Work with a special focus on Women, Youth, People with Disabilities and People infected and affected by HIV/AIDS) and corresponding Outcome 2 (improved conditions for enterprise creation and growth with a view to generating Decent Work, particularly in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and all related output).

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project in terms of regional imperatives and sectoral realities:

*“Both the Future of Work and Decent Work Academy were relevant to a number of countries. The Academy was very much relevant, especially with social protection. One of the key areas we sit with is the growing informality due to changing economies... Countries are eager to learn from each other and share what can be used”* (Zambia ILO Country Office official, attended Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation interviewee).

Malawi and Mozambique have a large informal sector<sup>12</sup> and some of the participants who attended the courses in 2015 and 2016 shared that the Academy assisted them, as quoted:

*“The Decent Work Academy was aligned to the work that we as a country are doing because we have to deal with the global issues and are dealing with the Sustainable Development Goals. We are interested to know about the labour market and how to make a better strategy to reduce employment”* (Mozambique Government official, attended the Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation interviewee).

### **FITS WELL WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS’ COUNTRY STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA**

The Government of Flanders started working with South Africa in 1994 when South Africa became a priority country of their foreign affairs policy. At end of the 1990’s, the objectives became more focused and a first country strategy paper with South Africa was written in 2002 to share which sectors the Government of Flanders would focus on, namely, SME development, agriculture for security and HIV/AIDS projects. The first country strategy paper was extended until 2011. The second country strategy, Development Cooperation between Flanders and South Africa, started in 2012 and ended in December 2016. Its focus was on food agriculture for security and SME development, but as an outcome of a Mid-Term Evaluation, the Government of Flanders’ projects **focused mainly on SME development** with some emphasis on social entrepreneurship and social innovation. A third country strategy that began in 2017 continued to focus on SME development and food agriculture for security, with a focus on three provinces, namely, KZN, Limpopo and the Free State.

The approach used by the Government of Flanders is a systemic one whereby they look at the ecosystem of social entrepreneurship and, together with implementing partners, define the needs of the system. During 2014, implementing partners highlighted the problem with Business Development support and as an outcome of a collaborative workshop held at the National Treasury, the Government of Flanders decided to provide funding for the knowledge sharing project to the ILO. The ILO are regarded as an important player in the eco-system of entrepreneurship because they are able to facilitate processes and dialogue with the Government, the private sector, civil society and NGOs, as well as labour organisations, including the unions.

The KS4SME project was well aligned to the Country Strategy paper II 2012-2016, especially to objective 1 on the sustainable development of small enterprises, social enterprises and cooperatives and objective 3 on the promotion of an enabling environment for small enterprise development. A special emphasis of the project was to contribute to the related result area 1; a policy environment created which is more conducive to sustainable SME and cooperative growth and development from national to local level and result area 4 on improved access to SME and cooperative development services. The following quote supports this finding:

*“It falls under the previous programme which had a focus on job creation through SMME development. In general terms it was well linked to the objective of the country strategy paper and well embedded in more than one programme of the ILO”* (Funder, Final Evaluation interviewee).

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<sup>12</sup> Informal traders represent 92% of the informal economy in Malawi

Finding 2: Events and topics were relevant to constituents, guided by the current global and regional debates, as well as by feedback and requests received at NEDLAC meetings and/or by constituents.

The Final Independent Evaluation found that events and topics presented over the three years of project implementation were not only aligned to regional imperatives, as illustrated in Finding 1, but were also guided by current, relevant global, regional and national focus areas. As a result of interviews held, it was also found that there was a consultative process of engagement by the KS4SME project team to identify focus areas over the three year implementation period. Over the duration of the project, the KS4SME project team took up requests by ILO constituents through either NEDLAC or direct consultations and responded to these requests for support through research and events that fuelled further development of the focus areas. The following aspects on which the project was premised provide supportive evidence for how the KS4SME project was guided by global and regional debates of the time, as well as by feedback and requests made at NEDLAC meetings or directly by ILO constituents:

- The KS4SME project selected **NEDLAC** as its **project Steering Committee** and was guided by requests that were made at NEDLAC meetings.
- As one of the first project activities, the KS4SME project team consulted representatives from government, organised business, organised labour and community organisations in South Africa to identify research priorities. These consultations clearly identified that all stakeholders prioritise '*the transition to formality in the context of SME development*'. As a result of a request from BUSA to the ILO, the **EESE research study** was implemented, co-sponsored by the project. The focus on informality continued and the KS4SME project shouldered the cost of developing a video on the informal business sector which was shown and discussed at the **NIES**, an event for which the project provided cost sharing. A **blended learning course** on policies and practices for enterprise formalisation and SME development was designed and hosted in South Africa in 2016 in partnership with the DSBD. The priority research area for 2017 continued its focus on the Informal Economy and expanded to focus on the social protection of workers. This was captured through a video that shared different aspects of social protection across sectors and across four countries.
- In 2017, the KS4SME project team saw an opportunity for the project to provide an academy with a broader focus on decent work. NEDLAC were supportive of the idea and collaborated in hosting the **Decent Work Academy, which aimed** to share the latest global thinking and to share experiences and lessons learned in terms of promoting decent work across the African continent in order to find solutions for some of Africa's pressing labour market challenges.
- The **South Africa National dialogue on the future of work** was held in 2017 following the launch of the ILO Future of Work Initiative and the global agenda of the ILO's member states to determine what the future of work would look like and how technology is impacting on jobs. As an outcome of the Dialogue, a video and social media clips were produced and the four themes translated into four working papers, which informed a SADC position on the Future of Work.

All participants who were interviewed shared about the relevance of the event(s) that they attended. Some participants highlighted how dialogues facilitated further progress in their areas of work. The following quotes illustrate this finding:

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*“It was relevant because it allowed for robust and relevant dialogue about what it means to create jobs. It was critical that we all air our views - I haven’t had a transparent dialogue before then. It is really essential to have the difficult discussions”* (Organised Business, attended the Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation interviewee)

*“The events were relevant because they dealt with the future of work, migration and social dialogue—these are current topics that the Department is looking at”* (RSA Government official, attended the Future of Work Dialogue and the Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation interviewee).

Finding 3: The key role players understood their roles and were involved appropriately and sufficiently. However, for some events, those interviewed believed that although there was good participation by Government Departments, some Departments were absent. Interviewees identified the Business Sector as under-represented and Financial Institutions as missing.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities within the ILO project team and extended team were clear. The ITC ILO extended project team was also more engaged than with other similar project events because:

*“They were provided a good brief and freedom to produce, while keeping focus and providing good input”* (ITC ILO official, extended project team, Mid-Term Evaluation).

Because the KS4SME project team worked with ILO constituents on an event basis, key role players were consulted and their **roles and responsibilities** of stakeholders to be **clear** across the KS4SME project events that were hosted or co-hosted. From the document review (specifically attendance register analysis) the following stakeholders participated in events and/or provided inputs:

- Government departments such as DSBD, DOL, DPSA and DSD in South Africa and Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Finance in Mozambique;
- Provincial departments of economic development;
- Universities and research institutions;
- Informal sector operators;
- Sector level organisations;
- Other labour organisations / trade unions;
- Community organisations;
- SME support programs;
- Private sector Service Providers focusing on developing SMEs;
- Donor community and development partners with a stake in SME development;
- Civil society organisations; and
- Mozambique Civil Society.

### APPROPRIATENESS AND ADEQUACY OF STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Those who were interviewed from the ILO and across ILO Constituents shared that constituents were involved appropriately and sufficiently. In addition, they indicated that some major industries were represented as well as different countries (in the Decent Work Academy):

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*“I felt that it was well attended. It was diverse and not just South African. All constituents were present and they also had different countries represented and also some major industries Facilitators did great job at including French and English to drive participation. It was excellent to be able to have conversations across a broad range of countries in particular on NEDLAC” (ILO official, extended project team, Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).*

Those interviewed as part of the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations indicated the absence of some Government Departments. In general, participants indicated that **there was good participation by Government Departments during the 2017 events**. However, there were **some Departments whose mandates intersect with the decent work agenda** and officials, in particular, Chief Directors, where interviewees indicated that more involvement would have been valuable. Departments identified as absent from 2017 events included the **National Department of Rural Development, Department of Small Business Development, the Department of Trade and Industry, the National Department of Public Works and the Department of Higher Education and Training**.

Participants interviewed as part of both the Mid-Term Evaluation and the Final Evaluation identified the **business sector** as under-represented (two participants during the Mid-Term Evaluation and six participants interviewed during the Final Evaluation). As quoted:

*“There were many from government officials but not enough from business. There is the need to have more business – the SMMEs... the people from the businesses themselves” (RSA Enterprise, Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).*

**Financial institutions** were also identified as missing from capacity building workshops during the Mid-Term Evaluation (three participants) and the Final Evaluation (one participant). As quoted:

*“There is willingness to develop SMEs but no financial support to drive the enterprise. Stakeholders on the finance side (**banking and development finance institutions**) were missing to come up with a strategy to help SMEs with access to funding. There was more focus on soft skills and not on finances. In Malawi, finance is expensive and drives up pricing for SMEs. This affects competitive pricing and affects the sustainability of their businesses” (Malawi Government official, SEA, Mid-Term Evaluation).*

The Donor indicated that the project did not seem to partner sufficiently with their partners and that they would have liked to see more of their partners present at events.

It was noted by some ILO extended project team officials and a representative from Business that the absence of key stakeholders may have been due to short notice in communicating the event to them, hence already having other commitments.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- A lesson learned from the KS4SME project is the art of how to access the range of Government Departments that could benefit from events of similar projects when only one Department (recognised as the Department of Labour for this project) takes responsibility as the custodian of the relationship. It is recommended that future similar projects consider the strategy of inviting key Departmental officials and covering their costs for first-time events and then once they understand how the project event(s) are embedded in their mandates, they are more likely to budget for costs associated with future events.

