



Productivity Eco-Systems for Decent Work Independent Mid-term Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Ghana, South Africa, Vietnam

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Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

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Key Words: [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#)



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

<p>Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure</p>	<p>To address recent declines in productivity growth in emerging and developing economies, ILO has designed the Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work Programme (PE4DW) with the twin aims of boosting productivity and decent work. The USD \$16 million programme began in January 2022. It is being piloted in three countries: Ghana, South Africa, and Vietnam and will run until December 2025. It is funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).</p> <p>The programme’s Theory of Change (ToC) has two outcomes: Outcome 1 is focused on national policy, the ‘macro’ level, and Outcome 2 is focused on sectoral and enterprise constraints, the ‘meso’ and ‘micro’ levels. The two outcomes, and three levels are intended to complement each other.</p>
<p>Present situation of the project</p>	<p>The programme’s inception phase began in January 2022 and the length of this phase varied in each of the three country pilot projects. In Ghana, the project inception phase commenced in April 2022 and ended in February 2023. The Inception phase for the South Africa pilot ended in December 2022. In Vietnam, the inception phase ran from April to November 2022. All country projects are now in their implementation phase.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>The ILO commissioned The Canopy Lab to conduct a mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the pilot programme, to generate lessons for the three pilot countries and future iterations of the programme. The three objectives of the MTE are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the programme’s progress against its strategies and logframes, 2. Inform the ILO and programme stakeholders of what’s working and provide recommendations to increase the likelihood of achieving its objectives, and 3. Identify lessons learned of use to the ILO and stakeholders.
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The MTE is designed in accordance with the Terms of Reference (ToRs) and uses ILO’s (and the OECD’s) evaluation criteria (Relevance and Validity, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Impact) and integrates an analysis of gender and inclusion throughout. Through a combination of document reviews (of qualitative and quantitative data), key informant interviews (KIIs) with ILO staff, donor (SECO and NORAD) representatives, and tripartite stakeholders (government, employers, and workers) in each of the three pilot countries, the evaluators gathered the evidence needed to address the Evaluation</p>

Questions (EQs) detailed in the Evaluation Question Matrix (EQM). The evaluation was comprised of five phases:

1. Desk review and inception report writing;
2. Primary data collection in each of the three pilot countries;
3. Data analysis, synthesis, and report writing;
4. Report revisions and finalization in response to client feedback;
5. Presentation of findings to the ILO, donors and other stakeholders.

Methodological limitations:

- The initial number of evaluation questions in the ToRs were rationalized in discussion with ILO staff and donors, to focus on a priority list of 17 questions.
- The Team Leader was initially to lead on South Africa data collection but was unable to due to a change in her circumstances, this necessitated finding a South Africa-based team member. The team member chosen came recommended by the ILO having worked for the ILO previously.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance: The programme as a whole, and three country pilot projects are seen as highly relevant to, and consistent with, national and tripartite actors and their priorities, and interviewed stakeholders were able to articulate this relevance. This relevance is attributed to the fact that the projects were designed in collaboration with these stakeholders.

Validity of Design: Overall, the programme's ecosystem approach appears valid, although in practice it is not always implemented--some activities appear fragmented, including being spread out across multiple geographies. The inception phase included challenges such as delays (due to recruitment challenges) but was used to adapt the programme and was an opportunity for valuable learning (including learning related to the process of sector selection).

Intervention progress and effectiveness: The country projects have made good progress on their planned activities, especially at the micro level (Outcome 2), here implementation has been made more effective through the programme's complementarity with the SCORE programme. At the macro level (Outcome 1), while policy change can be a very protracted process, important milestones have been met. The ILO acknowledged that the programme faces a challenge of its relatively short timeframe (4 years,

including one year for inception) with respect to its objectives of implementing policy change and systemic change. In addition, some partners noted that ILO systems and procedures have contributed to delays in implementation, in what is already a short timeframe.

Effectiveness of management arrangements: The programme's management arrangements are effective but also have room for improvement. For the most part, time frames and workplans are adhered to across the three countries. The advisory committees at the Global level and in Ghana and South Africa are working effectively and are considered useful. Some members have suggested improvements. However, in Vietnam there is no such functioning body because of administrative issues related to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) decrees affecting all UN agencies and development partners in the country. The M&E system is considered appropriate and straightforward to use, although it is a work in progress, and could be used to better communicate with donors and project partners.

