



Mid-Term Independent Evaluation of the Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme in Zambia

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List of Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
AIZ	Agriculture Institute of Zambia
BDS	Business Development Services
DWT	Decent Work Team
EO	Employers Organization
EGSP	Economic Governance Support Programme
EIZ	Engineering Institution of Zambia
EU	European Union
EVAL	ILO Evaluation Office
GRZ	Government Republic of Zambia
ILO	International Labour Organization
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Energy
MFL	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
MFNP	Ministry of Finance and National Planning
MMMD	Ministry of Mines and Mineral Development
MLG&RD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MOTS	Ministry of Technology and Science
MTCA	Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs
MYSa	Ministry of Youth, Sports and Arts and Sports
NAO	National Authorising Office
NDP	National Development Plan
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
ROAF	Regional Office for Africa
SAC	Skills Advisory Committee
SAG	Skills Advisory Group
SMEs	Small and Medium-size Enterprises

SSB	Sector Skills Body
STED	Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification
SPEED	Skills for Productivity, Environment and Economic Diversification
TEVET	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
TEVETA	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority
TOC	Theory of Change
TWG	Technical Working Group
WO	Workers' Organisation
ZAQA	Zambia Qualifications Authority
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
ZFE	Zambia Federation of Employers

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Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

This independent Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) was commissioned to assess progress of the Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP), funded by the EU and implemented by the ILO in partnership with the Government of Zambia. The evaluation reviews the extent to which the project is achieving its intended objectives, outcomes, and outputs, as well as the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact orientation, and sustainability of its interventions. It also identifies lessons learned, good practices, and provides recommendations for the remainder of the implementation period.

The SDEP was designed against the backdrop of Zambia's pressing need to enhance Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) as a driver of economic diversification and employment creation. With high youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and limited industry engagement, the programme aims to strengthen TEVET governance, foster private sector partnerships, and ensure curricula respond to labour market demands. The project seeks to achieve four interlinked specific objectives: (1) enhance the relevance and capacity of the TEVET system; (2) improve private sector access to relevant skills in strategic sectors; (3) review and pilot updated curricula aligned to labour market demands; and (4) ensure effective project management and oversight. Its Theory of Change is built on the logic that strengthened institutions and governance mechanisms will create the enabling environment for sustainable skills delivery and improved employability outcomes. The project is managed jointly by ILO and Government through a Project Steering Committee (PSC), a Technical Working Group (TWG), and a small implementation team. While technically competent, the team is overstretched, with no dedicated M&E officer, which has constrained systematic monitoring. Engagement of government focal points has enhanced ownership but caused delays due to bureaucratic procedures and limited resources.

The evaluation was conducted in line with ILO and OECD-DAC evaluation standards. Its purpose was to provide accountability, measure progress, and inform decisions for the next phase of implementation. Objectives included assessing relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and the degree of alignment with national and regional priorities. The evaluation covered project implementation from inception in 2022 through mid-2025. The primary clients are the EU, ILO, and Government of Zambia, with secondary audiences including TEVETA, employers, training institutions, and civil society. Key evaluation questions were structured around OECD-DAC criteria, with additional focus on gender equality, social inclusion, and policy coherence.

The MTE applied a mixed-methods design, combining document reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, field visits, and online surveys. Triangulation was used to validate findings, though the absence of a baseline limited longitudinal comparisons.

Findings

Relevance: The project responds directly to Zambia's Vision 2030 and the National Development Plans (7th NDP and 8th NDP), both of which prioritise skills development and economic diversification. It also aligns with the African Union TEVET Strategy, the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, and global

agendas such as the SDGs. Stakeholders consistently confirmed that the project addresses pressing national priorities of reducing youth unemployment, closing the skills mismatch, and strengthening TEVET governance.

Coherence: At the strategic level, the project is well aligned with EU cooperation priorities and ILO's mandate on decent work and skills development. It complements other government-led reforms in TEVET. However, synergies with parallel donor-funded programmes, such as those supported by the World Bank and GIZ, have been limited. Opportunities for stronger coordination and leveraging of complementary resources have not been fully exploited, partly due to fragmented institutional frameworks.

Effectiveness: Progress is most visible under Outcome 1 (governance strengthening) and Outcome 2 (industry engagement), where TEVETA has been supported to improve certification and research, and Sector Skills Bodies have been established in priority sectors. However, Outcome 3 is lagging behind. The rollout of updated curricula, work-based learning programmes, and equipment installation in training institutions has been delayed by procurement bottlenecks and underestimation of the scale of required resources. Consequently, direct benefits to trainees are yet to materialise as planned.

Efficiency: The project has not fully optimised use of its financial and human resources. Some areas remain underspent due to delayed activity start-up, while others, such as advisory committees, overspent against initial allocations. The lack of an inception phase, delays in appointing focal points, and absence of a dedicated M&E officer have reduced timeliness and created management inefficiencies. The small team's overstretch has compounded these challenges.

Impact Orientation: Institutional reforms supported by the project, such as legal and regulatory changes, digitisation of TEVETA systems, and operationalisation of SSBs, are promising and likely to have long-term impact. However, because beneficiary-level activities (e.g., curricula delivery, apprenticeships) have only recently started, the project's direct contribution to employment and productivity outcomes is not yet visible.

Sustainability: By working through government structures and focal points, the project has embedded ownership and laid foundations for continuity. Nevertheless, the absence of dedicated budgets to support focal people and heavy reliance on donor financing pose risks. Without further institutionalisation and domestic resourcing, there is a danger that gains may not be sustained beyond the project's lifespan.

Cross-Cutting Issues: Enrolment of women and the creation of gender-sensitive facilities and services are progressing slowly, indicating that more deliberate measures are needed to achieve meaningful inclusion outcomes.

The project therefore remains valid and strategically important. It has laid a strong foundation for systemic reforms but lags in translating these into tangible benefits for learners and employers.

Lessons Learned

1. *Systemic focus yields long-term value.* Prioritising reforms such as CBT curricula, SSBs, and SAC revitalisation shows that systemic interventions create more durable results than isolated activities.
2. *Adequate time and sequencing are essential.* Ambitious legal and institutional reforms required starting almost from zero, underscoring the need for inception phases and realistic pacing.
3. *Stakeholder ownership strengthens sustainability.* The SAC and SSBs enabled government, employers, and workers to shape training priorities, ensuring curricula better reflect labour-market needs.
4. *Capacity-building must accompany infrastructure.* Institutions like Nortec and Chipata Trades stressed that equipment and facilities only yield lasting impact when paired with staff development and curriculum reform.
5. *Risk management should be proactive.* Procurement delays and policy bottlenecks were addressed too late, showing the importance of early monitoring and responsive mitigation systems.
6. *Equity requires stronger intentionality.* Youth inclusion progressed well, but gender mainstreaming remained limited, especially in male-dominated sectors that require targeted strategies.

Good Practices

1. *Revitalisation of dormant governance structures.* The project successfully reactivated the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), which had been inactive since 2019.
2. *Operationalisation of Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs).* Establishing SSBs in agriculture, mining, energy, and tourism created structured tripartite platforms that produced critical skills lists and curricula, ensuring stronger alignment between training provision and industry needs.
3. *Institutional capacity-building linked with infrastructure.* Colleges such as Chipata Trades and Nortec paired infrastructure upgrades with curriculum and staff development, ensuring that physical investments translate into improved training delivery and better employability outcomes.
4. *Worker and employer voice in training relevance.* The project created spaces for workers to influence training priorities, while critical skills lists strengthened industry-relevant pathways, demonstrating how social dialogue anchors demand-driven training systems.
5. *Embedding monitoring systems into institutions.* The development of the LMIS strengthened national capacity to generate and use labour market data, and its integration into Ministry structures offers a sustainable tool for ongoing monitoring and policy planning.
6. *Stakeholder Engagement Fostering Ownership and Sustainability of Outcomes.* The project's structured engagement of ministries, TEVETA, employers, and training institutions through PSC and TWG platforms ensured relevant reforms and strengthened national ownership, improving prospects for sustainability.
7. *Sector Studies as a Basis for Planning and Informed Decision Making.* Analyses of key sectors revealed skills gaps and market demands that shaped curricula and WBL arrangements, advancing a shift from supply-driven to demand-led planning and improving labour market relevance.

Recommendations

1. *Introduce a No-Cost Extension:* To address cumulative delays, a no-cost extension of at least 12 months is recommended for the consolidation of reforms, curriculum implementation, and the delivery of outputs like equipment installation and training. A costed extension may also be considered due to the significant infrastructure support costs.
2. *Strengthen private sector engagement in Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs).* Private sector engagement has been inconsistent. There is a need for streamlined engagement, clearer incentives, and practical demonstrations of value to maintain employer commitment.
3. *Expediate the finalisation of stalled legal reforms (Apprenticeship Act, Employment Code).* Delays in policy and legal reform have slowed progress and forced project teams to restart processes. Swift completion and enactment of reforms are needed to embed work-based learning and provide a durable legal framework for skills development.
4. *Expedite and consolidate competence-based training (CBT).* Institutional capacity assessments confirmed the need to shift fully to CBT. Adequate investment in curriculum redesign, staff re-training, and equipment is critical for aligning training with labour market needs.
5. *Safeguard institutional investments through maintenance and recurrent funding.* Colleges will benefit from infrastructure such as irrigation systems and specialised labs, but sustainability will depend on recurrent budgets for maintenance and continuous staff development.
6. *Mainstream gender more intentionally in male-dominated sectors.* No progress has been made in most areas, and gender mainstreaming has been less visible than youth inclusion. Future phases should implement stronger, targeted strategies to improve women's participation in sectors such as mining and energy.
7. *Institutionalise proactive risk management.* Risks such as procurement delays, policy bottlenecks, and weak employer participation are often addressed only after they occurred. A structured, proactive risk monitoring system should be built into programme planning to prevent similar setbacks.
8. *Strengthen Procurement and Operational Efficiency Mechanisms.* To enhance procurement and operational efficiency, the project should establish a streamlined procurement and management system with a time-bound plan, improved inter-unit coordination, and temporary boosts in administrative and monitoring capacities. This strategy intends to expedite outputs such as LMIS development and curriculum piloting, thereby improving absorption rates and ensuring timely delivery of activities.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is providing technical assistance to the Government of Zambia (GRZ) in implementing the Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP), funded by the Delegation of the European Union to Zambia and COMESA. Being implemented from 2023 to 2027 with a budget of €6.5 million, the programme builds on earlier achievements in the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) sector while aligning with Zambia's broader development frameworks.

Globally, skills anticipation systems are a critical input for achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and regionally, initiatives such as the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) under AUDA/NEPAD and the African Union TEVET Strategy (2014) reinforce the importance of employment-oriented training. Similarly, the 1997 SADC Protocol on Education and Training, signed by Zambia, promotes harmonised, equitable, and quality education systems.

At the national level, Zambia's Seventh and Eighth National Development Plans and Vision 2030 identify job creation, especially for youth, as a driver of sustainable economic growth and diversification. The Industrialisation and Job Creation Strategy (IJCS) further highlights labour force skills as a key factor in productivity, calling for initiatives such as re-introducing apprenticeship training, promoting industrial attachments, establishing a Labour Market Information System (LMIS), and expanding access to skills training. The SDEP builds on these priorities to address persistent challenges of high youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and low productivity, particularly in strategic sectors like agriculture, mining, tourism, and energy.

1.2. Project Description

The Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP) is a four-year initiative (2023–2027) implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ), with funding from the European Union (EU). With a budget of €6.5 million, the programme is designed to strengthen Zambia's Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) system to improve employability and support the country's industrialisation agenda. The programme targets key growth sectors; mining, agriculture, tourism, and energy, where skills gaps have been identified as constraints to economic diversification and productivity. Its overall objective is to enhance the employability of both women and men, while addressing persistent challenges such as high youth unemployment, skills mismatches, outdated curricula, weak industry linkages, and gender inequality in access to training.

The SDEP pursues four specific objectives: (i) to enhance the relevance and capacity of the TEVET system to support economic diversification; (ii) to improve private sector access to relevant skills in priority sectors; (iii) to review, update, and pilot curricula in line with labour market demands; and (iv) to strengthen project management and oversight.

By integrating EU priorities such as the European Green Deal, the programme also emphasizes innovation, quality education, and social rights. In this way, the SDEP is positioned as a flagship

intervention to strengthen Zambia's human capital base and foster inclusive, sustainable economic growth

1.3 Project Management Structure

The SDEP is implemented by the ILO in close collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) and key stakeholders. Implementation is coordinated through a Programme Steering Committee (PSC) under the Economic Governance Support Programme, chaired by the Secretary to the Treasury, and a Technical Working Group (TWG) chaired by the Ministry of Technology and Science and co-chaired by the Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Key actors include government ministries, TEVETA, training institutions, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society, and the EU.

The MOTS plays a central role by managing the Skills Development Fund and supporting TEVET reforms in line with national priorities for technology, innovation, and a green economy transition. TEVETA serves as the key implementing partner, while the ILO provides technical and secretariat support, ensuring the programme aligns with EU priorities, including the European Green Deal, which underscores quality education, skills, innovation, and social rights.

The ILO Country Office Lusaka provides overall management and secretariat support, with technical backstopping from the Decent Work Team in Pretoria and ILO headquarters.

2.0 The Midterm Evaluation Background

2.1 The Evaluation background

The evaluation of the ILO project was conceived as a management and learning tool to strengthen support for Decent Work and social justice, while ensuring accountability to constituents, partners, and donors. It is required under ILO policy and the donor agreement to conduct both a midterm and a final independent evaluations, with the midterm focusing on assessing progress, identifying challenges, and recommending improvements for delivery and sustainability.

The project was designed to align with Zambia's national priorities and ILO's strategic objectives, and at midterm it was necessary to examine its continued relevance, the effectiveness of its implementation strategy, and its coherence with national development plans and other donor initiatives.

2.2 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation was to promote accountability, assess progress and bottlenecks, and strengthen organizational and stakeholder learning. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the extent to which the projects are on track or not to achieve their stated objectives and expected results.
- Identify the factors (positive and negative) affecting Projects implementation modalities chosen and identify reason why this is so.
- Establish the relevance of the projects design and implementation strategies in relation to the development frameworks it is supposed to contribute to
- Assess overall implementation effectiveness, efficiency and the extent to which stated projects outcomes will be sustainable.
- Provide recommendations to the Project Team, the ILO, the Project Partners, the Donor, and key stakeholders regarding steps to be taken for the successful achievement of the projects outcomes.
- Identify unexpected positive and negative results of the projects.
- Identify lessons and good practices for the remaining of projects' implementation, as well as for future similar interventions.

2.3 Evaluation Scope and Clients

The midterm evaluation covered all outcomes, outputs, and activities of the Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP) from its inception in February 2023 up to the review period in 2025. Its scope extended to examining project design, implementation strategies, and emerging results, while assessing cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, non-discrimination, social dialogue, and capacity development. The evaluation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including government ministries, TEVETA, employers' and workers' organizations, training institutions, beneficiaries, and development partners, to ensure a comprehensive assessment of progress and lessons learned.

Geographically, the evaluation focused on both national-level institutions in Lusaka and project implementation sites across four regions: Chipata, Mambwe, Livingstone, and Ndola. These locations were selected to capture diversity in project delivery and outcomes across Zambia's priority sectors, agriculture, mining, tourism, and energy. By covering these sites, the evaluation was able to reflect national policy alignment while also documenting regional and local-level impacts on institutions, trainees, and employers.

The primary clients and users of the evaluation included the ILO (Country Office Lusaka, Decent Work Team Pretoria, and Regional Office for Africa), the Government of Zambia as the main partner, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Technical Working Group (TWG) including tripartite constituents, and the European Union (EU) as the donor. These entities were expected to use the evaluation findings for accountability, decision-making, and improving ongoing implementation.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Relevance: The evaluation assessed whether the project objectives and design were appropriate to Zambia's national priorities, ILO strategies, and the needs of tripartite stakeholders and beneficiaries. Key questions focused on the project's alignment with national and regional development plans, consistency between activities and intended outcomes, and the extent to which the project adapted to emerging needs during implementation.

- Has the project considered the needs and priorities of tripartite stakeholders and beneficiaries?
- Is the project aligned with local, regional, and national development plans/strategies?
- Are activities and outputs consistent with intended outcomes and objectives?
- Has the project adapted to changing context or emerging needs during implementation?

Coherence: The evaluation examined how well the intervention complemented other ongoing national, regional, and donor initiatives in the sector and geographic areas. It also explored how the project aligned with systemic changes, broader policy frameworks, and international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Is the project complementing other initiatives/programmes in the sector/geographical area?
- Are interventions aligned to maximise systemic change?
- Is the project aligned with broader policy frameworks and international commitments (e.g., SDGs)?

Effectiveness: The evaluation considered whether the project was achieving its objectives, outcomes, and outputs, with a strong focus on cross-cutting issues like gender equality, youth inclusion, and social dialogue. It assessed factors that contributed to or hindered results, the validity of the project's theory of change, and whether outputs were of sufficient quality and quantity. It also explored unexpected results, variations across geographic areas, and the effectiveness of technical backstopping from ILO regional and headquarters offices.

- To what extent is the project on track to achieve its objectives, outcomes, and outputs?
- What enabling or hindering factors affected achievement of results?
- Has the project followed its Theory of Change?

- Are logical framework hypotheses supported by performance data?
- Are the quantity and quality of outputs produced satisfactory?
- Have unexpected results (positive or negative) been observed?
- To what extent has the project equitably reached intended beneficiaries (e.g., women, youth)?
- Are results consistent across geographic areas?
- How effective was backstopping support from DWT Pretoria and HQ?

Efficiency: The evaluation reviewed how well financial, human, and technical resources were allocated and used. It examined whether results justified costs, whether interventions were timely, and whether budgets adequately addressed gender and inclusion objectives. It also considered the effectiveness of risk analysis and monitoring systems in supporting project delivery.

- Has the project used financial, human, and time resources efficiently?
- Do achieved results justify the costs? Could the same results be achieved with fewer resources?
- Were funds/activities delivered on time? What bottlenecks occurred?
- Did budgets sufficiently address gender and inclusion objectives?
- Were risk analyses and M&E systems established and implemented effectively?

Impact Orientation: The evaluation assessed the project's contribution to broader labour market and institutional changes, as well as its alignment with development goals and policy objectives. It examined how the project strengthened local capacities, institutions, and systems, and identified lessons on impact that could inform the second phase of implementation or similar future interventions.

- Is the project on course toward the intended impact?
- What evidence shows contribution to wider development goals or policy objectives?
- How has the project influenced capacities, institutions, or systems?
- What impact-related lessons could inform the remainder of implementation or future projects?

Sustainability: The evaluation explored whether the project built local ownership, capacity, and commitment to continue activities beyond donor funding. It also considered risks to sustainability, the adequacy of exit strategies, and whether beneficiaries would continue experiencing improved conditions after project completion.

- Has the project built ownership, capacity, and commitment to sustain results?
- What are the risks to sustainability and how were they mitigated?
- Are exit strategies realistic and implemented?
- Will beneficiaries continue to experience improvements after project closure?

Cross-Cutting Issues: Finally, the evaluation assessed the extent to which gender equality and non-discrimination were integrated into project design and implementation. It also reviewed how effectively the project supported the strengthening of worker and employer organizations and promoted constructive social dialogue.