- For the KS4SME project, there was a strategy used to ensure adequate representation and participation across ILO constituents. The project team deliberately set out to identify stakeholders who could not fund their way to attend an event and provided support to ensure representation across role players. This strategy is worth applying to future projects so that key constituents who are unable to attend due to insufficient funds being available, are then subsidised by the project.

Finding 4: The KS4SME Project activities and events were hosted as ILO supported initiatives rather than branded as a specific project under the ILO, hence stakeholders who participated in project events did not know that an event they attended was part of a knowledge sharing project. However, they were able to accurately describe the broad objectives of the project in relation to the event that they participated in as either knowledge sharing, stakeholder collaboration or capacity development.

Findings from both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations confirm that participants saw events as ILO events and were generally not familiar with the event being part of the KS4SME project. This was an intentional design feature where the ILO have moved away from branding projects as stand-alone projects to marketing activities or events of projects as ILO support to constituents. In the past, ILO had separate project websites whereas now all project information resides on the ILO website of the country.

Those participants interviewed as part of the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations were able to accurately identify the main objectives of the KS4SME project in relation to the event that they attended as either being a knowledge sharing event or a capacity building event that aimed to improve stakeholder coordination and collaboration with the planned outcome to improve policies as well as develop or improve programmes. Those who were interviewed also expressed how events provided a platform for stakeholders to share experiences and lessons learned on issues either across different countries or across sectors. As quoted:

*“It is to drive dialogue within the sector and get better alignment with stakeholders toward the objectives of NDP and national and regional objectives. To also understand what changes are taking place within the world of work to provide a platform to share knowledge”* (NEDLAC representative, Future of Work Dialogue and Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).

*“To ensure that there is knowledge sharing... to capacitate government, workers, policy makers and practitioners across the region”* (RSA Civil Society representative, SEA, Africa Talks and Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).

## 7. FINDINGS RELATING TO PROJECT DESIGN

Finding 5: The project design was generally adequate and six (6) design strengths were identified. However, the programme design was not sufficiently defined upfront and an assessment of the actual project outputs versus the planned outputs shows that the project design was not entirely realistic. Seven (7) project design challenges were identified.

### THE DESIGN WAS GENERALLY ADEQUATE BUT NOT ENTIRELY REALISTIC

The KS4SME project design derived from a desire to facilitate an improved enabling environment for SMEs where support programmes and technical assistance facilitate formalisation and enable enterprise development in an equitable and sustainable manner. The Mid-Term and Final Evaluations identified the following key strengths of the design:

- i. The project is unique in that it did not function in isolation in terms of activities planned and implemented. Selected project events **linked strategically with mandates of ILO, BUSA, DOL and DSBD** and the project design was such that it supported and uplifted other existing initiatives within the ILO Pretoria office and its ILO constituents.
- ii. The design followed **a systematic approach**, rather than being implemented as a 'one size fits all' approach. Although it applied a standard approach, it could be responsive to newly defined needs of ILO constituents and across the region.
- iii. A **participative process** formed the basis of defining project activities and events. Policy makers and technical specialists discussed and jointly developed strategies for implementation and the design planned for engagement with a broad range of ILO constituents.
- iv. A **fluid design** was applied that allowed project activities to be adapted to meet priorities of ILO constituents. An interviewee shared how the programme was re-designed to include **two other SADC countries** after implementation had started and cited the example of NIES, which was hosted as a response to the xenophobic attacks in Apr 2015 (Government of Flanders). The ILO project team officials expressed their gratitude for *'the flexibility to make changes'*.

In terms of focus areas, linking the project to sector priorities, other projects, other countries and the strategic objectives of ILO constituents, allowed the contribution to be greater and increased benefits to beneficiaries.

It is evident from the document review that the objectives of the programme were re-aligned in 2015 to meet the needs of the stakeholders that were consulted during the inception phase of the study and to optimise value from the investments made.

- v. The **EESE methodology** followed to do action planning as an outcome of the study findings, was a strength of the design. The facilitation methodologies used during events (such as the World Café at the Future of Work Dialogue) were also identified as design strengths. The project **activities** followed an **interactive and**

**practical** design, which included short components, punchy content and active engagement.

An assessment of the project results<sup>13</sup> in terms of planned outputs versus actual outputs, showed that **the project design was not entirely realistic**, specifically in terms of the number of beneficiaries reached. Although the project achieved its targets in terms of most of the planned events and activities, it fell short in reaching the planned number of people and was not realistic in its planned estimates of how many would be reached through events and activities.

Feedback from interviews highlighted the following project design challenges:

- The design was premised on leveraging partners and relying on them to host events and ‘own’ the steps that should lead to the KS4SME’s projects outcomes and impact indicators. This meant that the **project results** were somewhat ‘*out of the ILO’s hands*’. A project example cited was a delay in implementing the future of work event late 2015 because FEDUSA were not available.
- The ILO project team acknowledged that “**complexity theory** comes into play, as quoted: “*Doing something in this area is a lot more complex than when you just read about it*” (ILO official, project team, Mid-Term Evaluation); and “*it is a complex landscape, which made it more difficult to track*” (ILO official, project team, Mid-Term Evaluation).

In addition, the fact that the policy and strategy wheels turn slowly further blurs the attribution pathway.

- A weakness in the original design was **under-estimating staff time** required for the project. This translated into “*putting in more time than was available in the budget*” (ILO official, project team, Mid-Term Evaluation). The project management team did not anticipate that collaboration and networking for knowledge sharing would take so much time. Because they were **too ambitious** with the staff time allocated to the project because of a flawed assumption that coordination and collaboration would be a lot easier, they invested more than the three work months (which was budgeted for in the first two years), because they “*saw the additional time of strategic importance*” and because “*it was difficult to deliver with limited time*”.

As a response to a Mid-Term Evaluation recommendation, the KS4SME project recruited a full time resource person for the final year of implementation (2017).

- The project was able to facilitate the building of an informal network with stakeholders in the region through facilitating participation in regional academies on sustainable enterprises but a **working online knowledge sharing network platform was not yet established** at the Mid-Term Evaluation and it was only decided in late 2017 that the ITC ILO e-platform would be used as a knowledge sharing network platform.

In the early stages of work plan development, it was conceptualised that a knowledge sharing platform would need to be established in collaboration with the ILO ITC, however the ILO assessed that the initial idea of creating a stand-alone knowledge sharing platform would be a duplication of efforts given the existence of several platforms and networks. The Mid-Term Evaluation found that the project should have been designed to ‘*contribute to or strengthen existing networks*’ rather than try to create a stand-alone

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<sup>13</sup> Monitoring Score Card – KS4SME. The document provides progress on achievement of targets

platform.

**The project resolved to utilise the ITC ILO platform to develop the e-platform but the decision to establish the knowledge sharing network platform was taken too late in the project, not allowing sufficient time to build and drive utilisation of the platform.** During the Final Evaluation (February 2018), the ITC ILO e-platform was up and running but still being populated with all content developed for all project activities so that participants of events and activities could access the wealth of information produced during the three year implementation period, as well as continue to access relevant materials downloaded by the ILO in the future. Participants were not aware of the platform but when asked during Final Evaluation interviews whether they would be interested to access the dearth of information, participants showed great interest.

- The revised project document (May 2015) highlighted some project assumptions, which the Mid- Term and Final Evaluations found to be met by the project, with the exception of one assumption, namely, that *“Government continues to prioritize research and knowledge sharing to inform national SME development strategies and programmes”*. An underlying assumption of the project design was that **Government structures communicate with each other**; hence, the project assumptions were premised on the Government ‘as one’. It was noted that when the KS4SME project team present at NEDLAC, Government is treated ‘as one’, which is why some Departments *“tend to fall away”*. This challenge of not reaching sufficient Government Departments is not a unique challenge to this ILO project – it tends to happen in all ILO projects.
- The project team were also **over-ambitious** in thinking that some of the activities, outcomes and impact indicators would be reached within a three year timeframe. An ILO official acknowledged that *“although a lot of work has been done on the policy level, the machine moves so slowly”*.
- The design **did not sufficiently define a target group of beneficiaries** who partake in all events and whose actions were used as a measure of programme success. It was found that few participants attended more than two of the six key events provided by the project, namely, the SEA, Africa Talks, NIES, the Blended Learning Academy, the Future of Work Dialogue and/or the Decent Work Academy.

## TARGETS AND INDICATORS HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY DEFINED

The desktop review found that in the revised programme document dated 21 May 2015 a detailed logical framework matrix was compiled for the programme in which the project structure is outlined, relative to both broader development objectives of the ILO, as well as immediate objectives / project outcomes<sup>14</sup>. This logical framework further linked each objective and output with indicators and related means of verification that could be used to assess both long term and short/mid-term impact. Within the framework, both sustainability and implementation assumptions were outlined.

However, the formulation process of the project design was quick (one week) because of the need for the Government of Flanders to commit the money in early 2015, which resulted in a project design that was insufficiently detailed and ambiguous. A project management team member acknowledged that

*“It is not the ideal way to design projects - projects normally have a process of engaging with*

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<sup>14</sup> Cleaned version Revised Prodoc 1406FLA 21 May 2015 provided by ILO South Africa in Folder with Key Documents

*stakeholders to identify their priorities” (Final Evaluation).*

Where the design fell short was clarity on the exact sources of information to be utilised to establish indicators of success since ‘physical evidence’ was mentioned but insufficiently clarified. The direct causality between stated objectives and outputs and their link to intended outcomes and broader development objectives, was not mapped out sufficiently. Both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations also found that there was **a need to more clearly define what is meant by key terms**, for example, *what is meant by a network*, by knowledge sharing or by capacity development in the context of the programme.

