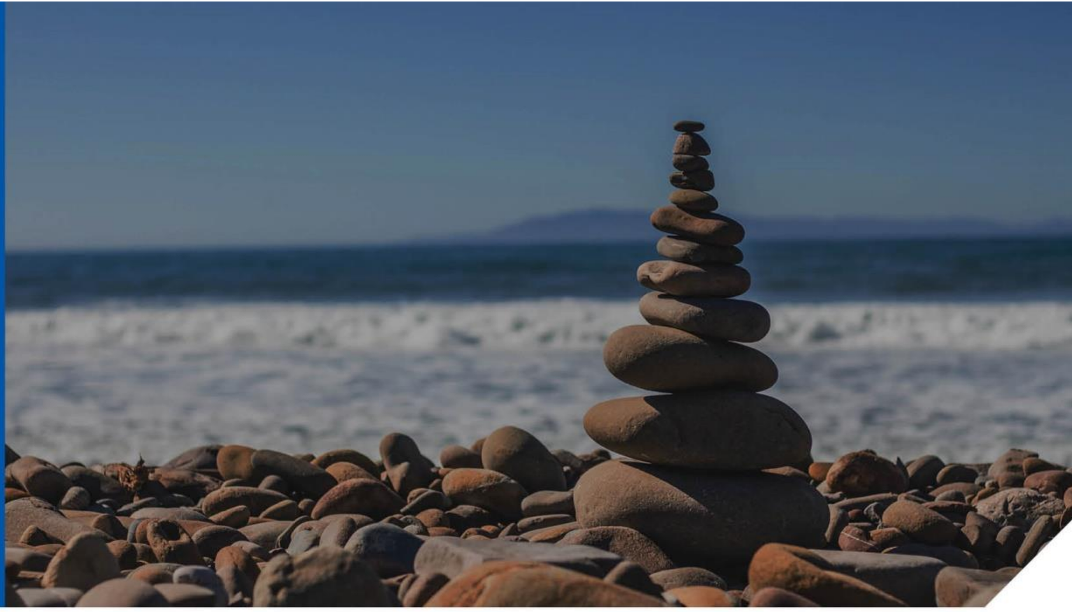
International Labour Organization

Evaluation Office

i-eval Discovery



Decent Work and Labour Rights for Southern Africa (Focus on Construction Sector) – Independent Midterm Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: **Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and SADC**

Evaluation date: 12 September 2025

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: **Enterprises Department / MSME Unit, Geneva**

Technical Office: **Decent Work Team Pretoria**

Evaluation manager: **Pacome Dessero**

Evaluation consultant(s): **Iva Bernhardt – Principal Evaluation Expert**

DC Symbol: **RAF /21/14/SWE**

Donor(s) & budget: **Donor and budget: Government of Sweden - The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Budget: SEK 50 million / USD 4,567,055 (November 2022 UN exchange rate)**

Key Words: *Business development service, Capacity building, Conditions of employment, Corporate responsibility, Decent Work, Economic and social development, Equal rights, Labour inspection, Labour relations, Occupational safety & health, Small or micro – enterprises, Social dialogue, Social protection, Sustainable enterprises, Trade Union - capacity building, Training, Vulnerable groups, Workers' rights, Working condition, Youth employment*