Efficiency of resource usage: The programme does make efficient use of its financial and human resources, but staffing could be optimized. There are high workloads for a small number of staff, and a risk of burnout. It is however difficult to address some of these constraints within the ILO and donor's standard practices around recruitment and spending on staff.

Impact and sustainability: There are early signs of the programme's potential impact. At the macro-level (Outcome 1), there are encouraging signs of national ownership and changes in employment policy, even at the mid-term point--although the impact of these policies cannot yet be seen. At the meso-level (Outcome 2), the country projects have made various inroads, but the effectiveness of sector-level interventions remains unclear. At the micro level (Outcome 2), there have been tangible improvements in efficiency in supported enterprises. The impact of the systemic approach is still to be seen, and there are opportunities to strengthen its implementation.

Cross-cutting themes

Gender and non-discrimination: Gender inclusion is built into the global programme's objectives and systems, but its application on the ground and



subsequent results varies significantly by pilot country and ecosystem level. Ghana appears to have made the most progress because the selected sectors are dominated by women. In South Africa and Vietnam, the ILO-supported policies address gender inclusion. On the whole, the programme is inconsistent when it comes to gender inclusion, this may in part be due to a lack of technical resources to mainstream gender. The inclusion of PWDs was not integrated into the programme from the outset, nor has it been integrated subsequently, with virtually no results to show. Although it is a cross-cutting issue for the ILO (and included the ToRs for this evaluation), the programme has been quite vocal in stating this issue is among too many cross-cutting themes being added to its objectives. To mainstream inclusion of PWDs, this would require changes in the programme design and likely, as with gender, additional resources.

Tripartism: Collaboration by government and its social partners at the macro level is influenced by the need for policies to drive the increase in productivity and the improvement of working conditions for employees across all sectors of the economy. These engagements are showing positive results in the progress made by the projects in the different countries, in particular South Africa and Ghana. The assessment conducted on the PE4DW projects in the three pilot countries learned that the tripartite alliances are proving useful in the aiding the implementation of the programme. For example, in Ghana tripartite actors are reviewing the country's labour law. There are challenges and issues that impact the effectiveness of tripartite and social dialogues in Vietnam due to its state-led model of organizing dialogue and the challenging ODA environment.

International labour standards: The project promotes several of the ILO's conventions and recommendations through its interventions at the three levels. At the policy-level its work on the revision of the Employment Law in Vietnam and the Employment Policy in South Africa promotes the Employment Policy convention (C122), the Employment Services Convention (C88) and the Labour Statistics Convention (160). In Ghana, the revisions of the Labour Act and the OSH Act are promoting the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as well as OSH related labour standards. Sector and enterprise-level work further promoted the 'Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises' (R189) and, to some extent, R204, 'Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy.' The programme is implementing aspects of this recommendation through



engagement with SMEs (including informal businesses), supporting the creation of national employment policies and piloting an approach to formalisation in Ghana.

Environmental sustainability: The PE4DW program integrates environmental sustainability in its strategic approach, albeit with varying emphasis across global and country-specific contexts. Country-specific projects demonstrate sensitivity towards local environmental issues, with a pronounced focus on sustainable development policies, and emission reduction strategies in different sectors. While the global-level design lacked a strong environmental focus, it was firmly incorporated in country-specific programs aligned to local environmental challenges. Project interventions currently being implemented included awareness raising, environmental training and coaching support with participating enterprises. Across Ghana, South Africa, and Vietnam interventions covered waste management, green growth, carbon accounting and emissions reduction strategies. The project also delivered knowledge and capacity strategies focusing on circularity models and energy-saving. It should be noted that current levels of enterprise engagement are quite modest (in terms of the number of enterprises). While the project demonstrates a commitment to integrating environmental sustainability, there's a need to strengthen systematic monitoring and documenting of environmental outcomes.