The Mid-Term Evaluation recommended that the project design document be reviewed and that a consultative process be administered to map out the intervention logic and to provide clarity on key terms (definitions) and on how indicators will be measured. The Final Evaluation found that **the KS4SME project team made only slight adjustments to some terms in the logframe – indicators and targets were not modified, the intervention logic was not mapped out and key terms were not defined, nor was clarity provided for how to measure indicators**. It is likely that the Mid-Term Evaluation was conducted too late in the project – once the logframe was adjusted, there were only six months left for project implementation before the project end date. The KS4SME project team acknowledged that the amount of time that it would take to formally revise the logframe was not justified.

The project team further reflected on the nature of the knowledge sharing project and its definition of success not conforming to the way that other projects are defined.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- A key learning from the Final Evaluation is that indicators for similar knowledge sharing projects should be defined differently, based on the nature of the project. For a knowledge sharing project, the aim should not be to target the number of people reached but rather to measure project implementation outcomes over time that demonstrate capacity development with tripartite partners and shifts in identified actions, policy and programmes.
- It may be useful to schedule a Mid-Term Evaluation to be concluded earlier (at the end of Year 1 to be concluded before the project is half-way during its implementation) so that there is still sufficient time in a programme to reflect on and revise design elements to drive improved implementation.

Finding 6: Whereas the project collected data, no consolidated monitoring system was developed to track the contribution to the broader development objectives of the project.

The revised project concept document provided by the ILO (May 2015) specified that a monitoring system will be put in place to capture project outputs and deliverables and that data will be disaggregated by gender and disability.

The Final Evaluation found that a Monitoring Score Card was put in place as a monitoring framework for the programme, based on a recommendation during the Mid-Term Evaluation to collate data on project outputs and deliverables. The Score Card did not include disaggregated data by gender and disability but did present progress on targets, indicating which ones were and were not achieved.

*'The **project outputs and deliverables will be monitored through the collection of the number of institutions and individuals**, who register for the network and participate in the events and blended learning courses. Monitoring the impact at project outcome level on short-term impact in terms of i) number of innovative models for job creation that are implemented by network members, ii) the number of improved government policies and programs and, iii) number of institutions that develop new programs will be done through baseline data collection of participating network members/institutions and through follow-up surveys.*

*The project will conceptualize an appropriate monitoring system to capture this data. All data collected will be disaggregated by sex and disability'*

**Revised project concept document, ILO, May 2015**

For both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations, the evaluation team found that **the KS4SME project management team did not effectively monitor project performance and results**. Both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations found the following weaknesses in monitoring:

- Documentation received provided sufficient evidence to confirm that events had taken place and that a number of the project's planned objectives were reached. However, the evaluations found that **neither measures nor a monitoring system was in place** to systematically collect and collate relevant information for the KS4SME project and against which to evaluate project outputs and outcomes. Although feedback was obtained from a small sample of participants who were interviewed as part of both evaluations and some indication is provided from the Theory of Change Report that events may have contributed to reaching impact indicators defined (listed in the adjacent block), there was no structured system that collates evidence against which to verify outputs and impact indicators. There was also **no baseline data** against which the short term impact indicators could be measured.
- A **database** that collated summative numbers of institutions and individuals who attended events, **was not available**. An interviewee from the project management team acknowledged that *"it would have been useful to have a database"*.
- The evaluation team had to review attendance registers per event (often scanned copies of signed registers, or separate spreadsheets with participant names). There was also confusion when sampling participants from the available lists because some participants on lists were invited to events but did not attend them.
- **Lists of participants** who attended events, were obtained for the evaluation, however, not all lists **were**

**disaggregated by gender and none of the lists were disaggregated by disability.** There was **little consistency between the data captured per event**, which for the most part was limited to 'name, surname, organisational affiliation and contact details of participants'. Out of all the events, gender disaggregated data was provided only for Africa talks and the Future of Work Dialogue (indicated as either male and female) and for the Blended Learning course (indicated as either Mr or Ms).

Both gender and disability are important focus areas of the ILO. It is noted that during the final year of implementation (2017), there was a clear action plan and focus on 'gender' for project events, as evidenced through interviews with the extended project team at the ILO. However, there was no clear action plan and focus on 'disability'. It is possible that this was because of a no clear action plan being in place for disability within the ILO Pretoria Office.

- During the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations, there was **data lacking on participant evaluations** completed for some events that were hosted. Future of Work participants could not recall having completed an evaluation form and no evidence was provided that there was one completed for the event.

During the Final Evaluation, the project management team members were asked whether they see the possibility of tracking stakeholder benefits for the KS4SME project. The ITC ILO e-platform created for the project was identified as a suitable platform where participants could be tracked in terms of project outcome and impact indicators.

## 8. FINDINGS RELATING TO PROJECT EFFICIENCY

Finding 7: Resources were allocated strategically to provide necessary support and to achieve broader project objectives. The ability of the ILO project team to leverage necessary resources, expertise and relationships, increased the value of the project's activities.

Initially, a part time international project coordinator (25%) and a part-time administrative and financial assistant (25%) were allocated to the KS4SME project. The project coordinator was technically backstopped by the Enterprise Development Specialist in the Pretoria office with support from other specialists for events. As a result of a recommendation made by the Mid-Term Evaluation, a full-time resource was dedicated to the project in its final year of implementation.

As an outcome of both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluation it was found that resources were allocated strategically to the project in order to provide the necessary support. What is evident from the inception of the project is a positive intent not to duplicate effort or spend project resources unnecessarily. One example is the decision not to invest in standalone infrastructure for the establishment of a knowledge sharing platform but rather to partner with ITC in optimising what is available to ILO for the benefit of achieving the objectives of the programme.

The KS4SME project obtained **ILO inputs through significant time provided** by the Enterprise Development Specialist and time dedicated to activities that were provided by ILO officials in the Pretoria office and at the ITC at

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no extra cost<sup>15</sup>. The Government of Flanders acknowledged that the ILO have a strong infrastructure with a number of internal technical resources and capacity, which was an advantage and strength of the project. An ILO official who was interviewed recognised that *“because the project is in areas linked to it, it is able to get other support”*.

The evaluation found that **the leveraging effect was highly effective** in ensuring the success of activities and events. Various project events were implemented in close partnership with ILO Constituents, including the DSBD, with BUSA, COSATU, FEDUSA, the DOL, NACTU and with Community representatives. Officials from partner constituencies provided significant support in conceptualising, preparing and co-hosting most of the project activities at no additional cost to the project. By this project being able to collaborate with partners, it was able to obtain the human resource support which it would otherwise have had to pay for through its own budget. This meant that significantly **more was done than what the budget allowed for**. Thus, the benefits delivered to the funder as a result of linking this project’s activities to other projects within the ILO and to other prioritised activities of ILO constituent partners, are significant because of having created economies of scale. The following quote is illustrative of this finding:

*“We used more resources than what was provided, but it benefited the office... we cross subsidised to invest more time and effort. The Funder got more value”* (ILO official, project team).

Finding 8: Although project activities are generally in line with the schedule of activities, not all activities were implemented as planned.

As outlined in Table 2, the planned outputs for most of the project objectives were achieved.

Table 2: Outputs achieved for KS4SME project objectives

Objectives	Planned Output	Achieved by project end date	Evidence
<b>Objective 1:</b> To increase knowledge sharing and improve stakeholder coordination and collaboration in order to strengthen job creation through SME development	<b>Output 1.1:</b> Research on link between SME development, formalization and job creation.  <b>3 research outputs undertaken and disseminated</b>	YES  N=4	EESE Assessment (2015) Cost of Red Tape Assessment (2016) Social Innovation and the Future of Work Working Papers (2016) Future of Work Working Papers (2017)
	<b>Output 1.2:</b> Policy briefs/SME development practice notes to influence policy and programming  <b>3 policy briefs disseminated</b>	ALMOST  N=2	EESE Assessment Policy Brief (2016) Red Tape Reduction Guidelines (2016) Promoting Gender Equality practice note (still being finalised – to be finalised in 2018)
<b>Objective 2:</b> To increase knowledge and awareness of the	<b>Output 2.1:</b> Regional knowledge sharing network	ALMOST	Knowledge sharing network created through the ITC ILO e-platform. Participants

<sup>15</sup> ILO inputs are not costed – they are part of the backstopping arrangements and thus in a way covered under the 13% PSI budgeted for as part of the project

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link between SME development and job creation with the view to improve government policies and programmes			have not yet received an email notification that all project content is on the e-platform and that it will be live going forward for access to all project materials and for further collaboration and networking. Please note that although the evaluation team had an opportunity to review the e-learning platform for the Mid-Term or Final Evaluations, it was not possible to comment on the network extension of the online platform. A key consideration for the success of this online mechanism will be how well traffic is driven to the site.
	<b>Output 2.2:</b> Annual national knowledge sharing events  <b>3 knowledge sharing events</b>	YES  N=3	NIES (2016) ILO/Flanders 25 year dinner (2016) Future of Work Dialogue (2017)
<b>Objective 3:</b> To develop the capacities of policy makers and	<b>Output 3.1:</b> Policy makers and practitioners develop their knowledge and understanding of SME development through an annual blended learning course on sustainable enterprise	YES  N=3	SEA (2015) Blended Learning Informal Economy Workshop (2016) Decent Work Academy (2017)
practitioners, with the intention that they develop new programmes.	<b>Output 3.2:</b> African policy makers and practitioners receive expert input and are exposed to innovative entrepreneurship models from the African continent through the annual African Talks on Entrepreneurship	NO  N=2	African Talks on Entrepreneurship futures (2015) No event (2016) African Talks combined into Future of Work Dialogue (2017)

As seen in Table 2, the project was able to achieve three research outputs (Output 1.1), three annual national knowledge sharing events (Output 2.2) and three capacity development academies (Output 3.1). As a whole the project faced delays in its first year of implementation, mainly because of the turnaround in staff, along with the lack of a full-time resource person dedicated to the project. However, feedback from Final Evaluation interviews conducted with the ILO project management and extended team indicated that *'having a full-time staff member really assisted the project'*. In addition, interviewees shared that *'collaborating internally allowed for additional resources at no additional cost to the project, which also assisted the project to not only deliver on activities but to enhance on the quality of delivery'*.