- To what extent are gender equality and non-discrimination integrated in design and implementation?

- How effectively has the project promoted social dialogue, Strong, independent worker/employer organisations and Tripartism principles?

3.0 Evaluation Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Design

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods design, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a descriptive, cross-sectional, and participatory manner. To enhance validity and rigour, triangulation of sources and techniques was applied, ensuring that findings were grounded in multiple forms of evidence.

A desk review of project documents and secondary data was undertaken to inform the inception report, including the framing of evaluation questions, approaches, data sources, and tools. The inception report was developed in line with the ILO Guidance on Inception Reports and received approval before field data collection began. Primary data collection was carried out through interviews, focus group discussions, and stakeholder workshops. Consultations involved implementing partners, beneficiaries, donor representatives, ILO officials, and government counterparts. The evaluation also engaged with relevant ILO units and the ILO Country Office Lusaka to contextualize findings.

The evaluation used the OECD-DAC criteria; relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability as the central framework for assessing achievements. These criteria guided both data collection and analysis, ensuring consistency with international evaluation standards.

Gender equality and non-discrimination were mainstreamed throughout the process. Gender-responsive tools were applied, and sex- and diversity-disaggregated data were collected. Women, youth, and persons with disabilities were deliberately included in consultations to ensure inclusivity and capture diverse perspectives. Social dialogue was emphasized through structured engagement with workers' and employers' organizations, training institutions, and government stakeholders. These consultations validated findings and allowed for multiple viewpoints to be considered in the assessment.

A theory-based approach, including contribution analysis, was used to assess the project's Theory of Change (ToC). This involved examining the logic, assumptions, and causal pathways linking project interventions to systemic change. Risks, assumptions, and mitigation strategies were critically reviewed against contextual realities. A process evaluation was also conducted to examine how results were delivered, comparing planned activities with actual outputs and outcomes. This included assessing efficiency, value-for-money, and the quality of project delivery against set targets. The evaluation further integrated an orientation to impact and sustainability. This approach explored the project's potential causal contributions to observed changes, assessed whether outcomes were likely to be sustained beyond project closure, and reviewed the durability of institutional mechanisms such as Skills Advisory Committees and gender mainstreaming strategies.

3.2 Methods Overview

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure triangulation and validity. The methodology was refined during the inception phase following consultations with key stakeholders. Data collection was conducted through both physical and virtual means.

A comprehensive desk review was undertaken to examine project documents, strategy papers, progress reports, UN and national frameworks, and policy materials. This provided the foundation for assessing alignment, coherence, and contextual relevance of the project.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) targeted individuals in strategic, technical, and management roles. A total of 57 stakeholders (46 males and 11 females) were reached with the evaluation. – See Annex 3. These included officials from ILO, the Ministry of Technology and Science, the National Authorising Office, TEVETA, ZAQA, an EU representative, and ministries linked to skills and economic diversification. Members of the Programme Steering Committee and Technical Working Group, along with representatives from employers' and workers' organizations, were also interviewed.

Focus Group Discussions were conducted with direct beneficiaries such as trainees, instructors, and administrators in TEVET institutions across the project sites. Private sector representatives from mining, agriculture, tourism, and energy were engaged, along with apprentices and interns participating in work-based learning components. These discussions captured diverse perspectives on effectiveness, inclusivity, and unintended outcomes. Field observations were conducted at TEVET institutions which allowed the evaluator to directly assess the use and availability of infrastructure. Observations were particularly useful in validating self-reported data and identifying operational strengths and weaknesses.

Data triangulation was applied across multiple sources. Primary data came from KIIs, FGDs, observations, while secondary data included project monitoring records, national development frameworks, and SDG reports. This ensured consistency and strengthened the reliability of findings.

Data analysis combined descriptive data for quantitative secondary data with thematic coding for qualitative data. Contribution analysis was applied to explore causal links between project activities and reported changes. Efficiency was examined through cost-effectiveness assessment, while sustainability was assessed by reviewing institutional mechanisms and funding prospects.

Findings were validated through a stakeholder workshop, where preliminary results were presented for feedback and verification. The final report incorporated this input.

3.3 Limitations

This evaluation was primarily based on self-reports obtained from stakeholders involved in the project through two main qualitative methods: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and facilitated Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). These self-reports formed the foundation of the data collected, offering direct insights and perspectives from individuals closely associated with the project. However, given the subjective nature of self-reporting, the evaluators took additional steps to corroborate the information provided. This involved cross-checking responses across different participants and sources to assess their consistency and reliability. Recognizing that self-reports rely heavily on respondents' memories, often recalling events retrospectively, there was an inherent risk that some information might be incomplete, biased, or inaccurate due to memory lapses or personal perspectives.

To mitigate these limitations and enhance the robustness of the evaluation findings, the evaluator implemented multiple data collection and analysis approaches. This triangulation strategy allowed for a more thorough exploration of the evaluation questions by comparing and contrasting information from various angles. For instance, where stakeholders' accounts were found to be limited or unclear, the evaluators complemented these with reviews of relevant project documents such as reports, plans, and monitoring records. Examining these documents helped fill information gaps, verify claims made by stakeholders, and provide an objective basis for interpreting the qualitative data collected. By integrating these different sources and methods, the evaluation was able to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the project's processes, outcomes, and challenges, ultimately strengthening the validity and credibility of the overall findings and conclusions.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Relevance

Consideration of Stakeholder and Beneficiary Needs

The SDEP project has demonstrated strong responsiveness to stakeholder priorities by embedding inclusive consultations, tailoring outputs to sector-specific demands, and addressing systemic constraints in training and labour market systems. Remaining challenges include sustaining private sector engagement and overcoming bureaucratic delays, but the core design and implementation clearly reflect stakeholder and beneficiary needs.

The project deliberately considered the needs and priorities of tripartite stakeholders, government, employers, and workers, as well as beneficiaries throughout both its design and implementation. From the government's perspective, the project addressed priority reforms such as revising the Apprenticeship Act (1965) and the Employment Code, and establishing sector skills bodies, which directly respond to national policy gaps in skills development and labour market governance. For employers, the programme engaged industry through the sector skills bodies, ensuring that curricula and training standards reflect actual labour market demands. In the mining and energy sectors, for instance, employers highlighted outdated skills and emerging needs (e.g., automation, drone use, advanced solar systems), which were subsequently integrated into training initiatives.

Workers' organisations and training institutions equally benefited from participatory approaches. At institutions like Nortec and the Lapidary, staff and students identified critical needs for equipment, incubator models, and staff capacity building, which were incorporated into project support, thereby reducing student-to-equipment ratios and aligning training with industry expectations. The Ministry of Labour also underscored that the Labour Market Information System, developed under the project, will respond to long-standing gaps in accessible labour data for workers and job seekers.

Alignment with Regional and National Development Plans

The SDEP is well aligned with Zambia's Vision 2030, and 8th National Development Plans, and the Industrialisation and Job Creation Strategy, which prioritise human capital development, skills upgrading, and employment creation. Alignment with the 7th NDP, is it at design stage considering that the project started in Feb 2023 and the 8th NDP runs from 2022 to 2026. Its support to legal reforms (Apprenticeship Act, Employment Code), the establishment of sector skills bodies, and the Labour Market Information System directly responds to government priorities. Regionally, the programme reinforces the AU's TVET Strategy, the Skills Initiative for Africa, and the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, while also reflecting EU-Africa partnership priorities, particularly the Green Deal. By focusing on priority sectors such as mining, agriculture, energy, and tourism, and mainstreaming green and digital skills, the project advances both national development goals and regional integration strategies.

Consistency of Activities and Outputs with Objectives

The SDEP's activities and outputs are largely consistent with its intended outcomes and objectives of strengthening skills development systems, improving employability, and aligning training with labour market needs. Key interventions such as the review of the Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code, establishment of sector skills bodies, and development of a Labour Market Information System directly contribute to the objectives of modernising the policy and institutional framework for skills development.

At the training institution level, investments in equipment, staff capacity building, and curriculum revision address critical gaps and ensure that outputs translate into more relevant and market-responsive training. In priority sectors such as energy and mining, activities have gone beyond initial plans to incorporate emerging skills areas, such as renewable energy applications, automation, and digital technologies, thereby reinforcing the outcomes of improved employability and adaptability to changing market demands.

While some delays in procurement and challenges in sustaining private sector engagement have slowed progress, the overall coherence between activities, outputs, and the programme's objectives remains strong, supporting the broader goal of equipping Zambia's workforce with relevant, demand-driven skills.

Adaptation to Changing Circumstances and Emerging Needs

The SDEP has shown a strong capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging needs during implementation. For example, in the energy sector, activities evolved from basic solar installation training to more advanced applications such as mini-grids, solar-powered irrigation, and productive-use systems, reflecting industry's shifting priorities and the demand for renewable energy solutions. In the mining sector, training and curriculum support expanded to cover both outdated but still critical skills (e.g., plastic welding, winding) and new technologies like automation, AI, and drone-based exploration, ensuring relevance to an evolving industry landscape.

At institutional level, colleges such as Nortec have been able to influence equipment procurement and training content, ensuring that support responded directly to their most pressing needs, such as staff capacity building, incubators, and reducing student-to-equipment ratios.

On the policy front, the project has adapted by supporting revisions to the Apprenticeship Act and the Employment Code to align with modern work-based learning practices and encourage stronger private-sector participation. In addition, the Ministry of Technology and Science (MoTS) recently requested the project to support the review of the TVET Policy (2020) and its implementation plan, alongside ongoing work to strengthen sector skills strategies that guide priority skills development in key economic sectors. While delays in procurement and slow administrative processes sometimes limited the speed of adaptation, the programme consistently demonstrated flexibility by adjusting activities to fill gaps identified through ongoing consultations with stakeholders and beneficiaries.

4.2 Coherence

Complementarity with Other Initiatives and Programs

The SDEP effectively complements other ongoing initiatives and programmes by focusing on systemic reforms that strengthen the skills development ecosystem rather than duplicating efforts. It builds on lessons from earlier ILO projects (CAPSA¹, CESA²) and aligns with the Decent Work Country Programme and the EU's Economic Governance Support framework. By emphasising work-based learning, private-sector engagement, sector skills strategies and the governance of training and employment supply, the project contributes to several key priority outcomes of the DWCP, including the human capital

¹ The Strengthening Capacity of Governments to Address Child Labor and/or Forced Labor, and Violations of Acceptable Conditions of Work in Sub Saharan Africa

² Continental Education Strategy for Africa (specifically CESA 2016-2025)

development / skills and employment opportunities, sustainable economic growth and enterprise development, tripartism / social dialogue and stronger institutions and Rights at work / quality of work and more productive employment. Through TEVETA, it reinforces national reforms such as transition towards competence-based training and digitalisation, while creating sector skills bodies that anchor donor and government initiatives in evidence-based skills priorities. For workers and employers, it complements advocacy and in-house training by creating dialogue platforms and reducing skills mismatches.

The project thus plays a catalytic role, ensuring that other initiatives operate within a coherent, coordinated, and demand-driven skills development framework.

Alignment of Interventions for Systemic Change

The SDEP interventions are well aligned to maximise systemic changes by targeting the institutional, policy, and coordination mechanisms that underpin skills development in Zambia. At the policy level, the project supports the review of the Apprenticeship Act and the Employment Code, ensuring that legal frameworks for work-based learning and skills governance are modernised and inclusive. At the institutional level, interventions such as strengthening TEVETA, introducing competence-based training, and supporting digitalisation (e.g., exam item banks, industrial printers) are designed to embed lasting structural improvements rather than short-term fixes.

The establishment of sector skills bodies (SSBs) in agriculture, mining, energy, and tourism further anchors systemic change by institutionalizing industry participation in skills identification, curriculum review, and critical skills lists. This ensures that reforms are demand-driven and can be sustained beyond the project's lifespan. For social partners, the project created dialogue platforms that bring together government, employers, and workers (via ZFE and ZCTU), helping align training supply with labour market demand while embedding recognition of prior learning and work-based learning into the national agenda. The project strengthened tripartite engagement by creating dialogue platforms that convened government, employers, and workers (through ZFE and ZCTU) to better align training supply with labour-market demand while advancing recognition of prior learning (RPL) and work-based learning (WBL) within the national agenda. A concrete outcome of these dialogue processes is the development of Sector Skills Strategies under the Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification (STED) approach, through which stakeholders jointly identified critical skills needs and occupational profiles in priority sectors such as mining, tourism, agriculture, and energy. These strategies have since guided curriculum revision, informed the Critical Skills Lists coordinated through the Skills Advisory Committee, and supported proposed amendments to the Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code to enhance private-sector participation and modern WBL arrangements. The dialogue platforms also informed the revision of the Apprenticeship Act, expanding work-based learning provisions and strengthening private-sector participation, as well as the development of Critical Skills Lists through the Skills Advisory Committee, which now guides curriculum alignment, labour-market planning, and prioritisation of training investments.

By focusing on long-term enablers, laws, institutions, regulatory frameworks, and coordination platforms, the interventions go beyond individual training outputs to create systemic shifts in how skills are governed, delivered, and linked to employment. While progress has sometimes been slowed by

bureaucratic processes, the strategic focus on building foundations rather than isolated interventions maximises the potential for sustainable systemic change.

Alignment with Broader Policy Frameworks and International Commitments

The SDEP is strongly aligned with broader policy frameworks and international commitments, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its focus on employability, human capital development, and skills for priority sectors directly contributes to SDG 4 (quality education and lifelong learning), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), and SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), while its emphasis on renewable energy and climate-smart skills also supports SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and SDG 13 (climate action). At the continental and regional levels, the programme reinforces the AU's Continental TVET Strategy, the Skills Initiative for Africa, and the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, which promote harmonised, demand-driven skills systems. It is also consistent with the EU–Africa Partnership and the European Green Deal by mainstreaming green and digital skills within Zambia's development agenda.

4.3 Effectiveness

Progress Toward Objectives, Outcomes, and Outputs

The project is broadly on track in terms of systemic reforms and institutional strengthening (Outcomes 1 and 2), which are essential for long-term sustainability.

While foundational reforms are progressing, the translation of these systemic gains into tangible improvements in employability and labour market outcomes is lagging, particularly in terms of work-based learning, updated curricula, and direct beneficiary-level results. The project is lagging in achieving the practical, learner-level results envisaged under Outcome 3, where delays in curricula piloting, equipment installation, and work-based learning risk undermining immediate employability gains. With the current pace, the project is unlikely to fully achieve all its outputs and outcomes by 2027 unless corrective measures are taken.

Achievement of Outcomes

1. **Outcome 1 (Strengthened TEVET governance):** There is strong evidence that the project has made meaningful progress in modernising the TEVET governance landscape, primarily through policy and legal reforms, institutional strengthening of TEVETA, and development of labour-market intelligence systems. A major area of advancement has been the support to the revision of the Employment Code and the Apprenticeship Act, both of which are central to mainstreaming contemporary forms of work-based learning (WBL), expanding recognition of prior learning (RPL), and bringing private-sector actors into core decision-making roles.

According to a representative from the Ministry of Labour: *"the updated Apprenticeship Bill brings the law up to speed with emerging issues in skills development, and importantly, creates a governance structure where the oversight committee is led by the private sector rather than government alone"*.

This shift responds directly to long-standing concerns that skills development structures had limited capacity to generate timely, industry-relevant guidance on occupational needs, WBL pathways, and

critical skills identification. The reform process has also integrated recent ILO guidance on apprenticeships and explicitly strengthened provisions around equity, including opportunities for youth and women to participate more fully in WBL opportunities.

The project has also contributed significantly to institutional strengthening of TEVETA. Through comprehensive organisational capacity assessments, TEVETA and training institutions were able to identify structural and operational gaps that required attention.

One TEVETA representative described the assessment as a *"mirror... helping us see where the gaps are and how to realign."* These findings are now directly informing TEVETA's next strategic plan, positioning the agency to become a more evidence-driven regulator. Improvements are visible in areas such as the digitisation of examination item banks, which enhances transparency and quality assurance, and a renewed emphasis on research and innovation functions to better respond to industry and labour-market trends.

The near-completion of a national Labour Market Information System (LMIS) represents another significant milestone under this outcome. Once operational, the LMIS is expected to address long-standing labour-data gaps, helping policymakers, employers, workers, and jobseekers make better decisions regarding training, hiring, and career development. Stakeholders emphasise that the LMIS will, for the first time, provide a coordinated national repository of labour-market insights to support training relevance and government planning.

Nonetheless, institutionalisation of these reforms has been slower than planned. Stakeholders noted that the project's delayed start-up, particularly the absence of a full inception phase, restricted early alignment, work planning, and stakeholder coordination. This has been compounded by public-sector procedural delays, which have slowed consultations, validation processes, and the codification of policy reforms into operational practice. As a result, while the direction of reforms is widely considered appropriate, momentum on embedding and operationalising these reforms across institutions and sectors requires continued management attention.

In a nutshell, progress under Outcome 1 demonstrates a strong and credible shift toward a more responsive and better-regulated TEVET governance system, anchored in tripartite participation, modernised legislation, and strengthened institutional capability. Even so, sustained follow-through will be needed to ensure the reforms move beyond drafting and consultation and translate into consistent implementation across the training ecosystem.

2. **Outcome 2 (Industry relevance):** Progress under Outcome 2 has been particularly strong, with the project succeeding in shifting skills planning from a supply-driven model toward a genuinely demand-driven, industry-responsive ecosystem. The establishment and operationalisation of Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs) in mining, agriculture, tourism, and energy represents a major milestone.

An Assistant Labour Commissioner confirmed that Government has formally recognised and embedded SSBs into the national framework through amendments to the Employment Code, noting that *"we have been very active in working with the sector skills bodies with the Ministry of Technology and Science... we incorporated the recently established mining sector, tourism, energy, and agricultural sector"*. This demonstrates formal recognition, alignment and operational collaboration between ministries and the SSBs.

These bodies provide structured platforms where employers, workers' organisations, TEVETA, sector ministries, and training institutions jointly anticipate skills needs, validate occupational profiles, and shape curriculum updates. Stakeholders consistently stressed that such mechanisms did not exist previously or were fragmented and inconsistent. As one employer representative noted:

"The SSBs have enabled us to move from working in isolation to speaking to each other, marking a significant cultural shift toward coordinated public-private planning"; ZFE CEO

The SSB platforms have been strengthened through Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification (STED), supported consultations, which have produced Sector Skills Strategies for each of the four priority sectors. These strategies outline sector-specific occupational demand, skills gaps, future trends, and training implications, and now guide the development and revision of curricula. A complementary achievement has been the development of Critical Skills Lists (CSLs), generated through employer and worker consultations and coordinated by the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC). These CSLs identify high-priority occupations facing acute shortages and help training institutions and Government target investment, curriculum reform, and WBL expansion. According to the Zambia Federation of Employers, the SSBs now bring together *"small, medium and big mining companies... and training institutions to jointly determine what skills are needed"*. These engagements have contributed to the development of the critical skills list to drive sector competitiveness.

The energy sector stands out as an illustrative case of how these mechanisms are reshaping policy and training focus. Stakeholders emphasised that initial skills development efforts had focused narrowly on basic solar home-system installation, leaving emerging areas underserved. Through sector consultations, actors identified new priority domains such as mini-grid installation, productive-use solar applications (including irrigation and refrigeration), and net-metering. One group discussion participant from the energy sector noted that: *"while previous curricula addressed only ordinary solar installations, industry consultations revealed gaps in the market around mini-grids and solar for productive use, creating new demands for technician-level and artisanal training"*. TEVETA has since begun integrating these rapidly evolving skillsets into curriculum updates and training planning, indicating the responsiveness of the system to market signals.