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	
Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	The project "Decent Work and Labour Productivity in Southern Africa's Construction Sector" is implemented in the framework of a partnership between the Government of Sweden—through the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)—and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to advance the Decent Work Agenda in the South African region. The project a sub-regional project to promote labour rights in the construction sector in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The project's objective is to enhance compliance with labour rights and improve productivity in the SADC construction sector by implementing interventions that benefit vulnerable workers and contribute to greater productivity for the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that employ them. In this context, the project is piloting interventions in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa aimed at supporting and incentivizing MSMEs in the sector to provide better working conditions, adopt improved business processes, and ultimately increase their labour productivity. The project was financed by Sida with a budget amounting to SEK 50 million / USD 4,567,055 (November 2022 UN exchange rate). The project has three main outcomes, detailed below. Corresponding outputs and activities have been created for each outcome and adapted to the country context. Outcome 0: Project is fully operational, with targeted project design that is based on comprehensive understanding of construction sector system and its key constraints and actors. Outcome 1: Enhanced compliance with labour rights and regulatory requirements by workers and MSMEs and improved productivity in the construction market systems of Mozambique, South African, and Zimbabwe. Outcome 2: SADC Member States adopts good practices from pilot interventions within the construction sector to promote decent work for women and youth.
Present situation of the project	The International Labour Organization (ILO) has started the implementation of the "Decent Work and Labour Rights for Southern Africa (Focus on Construction Sector)-DWC4SouthernAfrica" project on 1 July 2022. The project is planned to finish its implementation on 31 December 2025 in three countries: Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. However, the project has asked the donor Sida for a cost extension for up to two years to finish all planned activities. The results of the mid-term evaluation of the projects will be used for measuring its impact to date and the level of achievement of the established projects' objectives. The mid-term evaluation covered the entire duration from its start in July 2022 to April 2025 in the three countries: Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	Overall, as specified in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the objective of this mid-term evaluation is to review and assess the progress and achievements of the project against the planned outcomes and products, identify expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors, and causality using OECD-DAC criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The evaluation also provides

	actionable recommendations to the project, to the ILO, the national tripartite constituents, and to the donor. The main findings, lessons learned, and identified good practices will contribute to organizational learning and the improvement of future project design and effectiveness. The clients of this mid-term evaluation are the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the ILO's project staff, the ILO Country Offices in Pretoria, as well as ENTERPRISES, the Regional Offices in Abidjan and the HQ in Geneva, the Governments and constituents of the three countries.
Methodology of evaluation	The evaluation set out to answer a list of specific questions which were organized according to the thematic criteria as defined in the Terms of Reference. The evaluator addressed the evaluation questions using multiple sources of evidence, combining primary qualitative data with secondary quantitative data. Qualitative data were obtained using key informant interviews. Quantitative data were obtained from the performance reporting data presented by the ILO in the progress reports to Sida, as well as from other secondary sources. Data collection methods and stakeholder perspectives were triangulated to bolster the credibility and validity of the results.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	The key conclusions of this mid-term evaluation are: 1. **Relevance and coherence:** The "Decent Work and Labour Productivity in Southern Africa's Construction Sector" is a highly relevant project that focuses on promoting decent work and labour rights, increasing social security participation, raising awareness of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) standards, and supporting national development among tripartite stakeholders related to decent work. It aims to improve productivity and working conditions within SMEs, aligning with the strategies of governments in SADC pilot countries—namely South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique—as well as regional and sub-regional priorities centred on advancing workers' rights and labour productivity across all Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States. These efforts align with global sustainable development goals and local and national priorities as outlined in 1) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2) the sustainable development policies and national strategies of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, 3) the strategic priorities and objectives of the donor Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and 4) the mandate, policy, and strategic outcomes of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Overall, this initiative is highly relevant and significant. The project aligns and is coherent with ongoing initiatives and programs on Decent Work within the SADC community, collaborating effectively with other donors, partners, and stakeholders. 2. **Effectiveness:** Based on both primary and secondary evidence, the lead evaluator concluded that the Decent Work and Labour Productivity project in Southern Africa's construction sector has significantly advanced the Decent Work and Labour Productivity agenda across South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. The project-generated knowledge has also been disseminated

throughout the SADC region. Its effectiveness is demonstrated through the development of strategies, capacity-development, and training activities aimed at enhancing awareness and engagement among tripartite stakeholders and Business Development Services (BDS) providers on topics such as decent work, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) principles, labour rights, and social protection coverage. These capacity-development and training efforts are being shared with construction sector MSMEs and vulnerable workers, including vulnerable women and youth workers.

A total of 6,422 individuals were directly reached with messages concerning fundamental rights, workplace principles, and labour productivity, including 2,455 in Mozambique, 1,243 in South Africa, and 2,724 in Zimbabwe. Additionally, 189 small and medium-sized enterprises (with employees ranging from 10 to 100) received training, and 124 practitioners were capacitated through six capacity development events. Concerning strategies, tools, and manuals, seven strategies relating to decent work, labour productivity, and occupational safety and health (OSH) were collaboratively developed with partners, together with nine tools and manuals focusing on decent work and labour rights.