The project activities over the implementation period, they were generally in line with the schedule of planned activities. However, it was acknowledged by the project management team that some activities occurred too late in the project, hence they were still being finalised after the project closure date. The project should achieve the dissemination of three policy briefs (Output 1.2) once the extended project team complete the practice note on Promoting Gender Equality (to be finalised in 2018). The project will also achieve Output 2.1 once all project content is uploaded onto the ITC ILO e-platform and all participants across all events and activities have been notified. Although it is unfortunate that the knowledge sharing network was not launched earlier in the project, it is acknowledged by the evaluation team that it was a sound decision made by the project team not to spend money on creating a new platform when so many SME platforms exist already within South Africa.

The only output that the project will not achieve is having completed annual African Talks where policy makers and practitioners receive expert input and are exposed to innovative entrepreneurship models from the African continent (Output 3.2). Only one African Talk was hosted, where three were planned. No African Talks event was

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hosted in 2016 and the project team decided to combine the African Talks as part of the Future of Work Dialogue in 2017. It seems as though the African Talks events were considered to be the same as the Annual National Knowledge Sharing events. Perhaps this shortfall is due to there being no clear logical framework to map out key activities leading to outputs and planned outcomes.

## LESSONS LEARNED

To maximise the benefits from a knowledge sharing project, future similar projects should consider (i) a full-time coordinator; (ii) leveraging extended project team specialists; (iii) embedding project activities in ILO and constituent priorities; and (iv) leveraging administrative support from specialists within partner organisations to prepare for activities and events.

Finding 9: The project is commended for good financial management, stakeholder management, for the management of high quality events and activities, as well as being responsive to needs and priorities of ILO constituents. However, findings show that project monitoring and some aspects of project governance and project communication were identified as inadequate.

During the Mid-Term Evaluation, those interviewed from the ILO project team, ITC ILO officials and extended project team were asked to identify what they regard as poor versus effective relating to project governance, project management, financial management as well as project monitoring and evaluation. The identification of constructs to illustrate either 'poor versus effective' in the Mid-Term Evaluation, was used as a benchmark against which the management aspects of the KS4SME project were assessed for the Final Evaluation. Below is a summary of key findings across governance and management aspects of the project:

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Good financial management was defined by those interviewed during the Mid-Term Evaluation as 'implementing the project by adhering to the ILO's financial management procedures and using ILO's financial management system'.

During the Final Evaluation, financial management was considered to be highly effective by the project team and by the Finance Department of the ILO. Because of the way that the ILO is structured, suitable financial procedures were in place to ensure sound financial management. The total expenditure of the project budget was 99,14% from the project start date to the financial project end date. Finding 7 and finding 8 reflected on the strategic allocation of resources and described how the leveraging effect provided more time and resources than what the budget provided for. The ability of the project to bring capacity building activities to Africa, also made it more accessible for project beneficiaries and provided a cost saving. The following quotes illustrate the good financial management that was in place for the KS4SME project:

*"We did well with spending 99% of the budget. We used project funds to leverage other resources for events (DSBD, Labour, ILO) and that has been effective. I think we did well on staff costing. When we did the Decent Work Academy, experts contributed their time to prepare for the academy at no extra cost. If you look at in-kind contributions from different experts, the project is actually double the amount received"* (ILO project team, Final Evaluation).

## STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

Good stakeholder management was defined as ‘ensuring that the intended beneficiaries are participating, are included and consulted at every stage of the project by way of information sharing so that they know where they are in the project and how they are benefitting’. Findings

2 and 3 reflected on the stakeholder involvement during the project to enable the delivery of activities/events that were more relevant. Tripartite constituents were included and participative in the project. The following quotes are relevant in support of stakeholder management being good:

*“In certain aspects, stakeholder management was highly effective – we never designed an event without their (ILO Constituent) endorsement. Stakeholders didn’t criticise us for not including them” (ILO official, project team, Final Evaluation).*

Although stakeholders were identified that could be included more going forward, overall, the KS4SME project is commended for successfully creating a platform of engagement across stakeholders where they generally participated in and collaborated on project activities.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT TO ENSURE QUALITY OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations found that good management methodology was applied in the implementation of activities/events. Perceptions of beneficiaries who were interviewed reflected positively on (i) the ability of the project team to leverage resources to produce events with a lot of information through a range of good and relevant topics; (ii) their ability to use a range of facilitation techniques to present innovative events that were highly participative and interactive; (iii) selecting strong speakers and facilitators that were knowledgeable and well versed in terms of the topics they were assigned to; (iv) ensuring a diverse audience representative of the tripartite constituents; (v) making use of suitable venues that considered people with disability; and (vi) providing well-arranged and enlightening site visits.

There were some concerns raised about the Future of Work Dialogue because of the limited time there was available to fully engage with the research findings. Some of the participants who were interviewed felt that the interface between the Researchers and the stakeholders needed more time and that all constituents should have had an opportunity to have a caucus before the Dialogue to present a consolidated position.

## PROJECT GOVERNANCE

Good governance was defined as (i) ‘a project that speaks to the priorities of the country we work in, that implements the priorities of Government and constituents and that is aligned to the National Development priorities and that is responsive to the DWCP’.

- i. **The KS4SME project was highly effective in meeting priorities of ILO constituents:** As described in Finding 1, all aspects above have been addressed sufficiently by the KS4SME project. Finding 5 reflected on the **fluid design**, which allowed project activities to be adapted to meet priorities of ILO constituents. Linking the project to sector priorities, other projects, other countries and the strategic objectives of ILO constituents, allowed the contribution to be greater and increased benefits to beneficiaries.

Other aspects of good governance, as defined by those interviewed, included (ii) a suitable Project Advisory Committee (PAC); (iii) having a technical backstopper and full-time coordinator in the final year of implementation; (iv) regularly providing reports to constituents, obtaining feedback (reporting feedback loop) and (v) ensuring that

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ILO requirements and values (gender and tripartite inclusivity and international labour standards [ILS]) were considered. Findings from the Final Evaluation identified the following:

- ii. **The PAC was not effective:** The KS4SME project used the NEDLAC Steering Committee as the PAC, where feedback was provided on how the project was performing. One interviewee indicated that *“if it was not in the programme of NEDLAC, it would get a negative response. It was good that it was part of NEDLAC”* (Labour representative, Final Evaluation). However, the Mid-Term Evaluation found that due to capacity challenges of the NEDLAC secretariat to convene meetings regularly (and to some level the stakeholders of NEDLAC are carrying too much workload), certain structures within NEDLAC were not operating as effectively as they should have been, hence affecting the quality of participation. The Final Evaluation found that reporting to NEDLAC was at a high level and that the project needed a PAC at a technical level. The Donor was also not included as part of the PAC.
- iii. **ILO requirements and values (gender and tripartite inclusivity and international labour standards [ILS]) were considered as part of events hosted:** The Final Evaluation found that ILO requirements and values were considered for both key events that took place in 2017. Based on recommendations from the Mid-Term Evaluation, the project team included a Gender Specialist (who was part of the extended project team) and identified how to improve ‘gender inclusivity’ as part of the project. Gender was a focus area of both events through rallying around women at work, a specific elective on gender in the Decent Work Academy and an output of a brochure on promoting gender equality (still being finalised).

Based on a desktop review of participant lists as part of the Final Evaluation, it was found that stakeholders with whom the KS4SME project team engaged, adequately represented both men and women. The ILO project management team indicated that *‘the content of discussions is always sensitive to the specific challenges faced by women’*. It is further noted that disability was not a focus area of the project. No participants could recall any inclusion of disability during any project events. The KS4SME project team shared that they *“didn’t feel the demand for it like gender or social protection”*.

During Final Evaluation interviews, it was noted that the ILO project team were **guided by the ILO standards**. These were also discussed as part of the Decent Work Academy. ILO officials from the extended project team commented during interviews that *“the project was guided by the ILO standards and tools that are in place”* and that *“ILO standards are always very high”*.

## PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS

Both the Mid-Term and Final evaluations found communication about the overall project, its objectives, planned activities and feedback on progress, as weak in comparison to other projects. The Government of Flanders as the Donor would have liked more regular reporting through sharing of information on the KS4SME project (this could also have been done informally). Although project reporting was completed annually in line with ILO requirements, the Donor felt that this was ‘insufficient’ and that reports submitted every six months would have been ideal.

The ILO project team agreed that they could have pushed to provide more frequent updates to discuss the project with the Donor. This may also have been a function of the initial limitation of a part-time coordinator for much of the project.