At institutional level, training providers are beginning to engage differently with industry as a result of the SSB platforms. One institution representative, the Principal of NORTCO shared that: *"the consultative process helped us understand the real skills employers are looking for. This is what was missing before,"* this has led them to re-prioritise infrastructure and equipment needs accordingly. This linkage between sector-level planning and institutional responsiveness underscores the depth of change underway.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. Private-sector participation, while stronger than before, is still uneven. Interviewees cited limited incentives for regular participation, and competing operational priorities as contributing factors. Smaller firms in particular struggle to commit time and resources to sustained engagement unless benefits are clearly visible. Without further structuring of incentives, such as clearer pathways for accessing trained workers or subsidised WBL placements, there is a risk that participation may dwindle over time, weakening relevant gains.

3. **Outcome 3 (Curricula and training delivery):** Progress under Outcome 3 has been moderate, with solid groundwork laid but slow conversion into fully operationalised, industry-aligned training delivery. Significant advances have been made through comprehensive institutional diagnostics, which examined capacity, infrastructure, staffing, and programme relevance across targeted training centres. These assessments have helped institutions identify their comparative advantages and strategic investment needs. The Principal of

Chipata Trades Training Centre reflected that: *“participation in sector consultations and assessments helped us understand the real skills employers are looking for....this is what was missing before,”* underscoring how the new diagnostic and consultation processes are already shifting institutional thinking and planning.

On the supply side, plans for equipment procurement have been made, based on the diagnostics and sector priorities identified. Institutions are therefore preparing to adapt training delivery once equipment is installed. For example, Chipata Trades is set to expand year-round agriculture and energy training once irrigation and solar-powered systems are completed. Plans include reservoirs, irrigation pivots, and drip-line systems, which will allow the centre to irrigate its 400-hectare farm to sustain continuous programming in horticulture, water-management technologies, and related productive-use energy applications. These investments are also intended to improve the practical orientation of training and enable production-based learning linked to local markets.

Despite these structured steps, classroom-level improvements and learner-level gains are not yet visible. The piloting of revised curricula remains delayed, primarily due to procurement bottlenecks and sequencing challenges. Without equipment in place, institutions are unable to demonstrate the full practical requirements of new occupational standards.

Progress in Work-Based Learning (WBL) is similarly constrained. Although legislative and governance reforms have laid the foundation for WBL modalities, institutional capacity to broker placements, and employer readiness to host apprentices and trainees at scale, remain insufficient. Employers have expressed willingness to support WBL but require clearer support structures, guidance, and incentives.

Collectively, these constraints limit the project’s ability to demonstrate early improvements in training quality, relevance, and employability. Stakeholders are confident, however, that once equipment installation and curricula pilots begin, momentum will shift quickly. Institutions are already aligning their planning and staffing with sector requirements and remain keen to accelerate hands-on training delivery. In short, considerable groundwork has been completed; the next phase requires a sharpened focus on execution, timely procurement, and institutional support to translate systemic reforms into tangible training outcomes for learners.

4. **Outcome 4 (Project management):** The project benefits from functional coordination structures and strong technical capacity within the team. However, implementation pace has been slowed by under-resourcing, weak sequencing, and procurement delays. On the positive side, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Technical Working Groups (TWGs) have operated consistently and provided a regular forum for technical engagement between government, employers, workers’ organisations, and TEVETA. Stakeholders highlighted the quality of technical support provided. TEVETA noted that:

“The project is here to build the systems... and will help us in the long term....its approach to strengthening institutional diagnostics and sector skills bodies is commendable” TEVETA

Similarly, the Zambia Federation of Employers described the engagement as a welcome shift from past isolation. Stakeholders consistently praised the competence of the core team. The PSC/TWG mechanisms were described as well-structured and collaborative, with partners reporting smooth interaction and openness to feedback. ZFE representative noted: *“we have no issues in terms of the capacity for them to deliver. I think they’ve done very well”*.

However, several structural issues have constrained implementation. First, the project started without a sufficient inception phase, which prevented early clarification of institutional arrangements, roles, and processes. The government project manager emphasized that this lack of inception meant uncertainties persisted around oversight, reporting lines, and financing modalities:

This absence also meant the team carried forward outdated assumptions, including around the readiness of legal and regulatory reform processes. As the project officer explained, they assumed the Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code would only require “finalising,” but discovered on arrival that *“it was nowhere near the line... we had to start from zero”*, a reality that forced extensive reallocation of time and financial resources.

Staffing challenges are also a persistent barrier. The team is small relative to the project’s scale and complexity, with no dedicated M&E officer, limiting systematic tracking, learning, and adaptation. Stakeholders highlighted that this has affected responsiveness and follow-through. As one sector body representative noted:

“They are not sufficiently staffed... what is helping them is interaction with various bodies” SSB Agric.

This limits the project’s ability to translate analysis into coordinated roll-out. For example, institutional capacity assessments have been conducted, but data from these cannot yet be fully harnessed to guide implementation decisions because of insufficient M&E capacity.

Procurement is another defining challenge. Because delivery of curricula piloting, work-based learning (WBL), and equipment installation depends heavily on procurement timeliness. Slow processes have caused knock-on delays. An MOEST representative noted that while initial diagnostics succeeded, execution is being slowed by process rather than design. Stakeholders across sectors consistently called for acceleration, with an energy stakeholder noting: *“Execution is much easier because it’s very specific, but that institutions are unable to proceed until procurement clears”*.

Another complicating factor is the dual-manager arrangement: the Government-appointed Project Manager (MoF/NAO) and ILO CTA operate alongside each other, without a formally agreed division of labour. As one manager explained, this creates practical coordination challenges, especially in reporting chains:

“The PM... remains an employee of the government... The inception phase... would have clarified this.”,
Project CTA

These coordination challenges have slowed the conversion of foundational reforms into tangible results at institutional and learner level.

Delivery of Outputs

The delivery of outputs remains partially on-track (Annex 9.7). Foundational systemic reforms (SAC/SSBs, LMIS, institutional plans) are progressing well and lay the basis for downstream improvements in training delivery and employability. The project has registered meaningful progress across a number of priority outputs. While delivery is uneven, several foundational reforms and institutional strengthening measures have taken hold, demonstrating systemic gains.

However, delayed procurement, curriculum piloting, tracer studies, and WBL roll-out indicate the need for stronger sequencing, staffing, and operational support to translate systemic gains into learner-level outcomes before project close.

Output 1.1 — Revamped Skills Advisory Committee (SAC)

By September 2025, the revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC) had begun to bear fruit, following years of inactivity before the project. Stakeholder satisfaction with the SAC's performance improved from low to moderate, indicating that institutions and social partners appreciate the renewed structure and coordination role it provides. While the target was to achieve high satisfaction, the moderate level reflects both progress and the ongoing need to strengthen SAC's influence, quality of analysis, and responsiveness to labour market changes. Nonetheless, the activation of SAC and the increased frequency of engagement mark a significant systemic shift in Zambia's skills governance ecosystem. A project team member noted that the SAC had previously *"only met... four years down the line... now, this year alone, they've had three meetings"*. Members have been re-appointed and oriented, and SAC now provides a structured national platform linking Government, employers, and workers. For the first time, SSBs have had the opportunity to interact formally with SAC, strengthening vertical and horizontal coordination within the TEVET governance system.

Output 1.2 – Enhanced TEVETA capacity for assessments, examinations, and certification

This output aimed to improve employer satisfaction with graduate competency, targeting at least 40% satisfaction compared to less than 25% at baseline. However, by September 2025, no official measurement of employer satisfaction had yet been undertaken. As a result, progress on this output remained undetermined. Although qualitative feedback suggests ongoing improvements in assessment reforms and digitalisation, the lack of systematic measurement means the programme cannot yet verify whether employers perceive graduates as more competent.

Output 1.3 – Strengthened Research & Innovation capacity within TEVETA

A major milestone under this output was the establishment of TEVETA's Research and Innovation Unit, which did not exist at baseline. By September 2025, the unit was formally established, signaling a strong advancement toward TEVETA's long-term institutional strengthening. The creation of this unit enhances TEVETA's capacity to conduct research, analyse labour-market trends, and develop evidence-based training policies. Though the full operationalisation, such as staffing, technical capability, and research output, still requires development, the establishment of the unit itself represents a foundational achievement aligned with the project's system-building approach.

Output 1.4 – Development and piloting of a TEVET social marketing, branding, and communication strategy

This output sought to improve the perception of TEVET among women and youth, starting from a baseline of generally poor views of vocational training. As of September 2025, evidence indicates that perceptions among young learners are improving, though there is no widespread measurement yet to determine the level of change. The progress reflects improved visibility of TEVET opportunities. While the perception shift is still modest and primarily anecdotal, it signals early behavioural change among

learners and communities, an essential precursor to increased enrolment and broader acceptance of vocational pathways.

Output 1.5 – Enhanced digitalisation of TEVET and the skills system

The project aimed to generate significant cost savings through digitalisation, addressing a baseline of high assessment-related costs. By September 2025, tangible progress had been made through reductions in exam printing costs, reflecting efforts to shift from paper-based to digital processes. Although the broader goal of systemic digitalisation, including online assessments, information management, and digitised examination banks, is still in progress, the early cost savings demonstrate the potential of digital reform. This achievement lays a strong foundation for future efficiency gains and improved transparency in assessment administration.

Output 2.1 — Establishment and formalisation of Sectoral Advisory Groups (SAGs)

At baseline, Zambia had only one functioning SAG, within the water sector. By September 2025, three new SAGs had been established across the priority sectors, representing strong progress toward the target of four. These SAGs play a crucial role in interpreting labour-market needs, reviewing curricula, and guiding TEVET institutions. Although one more SAG remains to be created to fully meet the target, the establishment of three represents a structural breakthrough by widening industry participation and improving coherence across skills planning processes. SSBs in agriculture, mining, tourism, and energy are operational at varying levels of maturity. Their establishment has opened new avenues for industry participation. Agriculture stakeholders highlighted that before the project, *“TEVETA was operating more or less in a silo... the project opened up avenues for private-sector engagement”*. SSB Agric. In mining, project support transformed an internal employer-only body into a more inclusive structure engaging large-scale, small-scale and artisanal miners. SSBs have since contributed to occupational profiling, curriculum prioritisation, and the development of Critical Skills Lists.

Output 2.2 – Piloting the sector skills anticipation approach in four priority sectors

Building on the work of SAGs, this output required the development of four sector skills strategies. By September 2025, strategies for three sectors had been completed. These strategies provide a structured analysis of skills gaps, occupational demand, and future trends. Although one sector’s strategy is pending, the three completed strategies demonstrate that the system is moving toward a more evidence-based, demand-driven model. They also serve as foundational documents for curriculum revision, qualification upgrades, and work-based learning expansion.

A LMIS development is at an advanced stage of development and will be addressing long-standing labour-market information gaps. While its outputs are not yet visible to the public, stakeholders emphasised that LMIS is a systems-enhancement investment, building backend capability for evidence-based skills planning.

Output 2.3 – Increased employability of women through industry-aligned skills development

Progress under Output 2.3 has not been achieved. There is no strategy, no advocacy campaigns. Outcome-level change is not yet evident. There is no measurable increase in women’s enrolment, access to work-based learning, or employment outcomes, reflecting broader delays in curriculum piloting, WBL roll-out, and tracer studies.

Although the broader aim, to directly improve women’s employability, remains a longer-term ambition requiring training, placement, and targeted gender strategies, the availability of sector gap analyses is a critical prerequisite for designing such interventions.

Output 2.4 — Work-based learning (WBL) scale-up

This output sought to establish a national apprenticeship programme and ensure measurable participation by youth and women. At baseline, Zambia had no national apprenticeship system. By September 2025, the project had successfully developed the design of a national apprenticeship programme, though implementation had not yet begun. This indicates substantial conceptual progress but limited operational progress. The design provides a framework for MoUs, apprenticeship pathways, completion tracking, and employer engagement, but the real impact on learners will only be realised once the programme becomes active and placements begin.

Despite legal and governance reforms enabling diverse WBL modalities, institutions and employers are not yet fully ready to offer placements on a scale. Employers cited limited incentives, while stakeholders in energy stressed that with priorities now clear, *“execution is much easier because it’s very specific”* but dependent on procurement and institutional readiness.

Output 3.1 – Curriculum review and development with private sector participation

Although Zambia had ongoing curriculum review processes, these were not aligned with competence-based training (CBT). By September 2025, nine curricula had been identified (“earmarked”) for full revision under the new CBT models. This demonstrates alignment between sector skills gap findings and curriculum reform priorities. However, the actual revision and piloting of these curricula remain delayed, largely due to procurement challenges and institutional readiness issues. The earmarking phase signals intention and planning, but practical implementation is still pending. Initial assumptions that the project would refine existing curricula proved unrealistic; institutional assessments revealed insufficient readiness to deliver competence-based programmes. As the team explained:

“If we were just going to come in and immediately start developing curriculum... by now we should have had a lot... but the institutional capacity assessment told us, no, you can’t”, **Project Staff**

This shift required strengthening institutional capability first, thus extending timelines.

Output 3.2 – TEVET capacity assessment and development of institutional improvement plans

The programme achieved strong progress under this output. Comprehensive capacity assessments were conducted for selected VTIs, leading to the development of detailed capacity-building plans. These plans now guide institutional upgrades, staffing strategies, procurement priorities, and improved programme delivery. This work directly strengthens TEVET institutions by ensuring they are equipped and prepared to deliver modern, industry-aligned training programmes. The assessments also informed TEVETA’s broader institutional strengthening plan.

“Our idea then was to... assess the institutions and see the most viable ones... especially reflecting on the four priority sectors”. **Project Team Member**

Although equipment procurement and delivery are delayed, institutions such as Chipata Training Center are preparing infrastructure (reservoirs, pivots, drip lines) necessary to operationalise new agriculture and productive-use energy curricula.

Output 3.3 – Strengthening institutional capacity to deliver market-responsive training

This output aimed to increase CBT readiness across four priority institutions. By September 2025, three institutions had been formally earmarked for upgrading. Although this falls slightly short of the target, the progress demonstrates a structured approach to elevating training quality. Capacity gaps were identified, and equipment and staffing needs were mapped out. The key bottleneck remains the procurement and installation of training equipment, without which full CBT implementation cannot commence.

Output 3.4 – Pilot implementation of updated curricula

The programme intended to pilot new or revised CBT curricula across five VTIs. By September 2025, all five institutions had been selected and prepared for piloting, but actual pilot delivery had not begun. This delay is linked to equipment procurement processes, institutional readiness, and sequencing challenges linked to Output 3.1. Although groundwork is in place, the absence of practical piloting means that the training system has not yet begun testing the revised curricula with learners. This places pressure on later phases of the project to deliver tangible benefits at learner level.

Factors Influencing Achievement of Outputs and Outcomes

The achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes was shaped by a combination of enabling and constraining factors.

Enablers

- **Strong tripartite engagement:**
Revitalised SAC and operational SSBs institutionalised consultative feedback loops among government, employers, and workers; workers noted these platforms allow them to “*voice out what they think the training programs should... address*”.
- **Systemic reform orientation:**
Focus on legal and regulatory reforms, transition to competence-based training, and TEVETA institutional strengthening helped address root causes of skills mismatches and build long-term system capacity.
- **Institution–industry partnerships:**
Collaboration between TEVETA and professional bodies such as the Agriculture Institute of Zambia (AIZ), plus strengthened SSB participation, enhanced curriculum relevance and occupational standards. Employers reported “*a lot of confidence and trust... [and] curriculum reviews aligned to industry needs*” (SSB Agriculture).
- **Alignment with national and continental frameworks:**
Alignment with the 8th NDP, national TVET strategies, and AU/SADC priorities reinforced policy coherence, legitimacy, and national ownership.

Constraints

- **Delayed start and absence of a sufficient inception phase:**
Roles, budgets, and sequencing were unclear at outset, slowing coordination; “The inception phase would have clarified this, but it was not enough.
- **Procurement delays and budget rigidities:**
Highly procedural procurement process hindered contracting and equipment delivery; “*ILO procurement... is extremely cumbersome... three people are not enough to implement a 6m-euro project*” EU Delegation.
- **Small, overstretched team and lack of M&E officer:**
Limited staffing weakened adaptive learning and follow-up. Team members reported “*working even during weekends... because we were already behind schedule*” (Project Team member).
- **Private-sector consultation fatigue:**
Heavy consultation demands and slow follow-through led to waning employer participation; the private sector became “*less and less involved... because things took a long time*” (Paula, EU Delegation).
- **Protracted policy/legal reform processes:**
Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code revisions required starting “from zero,” rather than fine-tuning existing drafts, extending timelines and resource needs.

Adherence to the Theory of Change

The project has generally followed its Theory of Change (ToC), though with adaptations in response to contextual realities. The ToC envisaged strengthening the legal and policy framework, enhancing institutional capacity (particularly TEVETA and training institutions), and establishing mechanisms for industry participation would lead to more relevant, demand-driven training and, ultimately, improved employability and decent work opportunities.

In practice, many of these pathways have been actively pursued. The project has supported the review processes for the Apprenticeship Act and the Employment Code by providing technical assistance to tripartite constituents, who retain responsibility for drafting, endorsement, and adoption. Likewise, the project has facilitated and technically supported the establishment and operationalisation of Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs) in agriculture, mining, tourism, and energy, with their formal creation and continued functioning led by the relevant government and social partner institutions. The project has also contributed to institutional capacity by undertaking diagnostic assessments and supporting procurement of equipment for selected training institutions. These actions are consistent with the ToC’s core assumption that strengthening systemic reforms, together with active employer and worker engagement, creates conditions for sustainable change.

Validation of Development Hypotheses in the Logical Framework

The development hypothesis underpinning the project’s logical framework has been partly supported. The assumption that strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks would create an enabling

environment has been validated, as evidenced by the revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee, which became active after years of inactivity. As well, the hypothesis that tripartite participation would align training with labour market needs was supported, with employers and workers confirming that sector skills bodies and feedback mechanisms have improved relevance of curricula and training.

However, some underlying assumptions proved unrealistic. Although the SDEP was designed to ensure continuity of past work undertaken by the ILO, Government, and other partners, expectations that existing reforms could be rapidly finalised did not hold. In practice, several legal processes, such as revisions to the Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code, had to restart from an earlier stage. Likewise, curriculum development progressed more slowly than anticipated because the transition to competence-based approaches required additional time and specialised expertise. *Satisfaction with Quantity and Quality of Outputs*

The quantity and quality of outputs produced to date have been mixed; satisfactory in quality but slower in quantity than originally anticipated. On the positive side, stakeholders acknowledged that reforms and institutional outputs were meaningful and well-executed. As a TEVETA representative noted:

"This project came and now started to build the capacity in us and build the capacity in sector skills bodies... those are very systemic approaches that will help us even in the future"

The Zambia Federation of Employers also highlighted the relevance of outputs, stating that *"we've moved to the identification... of a critical skills list which we think are much needed for the different sectors"*.

