International Labour Organization

Evaluation Office

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Final Independent Clustered Evaluation of ILO Africa Interventions on Formalization

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, and The Gambia

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Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: CO-Dar Es Salaam; CO-Kinshasa; DWT/CO-Dakar

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Key Words: *Formalization, social protection, recommendation 204, gender, digital tools, SIYB, GERME, cooperatives, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, The Gambia.*

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	
Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	The four RBSA-funded projects in **Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania (Kigoma), and The Gambia** were designed to support national efforts in transitioning from informal to formal employment. Their overall objective is to improve working conditions, extend social protection, enhance productivity, and contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth by addressing the widespread informality that characterises up to 80% of Africa's labour market, and over 90% in the case of Guinea-Bissau. The intervention logic rests on the premise that formalisation can be advanced through three main strategies: strengthening regulatory and policy frameworks to create an enabling environment; expanding access to social protection and employment services, particularly for youth and vulnerable groups; and fostering tripartite social dialogue to ensure ownership and sustainability. The main means of action include policy support, capacity building of institutions and workers'/employers' organisations, pilot interventions at community and sectoral levels, and knowledge generation to inform policy and practice. The projects were financed through the **Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA)**, which provides flexible resources to further ILO's Decent Work objectives. They were implemented with technical and administrative support from the DWT in Dakar, and operational support from the relevant ILO Country Offices in Kinshasa and Dar es Salaam. Day-to-day implementation was coordinated by national project managers, working closely with national constituents and stakeholders.
Present situation of the project	The four RBSA-funded projects in Chad, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, and Tanzania (Kigoma) were each implemented over a period of 20 to 24 months. The project in The Gambia ended in December 2023 after a short extension. The projects in Chad, Guinea-Bissau and Kigoma (Tanzania) ran through 2025 and are finalized now. Last project funded activities are implemented in August and September 2025 in Kigoma and Guinea-Bissau.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The evaluation aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the four RBSA-funded projects on formalization in Chad, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and Tanzania. It reviews their alignment with ILO, UN and national frameworks, the extent to which objectives were achieved, the factors influencing results, and any unintended effects. It also identifies lessons learned, good practices and provides recommendations to guide future ILO support to formalization. The scope covers the full implementation period of the four interventions, including extensions, with attention to outputs, outcomes and objectives. Gender

	equality, tripartism, social dialogue and environmental sustainability are integrated as cross-cutting themes. The main clients are the ILO DWT in Dakar, the ILO Country Offices in Kinshasa and Dar es Salaam, the Regional Office for Africa, and ILO Headquarters.
Methodology of evaluation	The evaluation applied a theory-based clustered evaluation approach, in line with ILO guidance on RBSA-funded thematic cluster evaluations, with a strong focus on learning from innovative implementation approaches. A common Theory of Change was reconstructed to test outcomes and impacts across the four projects, despite the absence of a shared results framework. The projects were partially linked through common outputs under the ILO Programme and Budget (2020–21 and 2022–23). The methodology combined document review, stakeholder interviews and field visits (Guinea-Bissau and Kigoma, Tanzania), with triangulation of data from multiple sources to ensure credibility. Findings, lessons and recommendations were synthesized across the four interventions to draw broader conclusions on ILO's approach to supporting formalization. Stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process varied across countries, and a total of 34 stakeholders were interviewed (44% women).

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	**Relevance**: Across all four countries, the projects were highly relevant to national priorities and aligned with the needs of tripartite stakeholders and informal economy actors. In Tanzania, the project addressed pressing needs around digital inclusion and formalization, while in Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia, interventions contributed to long-standing demands for policy development and institutional coordination in the informal sector. In Chad, the focus on capacity-building and policy awareness responded to a fragile socio-political environment and institutional limitations. The interventions were also consistent with ILO standards, particularly Recommendations 204 and 202. **Coherence**: The projects aligned with ongoing ILO initiatives and broader development efforts in each country. In Tanzania, the intervention was coherently integrated with the UN Kigoma Joint Programme, enhancing synergies. In The Gambia, the project was complemented by other donor-funded initiatives, such as UNCTAD's EMPRETEC programme and UNDP support. However, coherence was somewhat constrained in Chad due to weak institutional linkages. In Guinea-Bissau, the strategy development process was linked well with national social protection efforts. **Effectiveness:** Tangible results were achieved across all four projects, although the scope and depth varied. Tanzania demonstrated high

effectiveness, with over 2,600 enterprises formalized, widespread adoption of digital tools, available ILO training tools (e.g., FIYB) and the training of public and private local facilitators. In Guinea-Bissau, the development of a national social protection strategy through a tripartite process and the creation of 87 women-led cooperatives were major milestones. In The Gambia, awareness-raising and coordination among key actors (GWCC, GCCI, GAMTUB) led to improved engagement with the informal sector. Chad's project was more limited in scope but initiated meaningful institutional reforms within ONAPE and created a pool of national trainers. Overall, all four projects made progress in increasing access to services, promoting dialogue, and improving awareness among informal economy actors, particularly women and youth.