Participants who were interviewed during the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations also reflected on some challenges because of limited communications by the project team. These challenges included (i) the difficulty in attending an

event, mainly due to feeling that they needed to be aware of an event earlier; and a limited understanding of the project's focus areas, objectives, key activities and intended outcomes. In addition, they generally felt that having a view of what activities are taking place and when they would be taking place, could have assisted all stakeholders in their planning process.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The KS4SME project team members indicated that a knowledge sharing project that provides events as key deliverables requires the expertise of a Communications Specialist.

## 9. FINDINGS RELATING TO PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

Finding 10: The project received political, technical and administrative support internally within the ILO Pretoria office and externally from partners

The KS4SME project received **adequate political support from the ILO and technical specialists** and the responsible technical units in headquarters. In addition, the **backstopping support** provided by ILO to the project **was effective** – ILO Pretoria office technical specialists backstopped in terms of engagement with BUSA, in terms of capturing the priorities of organised labour and in terms of providing technical inputs, as well as ensuring that the project remains aligned to priorities and needs of constituents in South Africa.

Beneficiaries of project events reflected positively in terms of the support provided by the ILO to ensure effective implementation. As quoted:

*“There was a lot of collaboration with the Training Centre in Turin. I think there was good cooperation – a big advantage working with the ILO is that they really use a lot of resources available... It is effective to have a pool of experts and admin staff – this is a benefit of a bigger organisation who has the capacity to do the big events and fly in all the relevant people”* (Funder, Final Evaluation).

One official from the ITC ILO office shared, *“there was great collaboration – we came over from Head Quarters – the content development was intense and very well done by both the teams”*. He further indicated that they are *“leveraging learnings already, with content and format for future design”* (ITC ILO, extended project team).

Activities relied heavily on collaboration with various stakeholders and partners, who were involved in co-hosting the majority of project activities. The three key partners, DSBD, DOL and BUSA, were of the opinion that **the project was receiving adequate political, technical and administrative support from its national partners/implementing partners**, emphasising the importance of having the ILO continue to drive implementation. The project's alignment to the National Development goals made it easier to gain the political support necessary by ILO



Engagement at the 2015 African Talks: Vic van Vuuren (ILO Director), Khanyisile Kweyama (CEO, BUSA); Dr Matthews Phosa & Gugu Cele (TV personality)

constituents.

A NEDLAC representative shared that *“it was a great honour and privilege to host an event and that it provided a two-way learning opportunity for both Nedlac and participants as they exchanged information”*

## LESSONS LEARNED

A knowledge sharing project is likely to have a number of partners throughout implementation, depending on the topic of the events/activities hosted as part of the project. The KS4SME project had DSBD as a partner and co-organiser for the NIES held in Bloemfontein in 2016. In 2017, although invited, the DSBD did not attend any events. In 2017, NEDLAC was the partner and co-organiser for the Future of Work Dialogue and Decent Work Academy.

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**Finding 11:** Project outputs did not reach the quantity of events and beneficiaries that were planned for as per the work plan.

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This section illustrates the extent to which outputs were achieved, quantitatively. Table 3 provides a summary of quantitative achievements for the KS4SME project. The following was found:

- **The project exceeded expected targets for Objective 1, Output 1.1:**
  - Three research studies were planned for, whereas **four research studies were published** by the project closure date. This includes the EESE Assessment (2015), the Cost of Red Tape Assessment (2016), two working papers relating to the Social Innovation and the Future of Work (2016); and four working papers for the Future of Work (2017). Four Social Protection and the Informal Economy videos were funded by the project but were not yet completed by the project closure date. The videos are planned for completion in 2018.
  - The project planned to reach 300 representatives that debate research studies. In total, 568 representatives were reached, according to the Monitoring Score Card.
- **The project met expected targets for Objective 1, Output 1.2 in terms of policy briefs disseminated but not in terms of the number of stakeholders that received/accessed policy briefs:**
  - The project considered guidelines and practice notes as policy briefs. Three policy briefs were planned for and this number was met by the project, based on the expanded definition of the concept ‘policy briefs’. Based on evidence found by the evaluation team, the project provided an EESE Assessment Policy Brief (2016), Red Tape Reduction Guidelines (2016) and a compendium of SADC Labour Laws (2017). A practice note for Promoting Gender Equality was funded by the project but was not yet finalised by the project closure date. The practice notes is planned for completion in 2018.
  - The project planned to reach 3’000 stakeholders that receive/access the policy briefs. In total, 59 stakeholders were reached, according to the Monitoring Score Card.
- **The project did not meet the expected targets for Objective 2, Output 2.1:**
  - The project planned for a regional SME knowledge sharing network where 1’500 stakeholders would be reached. Although a total number of 545 participants had accessed the knowledge sharing network for academies, the knowledge sharing network (ITC ILO e-platform) was not

populated and officially launched by the project closure date as a platform where all content developed for all project activities and events could be accessed by participants who attended or partook in one or more project events and activities.

The decision to establish the knowledge sharing network platform was taken too late in the project, not allowing sufficient time to build and drive utilisation of the platform. It was only decided in late 2017 that the ITC ILO e-platform would be used as a knowledge sharing network platform. During the Final Evaluation (February 2018), the ITC ILO e- platform was up and running but still being populated with content. Participants were not aware of the platform, however, when asked during Final Evaluation interviews whether they would be interested to access the dearth of information, participants showed great interest.

- **The project met expected targets for Objective 2, Output 2.2 in terms of number of national knowledge sharing events but not in terms of the number of policy makers and practitioners reached through knowledge sharing events:**
  - Three national knowledge sharing events were planned for and this number was met by the project. Based on evidence found by the evaluation team, the project provided a National Informal Economy Summit (2016), a gala dinner in celebration of 25 years of Flanders & ILO collaboration (2016) and the Future of Work Dialogue (2017).
  - The project planned to reach 1'000 policy makers and practitioners through knowledge sharing events, however, only 545 were reached through the three events according to the Monitoring Score Card.
- **The project met expected targets for Objective 3, Output 3.1 in terms of the number of annual blended learning courses on sustainable enterprises but not in terms of the number of policy makers and practitioners who participated in annual blended learning courses:**
  - Three annual blended learning courses were planned for and this number was met by the project. Based on evidence found by the evaluation team, the project hosted the Sustainable Enterprise Academy (2015), the Blended Learning Course on policies and practices for Enterprise Formalisation and SME Development (2016) and the Decent Work Academy (2017).
  - The project planned to reach 500 policy makers and practitioners through annual blended learning courses, however, only 162 were reached through the three courses according to the Monitoring Score Card.
- **The project did not meet expected targets for Objective 3, Output 3.2:**
  - Three African Talks on Entrepreneurship were planned for. One African Talks event was hosted in 2015 and the project team decided to combine the African Talks as part of the Future of Work Dialogue in 2017. It seems as though the African Talks events were considered to be the same as the Annual National Knowledge Sharing events. Perhaps this shortfall is due to there being no clear logical framework to map out key activities leading to outputs and planned outcomes.
  - The project planned to reach 300 policy makers and practitioners through African Talks on Entrepreneurship, however, only 200 were reached through the two events according to the Monitoring Score Card.



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The following Table provides a summary to illustrate the extent to which project outputs were achieved:

Table 3: Assessment of quantitative targets reached

<i>Immediate Objective #1: Evidence based research inform government policies and programmes</i>	Indicators	Targets achieved	Level of satisfaction
Output 1.1: Research on link between SME development, formalisation and job creation has been undertaken and disseminated	At least 3 research studies published and debated by at least 300 representatives of government, organised business and labour over the project period	<b>4 research studies published</b>  Research studies debated with 568 representatives	 Target met  Target met
Output 1.2: Policy briefs/SME development practice notes to influence policy and programming	At least 3 policy briefs / practice notes on SME development disseminated to at least 3'000 stakeholders in the SME sector in the SADC region	<b>3 of 3 policy briefs</b>  Policy briefs received/accessed by 59 stakeholders	 Target met  Target not met
<i>Immediate objective #2: improved knowledge sharing, coordination and collaboration contribute to innovative models for job creation</i>	Indicators	Targets achieved	Level of satisfaction
Output 2.1: Regional knowledge sharing network	An SME knowledge sharing network that reaches 1'500 members	Knowledge sharing network not yet officially launched. 545 participants accessed their own event's contents	 Target not met
Output 2.2: Annual national knowledge sharing events	3 national knowledge sharing events that reach 500 policy makers and practitioners	<b>3 events hosted</b>  162 of 500 beneficiaries	 Target met  Target not met
<i>Immediate Objective #3: Developed capacities of policy makers and practitioners inform new program development</i>	Indicators	Targets achieved	Level of satisfaction
Output 3.1: Policy makers and practitioners develop their knowledge and understanding of SME development through an annual blended learning course on sustainable enterprise development	An annual blended learning course (3 in total) on sustainable enterprises to develop capacities of at least 500 policy makers and practitioners over the project period	<b>3 events hosted</b>  165 of 500 beneficiaries	 Target met  Target not met

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Output 3.2: African policy makers and practitioners receive expert input and are exposed to innovative entrepreneurship models from the African continent through the annual African Talks on Entrepreneurship	3 African Talks on Entrepreneurship that reach at least 300 policy makers and practitioners over the project period	2 of 3 events  200 of 300 beneficiaries	 Target not met  Target not met
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As shown in the Table above (with orange text), the KS4SME project reached all but one of its high level outputs in terms of the number of research studies, policy briefs or events hosted. Where it fell short was the number of people reached through the events or activities. Upon reflection of the shortfall in numbers through interviews with the project team, it was indicated that the estimates were based on numbers attending academies prior to the KS4SME project. According to those interviewed, the focus placed on the project to reach a certain number of beneficiaries was not as suitable as focusing on the outcomes anticipated for the project, that is, practices in place that lead to (i) improved government policies and/or programmes; (ii) innovative models for job creation implemented by network members; and (iii) development and implementation of new programmes for job creation.

#### INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THE ABILITY TO MEET PROJECTED TARGETS

According to those interviewed as part of the mid-term evaluation, some factors that positively influenced the project included (i) having a strong, diverse team with access to specialists; (ii) the ILO already had a good, established relationships with BUSA; the project approach ensured that the four constituents of NEDLAC (Government, specifically DSBD, organised business (BUSA), organised workers and community constituents) had a role and interest in the project; Recommendation 204 escalated the level of importance at an international level that allowed for more participation.

Some negative factors that influenced the ability of the ILO to meet projected targets included a lack of management continuity - there was staff turnover of the ILO project coordinator and of people within ILO constituency partners (DSBD and BUSA). Turnover of staff within stakeholder organisations meant that the time invested in discussion and coordination had to be started again.

The fact that very little budget was allocated to the marketing and promotion of events could have influenced attendance and broader participation.

**Finding 12:** At the outcome level, the project contributed towards increasing knowledge, improving understanding and increased knowledge sharing amongst beneficiaries, improving collaboration and coordination, building institutional capacity, contributing towards continued dialogue and further actions on key topics and informing improved policies, strategies and/or programmes.

Short-term outcomes for the KS4SME project included (i) **increased knowledge sharing**, (ii) **improved coordination and collaboration** between SME stakeholders, (iii) **improved Government policies and/or strategies** and (iv) **new or improved programmes and/or plans**. The mid-term evaluation found that there had been achievements in all four short-term outcomes for those beneficiaries who have been involved in programme events. The following sections illustrate the benefits delivered to beneficiaries of the KS4SME project, aligned to the four short-term

outcomes, based on feedback received by participants from the Final Evaluation.

### **INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING AMONGST BENEFICIARIES**

Most of the beneficiaries who were interviewed across the three countries, spoke highly of the benefits afforded to them by being part of one or more of the KS4SME project activities. The events allowed for 'different kinds of conversations' between ILO constituents and they valued the honest dialogues within the confines of a safe environment that was afforded by the events. Participants across countries referred to (i) the extensive knowledge gained; (ii) understanding other sectors better as well as what is happening in other countries; and (iii) gaining an improved understanding of informal sector challenges.

### **SHARING OF NEW KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHERS**

Some of the beneficiaries who attended project events shared their learnings and knowledge with their circle of stakeholders.

### **CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS CONTINUED DIALOGUE AND FURTHER ACTIONS BY SOME STAKEHOLDERS**

The Final Evaluation found that events seeded the driving of further discussions and actions amongst some stakeholders. A number of participants who were interviewed indicated that the benefits they received (knowledge and collaboration through further dialoguing and actions with stakeholders) would not have occurred without having attended the event. They also highlighted that the diversity of stakeholders was valuable and that they would not have generally engaged with some stakeholders.

### **IMPROVED COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION AMONGST STAKEHOLDERS**

Findings from both the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations demonstrated that the KS4SME project provided the opportunity for continued collaboration. Participants shared how ILO Constituents were able to express themselves, how events opened respectful dialogue across stakeholders, provided the opportunity for constituents to touch base to better understand policy direction. Participants also indicated how events minimised the disconnect between stakeholders working on the same topics and how events drove more practical level discussion around policy and regulation and some concrete activities towards an improved environment for SME's, which is the end-of-project outcome for the KS4SME project. A possible factor to consider in the positive achievement of this outcome is the role that the ILO played as a neutral organisation, not positioning a specific agenda but rather facilitating the process. If the events had been organised by other stakeholders within the sector, this would not necessarily have been achieved as well as it was.

Key progress has been made amongst organised labour because of the KS4SME project. Labour organisations have begun to work more closely together, have prioritised the Future of Work as part of their programmes and have come up with a joint position on the Future of Work. These benefits would not have materialised without the Future of Work Dialogue hosted in 2017. As quoted:

*"It assisted me to come back and propose a joint workshop with the Labour Organisations because of having attended the Dialogue. As labour there has been improved coordination. Some funds from our internal budget were put aside towards having a workshop... from these workshops we have re-focused on the informal economy and other vulnerable sectors" (RSA Organised Labour, Future of Work Dialogue and Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).*

## INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY HAS BEEN BUILT

A number of participants shared about the benefits attained from the project in contributing towards building institutional capacity. As quoted:

*“The project built capacity from a technical perspective to implement cross learnings into the work that we do”* (RSA Civil Society, Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).

*“Capacity has definitely been developed. We were able to contribute in the ANC policy conference and a number of proposals have now been adopted. From the Academy there were positions we were able to drive and input into the Migration Policy”* (RSA Organised Labour, Future of Work Dialogue and Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).

## INFORMING THE IMPROVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND/OR STRATEGIES AND THE IMPROVEMENT OR DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

The Mid-Term and Final Evaluations highlighted how learnings from KS4SME events informed the development or improvement of policies, acts and strategies or the development of plans. Participants indicated that it takes time to improve policies and programmes and that there is a delay in seeing significant results because of the time that it takes to move actions working at policy level. The following was achieved because of support provided by the KS4SME project:

- **Re-strategizing the ILO Zambia’s Country Office project:** According to the participant interviewed from Lusaka’s ILO office as part of the Final Evaluation, the knowledge from the Decent Work Academy set groundwork for re-strategizing their project. As quoted, *“We were able to learn from some of the countries that attended the elective on social protection for informal economy. The event enhanced the benefits and served as an opportunity to explore and lay the groundwork. Gave us a running start – boosted our approach going forward”* (ILO official, extended project team, Final Evaluation).
- **Defining a SADC position on the Future of work:** According to participants interviewed from Pretoria’s ILO office as part of the Final Evaluation, the future of work report of the National Dialogue in South Africa was a key reference point in developing a synthesis report for SADC which has been discussed at a Ministerial level in SADC. It also guided other countries to complete their future of work dialogues. As quoted, *“The South Africa report was comprehensive – when we presented South Africa’s report, six other countries did their reports and now we have a SADC synthesis report. The dialogue started further dialogue and has led to ongoing dialogue on how countries should respond to the future of work. This has also factored into the development of the partnership frameworks for each country”* (ILO official, extended project team, Final Evaluation).
- **BUSA strategic plan and action plan:** A strategic plan with an action plan was finalised at the end of 2016 by BUSA to guide the way forward to ease the regulatory burden for the informal economy.
- **Progress towards improved job creation strategies in South Africa:** It is acknowledged that there is a lot of focus on job creation and a number of strategies have been developed or re-designed in this focus area. According to Organised Labour, they believe that they are building up to job creation strategies, contributed by learnings from KS4SME events.

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- **Changed measurement criteria for decent work:** One participant from Civil Society shared about the benefit of the project in informing revised measurement criteria for decent work. As quoted, *“I think that especially bringing practitioners and policy makers together to align and facilitate engagement as part of the project has created a greater impact. We have now changed our measurement criteria for decent work”* (RSA Civil Society, Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).
- **NEDLAC Discussion Paper:** There were great benefits in including the project as part of NEDLAC discussions. The Project has contributed to a NEDLAC Discussion Paper. As quoted, *“We are currently embarking on a discussion paper that the events added value to. The project highlighted the importance of the work that NEDLAC does. It also provided a starting point for further action within each of the constituencies to do their own part in contributing... and it allowed greater collaboration”* (NEDLAC Representative, Future of Work Dialogue and Decent Work Academy, Final Evaluation).
- **Influencing the development of SME policy and the SME act in Malawi:** Two participants from the Mid-Term Evaluation highlighted the benefits of attending the academies. As quoted,  
  
*“It has influenced perfecting the provision on tackling formality as part of the SME Law that is being developed, based on knowledge gained from the course. We currently have a final draft going through the procedures to go to Parliament to be passed”* (Malawi Government, attended blended learning course, Mid-Term Evaluation).  
  
*“It helped us a lot in developing the SME policy as well as the SME act. It also opened other opportunities for trade and product opportunities”* (Malawi Government, attended SEA, Mid-Term Evaluation).
- **Approval of Mozambique’s Labour Strategy:** A participant who attended the Decent Work Academy indicated that they have elaborated on the Labour Strategy. In their Strategy, they have the link between SME development and job creation. While he did not attribute the Labour Strategy to the KS4SME project, however, it was clear that the project had influenced their thinking and he further indicated that the ILO in Maputo were key in supporting this.

Finding 13: Positive unintended results of the project were that it minimised silo syndrome, provided a voice to ‘silent’ stakeholders and created collective momentum across stakeholders.

The Final Evaluation found that within the ILO and within one of the Labour Organisations, an unintended positive result of the KS4SME project was that it contributed to breaking down internal organisational silos and enhanced working relationships between Departments. As quoted:

*“Internally it got us as an organisation to work together across outcome areas – we now know how to do it”* (ILO official, project team, Final Evaluation).

*“The project opened avenues which would not have opened as easily... even us as Decent Work Specialists, we do concentrate on our mandates – through the discussions we had it shifted silo mentality”* (ILO official, extended project team, Final Evaluation).