However, delays in procurement and curriculum development limited the volume of tangible outputs, with stakeholders pointing out that progress was slower than expected despite the quality of what was achieved. In sum, outputs have been of good quality and system-focused, but the overall quantity remains below target due to time and capacity constraints.

Unexpected Results at Output and Outcome Levels

The project generated several unexpected results at both the output and outcome levels, many of which strengthened its systemic impact.

At the output level, one unanticipated achievement was the revitalisation and increased functionality of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC). Although the law had established the SAC in 2019, it had never convened until SDEP support. Since then, the SAC has met multiple times, developed a work plan, and engaged with sector skills bodies. As a project team member observed,

"By the time this project was coming, this is a committee that had only met... four years down the line... now, this year alone, they've had three meetings".

This went beyond the original expectation of simply strengthening an existing committee. Instead, the project effectively operationalised a dormant institution, creating a new platform for national skills coordination.

At the outcome level, another unexpected result was the policy and cultural shift within training institutions and ministries towards competence-based training (CBT). The project's institutional capacity assessments revealed systemic gaps that redirected focus from knowledge-based to competence-based curricula. As TEVETA noted:

"With that institutional capacity assessment now, it's recommended that the curriculum and everything that we do should be competence-based, and that's a very big change".

This shift has begun influencing broader reforms, with CBT now being integrated into national strategic planning and industry-aligned curricula at TVET level.

In addition, the project created unexpected synergies between sectoral bodies, such as linkages between the Agriculture and Water SSBs, which had previously operated in silos. This cross-sector collaboration improved curriculum alignment and occupational standards across related industries

Equitable Application of Targets for Intended Beneficiaries

The project has made deliberate efforts to ensure equitable application of its benefits to specific target groups, particularly women and youth, though progress has been uneven. Youth have been a central focus, with interventions such as curriculum reforms, work-based learning opportunities, and sector skills bodies designed to improve employability in priority sectors. For example, through the Skills Advisory Committee and the first national jobs summit, over 500 youth were directly linked to employment prospects. Training institutions supported under the project, reported that upgraded equipment and incubation models expanded opportunities for young trainees to gain practical, market-relevant skills.

Women have also been included, especially through policies promoting apprenticeships and work-based learning; however, evidence suggests that gender mainstreaming has not been as pronounced as youth inclusion. While employers and unions recognised the importance of representation, specific gender-sensitive measures (such as tailored outreach, mentorship, or quotas within sector skills bodies) were less visible in implementation reports.

The project has therefore equitably targeted youth and, to some degree, women, by expanding access to training, creating dialogue platforms, and fostering pathways into industry. Yet the application of gender equity measures lags behind youth-focused interventions, suggesting the need for stronger, intentional strategies to address women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors like mining and energy.

Geographic Variation in Project Results

Project results have not been uniform across geographic areas, with notable variations depending on institutional capacity, sector focus, and regional economic contexts. For instance, in Chipata, where agriculture is the dominant livelihood, the project has concentrated on irrigation infrastructure, capacity building, and farm-based training. Chipata Trades Training Centre has benefited from land acquisition, irrigation systems, and plans to upgrade from certificate to diploma-level programmes, positioning itself as a future centre of excellence in agriculture. Trainees at Chipata Trades Training Centre confirmed that they are receiving strong practical exposure in crop and livestock production as a direct result of SDEP-supported interventions, particularly the planned establishment of new irrigation infrastructure and expanded farmland. As one staff member explained, the project will be installing *"water reservoirs... the centre pivot and the dripping system... so students will be taught effectively on irrigation,"* enabling year-round agriculture training rather than relying solely on rain-fed systems. These planned investments are positioning the Centre to upgrade programmes and provide hands-on learning aligned with labour-market needs. By contrast, institutions in urban centres such as Lusaka and the Copperbelt have

experienced results more focused on systemic reforms, such as the sector skills bodies, rather than large-scale infrastructure. These regions also benefit from closer proximity to industries like mining and energy, which provide stronger employer linkages and opportunities for work-based learning.

Effectiveness of Backstopping Support from DWT Pretoria and HQs

Backstopping from the ILO Decent Work Team in Pretoria and technical departments at ILO Headquarters provided critical programmatic direction and implementation support, particularly on policy reform, skills governance, and competence-based training. These engagements were primarily inter-office (Pretoria–HQ–Lusaka) rather than between different functional units within the ILO Lusaka office. Pretoria was expected to provide technical supervision and thematic guidance, while HQ departments were expected to contribute specialised expertise on legal reform, apprenticeship systems, and systems strengthening. Although this support helped reinforce the project's strategic focus, more frequent and sustained in-country engagement between Pretoria/HQ specialists and the Lusaka team, as well as with national constituents, would likely have enhanced timeliness, operational responsiveness, and effectiveness of delivery. The support has been effective in terms of implementation and programmatic guidance. National counterparts highlighted that technical expertise from Pretoria and Geneva strengthened delivery, particularly through subject specialists who provided knowledge transfer and capacity building to the national team. This programmatic support ensured that the project remained aligned with ILO standards and maintained coherence with regional and global skills development priorities.

However, implementation support, especially for technically complex tasks such as the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) did not perform as well as expected, largely because it relied heavily on remote/virtual engagement rather than sustained in-person technical missions, which limited responsiveness, hands-on accompaniment, and timely problem-solving. ,.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency of Resource Allocation and Use

The project's efficiency has been affected by slow implementation and gaps in sequencing rather than by an oversized budget. Although EUR 6.5 million was allocated, under-expenditure reflects delays in major technical lines, especially curriculum development and piloting, work-based learning, gender activities, and evaluation, which could not proceed on schedule. The resulting budget gap therefore stems from unimplemented activities, not from over-budgeting. While ILO and the EU allow budget revisions during implementation, re-profiling alone could not fully address these delays because institutional readiness and procurement constraints limited absorption capacity. Staffing structures lacked key functions such as Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and the government-appointed project manager received limited operational and technical support, particularly due to delayed recruitment, unclear role division at start-up, and reliance on remote backstopping, thereby constraining overall effectiveness. Despite these constraints, the project team demonstrated strong commitment, which ensured progress despite limited resources.

Financially, the project is reported as underspent overall, but this masks significant inefficiencies. As of 31 January 2024 (latest available financial statement), expenditure stood at EUR 560,545.88 against a

total project budget of EUR 6.5 million. No subsequent certified expenditure report was available at the time of review. Certain critical areas such as the Skills Advisory Council appear under budgeted, not because of oversight, but by design. Given that SACs had previously become non-functional due to donor-driven funding, the project intentionally limited financial injections to promote constituent ownership. As implementation progressed, however, operational needs exceeded these minimal allocations, leading to pressure on available resources. Budget lines for essential interventions such as apprenticeships and competence-based training equipment remain underspent primarily because implementation has been delayed rather than due to insufficient budget allocations. While some lines appear tight, activities have not progressed far enough to justify full spending, and it is unclear whether available flexibility, such as budget revision or donor negotiation, were explored to address emerging needs. Misalignments between budget allocations and actual needs further delayed implementation and required donor-approved revisions.

The absence of a sufficient inception phase limited the project's ability to clarify roles and sequence activities appropriately at the outset. While budgets could technically have been revised with ILO/EU approval, delayed start-up and unclear prioritisation meant that some resources initially remained in less relevant lines while urgent areas, particularly policy and institutional strengthening, did not receive timely funding adjustments.

The efficiency of resource allocation and use under the SDEP has therefore been mixed, strategically effective but slowed by operational bottlenecks. On the positive side, resources were channelled into systemic reforms rather than isolated, short-term fixes, which stakeholders recognised as a more cost-effective approach in the long run. One representative from TEVETA observed that:

"This project came and now started to build the capacity in us and build the capacity in sector skills bodies... those are very systemic approaches that will help us even in the future"

The Zambia Federation of Employers also acknowledged that investments in sector skills bodies and critical skills lists directly addresses mismatches between training supply and market demand, reducing the risk of wasted resources. Human and technical expertise were generally well targeted, with DWT Pretoria and ILO HQ providing programmatic backstopping and subject specialists to complement national capacity. For some technical support sessions, such as the development of the Labour Market Information System, beneficiaries from the Ministry of Labour, besides the project funding 3 missions (beyond the remote sessions), advised that these be delivered in person to enhance effectiveness and impact. . As the Ministry of Labour team noted, *"the technical support... was done remotely... it took long to make it ready... you can't do that with somebody who you just met remotely"*. This indicates that while expertise was allocated, delivery methods sometimes reduced cost-effectiveness by prolonging timelines.

Financial resources were used prudently, with funds supporting institutional assessments, equipment provision, and curriculum development, all aligned to project objectives. However, delays in procurement and the absence of an inception phase meant that some activities took longer and cost more to implement than originally planned. Time and staffing constraints thus affected efficiency. The small project team was overstretched, limiting its ability to deliver outputs at the expected pace despite their technical competence.

Expenditure Patterns Against Budget

An analysis of project financial records for the period 1 February 2023 – 31 January 2024 shows that overall expenditure is significantly below expectation. The project's total budget is approximately €6.5 million, against which only €560,545.88 had been spent by January 2024. From the initial disbursement of €1.5 million, a balance of €944,648.26 remained unspent, indicating a slow burn rate and substantial under-execution relative to planned activity timelines.

Expenditure to date has been heavily concentrated in staffing and basic operational costs. Under Output o.1 (Project Management and Oversight), spending remains well below projections: for example, €137,725 was spent against a budget of €801,600 for the Technical Advisor; €46,817 against €329,664 for the National Project Coordinator (Skills); and no expenditure was recorded for the National Enterprise Coordinator post, which had €329,664 budgeted. Similarly, only €37,028 of €191,280 was spent on the Finance/Admin Assistant, and €9,847 of €88,800 on the Driver. These patterns reflect delays in recruitment and reduced operational tempo. As of 31 January 2024, several key posts, such as the Technical Advisor, National Project Coordinator (Skills), Finance/Admin Assistant, Driver, and National Enterprise Coordinator, showed minimal or no expenditures. These patterns are explicitly linked to *"delays in recruitment and reduced operational tempo."* Office establishment expenditures also remained low, as seen in rent expenditure (€3,197 spent against €77,280 budgeted), although some ICT procurement and communications costs were absorbed.

In contrast, spending against core technical delivery has been extremely limited. Across the skills system strengthening and private-sector engagement portfolio, most budget lines show near-zero execution. No expenditure was recorded for LMIS Steering and Advisory Committees, TEVETA assessment and certification strengthening, or research and innovation. STED-related sector analysis support shows the most progress, with €96,949 spent of €291,000 budgeted, approximately one-third delivery. The establishment of Sector Skills Bodies shows €15,180 spent of €99,700 budgeted, reflecting roughly 15 percent performance.

Activities related to gender mainstreaming, work-based learning (WBL), and curriculum development have also seen minimal expenditure. Despite allocations of €214,500 for gender mainstreaming and €961,438 for curriculum design and piloting, neither budget line shows meaningful financial activity. WBL delivery recorded €7,412 spent of €719,250 budgeted, approximately one percent. These findings are consistent with implementation observations indicating that downstream delivery has lagged behind systemic and policy-level processes.

Other budgeted areas, including baseline research, mid-term review, final evaluation, branding, public communication, and TEVET exhibition activities, show zero expenditure during the period under review. This suggests major sequencing delays, with project resources committed to foundational and upstream inputs while later-stage actions remain pending.

The expenditure patterns reported in the timeframe cited above therefore reflect a project still largely in foundational set-up, with significant under-execution of programmatic and technical activities. Spending primarily covers personnel and limited operational support, with very low utilisation across core delivery areas such as WBL, curriculum roll-out, gender interventions, and evaluation. These trends mirror

operational challenges identified through interviews, notably delayed inception, procurement bottlenecks, staffing gaps, unclear sequencing, and slower-than-expected regulatory review processes. To meet project objectives within the current timeframe, the next phase will require accelerated procurement, strengthened in-country technical support, detailed sequencing of downstream implementation, timely contracting, and activation of gender and WBL components.

Timeliness of Funds and Interventions

Funds and interventions under the SDEP have not consistently been delivered in a timely manner, and several bottlenecks have affected efficiency. Although overall funding from the donor to the project has been adequate, internal disbursement from the project to implementing partners/activities was not always timely. Stakeholders noted that costs for workshops and consultation processes could only be covered once project funds were released, which sometimes caused delays and disrupted implementation momentum. The project has experienced delays due to several interlinked factors. First, the institutional capacity assessments consumed nearly a year before substantive implementation could begin. Stakeholders noted that the methodology used may also have contributed to the extended timelines. While these assessments were necessary to justify investments and strengthen Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), they significantly delayed downstream activities, especially under Outcome 3, which depended on prior capacity assessment.

The assumption that the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC) would only require “light touch” interventions proved unrealistic. The SAC was found to be defunct, with both legal and operational gaps, requiring intensive revitalisation. The project was further forced to limit critical capacity building activities particularly in the areas of national skills governance, planned WBL activities, and support to TEVET training institutions.

The project’s reliance on a government-appointed project manager and focal persons also delayed implementation, as their appointments took time.

The absence of a sufficient inception phase and delayed baseline study (eventually done) also meant the project lacked an early opportunity to align assumptions, roles, and budget allocations. This omission forced reactive adjustments once activities were underway, further compounding delays. The delayed project start-up also increased the need for renewed assessments at start-up that further delayed implementation.

Adequacy of Budget Provisions for Gender and Inclusion

The project budgets made some provisions for gender and inclusion, but these are not as robust or visible as other systemic priorities. The Description of Action and budget framework includes activities such as gender analysis in the four selected sectors, development of sector-based gender mainstreaming plans, advocacy campaigns to promote apprenticeships for women in male-dominated trades, and provision of sanitary facilities in training institutions. These allocations showed enhanced commitment to address structural barriers to women’s participation and promote equity in access to training and employment opportunities.

In practice, however, gender-focused activities received less emphasis compared to broader institutional reforms like curriculum development, sector skills bodies, and labour market systems. Stakeholder

interviews reflected stronger attention to youth inclusion than to gender, with fewer targeted strategies or resources directed at ensuring women's sustained participation, especially in sectors such as mining and energy. While the budget technically made space for gender-responsive interventions, the scale and prioritisation suggest these provisions were modest relative to the systemic investments.

Effectiveness of Risk Analysis and M&E Systems

An effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system has been established, with notable progress in strengthening evidence-based decision-making. The eventual development of the Labour Market Information System (LMIS), supported by technical expertise from DWT Pretoria and Geneva, will provide a platform for labour data collection and analysis. Institutions such as Chipata Trades introduced tracer studies to track graduate employability in line with TEVETA requirements. Social partners also confirmed that M&E mechanisms created new feedback loops, with ZCTU noting that the project allowed workers to *"voice out what they think the training programs should... address"*. These efforts reflect meaningful advances in M&E structures and use.

By contrast, risk analysis and mitigation have been less effective. While the project design identified risks such as policy delays, procurement bottlenecks, and low private sector engagement, these are often managed reactively rather than proactively. Although risks were identified at design, mitigation in implementation were skewed and reactive. The Description of Action identified core risks, e.g., a "weak connection between private sector and TEVET governing bodies and institutions" alongside systemic funding weaknesses, indicating that policy delays and stakeholder engagement problems were anticipated from the outset. In delivery, however, bottlenecks were addressed largely after they had already slowed progress.

Institutions report downstream effects, for instance at NORTEC, a new metallurgy hub sat idle because equipment had not arrived, forcing the college to *"postpone the metallurgical engineering program... it's empty because it needs the equipment... we feel that the project has really delayed."*

On the policy track, the project team acknowledges that initial assumptions *"were not holding... [so] we had to start from zero, and now we're trying to reallocate resources,"* illustrating ex-post course correction rather than pre-emptive mitigation. Government counterparts also describe reactive governance fixes, *"at first... our involvement... was not there. Until... it was felt that there was something missing, that's when we started participating."*

4.5 Impact Orientation

Progress Toward Achieving Expected Impact

The project is clearly moving in the direction of its proposed impact, strengthened governance, improved institutional capacity, and better employability for youth and workers. Although structural and operational delays have slowed momentum, the systemic changes already underway indicate that the project is on track to achieve its intended long-term impacts.

At the systemic level, the project has laid critical foundations for long-term impact. Policy and legal reforms, such as the review of the Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code, have begun to modernise the framework for skills development. The establishment of sector skills bodies (SSBs) in agriculture,

mining, energy, and tourism has institutionalised employer and worker participation in defining critical skills needs, which is central to achieving the impact of demand-driven training. The revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), dormant since 2019, further demonstrates forward movement in creating lasting coordination mechanisms.

At the institutional and beneficiary level, interventions are already enhancing employability pathways. Training institutions such as NORTEC and Chipata Training Center have received capacity assessments, equipment, and curriculum support. Chipata TTC reported that irrigation infrastructure and agricultural reforms will allow them to train students year-round, producing graduates better prepared for employment and entrepreneurship. Trainees themselves confirmed that agricultural courses were equipping them with practical skills and raising confidence in pursuing self-employment, despite challenges with access to land and capital. Trainees noted that the agricultural courses are already building practical skills and boosting confidence in self-employment. This suggests early behavioural and capacity-level change. Several trainees reported feeling better prepared to start small ventures because they can now apply core competencies such as livestock care, crop production, and improved farming practices. However, the translation of these skills into tangible income-generating activity remains constrained by limited access to land, start-up capital, and equipment. As a result, the impact at this stage is primarily seen in enhanced knowledge, skills, and motivation, rather than in sustained economic outcomes.

However, the pace of progress has been slowed by delays in procurement, and bureaucratic bottlenecks, including the need to adapt to the ILO's organisational structure in which much technical backstopping is provided remotely. These have postponed the full roll-out of some reforms and limited private-sector engagement. While procurement processes are governed by established policies and procedures, strict adherence without adequate planning also contributed to implementation delays. These delays mean that while outputs are contributing toward impacts, change is taking shape and beginning to show promising signs, although slowly.

Evidence of Contribution to Broader National Development Goals

There is clear evidence that the SDEP has contributed to Zambia's broader development goals and policy objectives. Nationally, the project aligns with Zambia's Vision 2030 and the 8th National Development Plan, which emphasise skills development, economic diversification, and job creation. The project supports revising the Apprenticeship Act and operationalising the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) has strengthened policy frameworks for employability and decent work. Institutional reforms and curriculum upgrading at colleges such as Nortec and Chipata Trades Training Center directly support government priorities to expand technical education and produce a skilled workforce for priority sectors.

At the regional and continental level, the project contributes to the African Union's TVET Continental Strategy and the SADC Protocol on Education and Training by embedding competence-based training and strengthening sector skills bodies, which harmonise training with labour market demand. Employers and unions have noted that these reforms reduce mismatches between training and industry needs, thereby contributing to industrialisation and inclusive growth. For instance, ZCTU observed that the project created new spaces for workers to shape training relevance, while the Zambia Federation of Employers praised the identification of critical skills lists for priority sectors. The introduction of irrigation

systems and sustainable agricultural practices at Chipata also demonstrate alignment with food security and climate resilience objectives.

Impact Lessons for Future Phases

The key lesson is that long-term impact depends on combining systemic reforms with inclusive governance, proactive risk management, and targeted equity measures. The project demonstrates that systemic reforms, such as legal changes, competence-based training, and institutional strengthening, can generate long-term impact, but they require adequate time, phased implementation, and proactive risk management.