Capacity Development: Capacity development yields several positive effects and improvements in the short, medium, and long-term. In the short-term, the results of capacity building activities can already be seen in the form of improved efficiency at the enterprise (micro) level. At the sector (meso) level, capacity building activities have included support to sector associations to improve their functioning and improve the services they provide to their members. At the government (macro) level, there have been a myriad of capacity building activities under Outcome 1. The programme is building the internal capacity of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to improve productivity statistics through project TAGs. This has already had the effect of bringing siloed government departments together. While it is too early to assess long-term capacity development, the programme has the potential to yield significant benefits both in the medium and long term, contributing to productivity and decent work.



RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main lessons learned and good practices

All lessons learned, emerging good practices and recommendations listed here are intended for the programme as a whole. Country-level recommendations are included in Appendix 3 of the main report.

Lessons learned

1. **Mainstreaming gender inclusion and non-discrimination:** Choosing sectors for project interventions that already include women (and potentially other marginalized groups) is a way of mainstreaming gender inclusion and non-discrimination within the programme.
2. **Strengthening engagement and embracing social dialogue:** For effective capacity building and ownership, engage stakeholders using existing communication channels in an open and inclusive conversations to gain diverse perspectives, build consensus, and co-create solutions.
3. **Intervention design:** The intervention design should be carried out in a collaborative manner, feeding from partners' knowledge. Local partners are well placed to understand the outlook of the intervention sectors and can guide the development of interventions to align with industry targets and government goals.
4. **Ecosystem approaches:** Adopting a more targeted ecosystem approach for interventions is crucial. Future projects should leverage localized, sector-specific partnerships and resources which in turn ensure more structured and effective outcomes.
5. **Programme timeframe:** There is a disconnect between the programme's short timeframe (4 years including inception phase) and the ambitions of the project to achieve systemic change—which is a long-term goal.
6. **Under resourced with respect to staffing:** the team has experienced and is experiencing the effects of being understaffed: high workloads, high turnover, and a lack of in-house expertise to adequately address cross-cutting themes.

Emerging good practices

1. **Mainstreaming gender inclusion:** In Ghana, a major attribute of the sectors that works positively for the project is the predominance of women as workers and employers in both sectors. This has eased the attainment of gender targets on the project.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Strengthening engagement and social dialogue: In the case of South Africa, the project success in facilitating collaboration among social partners and government departments has led to reduced duplication of efforts and resources and enhanced the provision of demand-driven interventions. 3. Intervention design: The collaborative development of interventions with key partners aids buy-in and limits resistance. 4. Solutions to address staffing resources constraints: There have been instances where country teams have made use of technical resources in other ways. They have made use of consultants and of ‘borrowed’ staff from other ILO programmes to address cross-cutting themes.
<p>Recommendations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mainstream gender inclusion and non-discrimination through sector selection: During design stage, in future country projects, choose sectors for project interventions that already include women (and potentially other marginalised groups). The design can be flexible depending on the difficulty of enhancing/ achieving gender inclusion in a particular sector. In addition, the programme stakeholders should come to an agreement on the extent to which it is feasible to integrate activities specifically targeted at people with disabilities in the programme design, because of the programme resource constraints. 2. Strengthen macro and meso level engagement and collaboration: The ILO country offices should continue to facilitate these engagements and collaborations with Tripartite partners and sector-level players to help streamline efforts, avoid redundancy, and maximize impact in addressing the needs and priorities of the partners and stakeholders. 3. Intervention design: Improve communication with all relevant stakeholders during and after intervention design to improve understanding and reduce apprehension. 4. Ecosystem approaches: Consider focusing and integrating interventions, particularly for Outcome 2, by addressing key obstacles of targeted enterprises within one or two specific geographic areas and association clusters. 5. Increase programme timeframe: increase the programme’s timeframe (and associated resourcing) beyond the 4-year pilot to at least 5 years, not including inception. This is necessary to



	accommodate the programme's objectives of achieving systemic change.
6.	Optimize staffing: The ILO should review and submit a revised staffing structure, in particular to address administrative bottlenecks (in conjunction with improving ILO's internal procedures) and bring in house more sector-focused technical expertise.
7.	Peer Learning between countries: By facilitating knowledge exchange, experiences, and best practices, countries can learn from each other's successes and failures.
8.	Improve ILO internal procedures: The programme would benefit from any and all efforts by the ILO to make their internal processes (e.g. for procurement and contracting) more efficient.