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The Final Evaluation also found that the KS4SME project **provided a voice** to those stakeholders who never had one. Four interviewees identified this as a positive outcome of the project. As quoted:

*"I think that the way in which the events were done allowed participants to have a voice and to have a say - it wasn't a one sided discussion. The project created an environment for participation and collaboration to share information. It gave everyone an opportunity to speak out and provided a secure environment to express opinions and views to the broader group" (NEDLAC representative, Future of Work Dialogue and Decent Work, Final Evaluation).*

The KS4SME project **created collective momentum** in terms of work being done in the informal sector and bringing together different areas of work into a coherent structure. As quoted:

*"It has helped Government (DSBD) and Organised Business (BUSA) to filter the work through the process so that there is a more coherent view for action and has given BUSA a platform to engage with labour, government and informal business in a much more coherent way" (RSA Organised Business, involved in EESE).*

## 10. FINDINGS RELATING TO SUSTAINABILITY

Finding 14: Although a sustainability plan was put in place for the project, its aim to share project content on existing platforms, was not fulfilled. Action Plans and Communities of Practice were identified as key to enhancing sustainability.

When reflecting upon sustainability of the KS4SME project outcomes, a number of participants interviewed highlighted their concerns around continuity. The main concern was around the **'loss of momentum'** because of a lack of follow-up after project events and delays leading to 'next steps'. Participants who were interviewed noted that consistent interaction is required across the ILO constituents to drive conversations forward, to follow up on progress and to drive towards the project's outcomes. It is acknowledged that project activities/events did not consider the type of support programmes and technical assistance necessary to create the momentum required to enable stakeholders to continue activities that will ultimately lead to the end-of-project outcome and sustained momentum independent of the project involvement. Communication support and a strategy for on-going communication could have contributed toward maintaining momentum without necessarily adding significant technical resource burden by linking back to the learning platform.

### DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY FOR KNOWLEDGE-SHARING PROJECTS

The meaning of 'sustainability' for the KS4SME project was not clearly defined for the KS4SME project. Based on reflection of the term 'sustainability' with project team and extended project team participants as part of Final Evaluation interviews, it was found that a knowledge sharing project needs to define sustainability in another way to standard ILO projects because what is important is sustaining the environment created so that conversations are continued and the network of collaboration is 'kept alive'. As quoted:

*"It is about continuing the conversation... we must make sure we do something from ILO's side to keep the network alive – prompt the network through the e-campus through interesting discussions, through*

*regular emails, regular surveys to hear what has come out and then find a way to share that with others” (ILO official, project team, Final Evaluation)*

## DRIVING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION PLANS AS A RESULT OF EVENTS AND THE CREATION OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Some participants interviewed during the Final Evaluation indicated that the development of action plans culminating from events could build momentum. Participants shared that stakeholders have not done much to determine how to continue driving what came out of event discussions. They suggested that there is a need to establish communities of practice to provide more exchange of knowledge after events. Such a platform could be used to drive action plans so that stakeholders intentionally work on and track actions as an outcome of events.

During the Mid-Term Evaluation, two key recommendations were made, namely, (i) a Sustainability Plan should be developed; and (ii) a virtual platform should be created to drive engagement, knowledge-sharing and collaboration. The evaluation team reflected upon these two recommendations and the progress that was made by the project. The following was found:

### THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

During the Mid-Term Evaluation, beneficiaries, especially the donor and DSBD, emphasised the importance of a sustainability plan being developed **in collaboration with all key partners identified as having a role in the SME development and formalisation space**. The recommendation included the following:

- Identify key events for the project based on priorities, alongside relevant projects action plans, master plans and implementation plans (within the ILO and ILO constituents / partner organisations) that link to the thematic issues of partner organisations;
- The sustainability plan should ensure synchronisation of activities and map out, in detail, who will drive the different conversations (on Future of Work and the Informal Economy) in a way so that actions lead to partner organisations taking ownership of project components (integrating as part of their Strategic Plans and implementation plans (for the short and long-term).
- Roles and responsibilities of each partner organisation should also be clarified as part of the plan.
- The sustainability plan should encourage beneficiaries who attend project events to share their learnings and knowledge with their circle of stakeholders.

A Sustainability Plan was developed in response to the Mid-Term Evaluation. Its key aim was to convert training material, knowledge and research generated by the project into a format that could be accessed by partners and to place it on existing platforms run independently by partners. When assessing the mid-term recommendations, it was found that the Sustainability Plan developed in 2017 was developed in isolation, with no collaborative key partners. This meant that there was a lost opportunity to create continued ownership by partner organisations. The Sustainability Plan’s aim to share the KS4SME project content on existing platforms that are run independently by partners, was also not fulfilled.

## A VIRTUAL PLATFORM TO DRIVE ENGAGEMENT, KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND COLLABORATION

During the Mid-Term Evaluation, A third of the beneficiaries who were interviewed highlighted the importance of an online platform where stakeholders can (i) have regular engagement and debate, (ii) share information and knowledge on SME development, (iii) have access to toolkits that drive development, (iv) track progress in terms of targets and (v) report back to ensure a feedback loop on successes, challenges, lessons learned and good practice.

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The e-platform of the ITC ILO was identified as the key platform for this purpose.

The ILO project team indicated that the e-platform would include all materials and information produced by the project to be accessible by all participants who attended any one of the project events. It would also be used to invite participants to any future capacity building events offered by other projects as well as to provide a platform where stakeholders can collaborate moving into the future. It is unfortunate that the **e-platform was not up and running** during the last year of implementation so that stakeholders could adopt the practice of using it as a platform for collaboration and engagement. During the Final Evaluation, the platform had still not been officially launched with all project material. Thus, a key risk to sustainability is the uptake of the platform, which reduces the likelihood that it will be used for collaboration and engagement by stakeholders who are not yet making use of it. Its sole benefit is likely to be access to KS4SME project materials by stakeholders.

Given that the KS4SME project team recognised that there were existing platforms available, it may have been a viable alternative to engage with the existing local platforms and integrate the e-learning component into them. This would have made it possible to maximise the deep technical knowledge that the ILO possesses, while leveraging an existing user base and community mechanism.

The establishment of the e-learning platform could serve as an opportunity for the ILO to increase the awareness about the full extent of what is being done by the ILO. It was highlighted by a small number of those interviewed during the Final Evaluation that the ILO is not good at ‘bragging’.

## 11. CONCLUSION

The KS4SME project lead to some positive outcomes, with potential to lead to greater results over time, since the development of policies and revised programmes do not occur overnight.

### PROJECT RELEVANCE

The KS4SME project was relevant because it **addressed South Africa’s key social and economic challenges** such as Presidential Outcome No.4: Decent employment through inclusive economic growth. It **aligned with two of the nine NDP strategic thrusts** and to key strategies of the NDP: New Growth Path, IPAP and the Social Economy Accord. The project **fitted strategically with the Government of Flanders’ country strategy** for South Africa and complemented other ILO programmes in RSA such as the ILO strategic policy framework, as well as the Decent Work agenda for Africa and the DWCP for RSA (2010–2014 extended to 2017) – it responded directly to Outcome 4 of the DWCP (promotion of Sustainable Enterprise of the ILO Programme). The project also aligned to the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and supported the DWCPs of Malawi and Mozambique.

The Final Evaluation found that events and topics presented over the three years of project implementation were **relevant to participants**. Some participants highlighted how dialogues facilitated further progress in their areas of work. Most interviewees shared that constituents were involved appropriately and sufficiently. Some major industries were represented as well as different countries (as part of academies).

### VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN

The project design was generally adequate and design strengths included (i) strategic alignment with the mandates of ILO, BUSA and DSBD; (ii) the use of a systematic approach rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach; (iii) a

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participative process that formed the basis of defining activities (policy makers and technical specialists discussed and jointly developed strategies, content and innovative interactive formats for events); (iv) application of a fluid design that allowed project activities to be adapted to meet priorities and requests of stakeholders; (v) applying good methodologies, such as the EESE methodology and the methodology used to create interactive and practical events; and (vi) leveraging inputs from a broader technical team of specialists.

Activities relied heavily on collaboration with various stakeholders and partners, who were involved in co-hosting the majority of project activities. The project's alignment to the National Development goals made it easier to gain the political support necessary by ILO constituents such as DSBD, DOL and BUSA.

However, the programme design was **not sufficiently defined upfront**. Formulation of the project design was quick (one week) which resulted in a project design that was insufficiently detailed and somewhat ambiguous. The intervention logic was not mapped out and key terms were not defined, nor was clarity provided for how to measure indicators. An assessment of the project results in terms of planned outputs versus actual outputs showed that **the project design was also not entirely realistic**. Design challenges included (i) project results being dependent on efforts of partners which meant that project results were somewhat 'out of the ILO's hands'; (ii) due to complexity theory and the policy/strategy wheels turning slowly, the attribution pathway was blurred; (iii) the project initially under-estimated staff time and had only a part-time resource dedicated to the project until a recommendation made as an output from the Mid-Term Evaluation to employ a full time resource in the final year of project implementation; (iv) the project team were over-ambitious in thinking that some activities, outcomes and impact indicators would be reached within a three year timeframe; and (v) the design incorrectly assumed that Government has 'one voice' - in reality, National Government Departments are disjointed across functions and levels.

## PROJECT EFFICIENCY

**Resources were allocated strategically** to provide necessary support and to achieve broader project objectives. The leveraging effect was highly effective: (i) significant time was provided by the enterprise development specialist and time dedicated to activities that was provided by ILO officials at no extra cost; and (ii) implementation partners provided significant support in conceptualising, preparing and co-hosting most of the project activities at no additional cost to the project. The ability of the ILO project team to leverage necessary resources, expertise and relationships from ILO officials and implementing partners, increased the value of the project's activities and significantly more was done than what the budget allowed for.