Evidence shows that delays in policy processes and procurement slowed progress, suggesting that future phases must build in flexibility and stronger mitigation measures. Importantly, the revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee and establishment of sector skills bodies highlight that inclusive, tripartite structures foster ownership and ensure reforms remain relevant to labour market needs.

At the institutional level, providing equipment and infrastructure will create visible gains, but these will have the greatest impact when matched with staff capacity building, curriculum upgrades, and stronger industry partnerships. Youth inclusion is well integrated, yet gender-focused measures are less prominent, underscoring the need for more deliberate equity strategies in male-dominated sectors.

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability of outcomes for Project Beneficiaries

Many of the benefits introduced by the project are likely to continue after its closeout, though their sustainability will depend on continued institutional support, policy follow-through, and resource mobilisation.

At the systemic level, reforms such as the establishment of sector skills bodies (SSBs), the revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), and the review of the Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code have institutionalised new governance mechanisms that will outlast the project. These structures have created permanent platforms for employers, workers, and government to align training with labour market needs. Their continuity will ensure that beneficiaries, particularly youth and workers, continue to access more relevant and market-responsive training opportunities, requiring prolonged and more holistic support including institutional and programmatic support.

At the institutional level, colleges such as Chipata Trades Training center and Nortec will retain infrastructure improvements (e.g., irrigation systems, expanded farmland, new equipment) and upgraded curricula. These assets will continue to benefit trainees beyond the project cycle, provided that institutions maintain them and continue capacity building for staff. Students themselves recognised this long-term value, noting that the skills acquired will enable them to pursue both employment and self-employment, even if access to capital remains a challenge.

At the beneficiary level, workers' and employers' organisations now have clearer platforms for dialogue and collaboration that can help shape skills agendas over time. Even so, active private-sector engagement has progressed more slowly than anticipated, and continued effort will be required to sustain and deepen participation. ZCTU confirmed that the project *"brought workers closer to voice out*

what they think the training programs should address", while employers highlighted in-house training and critical skills lists that can guide industry investment in human capital.

Building Local Ownership, Capacity, and Commitment

The project has been largely successful in building local ownership, capacity, and commitment to sustain activities, though gaps remain in ensuring consistent private sector engagement and long-term resourcing.

At the ownership level, the revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC) and the creation of sector skills bodies (SSBs) gives government, employers, and workers a stronger stake in shaping skills development. ZCTU emphasised that the project has *"brought workers closer to voice out what they think the training programs should address"*, while the Zambia Federation of Employers highlighted that SSBs now allow industry to directly influence the development of critical skills lists. These tripartite structures illustrate how the project embedded ownership into Zambia's skills governance system.

At the capacity level, training institutions such as Nortec, Chipata TTC, and the Lapidary?? will receive both infrastructure and technical support, ranging from new equipment and irrigation systems to competence-based curriculum upgrades. Chipata TTC staff noted that these reforms position them to expand from certificate to diploma-level training, directly supporting Zambia's food security agenda. Staff training and curriculum reform further strengthened institutional resilience, ensuring that benefits extend beyond the project's lifecycle.

In terms of commitment, government ministries have adopted reforms such as the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) and TEVETA's shift to competence-based training, which reflect policy-level endorsement of the project's approaches. Workers' and employers' organisations also confirmed their willingness to carry forward advocacy and dialogue on skills development.

However, sustaining private-sector participation remains a challenge because prolonged consultation processes led to reduced interest, with some employers recommending more streamlined engagement models and clearer incentives, such as targeted technical support or facilitation of work-based learning placements, to maintain their involvement.

Government Contribution / Cost-Sharing

Government cost-sharing is present but limited, and most SDEP-supported reforms remain financially dependent on the project. TEVETA provides some co-financing through staff development, as one representative of the institution noted, *"TEVETA is sponsoring seven of our members of staff,"* and government offers small operational grants, though these are insufficient: *"The government gives us a small grant... but we need to raise resources for the daily running of the institute."* Broader public investment exists at sector level, for example, in energy, where the Ministry is more than quadrupling the amount of money they are putting in, and a Skills Development Fund financed through an employer levy provides an indirect contribution pathway. However, there is no structured matching-fund mechanism to sustain the project's investments, and colleges caution that continuity will depend on adequate budgets for maintenance and staff training, which are not yet assured.

Risks to Sustainability and Mitigation Measures

The main risks to sustainability are weak private sector engagement, slow policy reforms, limited institutional resources, capacity constraints, and uneven equity focus. The project has partially addressed these through tripartite dialogue, capacity building, and resource reallocation, but sustaining outcomes will require deeper employer commitment, continued government investment, and more intentional gender and inclusion strategies.

A recurring risk is that employers may not remain fully engaged in sector skills bodies (SSBs) or work-based learning initiatives. The engagement of the private sector is not so high. While SSBs have created platforms for industry input, sustaining employer commitment will require clearer incentives (such as priority access to skilled trainees, co-developed curricula, targeted technical support, and recognition of participating firms), streamlined processes, and practical demonstration of value.

Long timelines for revising the Apprenticeship Act and Employment Code No3 of 2019 threaten to slow momentum. Although some policy work had previously begun, it was not advanced or usable enough to build on, so the team had to restart the reform process almost entirely from the beginning, as if no prior groundwork existed. The project team itself acknowledged that initial assumptions about policy readiness *“were not holding... it is as good as starting from zero”*. On ECA, delays were further attributed to inadequate consultations raised by the private sector (ZAM) and the need for ILO mediation. These delays are being addressed by re-sequencing activities and reallocating resources, but continued political will and follow-through remain critical for embedding reforms.

The Vocational Training centres will hopefully benefit from new equipment, farmland, and irrigation systems, but sustainability depends on adequate budgets for maintenance and staff training. Chipata staff stressed the need for *“more equipment and infrastructure... to expand from certificate to diploma level”*. While the project provided a foundation, long-term sustainability requires government and institutional commitment to recurrent funding.

The small project team is overstretched, which affects consistency of implementation and monitoring. Although capacity-building was undertaken at TEVETA, SSBs, and institutions, sustaining reforms will depend on whether these bodies retain skilled staff and institutional memory beyond the project.

Youth inclusion has been strong, but gender mainstreaming is less prominent. Without stronger strategies to promote women’s participation in male-dominated sectors such as mining and energy, there is a risk that benefits may not be equitably sustained.

Effectiveness of Exit Strategies

There is no explicit, formalised exit strategy for SDEP, and no dedicated plan was found to guide transition or handover. While some activities, such as policy reforms, capacity-building, and infrastructure support, may contribute to long-term sustainability, these elements do not constitute a deliberate exit strategy. Long-term continuity will depend on factors outside the project’s control, including sustained government financing, deeper employer commitment, and completion of key legal reforms. On the positive side, the project has embedded systemic reforms and institutional mechanisms that are designed to outlast donor support. The revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC) and the establishment of sector skills bodies (SSBs) in agriculture, mining, energy, and tourism give

government, employers, and workers permanent platforms for dialogue and skills planning. Training institutions like Chipata TTC and Nortec also reported that new infrastructure (e.g., irrigation systems, expanded farmland, metallurgy labs) and curriculum upgrades will position them to continue delivering market-relevant training after the project ends. These system-focused interventions serve as a form of exit strategy by embedding benefits into existing structures rather than relying on temporary project-specific arrangements.

Nonetheless, gaps remain in ensuring realistic exit pathways. Stakeholders repeatedly flagged limited private sector engagement as a sustainability risk, with the employer participation remaining fragile. Delays in finalising legal reforms (e.g., the Apprenticeship Act) also raise concerns that policy momentum could stall without continued external facilitation. Institutions also expressed worries about maintenance of new equipment and staff training once project funding ends.

4.7 Cross-Cutting Issues

Mainstreaming of Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination

The project mainstreamed gender equality and non-discrimination principles to a moderate extent, with clear intentions in its design but uneven emphasis on implementation.

While sector skills bodies (SSBs) and training reforms are inclusive in principle, stakeholders noted that women's specific needs are not consistently addressed. ZCTU highlighted the importance of representation but focused more on workers' participation generally than on targeted gender measures. Employers also emphasised skills mismatch and industry demand without strong reference to gender considerations.

Nonetheless, there are pockets of progress. The project's foundational work, including the sector background studies, sector skills strategies, prioritization of curricula to be reviewed have all been deliberate to include gender aspects and recommendations. What remains to be seen is how these will be practically integrated going forwards. In Chipata TTC, students reported that gender balance in agriculture courses has been achieved, with some intakes showing more women than men. This suggests that project-supported improvements to agricultural training may have indirectly advanced female participation.

Promotion of Social Dialogue

The project has made strong strides in promoting social dialogue by operationalising inclusive structures and strengthening worker and employer organisations' roles in skills governance. Yet, sustaining this effectiveness will require ensuring consultations translate into concrete benefits for industry and providing more support for representative bodies to broaden participation among their constituencies.

The project has been effective in promoting social dialogue and strengthening worker and employer organisations, though challenges remain in sustaining depth and consistency of engagement.

At the sectoral level, the establishment of sector skills bodies (SSBs) provides structured platforms where employers, workers, training institutions, and regulators could jointly identify critical skills and shape curricula. The Zambia Federation of Employers (ZFE) emphasised that SSBs *"brought together small, medium and big mining companies... and training institutions... a good achievement... going forward, we*

want these sector skills bodies to fully participate in the development of the sector skills". For workers, ZCTU confirmed that the project has created new avenues for participation, stating that it has *"brought workers closer to voice out what they think the training programs should address"*. These mechanisms have strengthened organisational voice and improved tripartite coordination.

The project has also revitalised national-level dialogue structures, notably the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), which had been inactive since 2019 but met multiple times in 2023 with a clear work plan. This created a policy-level space for employers and workers to engage government on skills development priorities, further institutionalising social dialogue.

However, effectiveness is tempered by challenges. Employers and the EU Delegation noted consultation fatigue, with businesses reluctant to attend repeated meetings without tangible results. In addition, while organisational participation has improved, resources for unions and employer bodies to cascade awareness and mobilise their wider membership are limited.

Environment and Environmental Sustainability

The SDEP aligns with Zambia's climate commitments and prioritizes sectors like agriculture and energy. It promotes green skills and climate-responsive training within Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET). While environmental factors are referenced in curriculum updates for renewable energy and sustainable agriculture, there is an absence of a distinct framework that measures the project's overall contribution to environmental sustainability, which necessitates clearer objectives and monitoring mechanisms.

Just Transition

The project implicitly addresses just transition concepts through its focus on employability and skills relevance, promoting dialogue among government, employers, and workers. This enhances decision-making regarding skills in transitioning sectors such as mining and energy. Work-based learning and curriculum reform are vital aspects that support the transition, yet the concept of just transition lacks explicit framing in the project's guiding principles, limiting its systemic approach to equity and displacement concerns.

People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Inclusion of people with disabilities is acknowledged in project design, emphasizing non-discrimination and equitable access. However, implementation remains inadequate, with limited tangible measures to ensure accessibility in training and education. Systematic data collection on disability-related participation and outcomes is lacking, which impairs the project's effectiveness in achieving its goal of inclusivity. Strengthening planning and data practices is crucial for delivering measurable results for individuals with disabilities.

5.0 Conclusions

SDEP remains highly relevant and coherent, is progressing toward outcomes with credible system-level foundations, but effectiveness and efficiency are tempered by start-up/procurement delays, constrained staffing, and uneven private-sector engagement; sustaining gains will hinge on legal anchoring, predictable financing, and timely delivery of tangible enablers.

Relevance: The programme responds directly to national and regional priorities (Vision 2030; 7th/8th NDPs; AU/SADC TVET agendas) and to tripartite stakeholder needs through legal reforms (Apprenticeship Act, Employment Code), sector skills bodies (SSBs) and the LMIS. Adaptation strengthened relevance (e.g., shift to competence-based training; updating content for renewable energy, automation, and digital skills).

Coherence: SDEP complements prior ILO work and national reforms by targeting system pillars (TEVETA strengthening, competence-based curricula, digitalisation) and institutionalising industry participation via SSBs and the SAC, thereby aligning donor and government efforts within a coordinated, demand-led framework.

Effectiveness: Activities and outputs largely track objectives (policy reviews, SSBs, LMIS, institutional upgrades), and the team has followed the ToC while recalibrating sequencing and modalities. The quality is rated good though volumes lag, with procurement and private-sector-engagement headwinds. Backstopping from DWT Pretoria/HQ is programmatically valuable, but remote support (notably for LMIS) has sometimes slowed delivery.

Efficiency: A late start, no inception phase, slow procurement, and an overstretched team has reduced timeliness. There are budget alignment issues (e.g., under-resourcing key functions/lines) created friction despite overall underspend. Expertise was well targeted and system-focused (cost-effective longer term), but remote modalities cut responsiveness; some stakeholders also flagged consultative processes as time-costly.

Impact orientation: The project is catalysing policy/institutional shifts (SAC revived and producing critical skills lists; SSBs operational; LMIS advancing), laying groundwork for employability gains, though many impacts are still in formation mid-term.

Sustainability: Institutional anchoring (SAC/SSBs; legal amendments) and ministry buy-in support durability, but financing (Skills Levy), equipment delivery, and lack of an exit strategy are material risks that require active management.

Cross-cutting issues: Gender/youth were integrated in design and budgets, yet gender actions were less resourced/visible than broader system reforms. Social dialogue mechanisms (SAC/SSBs; worker/employer inputs) have strengthened feedback loops and relevance.

6.o Lessons Learnt

1. **Systemic focus yields long-term value.** By prioritising reforms such as competence-based curricula, sector skills bodies (SSBs), and the revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), the project has demonstrated that systemic interventions generate durable results compared to isolated, short-term activities.
2. **Adequate time and sequencing are essential.** Ambitious legal and institutional reforms require longer timelines and realistic pacing. Early assumptions about policy readiness were not holding. It was as good as starting from zero, thus the need for inception phases and flexible sequencing.
3. **Stakeholder ownership strengthens sustainability.** The SSBs and SAC gave government, employers, and workers structured platforms to influence training priorities. The project brought workers closer to voice out what they think the training programs should address while industry representation in SSBs has aligned curricula to market demand.
4. **Capacity-building must accompany infrastructure.** Colleges such as Nortec and Chipata Trades Training Center will benefit from new equipment and farmland, but staff emphasised that sustainable gains depend on matching these with pedagogy upgrades and curriculum reform.
5. **Risk management should be proactive, not reactive.** The project tended to address risks such as procurement delays, policy bottlenecks, and low private sector participation only after they materialised. This highlights the need for early monitoring and flexible mitigation mechanisms.
6. **Equity requires stronger intentionality.** While youth inclusion was well-integrated, gender mainstreaming was less visible in implementation, particularly in traditionally male-dominated sectors like mining and energy. Gender-responsive measures remain modest compared to broader system reforms.

7.0 Good Practices

1. **Revitalisation of dormant governance structures.** The project successfully reactivated the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), which had been inactive since 2019. Within a year, the SAC convened multiple meetings, developed a work plan, and began coordinating sector skills development. This demonstrated how targeted support can breathe life into existing but non-functional institutions, creating sustainable governance platforms.
2. **Operationalisation of Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs).** Establishing SSBs in agriculture, mining, energy, and tourism provided structured tripartite platforms where employers, workers, and training institutions co-developed critical skills lists and curricula. The SSBs brought together small, medium, and large employers with training institutions, ensuring alignment with industry needs.
3. **Institutional capacity-building linked with infrastructure.** Colleges such as Chipata Trades Training Center and Nortec combined infrastructure upgrades (e.g., irrigation systems, farmland, metallurgy labs) with curriculum and staff development. This integrated approach will ensure that investments in “hardware” are complemented by improved training delivery and employability outcomes.
4. **Worker and employer voice in training relevance.** The project created spaces for workers to influence training priorities, bringing workers closer to voice out what they think the training programs should address. At the same time, critical skills lists informed industry-relevant training pathways. These practices show how social dialogue can anchor demand-driven training systems.
5. **Embedding monitoring systems into institutions.** The development of the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) strengthened national capacity to generate and use labour market data for evidence-based planning. Though delayed, its integration into Ministry structures provides a sustainable tool for ongoing monitoring and policy guidance.

8.o Recommendations

1. Introduce a No-Cost Extension: Given the cumulative delays, a no-cost extension of at least 12 months is recommended to allow sufficient time for consolidation of reforms, implementation of curricula, and delivery of tangible outputs such as equipment installation and training-of-trainers. A costed extension may also be considered, given the enormous cost of required infrastructure support.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
<i>Donor (EU), ILO</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short-term (within project cycle; +12 months)</i>	<i>Low</i>

2. Strengthen private sector engagement in Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs). Private sector participation has been uneven, with employers showing signs of consultation fatigue. Engagement should be streamlined, with clearer incentives and practical demonstrations of value to ensure sustained employer commitment.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
<i>TEVETA; ZFE, Ministries of Labour & Technology Science</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium-term</i>	<i>Medium</i>

3. Expediate the finalisation of stalled legal reforms (Apprenticeship Act, Employment Code). Delays in policy and legal reform have slowed progress and forced project teams to restart processes. Swift completion and enactment of reforms are needed to embed work-based learning and provide a durable legal framework for skills development.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
<i>Ministry of Labour; Parliament</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium–Long term</i>	<i>Low</i>

4. Expedite and consolidate competence-based training (CBT). Institutional capacity assessments confirmed the need to shift fully to CBT. Adequate investment in curriculum redesign, staff re-training, and equipment is critical for aligning training with labour market needs.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
<i>TEVETA; Training Institutions</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium-term</i>	<i>High</i>

5. Safeguard institutional investments through maintenance and recurrent funding. Colleges will benefit from infrastructure such as irrigation systems and specialised labs, but sustainability will depend on recurrent budgets for maintenance and continuous staff development.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
<i>Training Institutions; Ministry of Finance; Local Councils</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Long-term</i>	<i>High</i>

6. Mainstream gender more intentionally in male-dominated sectors. No progress has been made in most areas, and gender mainstreaming has been less visible than youth inclusion. Future phases should implement stronger, targeted strategies to improve women's participation in sectors such as mining and energy.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
TEVETA; Ministry of Gender; Training Institutions	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium-term</i>	<i>Medium</i>

7. Institutionalise proactive risk management. Risks such as procurement delays, policy bottlenecks, and weak employer participation are often addressed only after they occurred. A structured, proactive risk monitoring system should be built into programme planning to prevent similar setbacks.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
ILO Country Office; DWT Pretoria; Government Partners	<i>High</i>	<i>Short–Medium term</i>	<i>Low</i>

8. Strengthen Procurement and Operational Efficiency Mechanisms. Given the persistent delays in procurement, staffing, and sequencing of major activities, the project should establish a streamlined procurement and implementation management mechanism. This includes a time-bound procurement plan, closer coordination between the CO, ROAF, and technical units, and temporary reinforcement of administrative and M&E capacity to accelerate delivery of key outputs such as LMIS development, curriculum piloting, equipment installation, and work-based learning arrangements. This will significantly improve absorption rates and ensure timely execution of downstream activities.