The only two outputs that will be difficult to achieve within the remaining time frame of the project are: 1. Contracting authorities include Decent Work (DW) criteria in small projects and employment contracts by updating them to include DW elements; and 2. Procurement authorities incorporate DW criteria into tendering by revising procedures for construction services. One of the reasons this is not feasible is the lengthy duration required to conclude partnerships with the respective authorities.

3. **Efficiency:** The project aimed to achieve cost-effectiveness, meaning efficient results during implementation. Project partner institutions, BDS providers, and MSMEs in all three countries: South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, exceeded their delivery targets outlined in their TORs. The mid-term evaluation shows that project management and financial management were generally considered efficient and cost-effective. An effective and impactful monitoring and evaluation system has been established and implemented. However, the risk analysis could have been more effective in providing contingency strategies for the implementation inertia resulting from national elections in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Due to tight budget planning, a lengthy inception phase, and implementation delays caused by force majeure related to the standstill of implementation activities due to national elections, a cost extension of up to two years is needed to complete all activities. According to the latest financial statement as of May 7, 2025, out of a total budget of USD 4,333,713.59, 82.3% (USD 3,568,725.24) has been spent, leaving USD 764,988.35 remaining until the original project implementation ends on December 31, 2025.

4. **Impact and Sustainability:** Assessing the impact and sustainability of a project is challenging at mid-term. However, due to the early initial results of the “Decent Work and Labour Productivity in Southern Africa’s Construction Sector” project, ILO’s expected long-term results (impact focus) and its contribution to sustainably advancing the strategic priorities of the funding

	partner Sida are seen as likely. Policymakers and stakeholders are willing to participate in capacity-development activities to enhance labour rights and wellbeing for vulnerable workers, especially women and youth in all three project countries: South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, as well as across the entire SADC region. The project outcomes are designed to be achieved sustainably, allowing them to continue beyond the project's duration through the institutional integration of the objectives among the tripartite stakeholders in all three project countries. This is contingent upon a project cost extension of up to two years, enabling the ILO to complete all project activities and deliver all outputs to achieve the desired outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES	
Main recommendations	**Recommendation 1: Cost Project Extension / Phase 2.** It is recommended that the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) extend the project for at least one year, ideally for more sustainable results—preferably for two years—through a cost extension or through a second phase of the project. Strengthen and build upon current accomplishments to achieve greater systemic changes in the construction sector, especially in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. **Recommendation 2: Expand the project geographically through the cost extension or as a stand-alone project.** It is recommended that the project be expanded geographically through the cost extension or as a stand-alone project. The National Governments of Botswana, Seychelles, Tanzania, and Zambia, among others, have expressed interest in implementing the project in their countries through SADC and the relevant ILO Country Offices. Using the knowledge gathered through the project implementation in Mozambique, and the networking for the SADC lusophone countries, the project can be replicated/twinned between Mozambique and Angola. The new project should have a strong emphasis on communication campaigns on decent work and labour rights, gender inclusivity, capacity-development, and stakeholder engagement to ensure the programme's sustainability. **Recommendation 3: Expand the Project scope/objectives.** It is recommended that the ILO, National Governments, and Tripartite Constituents, together with the donor community, continue to expand in Phase 2 of the project by expanding the project scope and objectives. Phase 2 can leverage the newly established entry points, opportunities, and private sector partnerships to include either of the following focus areas: ❖ New sectors (possibly mining, transport, and manufacturing) ❖ Enterprise development and employment creation (country priorities) ❖ Expand and Integrate Green Jobs and Just Transition Employment Initiatives ❖ Local economic development and environmental sustainability ❖ Labour migration and labour rights, especially recognition of training and certificates to comply with decent work and avoid hiring at minimum wage.