Management arrangements were efficient for various reasons: (i) **key role players** understood their roles and **were involved appropriately**; (ii) collaboration and backstopping support from within the extended ILO project team was enhanced because of the project's alignment and integration into other ILO programmes; (iii) there was continued alignment to priorities of Government and of ILO constituents; there was **good stakeholder management** - tripartite constituents were included and participative in the project activities; (iv) there was good **financial management** - the project team adhered to the ILO's financial management procedures and used the ILO's financial management system, which is regarded as sound. The total expenditure of the project was 99.14% demonstrating good financial management in terms of budget expenditure; and (v) **good management methodology was applied** in the implementation of activities/events – there was a lot of information and good/relevant topics; a range of facilitation techniques were used to present innovative events that were highly participative and interactive; strong speakers and facilitators that were knowledgeable and well versed in terms of the topics were selected; a diverse audience representative of the tripartite constituents was present at events; suitable venues were used; and site visits were well- arranged and enlightening.

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In terms of Governance, a PAC was not established for the project and the evaluation found that reporting to NEDLAC was at a high level and that the project needed a PAC at a technical level. Strategic planning was also absent, possibly due to the project team not administering annual planning workshops.

Findings from the Final Evaluation showed that **project monitoring was inadequate**: (i) a monitoring system was not in place to systematically collect and collate relevant data against which to evaluate project outputs and outcomes; (ii) no database was put in place that collated summative numbers of institutions and individuals who attended events and there was little consistency between the data captured per event; (iii) no baseline measure was considered against which short term impact indicators could be measured, (iv) although a Monitoring Score Card was put in place as a monitoring framework for the programme after the Mid-Term Evaluation, it was put in place too late to address the shortfall in numbers to be reached across project events and activities and it still did not map out how to track project indicators and a plan for how set targets would be reached.

The Final Evaluation further showed that there was **poor overall project communication** - although project reporting was completed annually in line with ILO requirements, the Donor and key ILO constituent partners felt that they were insufficiently involved in the project's planning and not up to date with what was happening. The Donor felt that annual reporting on its own was 'insufficient'. In addition, some participants experienced challenges relating to the difficulty in attending an event mainly due to not being aware of the event earlier.

## PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

Although project activities were generally in line with the schedule of activities, not all activities were implemented as planned. **Project outputs achieved the quality but did not reach the quantity of events and beneficiaries that were planned for** as per the work plan.

The Final Evaluation findings indicated that **factors identified that positively influenced the project** included (i) having a strong, diverse team with access to specialists; and (ii) having established relationships with constituents (Government, Organised Business, Organised workers and community). Some **negative factors that influenced the ability of the ILO to meet projected targets** included (i) staff turnover within the project team and within ILO constituency partners and (ii) a weak marketing and communication function within the ILO.

At the outcome level, the **project contributed towards (i) increasing knowledge, (ii) improving understanding, (iii) increasing the sharing of knowledge amongst beneficiaries, (iv) improving collaboration and coordination, (v) building institutional capacity, (vi) contributing towards continued dialogue and further actions on key topics, and (vii) informing improved policies, strategies and/or programmes.**

Some **positive unintended results** of the project as included: (i) breaking down internal organisational silos and enhanced working relationships between Departments (ILO and COSATU); (ii) events provided a voice to those stakeholders who never had one; (iii) the project improved approaches to training and hosting workshops; and (iv) the project created collective momentum in terms of work done in the informal sector and in terms of bringing together different areas of work into a coherent structure.

## FINDINGS RELATING TO SUSTAINABILITY

Although learnings gained by participants and some improvements implemented in the development of existing plans, policies and programmes, there was generally a loss of momentum because of a lack of follow-up after project events and delays leading to 'next steps'.

A risk to sustainability is that the **e-platform was not up and running** during the last year of implementation so that stakeholders could adopt the practice of using it for collaboration and engagement. Participants who were interviewed highlighted the importance of an online platform where stakeholders can (i) have regular engagement and debate, (ii) share information and knowledge on SME development, (iii) have access to toolkits that drive development, (iv) track progress in terms of targets and (v) report back to ensure a feedback loop on successes, challenges, lessons learned and good practice.

## CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Gender is considered to be an important focus area of the ILO. It is noted that during the final year of implementation (2017), there was a clear action plan and focus on 'gender' for project events. A practice note entitled '**Promoting Gender Equality Practice note**' was prepared and was undergoing final graphic design work under the leadership of the Regional Gender Specialist during the close-out phase of the Final Evaluation (early March 2018).

## 12. LESSONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

The lessons learned in the KS4SME project include the following:

**Lesson 1: A specialist communications resource to assist with the communication functions for the project could have improved the delivery against the objectives and stated targets.** This lesson learned should be incorporated into future project design and implementation with deliberate allocation of a specialist communications resource towards the communication function.

**Lesson 2: The project would have benefited from a consolidated monitoring mechanism to track collective attendance and project activities. This would have fulfilled not only some of the M&E requirements, but it would have assisted with further engagement with participants as well as with targeted communication.** It may be worthwhile to explore options to develop a monitoring system that can be applied across multiple projects of the ILO country office.

**Lesson 3: It is important to appropriately define and track what happens at the outcome level to provide a good reflection of the value delivered.** It is seldom that projects continue to be tracked after they are closed. However, because of the nature of the knowledge sharing project, impact indicators will take time before they are realised.

**Lesson 4: Time is an important consideration, both in terms of coordination and scheduling** (so that participants are able to attend an event). The aspect of 'time' needs to be considered at the design stage to maximise attendance and engagement by participants. Advanced notice could improve attendance as well as considering the segmentation of content across the days of the event – making the content more modular. The duration of events is also an important consideration in terms of participant attendance.

**Lesson 5: There is a need to look at an integrated approach across government and also to find a way to engage at a higher level within government to drive collaboration across various departments. In addition, there is a need to find an alternative way to build capacity and awareness throughout the constituent structures.**

The two key emerging good practices were highlighted from the KS4SME project evaluation. Both good practices are cross cutting and could contribute to all of the ILO strategic objectives and country programme outcomes by improving engagement, awareness and knowledge:

**Emerging good practice 1:** The participatory methodology applied to the design of events was extremely successful in achieving and sustaining high levels of engagement and participation throughout the events hosted. Disrupting expectations of the traditional format was well received by participants and allowed for deeper engagement with the content and between participants themselves.

**Emerging good practice 2:** Breaking down silos within the ILO to drive internal collaboration and leverage existing resources enhances project outcomes and contributes toward collective organisational objectives. The ILO Time Tracking system allows for detailed tracking of the allocation of time by individual team members to country priority outcomes (CPOs). This resource contribution (investment) could be extracted from existing systems and applied to the project outcomes on a per-activity basis to track in-kind contributions. The ILO needs to find a way to institutionalise this practice in a sustainable and scalable way.

### 13. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that The ILO consider tracking project benefits and progress towards achieving the desired project impact indicators for the KS4SME project. Through the e-platform created for ongoing collaboration and networking, it would not be difficult to send out surveys and to track participants over time to follow-up on the benefits and ongoing efforts of participant.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended that the KS4SME project team present all project material and information to owners of other e-platforms relating to SME development so that they might link to or integrate the content into their e-platforms with the intention that more stakeholders have access and benefit from what was produced by the KS4SME project.

**Recommendation 3:** The ILO should develop a clear communication strategy to maintain engagement with event participants before, during and after events, as well as with the project Donor and key ILO Constituents. As part of the communication strategy, communicating earlier (at least three months before an event) and providing clarity on who events are targeted at (types and level of stakeholders), would benefit all stakeholders and would ensure that all relevant stakeholders would be involved, especially the business sector.

**Recommendation 4:** A knowledge sharing project, even one with a small budget, should dedicate a full-time staff resource from the start of the project.

**Recommendation 5:** ILO project teams should make time during project inception to define the logical framework in a way that maps out the intervention logic and provides clarity on key terms (definitions) and clarity on how, when and in what timeframes indicators will be measured. This includes defining what sustainability is for a knowledge sharing project.

As part of the process, it is suggested that the ILO map the journey of key organisations across ILO constituents towards reaching project outputs and outcomes during (and possibly after) project implementation so that the effectiveness in reaching programme goals can be measured. By collaborating on such an activity, the ILO could increase the accountability for project results in the hands of partners.

**Recommendation 6:** The ILO should clearly define a monitoring system along with a monitoring plan that includes how to measure output, outcome and impact indicators, as well as a clearly defined reporting modality. As part of the monitoring plan, there should be clarity on when to measure progress against targets during project

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implementation (annual review of actual progress against targets is considered sufficient for similar knowledge sharing projects). A database should be developed to provide consistency in the collation of data on the number of institutions and individuals who participated in all events across the project. This database should be linked to an online platform to drive traffic to it while tracking attendance. Participant evaluations should take place after each event as part of monitoring.

Should partners take ownership of the project and want to continue activities, it is suggested that the ILO consider a mechanism to capacitate partners to enable them to manage the process going forward.

**Recommendation 7:** A formal reflective session (annual) to review and consider refinement of the Theory of Change, logframe and targets, is recommended.

**Recommendation 8:** It is recommended that future similar projects put in place a Project Steering Committee represented by relevant Government Departments, the Donor and other relevant ILO constituents (business, labour and civil society). It may be worthwhile identifying whether the same members of the PSC represent a range of projects. If this is the case, consolidating the PSC across projects could be more effective.

**Recommendation 9:** A project that aims to improve policies, strategies, plans and/or programmes should include more practical support to achieve its outcomes. It is recommended that for future similar projects the ILO budget for further engagement amongst stakeholders after events to develop action plans so that ownership across stakeholders is increased.

**Recommendation 10:** The ILO should engage with existing online platforms to collaborate and cross-pollinate where possible so as to drive engagement within the stakeholder community and awareness about the project. This would also extend the channels for the distribution of knowledge content.