Efficiency was mixed. Tanzania demonstrated high efficiency, leveraging partnerships and administrative support from the UN system to deliver within timelines. The Gambia achieved solid results with modest resources, though limited by a short timeframe. In Guinea-Bissau, severe financial administrative delays, lack of basic infrastructure, and absence of support systems for the Project Manager hampered early implementation. Chad also faced challenges related to fund disbursement and coordination. Some countries successfully leveraged additional resources or in-kind support to mitigate these constraints, particularly Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia.

Impact: The projects contributed to positive change in knowledge, policy development, and institutional practices. Tanzania and Guinea-Bissau saw the strongest impacts, including formalization outcomes, policy formulation, and strengthened community organizations. Chad and The Gambia achieved more foundational impacts, particularly in awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement. All projects contributed to SDGs 1, 5, and 8, and supported the ILO Centenary Declaration and regional goals such as the AU's Agenda 2063.

Sustainability prospects are strongest in Tanzania and Guinea-Bissau, where institutional ownership, stakeholder commitment, and integration into broader programs are well developed. In Chad and The Gambia, foundational structures were built, but financial and institutional capacity gaps remain. Across all projects, the continued engagement of national partners, strategic donor alignment, and stronger operational planning will be key to maintaining momentum.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main recommendations	***Recommendation 1: For new formalization projects,*** *adopt an integrated and context-sensitive approach to formalization by combining policy and institutional support with targeted capacity building and stakeholder engagement, while adapting interventions to each country's socio-economic and labour market realities.* **Priority: high, for all new ILO projects on formalization.** **Recommendation 2.** *All RBSA-funded projects should benefit from a logframe containing baselines, SMART indicators and measurable targets to enhance their evaluability.* **Priority: high, for all new ILO RBSA projects.** **Recommendation 3**. *Systematically map and align with existing national and international initiatives to build synergies and avoid fragmentation*. **Priority: high, for all new ILO RBSA projects.** **Recommendation 4.** *Combine technical tools with capacity-building and tailored communication to maximize results and reach.* **Priority: high, for all new ILO RBSA projects.** **Recommendation 5.** *Ensure basic administrative infrastructure and system access are in place before deployment of field staff.* **Priority: high, for all new ILO RBSA projects.** **Recommendation 6.** *Promote behavioral change through peer-to-peer learning and role models from the informal economy.* **Priority: high, for all new ILO RBSA projects.** **Recommendation 7.** *Embed project outputs within institutional frameworks and reinforce tripartite structures to support long-term ownership.* **Priority: high, for all new ILO RBSA projects.**
Main lessons learned and good practices	**Main lessons learned:** • Early and inclusive stakeholder engagement in project design ensures relevance, alignment with national priorities, and stronger impact. • Remote technical support is valuable but insufficient in fragile contexts without a dedicated in-country project manager.

	• Digital formalization tools show promise but depend on adequate infrastructure and digital literacy, which are often lacking in rural areas. • Short project durations limit policy uptake and sustainability, highlighting the need for longer engagement cycles beyond catalytic RBSA funding. • Gender-responsive approaches, such as targeted support for women's cooperatives or digital inclusion, enhance reach and inclusiveness. • Specifically on formalization: Holistic, multi-dimensional strategies that combine policy support, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement are more effective than isolated interventions. • Specifically on formalization: Tailoring formalization strategies to each country's specific context improves relevance, stakeholder buy-in, and sustainability. **Main good practices:** • Tripartite development of national strategies ensured shared ownership, legitimacy, and alignment with national realities. This participatory model built consensus and inclusive governance, increasing the chances of sustained policy implementation. • Combining local facilitators with digital tools (such as the Start and Imporve Your Business manual and Interactive Voice Response platforms) effectively expanded outreach to informal workers in remote areas, particularly women and youth. This low-cost model adapts well to different literacy levels and contexts with limited government presence. • Embedding training within national institutions and the private sector through training-of-trainers models built institutional memory and extended service delivery beyond the project's lifespan. By strengthening local ownership and cascading knowledge, this approach provides a scalable and sustainable pathway for long-term capacity building.