	Recommendation 4: Strengthen the Communication Campaigns in Pilot Countries to Disseminate Knowledge of Decent Work and Labour Rights in the Construction Sector. The ILO, the National Governments, and Tripartite Constituents should strengthen communication campaigns in pilot countries to disseminate knowledge of Decent Work and Labour Rights in the construction sector to workers at the grassroots level through diverse channels, including roadshows, TV, radio, and social media. Trade unions, the Ministry of Labour, the Employers' Organizations, and the Business Development Services are to be included. The ILO should develop a stronger project communication campaign through a dedicated project website. Project success stories should be timely shared with the donor, ILO, and SADC countries. **Recommendation 5: Support Women's Entrepreneurship and Broader Employment Strategies.** The ILO, the National Governments, and Tripartite Constituents should continue their collaboration with national partners to support women's entrepreneurship, particularly for women in vulnerable situations. In addition, they should enhance Gender Representation and build on inclusivity for gender and disabilities by construction SMEs, for example, by rewarding or subsidizing companies that employ more women and people with disabilities. **Recommendation 6: Initiate Twinning Collaboration Projects on Specific Topics between the Pilot Countries.** It is recommended that the project initiate twinning projects on specific topics between the pilot countries. For instance, a twinning project between Mozambique, South Africa, and/or Zimbabwe on OSH regulations. Furthermore, the development of official OSH studies in Mozambique can be expedited. **Recommendation 7: Sharing knowledge between Business Service Providers within and outside the project pilot countries.** It is recommended that the project initiate knowledge sharing between Business Service Providers (peer-to-peer exchange between countries) on how to best structure efficient and effective training on Decent Work and Labour Rights. Two levels of knowledge sharing can be recommended: ❖ Public and Private BDSs within the country; and / or ❖ Sharing knowledge between countries (starting with the collaboration of the three pilot countries). **Recommendation 8: Providing simple Sample Working Contracts for Constructive SMEs in the pilot countries.** The ILO, supported by the ILO, Business Development Service Providers, National Governments, and Tripartite Constituents, should provide simple Sample Working Contracts for Constructive SMEs in Zimbabwe and Mozambique to ensure their widespread adoption, and enhance decent work, labour rights, and social protection among workers.
Main lessons learned and good practices	The following lessons were learned from the implementation of the project: **1. Importance of Building Trust to enable an Open Social Dialogue through Timely Open Communication to all Tripartite Constituents, including MSMEs and Workers:** A key lesson from the Decent Work in Construction for Southern Africa project is that trust among Micro and Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and workers encourages dialogue and realistic assessments of decent work, emphasizing current contracts, social security, and labour rights. Clear

communication with all stakeholders is vital for building trust and sharing information about labour rights. Informing the public about Decent Work and Labour Rights campaigns (clarifying that this is not a labour inspection) alleviates fear and fosters a productive environment among workers and MSMEs.

2. Importance of Upfront Assessing a Baseline Situation: Another key lesson learned is that assessing a country's baseline situation for specific development objectives in a timely manner, before designing tailored interventions for the socio-economic and political contexts of each target country, is essential for effective and efficient project implementation.

3. Navigating Political Instability: A significant lesson learned is that political instability has a profound impact on project implementation, often resulting in major delays. This highlights the importance of identifying risks early during the design and implementation stages, as well as developing contingency plans and flexible designs to ensure progress and achieve realistic objectives.

The following good practices were used during project implementation to date:

1. Developing Policies and Institutionalizing Principles of Decent Work and Labour Rights to Ensure the Building of Sustainable Social Security Systems: A notable practice of the project is the ILO's role in developing policies and institutionalizing decent work and labour rights, which helps build sustainable social security systems. This creates a snowball effect from construction to other industries, transforming the country's decent work and social security landscape.

2. Working with BDS providers to Promote Decent Work, Labour Rights, and Productivity: This project utilized BDS providers to promote decent work, labour rights, and productivity. BDS aim to change MSMEs' perceptions of decent work and formal contracts by highlighting their importance and legal aspects. Partnering with public and private BDS providers is essential, as they help MSMEs adopt decent work practices by leveraging existing experience and trust with the respective MSMEs.

3. Strong Stakeholders Engagement and Network Building: Bringing together Ministries of Labour, Trade Unions, Employers, and service providers encouraged discussions on systemic change in decent work and labour rights in the construction sector. Early engagement secured broad support, eased implementation, strengthened partnerships, and aligned policies. Regular communication and stakeholder involvement fostered trust, transparency, and ownership, which are vital for sustaining activities. The rotation of steering committees between the three countries developed a national commitment in each country. The project effectively fostered strong commitment and ownership while adeptly managing stakeholder relations.