<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Time Implication</i>	<i>Resource Implication</i>
ILO (CO–Lusaka, ROAF, HQ Technical Units)	<i>High</i>	<i>Short-term (within current project cycle)</i>	<i>Moderate</i>

9.0 Annexes

9.1. ToR

Mid-term Review Evaluation

Terms of Reference

Title of project to be evaluated	Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP)
TC Code	Project ZMB/22/01/EUR
Administrative Unit responsible for administering the project	Country Office Lusaka, Zambia.
Technical Unit(s) responsible for backstopping the project	Decent Work Team Pretoria, Skills Branch, Employment Department, Geneva.
Type of evaluation	Independent Mid-Term Evaluation
Evaluation Manager	Abderrahim El Moulal
Geographical coverage	Zambia
Funder	European Union
Budget	ZMB /22/01/EUR (Euros 6,500,000)
Project Start and End Date	(01/02/2023 – 31/01/2027)

1. Background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is providing technical assistance to the Government of Zambia (GRZ) in implementing a programme, the Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP) (ZMB/2201EUR), that is funded by the Delegation of the European Union to Zambia and COMESA and running from 2023 to 2027. It has a budget of 6,500,000.00 Euros. This project builds on previous achievements of the GRZ, and its cooperating partners including the ILO, programmes and initiatives in the TEVET sector in the recent past while integrating the GRZ aspirations indicated in several development frameworks.

Globally, national skills anticipation systems are best captured in the individual Member State's commitments for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One key input for the actualisation of the development targets is sustained and responsive supply of skilled labour to the national economies. This ambition is echoed at continental level by the recent adoption of a communique within the framework of the Skills Initiatives for Africa (SIFA), a Programme of the AUC and AUDA/NEPAD, has positioned skills anticipation and matching as a means to attain the Africa Agenda 2063's aspiration for an 'Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of its people.'

Similarly, the 2014 Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training to Foster Youth Employment (African Union TEVET Strategy) provides a comprehensive

framework for the design and development of national policies and strategies to address the challenges of education and technical and vocational training. The strategy addresses employability, relevance, collaboration between training institutions and employers, accreditation of training structures (in formal, non-formal and informal sectors), certification, quality assurance and in-country portability of TEVET qualifications. In the same vein, the 1997 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Education and Training signed by Zambia, seeks to promote a regionally integrated and harmonised educational system, to ensure access, equity, relevance, and quality of education interventions.

At country level, decent job creation has been identified as critical to inclusive and sustainable economic development. This is being outlined in the country's Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP), the 8th NDP and the Vision 2030. In all of them, the importance of job creation, particularly for the Zambian youth, is underlined as an enabler for economic growth and diversification. The Industrialization and Job Creation Strategy (IJCS) identified skill levels in the labour force as a key factor in labour productivity. The IJCS went further to identified challenges on labour productivity and skills and provides strategies to be implemented to address them including the following: re-introduce apprenticeship training, promote industrial attachments and incentivise apprenticeship and internship in priority sectors, establish a Labour Market Information System (LMIS) to effectively and efficiently track employment in the country, expand access to skills training to address inadequate supply of requisite skills to support industrialisation particularly in the identified priority sector, develop and implement programmes in skills development for priority sectors based on comprehensive skills audit and upgrade training equipment and skills of instructors.

In addition to the above, it was planned that the country would achieve the targeted job creation for economic growth, by building an enabling environment, through capacity building and opportunity creation, particularly within key targeted sectors, such as agriculture, mining, energy and tourism. Further analysis of the opportunities under these sectors revealed that some of the factors that affected the performance of these sectors included lack of provision of sustainable energy and lack of availability of local skills to support value addition to products of mining, agriculture and tourism.

2. SDEP, Objectives and structure

2.1 The Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP) Objectives

The Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) sector holds immense potential to foster employment, productivity, social inclusion, and poverty alleviation. However, it faces numerous challenges. These include a shortage of skilled workers, high unemployment rates among TEVET graduates, mismatched skills supply and demand, outdated

curricula and equipment, and gender discrimination in access to TEVET. Additionally, inadequate public funding, inefficient levy collection and allocation systems, weak internship and apprenticeship programs, and limited collaboration between the private sector and TEVET institutions further compound the issues.

Recognizing the critical importance of a skilled workforce, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is implementing the Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme (SDEP) in Zambia, funded by the European Union (EU). Over four years, the programme aims to enhance the employability of both men and women, prioritizing sectors crucial for Zambia's industrialization: mining, agriculture, tourism, and energy.

The SDEP focuses on governance and management improvements within Zambia's TEVET system, along with upgrading training facilities and curriculum development. Private sector involvement is integral, particularly in curriculum review and Work Based Learning (WBL) implementation. The program aligns with the EU's Green Deal priorities, emphasizing access to quality education and skills.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute towards the improvement of employability of labour force for both women and men. This objective is to be achieved through complementary specific objectives. The activities will focus on the governance and management structures of Zambia's TEVET system and the upgrading and maintenance of training facilities and curriculum development. Private sector involvement will be consistently sought, for the updating of the curricula and for Work Based Learning (WBL) activities. The programme seeks to at all levels establish a strong link with EU's priorities under the Green Deal which apply to Skills development as enshrined in the EU-Africa strategy that is emphasising on increasing access to quality education, skills, research, innovation, health and social rights.

The Specific Objectives are as follows:

SO 1: Relevance and capacity of the TEVET system to contribute to economic diversification is enhanced.

SO 2: Private sector access to relevant skills in selected strategic/priority sectors is improved.

SO 3: Curricula are reviewed, updated and piloted to respond to labour market demands, and.

SO 4: SO4: Project Management and Oversight.

2.2 Project Management Arrangements

A Programme Steering Committee (PSC) has been established for the entire Economic Governance Support Programme (EGSP), to provide policy and strategic oversight or the implementation of all the projects under the EGSP. The PSC is chaired by the Secretary to the

Treasury (ST), who is also the National Authorising Officer of the European Delegation Fund (NAO), Ministry of Finance and National Planning. The PSC has met once since its constitution in 2024. Membership comprises Permanent

Secretaries responsible for implementing the components of the EGSP including the Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry (MCTI), Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MoGEE), Ministry of Technology and Science (MOTS), Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS), Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLG&RD) and the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP).

A Technical Working Group (TWG) is in place to oversee the overall implementation of the project. The TWG is one of the means to foster sustainability of results and enhance ownership among the Government and social partners. The TWG is chaired by the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Technology and Science and the Vice Chair is the Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ZACCI). The TWG includes representatives of Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS), Gender Division under the Cabinet Office, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Tourism, as well as selected training institutions.

Selected representatives from private sector, Employer and workers' organizations and Civil Society Organizations such as the Zambia Federation of Employers, the Zambia Chamber of Mines and the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions are part of the TWG. The TWG is scheduled to meet once in a quarter but also as and when need arise. To date four TWG meetings have been held since Project inception. The European Union has an observer status in the TWG. The ILO will undertake the secretariat role for the TWG.

The Project Manager (the Ministry of Technology and Science) as appointed by National Authorizing Office of the European Development Fund under the Ministry of Finance and National planning. The Project Manager is responsible for working and coordinating with the ILO, other implementing partners and the NAO.

The ILO is implementing this action. This implementation entails execution and coordination of all the activities foreseen under the action. ILO is responsible for all controls ex-ante and ex-post of all the procurements to ensure that the ILO procurement rules and procedures have been strictly adhered to. Tender dossiers are prepared, and the payments executed by ILO.

The Project team is based in the ILO Country Office, Zambia Project is supported by the CO directors' Office, and departments like Programming, Finance, DWT Specialist and HQ Tech Branches.

3. The Midterm Evaluation

Evaluation in the International Labour Organization (ILO) is primarily used as a management and organizational learning tool to help ILO partners and staff members support Decent Work (DW) and social justice. Evaluation is a critical means to improve decision-making, generate knowledge in the organization and provide verifiable evidence of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of an intervention. In addition, an evaluation provides an assessment of a particular intervention, focusing on what works, what does not work, and why this is the case. As per the agreement with the donor and ILO policy for project of this size and duration, there shall be midterm and final independent evaluations.

The project mid-term evaluation will consider the relevance of project design (as it relates to the ILO's strategic and national policy frameworks) and the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of outcomes. It will be used to improve project performance and contribute towards organizational learning. The Project evaluation will also serve accountability purposes by reporting to donors and national partners on the extent to which the intended outcomes will be achieved. It will also offer evidence of whether the activities and outputs described in this project document are on track of being attained.

3.1. Evaluation Background

The ILO considers evaluation as an integral part of the implementation of development cooperation activities. The evaluation in the ILO is for the purpose of accountability, learning and planning and building knowledge. It should be conducted in the context of criteria and approaches for international development assistance as established by the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standard and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.

The project will follow the ILO Policy on Evaluation for Development Cooperation projects and the Development Cooperation Internal Governance Manual. A project of this nature, which takes over 30 months to implement and with a budget under 5 million, will undergo through a mid-term independently managed evaluation in year 2, and a final independent evaluation in year 3 to be conducted by an independent Evaluation Consultant.

3.2. Evaluation purpose, scope, and clients

Purpose:

The overall purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to promote accountability, assess progresses and bottlenecks and strengthen learning by the Project Team, the Project partners and key stakeholders and the ILO. The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the extent to which the projects are on track or not to achieve their stated objectives and expected results.
- Identify the factors (positive and negative) affecting Projects implementation modalities chosen and identify reason why this is so.
- Establish the relevance of the projects design and implementation strategies in relation to the development frameworks it is supposed to contribute to
- Assess overall implementation effectiveness, efficiency and the extent to which stated projects outcomes will be sustainable.
- Provide recommendations to the Project Team, the ILO, the Project Partners, the Donor, and key stakeholders regarding steps to be taken for the successful achievement the projects outcomes.
- Identify unexpected positive and negative results of the projects.
- Identify lessons and good practices for the remaining of projects' implementation, as well as for future similar interventions.

Scope of the Mid-term Evaluation:

The evaluation will focus on the first 24 months of the project, namely from February 2023 to the end of January 2025, assessing all the results and key outputs that have been produced in this period according to agreed project workplan.

The evaluation will integrate gender equality, tripartism and greening as cross-cutting concerns throughout its deliverables and process. It should be addressed in line with EVAL guidance note n° 4 and Guidance Note n° 7 to ensure stakeholder participation.

The geographical scope of the evaluation will be in line with the geographical coverage of the Project which is a national as well as engagement with the GRZ. Despite being a national project, the project has identified collaborating 5 TEVET training institutions in Chipata, and Mambwe districts in the Eastern province, Livingstone town in the southern province and Ndola town in the copper-belt province.

Clients of the Mid-term Evaluation:

The primary users of this mid-term evaluation are the ILO and its key implementing partners, Government of Zambia as the main Partner for the Project, the Project Steering Committee, the Technical Working Group (and within it the Tripartite Constituents) as the oversight structure of the project, the ILO Technical Unit, Lusaka Country Office, the Eastern and Southern Africa DWT in Pretoria, the Regional Office for Africa (ROAF), and the EU as the donor.

3.3. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation will cover the OECD evaluation criteria, the UNEG guidelines and the ILO evaluation policy guidelines focusing on the following:

- Relevance
- Coherence
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability

The evaluation should also consider key evaluations dimensions including gender, tripartism, greening and social dialogue, Human Rights (HR), the SDGs (relevant SDGs and indicators and the principle of “no one left behind”) and ILO policy outcomes and enablers.

In line with the results-based approach applied by the ILO, the evaluation will focus on identifying and analysing results through addressing key questions related to the evaluation criteria and the achievement of the outcomes/ objectives of the projects using the mainly, but not only, indicators in the logical framework of the projects.

The recommended list of questions presented below should be reviewed and adjusted during the preparation of the Inception report. Adjustments to the questions will need to be approved as part of the approval of the inception report by the ILO appointed Evaluation manger.

3.4. Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluator shall address the following key questions:

Relevance: Is the project doing the right things?

- Has the project considered the needs and priorities of tripartite stakeholders and beneficiaries identified in the projects’ documents and during the implementation of both projects?
- How well is the project aligned with the local, regional, and national development plans and strategies?
- Are the projects’ activities and outputs consistent with the intended outcomes and objectives?
- Did the project adapt to changing circumstances or emerging needs during its implementation?

Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?

- How is the project complementing other ongoing initiatives and programs in the same sector or geographic area?
- How well are the interventions aligned to maximise systemic changes?
- How well are the projects aligned with broader policy frameworks and international commitments (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals)?

Effectiveness: is the project achieving its objectives?

- To what extent is the project on track of achieving its main objectives, outcomes and outputs?
- What are the key factors that contributed to or hindered the achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes?
- Has the project followed its Theory of change?
- Were the development hypotheses underpinning the logical framework supported or unsupported based on projects' performance data?
- Has the quantity and quality of the outputs produced to date been satisfactory?
- What unexpected results (at outputs and outcomes level) have taken place?
- To what extent has the projects' specific targets for intended beneficiaries (e.g. women, youth,) been applied equitably?
- Have the project results to date been similar by geographic area?
- How effective was the backstopping support provided by DWT Pretoria and HQs?

Efficiency: How well are the resources being used?

- How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated and used to achieve the objectives of the project? In general, did the results achieved justify the costs? Could the same results be attained with fewer resources?
- Were funds and interventions delivered in a timely manner? If not, what were the bottlenecks encountered?
- Did the project budgets make adequate provisions for addressing gender and inclusion related specific objectives/activities?
- Has an effective risk analysis and monitoring and evaluation system been established and implemented?

Impact Orientation: What difference does the project make?

- Is the project working towards achieving the proposed impacts?
- What evidence is there of the project's contribution to broader development goals or policy objectives?
- How did the project affect local capacities, institutions, or systems?
- What lessons can be learned about the projects' impact that could inform its second implementation phase or future interventions?

Sustainability: will the benefits last?

- How well did the project build local ownership, capacity, and commitment to continue the activities?
- What are the risks to the sustainability of the project's outcomes, and how were they addressed?
- Have effective and realistic exit strategies been developed and being implemented? Will project beneficiaries continue to experience improved conditions after the closeout of the projects?

Cross-Cutting Issues

- To what extent did the project mainstream gender equality and non-discrimination principles into its design and implementation?
- How effectively did the project promote strong and independent worker and employer organizations and facilitate constructive social dialogues?

3.5. Evaluation Methodology

The midterm evaluation should comply with evaluation norms and standards, ethical safeguards, specified in ILO's evaluation procedures. This is an independent evaluation and as such, the final methodology and evaluation questions will be determined by the consultant in consultation with the Evaluation Manager.

The evaluation is expected to apply a mixed-methods approach, including triangulation of data to increase the validity and rigor of the evaluation findings, engaging with key stakeholders of the project, as much as feasible, at all levels during the design, data collection and reporting stages.

The evaluation should include but be not restricted to the following methods:

i) Desk review:

The desk review will include review of the following information sources:

- Projects documents (Project Document, Technical documents including Rapid Mapping Reports, and Sector Skills strategies, Institutional Capacity Assessment, Technical Annexes, Theory of Change, log frame, Implementation plan and budget, Intervention plan/guides, MRM Manual, workshop reports, etc.)
- Progress reports and related documents
- Research and studies conducted by the Project such as Background Studies of Priority Sectors.
- Projects finance documents and records
- Mission reports and related documents
- All other relevant documents linked to the project

Preliminary findings from the desk review will be used to fine-tune the evaluation questions.

ii) Interviews with Project Stakeholders:

Telephone and virtual interviews will be conducted with project staff, project partners and key stakeholders, using pre-designed questionnaires which will be used as the source of primary information gathering. The list of stakeholders to consult as part of the evaluation will be consolidated by project management.

After the data collection process, the evaluator will be expected to develop a draft evaluation report (see below deliverables for details). The draft report will be subject to a methodological review by the ILO evaluation manager and will be circulated among the key stakeholders by the ILO Evaluation Manager. The evaluation manager will consolidate the stakeholders' comments and will send them to evaluator for development of the final draft of the evaluation report.

iii) Stakeholder validation workshop:

A stakeholder workshop will be organized to facilitate the validation of preliminary findings of the midterm evaluation. The Evaluator will present the preliminary findings of the evaluation at the validation workshop and receive stakeholders' feedback needed to close any possible data gaps and to finalize the report for final submission.

iv) Final Report:

The total length of the evaluation report should be a maximum of 30 pages for the main report, excluding annexes. The report should be sent as one complete document. Photos, if appropriate to be included, should be inserted using lower resolution to keep overall file size low.

4. Expected Deliverables

4.1 Inception report

The inception report should include a detailed work plan and data collection instruments, following ILO EVAL Checklist 3. The report must include:

- Description of the evaluation methodology and instruments to be used in sampling, data collection and analysis and the data collection plan mentioned above;
- Data collection tools;
- Detailed fieldwork plan for the six districts should be developed in consultation with the Evaluation Manager and project team;
- Agenda for the stakeholders' workshop;
- The proposed report outline.

4.2 Draft and final versions of evaluation report

The draft and report will be presented in English (maximum 30 pages plus annexes) as per the following proposed structure:

- Cover page with key project and evaluation data
- Executive Summary
- Acronyms
- Description of the project
- Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation
- Methodology and limitations
- Clearly identified findings for each criterion or per objective
- Conclusions
- Recommendations (i.e. for the different key stakeholders)
- Lessons learned and good practices
- Annexes:
 - TOR
 - List of people interviewed

- Schedule of the field work
- Documents reviewed
- Data Table on Project targets as per Project logical framework targets -ILO EVAL templates for each lessons learned, and good practice identified

4.3 Final Report

The evaluator will finalize and submit the final report to the evaluation manager in line with EVAL Checklist 5. The report should address all comments and/or provide explanations why comments were not considered. The quality of the report will be assessed against ILO/EVAL's Checklist 6. The evaluation manager will review the final version and submit to the RSMEO and EVAL for final review.

All reports, including drafts, will be written in English. Ownership of data from the evaluation rests jointly with the ILO and the evaluator. The copyright of the evaluation report will rest exclusively with the ILO. Use of the data for publication and other presentations can only be made with the written agreement of the ILO.

5. Contract Management Arrangements, Level of Effort (LoE) &

Time frame

5.1 Management

The Evaluation Consultant will report to the Evaluation Manager with whom he/she will discuss any technical and methodological matters. The evaluation exercise will be carried out with the logistical and administrative support of the Project.

All draft and final outputs, including supporting documents, analytical reports and raw data shall be submitted to the evaluation manager in electronic version compatible with Word for Windows.

The first draft of the report will be circulated to stakeholders for a two-week review. Comments and feedback from stakeholders will be presented to the Evaluation Consultant by the Evaluation Manager for integration into the final reports as appropriate or to document why a comment has not been integrated.

5.2 Assignment Duration and Budget

The assignment shall commence on 1 June 2025 and shall conclude no later than 15 August 2025. The ILO standard of payment is the output-based and payment will be made upon completion of the tasks as agreed at the time of signing of contract guided by the following payment schedule:

- 20% for Inception Report, to the acceptance of the ILO
- 30% for draft report to the acceptance of the ILO
- 50% for the final report to the acceptance of the ILO.

A budget for this Mid-term evaluation has been allocated to cover the evaluator's fees, cost of international and domestic travels and the organization of workshops and consultative meetings with stakeholders. The evaluation budget includes:

- Fees for the evaluator for 23 non-consecutive workdays. The bidding consultant or evaluation team should provide, as part of their proposal, daily fees in US dollars.
- Cost of international travel from evaluator's home to Harare. In accordance with the relevant ILO rules, the ILO will provide pre-paid return air tickets in economy class and by the most direct route.
- Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) during the mission. The ILO will pay DSA at the standard UN rate for the dates of the trips to cover lodging, meals and incidentals while on travel, as per ILO policy, Local transportation in the project areas.
- Cost of meetings, workshops defined by the TOR.
- A detailed budget and contract with the evaluator will be prepared by the Project Team.

5.3 Key Deliverables and Level of Effort

Deliverable	Description	LoE
Inception Report	Read and review the core set of project documents. Request any additional documentation required	2 days
Online meetings with the project team and core staff in ILO-Lusaka, ILO HQs and with relevant government departments and the donor		2 days
Inception report: Outlining the operational work plan which indicates the phases of the evaluation, finalises the set of evaluation questions, the approach, the timing, key deliverables, and milestones, aligned with these Terms of Reference		2 days
Field Work Zambia	Visits to project intervention sites and interviews with the stakeholders in Lusaka , • Interviews with	7 Days

	national stakeholders including the Project Manager• Interviews with Project Consultants• Field visit and interviews• Presentation of preliminary findings and debriefing to stakeholders	
Power-point Presentation and Online Validation Workshop	Evaluator Presents preliminary evaluation findings to key stakeholders and reviews final feedback	1 Days
Draft Report	A short (no more than 30 pages) report (templates and annexes not counted in the page numbers) addressing the evaluation questions.	7 days
Draft report circulated by Evaluation Manager to stakeholders for Feedback	Evaluation Manager forwards Report to feedback of the stakeholders to the evaluator All feedback from stakeholders for the evaluator will be communicated by the Evaluation Manager in a consolidated manner	0 days
Finalize Mid-Term evaluation report	The Evaluation Consultant finalizes the Mid-term Evaluation report by incorporating stakeholder inputs and feedback	2 Days
Submit Final Mid-term Evaluation to Evaluation Manager	The evaluator submits to the Evaluation Manager the final Mid-Term Evaluation Report an Evaluation Summary and related documents (according to ILO guidelines) for the review and final submission to EVAL	0
Total Level of Effort	23 days	

6. Required Experience and Qualifications

The independent evaluator will be selected based on proven evaluation experience and meeting the following independence criteria:

- A master's degree in any of the following, social sciences, development studies, economics, or other related graduate qualifications.
- A minimum of 5-7 years of professional experience specifically in evaluating donor funded development initiatives, including UN projects, and with policy level work and institutional building related work.
- Experience in qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, including survey design and reporting.

- A good understanding of ILO mandate and tripartite structure.
- Experience in facilitating workshops for evaluation findings.
- Have no previous or current involvement – or offers of prospective employment – with the ILO project or programme being evaluated.
- Have no personal links to the project.
- Knowledge and previous experience on the project thematic area and the country/region will be an asset.
- Fluent in spoken and written English.

Annex I - All relevant ILO evaluation guidelines and standard templates

1. Code of conduct form (To be signed by the evaluator)

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_206205/lang--en/index.htm

2. Guidance note No. 7 Stakeholders participation in the ILO evaluation

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165982/lang--en/index.htm

3. Guidance note No. 4 Integrating gender equality in M&E of projects

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165986/lang--en/index.htm

4. Checklist No. 3 Writing the inception report

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165972/lang--en/index.htm

5. Checklist No. 5 Preparing the evaluation report

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165967/lang--en/index.htm

6. Checklist No. 6 Rating the quality of evaluation report

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165968/lang--en/index.htm

7. Template for lessons learned and Emerging Good Practices

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_206158/lang--en/index.htm

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_206159/lang--en/index.htm

8. Template for evaluation title page

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_166357/lang--en/index.htm

9. Template for evaluation summary:

<http://www.ilo.org/legacy/english/edmas/eval/templatesummary-en.doc>



Project title: Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme

Project DC/SYMBOL: *ZMB/22/01/EUR*

Name of Evaluator: Dr. Edwin Ochieng Okul

Date: Nov 2025.

The following lessons learned have been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson are included in the full evaluation report.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<i>Systemic focus yields long-term value.</i> Systemic interventions, including development of competence-based curricula, establishment of Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs), and revitalisation of the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), generate stronger and more durable results than isolated, short-term activities.
Context and any related preconditions	The project prioritised national-level reforms in skills governance, curriculum systems, and labour-market coordination. These changes required strong technical support, stakeholder buy-in, and time for legal and institutional processes to mature.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Government ministries, TEVETA, workers' and employers' organisations, SSB members, and training institutions.
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Systemic reforms progress more slowly and require prolonged coordination, policy dialogue, and institutional capacity. Some actors experienced consultation fatigue, and delays in procurement and approval slowed uptake and visible results.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Institutional mechanisms (SSBs, SAC) and competence-based curriculum reforms create sustained structures and processes that continue shaping skills priorities beyond the project. Strong tripartite engagement and policy alignment with national agendas enhanced ownership.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Heavy emphasis on systemic change required ongoing specialised support and sustained in-country engagement. Remote backstopping and limited staffing (e.g., absence of M&E) slowed operational momentum and follow-through.



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LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<i>Adequate time and sequencing are essential;</i> Ambitious legal and institutional reforms require sufficient time, realistic pacing, and careful sequencing; initial assumptions about policy readiness were not accurate, indicating the need for inception phases and flexible implementation.
Context and any related preconditions	The project assumed that legal and policy reforms (e.g., Apprenticeship Act, Employment Code) were already advanced; however, stakeholders noted that these efforts had to “start from zero,” revealing gaps between design assumptions and actual readiness.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Government ministries, TEVETA, social partners (employers’ and workers’ organisations), and implementing agencies responsible for policy reform and institutional strengthening.
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Early policy assumptions did not hold; timelines were unrealistic; absence of an inception phase and insufficient sequencing led to delays.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Recognition of the need for realistic timelines and flexible sequencing provides a clearer framework for future planning and adaptation.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Design assumed greater policy readiness than existed; timelines were compressed; the lack of a structured inception phase limited early clarification of sequencing and resource adjustments.



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LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<i>Stakeholder ownership strengthens sustainability.</i> Stakeholder ownership, through active engagement of government, employers, and workers in SSBs and SAC, strengthens relevance of training reforms and enhances sustainability.
Context and any related preconditions	The project established and/or operationalized Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs) and revitalised the Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), creating formal structures for multi-stakeholder dialogue in shaping skills priorities.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Government (MoL, MoTS, TEVETA); employers (through industry bodies); workers (via ZCTU and worker representatives); training institutions; learners.
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Sustaining engagement requires clarity of purpose, predictable timelines, and reduced consultation fatigue; without continued participation, dialogue platforms risk losing momentum.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Workers gained stronger voice to articulate training needs; industry participation helped align curricula with market demand; structured platforms (SSBs/SAC) enabled shared decision-making and fostered buy-in.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Administrative issues include ensuring clear stakeholder roles, consistent engagement timelines, and managing consultation fatigue to sustain effective multi-stakeholder governance.



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LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<i>Capacity-building must accompany infrastructure.</i> Capacity-building must accompany infrastructure investments; equipment and farmland alone are insufficient without matching staff training and curriculum reform.
Context and any related preconditions	Under SDEP, institutions such as Nortec and Chipata Trades Training Centre received new productive-use energy/agricultural equipment and farmland to enhance practical training. However, without simultaneous upgrades in pedagogy and curricula, effective utilisation remains limited.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Training institution staff, curriculum developers, instructors, and students in agriculture and related trades.
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Staff indicated that without updated pedagogical approaches and revised competence-based curricula, new equipment risks being underutilised. Limited instructor capacity and delayed curriculum reforms constrain skill transfer.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Availability of equipment and land has created strong potential for practical, year-round learning, particularly for irrigation and livestock. Institutions recognise this as an opportunity to strengthen applied training and grow new programmes.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Sequencing weaknesses meant infrastructure support progressed ahead of curriculum and staff-capacity upgrades. Earlier alignment of training and curriculum development with equipment delivery would have enhanced utilisation and sustainability.



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LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<i>Risk management should be proactive, not reactive.</i> Risk management should be proactive rather than reactive. The project primarily addressed risks (e.g., procurement delays, policy bottlenecks, low private-sector participation) only after they emerged, underscoring the need for earlier identification and mitigation.
Context and any related preconditions	Risks such as lengthy procurement procedures, slow government policy processes, and challenges in mobilising private-sector commitment were known sector realities, yet early response mechanisms were not adequately activated.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Project management team; implementing ministries; ILO technical team; sector partners (TEVETA, MoTS, private-sector bodies).
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Limited early risk monitoring; delayed inception; sequential rather than parallel processes; slow procurement; low employer incentives leading to weak participation; mitigation measures were triggered late.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Once risks materialised, the project did act to mitigate (e.g., policy dialogues, consultant support, SSB engagement), demonstrating adaptive capacity even if delayed.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Lack of inception phase delayed systematic risk planning; limited staffing (no M&E officer) weakened continuous monitoring; remote backstopping constrained timely support; sequencing and procurement management required earlier prioritisation.



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LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	<i>Equity requires stronger intentionality.</i> Youth inclusion was well-integrated, but gender mainstreaming was less visible, especially in male-dominated sectors such as mining and energy.
Context and any related preconditions	The project emphasised broad systemic reforms and youth participation; however, gender-specific actions lagged during implementation, particularly where women's participation in the workforce is traditionally low.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Women trainees, female workers, training providers, and sector bodies (SSBs/SAC) engaged in mining, energy, and other priority sectors.
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Gender-responsive efforts were modest compared to broader reforms; limited visibility of gender activities; male-dominated sectors presented barriers to women's participation; inadequate gender-specific operational focus.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Youth inclusion was mainstreamed early and consistently, demonstrating that targeted groups can be effectively integrated when prioritised.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Gender mainstreaming lacked sufficient operational emphasis and resourcing during implementation compared to system-level reforms; limited monitoring of gender-specific actions affected visibility and progress.

9.3 Good Practice Template



Project title: Skills Development for Increased Employability Programme

Project DC/SYMBOL: **ZMB/22/01/EUR**

Name of Evaluator: Dr. Edwin Ochieng Okul

Date: Nov 2025.

The following emerging good practices have been identified during the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Revitalisation of dormant governance structures: The project successfully reactivated the national Skills Advisory Committee (SAC), which had been inactive since 2019. Within one year, the SAC convened multiple meetings, developed a work plan, and resumed its mandate of coordinating sector skills development. This directly supported the project's goal of strengthening skills governance and improving labour market responsiveness.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The revival was enabled by strong tripartite commitment and technical support from the project. However, replicability depends on the existence of a formal governance structure and government willingness to lead. Sustaining functionality requires institutional ownership rather than donor-driven convening.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The project's targeted technical assistance and logistical support enabled SAC to reconvene, develop a work plan, and coordinate SSBs. This resulted in improved national-level guidance for sector skills development and strengthened alignment with labour market needs.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	The SAC held multiple meetings within the year, approved a work plan, and initiated structured coordination of sector bodies. Beneficiaries include government, employers, workers' organisations, TEVETA, SSBs, and training institutions through enhanced policy coordination.
Potential for replication and by whom	This practice is replicable in other countries or sectors where similar dormant structures exist. National training authorities, skills councils, and tripartite social partners can adopt it, provided there is political will and minimum operational support.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	The practice contributes to Decent Work Country Programme priorities on skills governance, social dialogue, and labour-market relevance, and aligns with ILO Strategic Objectives on employment promotion and capacity development.
Other documents or relevant comments	Meeting minutes, SAC work plans, and SSB–SAC coordination notes provide documentation to support institutional learning and replication.



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GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Operationalisation of Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs): The project established SSBs in agriculture, mining, energy, and tourism, creating structured tripartite platforms where employers, workers, and training institutions jointly guided skills development. Through these bodies, sector actors co-developed Critical Skills Lists (CSLs) and informed curriculum design, directly supporting the project's objective of improving industry relevance of training.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Successful rollout required existing institutional willingness, employer representation, and TEVETA coordination. Replication may be limited in contexts where private sector organisation is weak or where training authorities lack mandates or resources to convene sector partners. Sustained functionality depends on continued engagement incentives and government stewardship rather than donor dependency.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Formal recognition and operationalisation of SSBs created regular collaboration platforms that enabled sector actors to articulate priority occupations and skills needs. This led to the development of Critical Skills Lists and informed curricula updates, reducing skills mismatches and improving the responsiveness of training providers to labour-market demand.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	SSBs engaged small, medium, and large firms alongside training institutions; CSLs were developed across key sectors and fed into curriculum reforms. Beneficiaries include TEVETA, SSB members, training providers, workers, and learners who will enter more relevant employment pathways.
Potential for replication and by whom	The model is replicable by national skills authorities, ministries, TVET agencies, and sector associations in other industries or countries with similar skills coordination needs.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	This practice contributes to DWCP priorities on strengthening labour-market institutions, tripartite engagement, and skills for employability, and supports ILO objectives on employment promotion, social dialogue, and improved skills governance.
Other documents or relevant comments	SSB meeting records, Critical Skills Lists, and sector curriculum consultation reports illustrate the model's effectiveness and provide reference materials for replication.



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GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Institutional capacity-building linked with infrastructure: The project supported colleges such as Chipata Trades Training Centre and Nortec to combine infrastructure upgrades (e.g., irrigation systems, farmland development, metallurgy laboratories) with curriculum strengthening and staff development. This integrated approach ensured that physical investments were accompanied by improved instructional capacity, directly supporting the project goal of enhancing relevant, demand-driven training delivery.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Success depended on institutions having sufficient land, space, and administrative willingness to integrate infrastructure with training reforms. Replicability may be constrained in institutions lacking adequate facilities, staffing, or local industry partnerships; sustained government funding is needed to maintain upgraded assets.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Infrastructure investment (e.g., irrigation pivots, demonstration plots, metallurgy labs) enabled colleges to deliver practical, industry-aligned training. Paired with curriculum updates and staff upskilling, this coordinated support strengthened training quality and improved learners' practical competencies.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Colleges reported increased capacity to deliver hands-on crop, livestock, and metals-related training; trainees noted stronger practical exposure and greater confidence to pursue employment or self-employment. Beneficiaries include trainees, trainers, and surrounding industry that can access better-prepared graduates.
Potential for replication and by whom	The model is replicable by TEVETA, government ministries, development partners, and TVET institutions seeking to align capital investment with capacity building, provided there is adequate institutional readiness and sector engagement.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	The practice aligns with DWCP and ILO Strategic Objectives on skills development, employability, and productive employment through improved TVET systems.
Other documents or relevant comments	Institutional capacity assessment reports, procurement plans, and college-level improvement plans provide supporting evidence and guidance for replication.



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GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Worker and employer voice in training relevance. The project strengthened the relevance of training by creating structured spaces for workers and employers to jointly shape training priorities. Through consultations, sector bodies, labour market assessments and critical skills lists, both groups contributed to identifying priority occupations and guiding curriculum updates. This practice supports the project's broader goal of establishing a demand-driven skills development system anchored in social dialogue.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The effectiveness of this practice depended on active tripartite structures, employer willingness to participate, and workers' representation through unions. Replicability requires functional social dialogue mechanisms and institutional commitment to integrating worker and employer input into skills planning. In contexts with weak employer associations or union structures, additional capacity building may be required.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	By involving workers and employers in identifying critical skills and shaping curricula, the project strengthened the alignment between training provision and real labour market needs. This participation ensured that training pathways were informed by workplace realities and industry trends, resulting in more relevant and responsive skills programs.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Employer and worker input contributed to the development of critical skills lists, revision of curricula, and improved alignment of training with occupational needs. Beneficiaries include trainees, TVET institutions, employers, workers, and sector bodies who now operate with clearer, jointly-agreed training priorities.
Potential for replication and by whom	This model can be replicated by national training authorities, sector skills councils, ministries of labour and education, employer organisations, and workers' unions in countries with or seeking to strengthen social dialogue structures.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Contributes to DWCP priorities on social dialogue, employment promotion, and skills governance. Aligns with ILO's Strategic Objectives on strengthening labour market institutions, promoting decent work, and enabling inclusive skills development systems.
Other documents or relevant comments	Sector skills reports, critical skills lists, curriculum review materials, and minutes from tripartite consultations provide documented evidence supporting this practice.



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GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Embedding monitoring systems into institutions. The project strengthened national monitoring capacity by supporting the development of the Labour Market Information System (LMIS), a tool designed to generate, analyse and disseminate labour market data for evidence-based planning. Despite implementation delays, the integration of the LMIS into Ministry structures has created a sustainable institutional mechanism for tracking labour market trends and informing policy, directly contributing to the project's objective of improving labour market responsiveness and skills governance.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The success of LMIS development depended on strong government leadership, technical support, and availability of administrative data. Replication requires adequate ICT infrastructure, stable institutional arrangements, and clear data-sharing protocols across ministries and agencies. Capacity gaps in data management may require ongoing support for full utilisation of the system.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	By embedding the LMIS within existing Ministry structures, the project enabled continuous, systematic collection and use of labour market data. This strengthened planning processes, improved coordination across agencies, and ensured that skills development interventions are guided by up-to-date and reliable labour market intelligence.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	The LMIS established a national platform for labour market data, supporting evidence-based decisions in skills planning and employment policies. Beneficiaries include government ministries, TEVETA, training institutions, employers, workers' organisations, and policymakers who rely on accurate labour market information for decision-making.
Potential for replication and by whom	Replicable by ministries of labour, national statistics offices, training authorities, and sector skills councils in countries seeking to institutionalise data-driven labour market planning.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Contributes to DWCP outcomes on labour market governance, employment promotion and institutional capacity strengthening. Aligns with ILO's Strategic Objectives on labour market information, decent work, and evidence-based policymaking.
Other documents or relevant comments	LMIS design documents, Ministry integration plans, data management protocols, and capacity-building reports serve as evidence and reference materials for replication.



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GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Stakeholder Engagement Fostering Ownership and Sustainability of Outcomes. The project's structured and inclusive stakeholder engagement, through the PSC, TWG, employer associations, TEVETA, and training institutions, ensured strong participation in project design, validation, and oversight.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Effective participation was enabled by active government leadership, functional tripartite structures, and availability of sector expertise. Replicability requires established coordination mechanisms and commitment from stakeholders to sustain regular engagement. In contexts with weaker institutional frameworks, capacity strengthening may be needed to achieve similar outcomes.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Consistent engagement enabled stakeholders to shape reforms according to labour market needs, leading to improved curriculum relevance, stronger sector planning, and better integration of project deliverables into national systems. This strengthened ownership and accountability, increasing the likelihood that reforms will continue beyond the project duration.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Stakeholder-led contributions resulted in updated curricula, revised occupational standards, and coordinated sector planning. Beneficiaries include TEVETA, training institutions, employers, workers' organisations, and trainees who benefit from more relevant training and improved alignment with labour market needs.
Potential for replication and by whom	This practice can be replicated by ministries of labour and education, TEVET authorities, employer organisations, trade unions, and sector bodies seeking to institutionalise social dialogue in skills development.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	The project's structured and inclusive stakeholder engagement, ensured strong participation in project design, validation, and oversight. This participatory model supported key reforms directly reinforcing the project's objective of building a responsive, demand-driven skills development system.
Other documents or relevant comments	Effective participation was enabled by active government leadership, functional tripartite structures, and availability of sector expertise.



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GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Sector Studies as a Basis for Planning and Informed Decision Making. The project conducted sector analyses in priority areas such as agriculture, mining, tourism and energy to identify skills gaps, technological changes, and labour market demands. These findings directly informed curriculum updates, occupational standards, and work-based learning structures, supporting the project's goal of strengthening labour market relevance and responsiveness within the skills system.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Effective implementation required employer participation, functional sector bodies, and access to reliable labour market data. Replicability depends on institutional capacity to conduct and interpret sector studies and on strong linkages between training institutions, industry, and labour market authorities.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	By grounding decisions in empirical evidence, the sector studies guided curriculum revision and WBL design, improving alignment with actual labour market needs. This shifted the skills system from supply-driven training to demand-led planning, ensuring greater relevance and coherence of interventions.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Sector study findings contributed to revised curricula, updated occupational profiles, and targeted WBL pathways. Beneficiaries include trainees, training institutions, TEVETA, employers, and ministries that rely on evidence-based planning to improve training quality and employability outcomes.
Potential for replication and by whom	Replicable by ministries of labour and education, national training authorities, sector skills councils, employer organisations, and research bodies seeking to establish evidence-based planning processes in skills development.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Supports DWCP outcomes on labour market relevance, productive employment, and skills anticipation, and aligns with the ILO's Strategic Long-Term Objective on employment and labour market information.
Other documents or relevant comments	Sector analysis reports, occupational profiles, and curriculum review documents serve as key reference materials for implementation and replication.

9.4 List of Respondents

1. Assistant Commissioner MLSS
2. Chipata Trades Training Institute Principal (F)
3. FGD - Chipata Trades Training Institute Staff (3 F, 6 M)
4. FGD- Chipata Trades Training Institute Students (4 F, 7 M)
5. DVET Director and SDEP Project Manager at MOTS (F)
6. Employers' Org – ZFE (M)
7. Workers' Org – ZCTU (M)
8. EUD – Ms Paula (F)
9. FGD with LMIS Task Team (2 F, 3M)
10. FGD with the Agriculture SSB (1 F, 3 M)
11. FGD with the Energy SSB (1F, 4 M)
12. Government Productivity and Labour Technology Centre (GPLTC) ILO team - Director, Finance, Programming and SDEP team)
13. Technical Back-stoppers of the project in Pretoria and HQ.
14. FGD Mining SSB (5m)
15. NAO Representatives (2 M)
16. NORTEC Principal - M
17. Nyamaluma Wildlife Training School Principal Rep. (1 F)
18. SDEP TWG
19. TEVETA DG
20. ZAQA DG

9.5 List of Documents Reviewed

1. Draft Description of Action (09-13-2022)
2. Project Logical Framework (FED/2022/432-931): SDEP
3. Financial Statement for Income and Expenditure – 01 Feb 2023 to 31 Jan 2024
4. ILO Project Budget (FINAL)
5. Financial Report
6. Project Annual Reports

9.6 Evaluation Question Matrix (EQM)

<i>Criteria / Question / Sub-question</i>	<i>Measures / Indicators</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>	<i>Data Collection Methods</i>	<i>Stakeholders / Informants</i>	<i>Analysis and Assessment</i>
Relevance: • Is the project doing the right things? • Has the project considered the needs and priorities of tripartite stakeholders and beneficiaries identified in the projects' documents and during the implementation of both projects? • How well is the project aligned with the local, regional, and national development plans and strategies? • Are the projects' activities and outputs consistent with the intended outcomes and objectives? • Did the project adapt to changing circumstances or emerging needs during its implementation?	• Degree of alignment between project design and identified stakeholder/beneficiary needs in project documents. • Evidence of stakeholder consultations in design and implementation stages. • Consistency of project objectives with national development plans, sector strategies, and SDG commitments. • Stakeholder perceptions of project flexibility and responsiveness.	Project documents, monitoring data, national policies, stakeholder interviews	Document review, KIIs, FGDs, surveys, field observations, case studies	ILO staff, TWG & PSC, tripartite stakeholders, government representatives, beneficiaries, social partners, ILO DWT and the EU	Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, thematic and comparative analysis
Coherence: • How well does the intervention fit? • How is the project complementing other ongoing initiatives and programs in the same sector or geographic area? • How well are the interventions aligned to maximise systemic changes? • How well are the projects aligned with broader policy frameworks and international commitments (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals)?	• Evidence of coordination with other related interventions in the same sector/geographic area. • Level of overlap/duplication avoided with other donor or government initiatives. • Explicit alignment with regional frameworks (e.g., AU Agenda 2063, SADC strategies) and global commitments such as the SDGs, ILO Conventions, and Decent Work Agenda.	Project documents, monitoring data, national policies, stakeholder interviews	Document review, KIIs, FGDs, surveys, field observations, case studies	ILO staff, TWG & PSC, tripartite stakeholders, government representatives, beneficiaries, social partners, ILO DWT and the EU	Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, thematic and comparative analysis

Effectiveness: • Is the project achieving its objectives? • To what extent is the project on track of achieving its main objectives, outcomes and outputs? • What are the key factors that contributed to or hindered the achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes? • Has the project followed its Theory of change? • Were the development hypotheses underpinning the logical framework supported or unsupported based on projects' performance data? • Has the quantity and quality of the outputs produced to date been satisfactory? • What unexpected results (at outputs and outcomes level) have taken place? • To what extent has the projects' specific targets for intended beneficiaries (e.g. women, youth) been applied equitably? • Have the project results to date been similar by geographic area? • How effective was the backstopping support provided by DWT Pretoria and HQs?	• % of planned outputs completed; % of outcome targets met or exceeded. • Proportion of women/youth among direct beneficiaries; geographic equity in results across different regions. • Stakeholder perceptions of progress toward objectives; alignment between observed changes and project's development hypotheses.	Project documents, monitoring data, national policies, stakeholder interviews	Document review, KIIs, FGDs, surveys, field observations, case studies	ILO staff, TWG & PSC, tripartite stakeholders, government representatives, beneficiaries, social partners, ILO DWT and the EU	Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, thematic and comparative analysis
Efficiency: • How well are the resources being used? • How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated and used to achieve the objectives of the project? In general, did the results achieved justify the costs? • Could the same results be attained with fewer resources? • Were funds and interventions delivered in a timely manner? If not, what were the bottlenecks encountered? • Did the project budgets make adequate provisions for addressing gender and inclusion related specific objectives/activities? • Has an effective risk analysis and monitoring and evaluation system been established and implemented? • Impact Orientation: What difference does the project make?	• Ratio of total expenditure per output achieved (e.g., cost per training session delivered, cost per cooperative supported). • % of planned activities delivered within the scheduled timeframe. • Ratio of planned versus actual deployment of technical experts. • % of budget earmarked for gender equality, inclusion, and M&E.	Project documents, monitoring data, national policies, stakeholder interviews	Document review, KIIs, FGDs, surveys, field observations, case studies	ILO staff, TWG & PSC, tripartite stakeholders, government representatives, beneficiaries, social partners, ILO DWT and the EU	Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, thematic and comparative analysis

• Is the project working towards achieving the proposed impacts? • What evidence is there of the project's contribution to broader development goals or policy objectives? • How did the project affect local capacities, institutions, or systems? • What lessons can be learned about the projects' impact that could inform its second implementation phase or future interventions?					
Sustainability: Will the benefits last? • How well did the project build local ownership, capacity, and commitment to continue the activities? • What are the risks to the sustainability of the project's outcomes, and how were they addressed? • Have effective and realistic exit strategies been developed and being implemented? Will project beneficiaries continue to experience improved conditions after the closeout of the projects?	• Existence of formal commitments (e.g., MoUs, budget allocations, or policy endorsements) by government ministries or social partners to continue interventions beyond project funding. • % of project-supported training centres or cooperatives that have secured continued funding from local government, employer associations, or other donors after project closure. • Inclusion of project-developed curricula in national TVET frameworks, or incorporation of new labour inspection practices into Ministry of Labour's operational guidelines. • % of women and youth-led enterprises established under the project that are still operational one year after support ends; or evidence of unions/employer organizations continuing social dialogue initiatives independently.	Project documents, monitoring data, national policies, stakeholder interviews	Document review, KIIs, FGDs, surveys, field observations, case studies	ILO staff, TWG & PSC, tripartite stakeholders, government representatives, beneficiaries, social partners, ILO DWT and the EU	Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, thematic and comparative analysis
Cross-Cutting Issues • To what extent did the project mainstream gender equality and non-discrimination principles into its design and implementation? • How effectively did the project promote strong and independent worker and employer organizations and facilitate constructive social dialogues?	• Proportion of project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and other vulnerability factors, and evidence of equitable participation in project activities. • Number, frequency, and quality of structured dialogues, negotiations, or consultations facilitated by the project • Perceptions of stakeholders regarding their inclusiveness, independence, and effectiveness.	Project documents, monitoring data, national policies, stakeholder interviews	Document review, KIIs, FGDs, surveys, field observations, case studies	ILO staff, tripartite stakeholders, government representatives, beneficiaries, social partners, ILO DWT and the EU	Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, thematic and comparative analysis

9.7. Results Framework

Outputs	Output indicators	Baseline	Target	Status Sept 2025
1.1: Improved national capacities and institutional mechanisms to support the building of a national skills anticipation system.	Constituent satisfaction with the performance of the SAC	Low levels of satisfaction with performance of SAC	High	Moderate levels of satisfaction with SAC performance
1.2 Enhanced capacity of TEVETA's assessment/ examination and certification of both private and public institutions.	% of employers reporting improved satisfaction with skills competence among graduates	Less than 25%	Improved. Above 40%	Not measured
1.3: Capacity of TEVETA's Research and Innovation enhanced to increase relevance and quality of the TEVET system.	Research & Innovation unit established Functional Research and Innovation function in TEVETA	None	Research & Innovation Unit established	Research & Innovation Unit established
1.4: TEVET sector social marketing, branding and communication strategy is developed and piloted.	Improved perception of TVET among women and youth	Poor	Improved	Improving TEVET perception among young learners
1.5: Digitalization of TEVET and skills system enhanced.	Cost savings via digitalisation by TEVETA	High cost of assessments	Significant cost reduction	Reduction in cost of printing exams
2.1: Sectoral Advisory Groups (SAG) established and formalized in all four priority sectors.	Number of SAG recommendations adopted by stakeholders	Only one SAG in the water sector.	4 new SAGS functional	3 new SAGS established
2.2: Sectoral skills anticipation approach piloted in all four priority sectors (linked to 1.1).	Number of sector skills strategies implemented	No sector skills strategies	4 sector skills strategies	3 sector skills strategies

2.3: Employability of women with specific skills in line with demand from the industry is increased.	Industry skills gaps and employability status for women and men	No industry specific skills demand report	Industry skills gaps and employability status report	Sector skills gaps reports
2.4: Work Based Learning programmes are implemented	Increased learner placements in apprenticeship programmes Number of youth and women who benefitted from apprenticeships Completion rates of apprenticeships programmes Number of MoUs signed for apprenticeship programmes	No national apprenticeship programme. TEVETA promoting apprenticeships through the Skills Development Levy – limited scope	National apprenticeship programme aligned to priority sector	Design of a national apprenticeship programme in place
3.1: Reviewed and developed curricula with the participation of the private sector (based on findings of 1.1).	Number of curricula revised or updated Number of national occupational standards developed in the four priority sectors	On-going review of curricula. Mostly not CBT curricula. Sponsored by various stakeholders	9 CBT curricula. Informed by the skills gaps report	9 curricula earmarked for review
3.2: TEVET capacity assessment carried out to identify gaps and opportunities in the provision of skills required by industry.	Assessment report	Annual TEVETA VTI's assessment ongoing	VTI capacity building plan	Assessment report and capacity building plan for 5 selected VTIs

3.3: Increase TEVET institutions' technical and methodological knowledge/capacity to deliver training initiatives that respond to labour market demand.	Improved VTI's capacity for CBT implementation	On-going VTIs capacity building through the SDF. Effort not CBT focused.	Build CBT capacity across 4 sector VTI's	3 sector VTI's earmarked for upgrading.
3.4: Pilot implementation of new/revised curricula by selected TEVET institutions in collaboration with private sector.	Number of TVET institutions adopting the revised curriculum - CBT	On-going capacity development of VTI's to deliver CBT.	Pilot CBT capacity across 4 sector VTI's	5 VTI's earmarked for piloting 9 CBT curricula

9.8 Work Plan & Key Deliverables

The evaluation will be conducted between 1st August and 3rd October, 2025. The lead evaluator will spend 23 man-days on the evaluation. Given the complexity of the project and its context, dedicating several days to stakeholder engagement will be essential for building trust, navigating local dynamics, and capturing in-depth, context-specific insights that enhance the accuracy, relevance, and effectiveness of the evaluation.

Activities and Deliverables	Month I				Month II		
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
1. INCEPTION PHASE							
1.1 Inception Meeting							
1.2 Secondary Research							
1.3 Development of data collection tools							
1.4 <i>Draft Inception Report (Deliverable 1): 18.08.2025</i>							
1.5 Final inception report							
2. DATA COLLECTION PHASE							
2.1 Data collection/ field visits: <i>08.09 to 19.09.2025</i>							
2.2 Debriefing / <i>Validation Workshop: 26.09.2025</i>							
3. REPORT WRITING PHASE							
3.1 Data collation and drafting of the report							
3.2 <i>Submission of draft report (Deliverable 2): 30.09.2025</i>							
3.3 <i>Submission of final report after feedback (Deliverable 3): 17.10.2025</i>							

9.9 Data Collection Tools

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide

ILO Project Staff - Lusaka Office and Backstopping Teams

Relevance (*Is the project doing the right things?*)

1. How well does the project reflect the needs and priorities of tripartite constituents and beneficiaries?
2. In what ways is the project aligned with national, regional, and international development priorities (e.g., Decent Work Country Programme, SDGs)?
3. Has the project been able to adapt effectively to emerging needs or contextual changes?

Coherence (*How well does the intervention fit?*)

1. How well does the project complement other ongoing initiatives in the sector or country?
2. To what extent is it aligned with broader policy frameworks and contributing to systemic changes?

Effectiveness (*Is the project achieving its objectives?*)

1. To what extent is the project achieving its expected outcomes and outputs?
2. What key factors have facilitated or hindered progress (including the adequacy of backstopping support)?
3. Have the project's activities reached intended beneficiaries equitably (e.g., women, youth, vulnerable groups), and what unexpected results have emerged?

Efficiency (*How well are resources being used?*)

1. How efficiently have human, financial, and technical resources been used to deliver results?
2. Were activities and funds delivered in a timely manner, and what challenges affected delivery?
3. Has the project budget and management system adequately addressed gender, inclusion, and risk monitoring?

Impact Orientation (*What difference does the project make?*)

1. What evidence is there that the project is contributing to broader development outcomes or institutional strengthening?
2. What significant changes or impacts (intended or unintended) can be attributed to the project?
3. What lessons about impact could inform a second phase or similar interventions?

Sustainability (*Will the benefits last?*)

1. To what extent has the project-built ownership, capacity, and commitment among national stakeholders?

2. What measures or exit strategies are in place to ensure continuity of results?
3. What risks could undermine sustainability after project closure?

Cross-Cutting Issues

1. How effectively has the project mainstreamed gender equality and non-discrimination into its design and implementation?
2. To what extent has it strengthened social dialogue and the role of worker and employer organizations?

Closing

1. What are the top three successes of the project?
2. What are the main challenges or lessons learned?
3. What recommendations would you make for a future phase or similar projects?

**Ministries (Policy-Level Stakeholders) - Ministry of Technology and Science (Project Managers),
Ministry of Labour, Agriculture, Energy, Tourism, Commerce, and SME Development**

Relevance (*Is the project doing the right things?*)

1. How relevant are the project's objectives and activities to your ministry's policies, priorities, and national development strategies?
2. Has the project adequately considered the needs of the sector(s) you oversee?
3. Has the project adapted well to contextual changes or new sectoral priorities?

Coherence (*How well does the intervention fit?*)

1. How effectively does the project complement other government or donor-funded initiatives in your sector?
2. To what extent does the project contribute to policy coherence and alignment with national frameworks (e.g., Vision 2030, SDGs)?

Effectiveness (*Is the project achieving its objectives?*)

1. What concrete changes or benefits have you observed in your sector from the project?
2. To what extent are targeted groups (e.g., youth, women, SMEs, farmers, enterprises) benefiting?
3. What challenges or gaps remain in achieving the intended outcomes?

Efficiency (*How well are resources being used?*)

1. From your perspective, has the project delivered timely and useful support to your ministry or sector?
2. Could the same or better results have been achieved with fewer resources or alternative approaches?

Impact Orientation (*What difference does the project make?*)

1. What early signs of impact can be linked to the project (e.g., skills development, enterprise growth, employment generation, sector reforms)?
2. Has the project strengthened institutional or sectoral capacity in a sustainable way?
3. What are the most significant contributions to your ministry's mandate or broader policy goals?

Sustainability (*Will the benefits last?*)

1. How well is the project building national ownership and capacity for continuation beyond donor funding?
2. What risks could threaten the continuation of benefits in your sector?
3. What strategies (policy, budgetary, institutional) are needed to sustain results?

Cross-Cutting Issues

1. How effectively has the project supported gender equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination within your sector?
2. In what ways has the project facilitated social dialogue, stakeholder engagement, or tripartite collaboration?

Closing

1. From your perspective, what are the project's greatest contributions so far?
2. What key lessons or recommendations should inform a potential second phase or similar interventions?

TEVETA & Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs) - TEVETA leadership and technical staff, representatives of Sector Skills Bodies

Relevance *(Is the project doing the right things?)*

1. How well are the project's objectives aligned with Zambia's national skills development agenda and TEVETA/SSBs mandates?
2. To what extent does the project address the real skills needs of industries, employers, and trainees in your sector?

Coherence *(How well does the intervention fit?)*

1. How effectively does the project align with other national or donor-led skills initiatives?
2. Does the project strengthen coordination between TEVETA, SSBs, employers, and training institutions?

Effectiveness *(Is the project achieving its objectives?)*

1. What improvements in training systems, curricula, or assessment methods have you observed through the project?
2. Has the project strengthened SSBs' capacity to link skills training with industry demand?
3. How well are vulnerable groups (women, youth, PWDs) being integrated into training opportunities?

Efficiency *(How well are resources being used?)*

1. From your perspective, has the support from the project (funds, expertise, partnerships) been timely and useful?
2. Could training outcomes or institutional strengthening have been achieved with fewer resources or alternative models?

Impact Orientation *(What difference does the project make?)*

1. What early signs of improved employment or productivity outcomes can be attributed to project-supported training initiatives?
2. How has the project influenced policy, standards, or institutional culture in TEVETA/SSBs?

Sustainability *(Will the benefits last?)*

1. How well has the project contributed to strengthening TEVETA/SSBs capacity to sustain reforms and results?
2. What mechanisms (policies, funding models, institutional frameworks) are in place to ensure continuity after the project ends?

Cross-Cutting Issues

1. To what extent have gender equality and non-discrimination been integrated into training and skills frameworks supported by the project?

2. How has the project promoted dialogue between employers, workers, and training providers in shaping curricula and standards?

Closing

1. In your view, what is the most significant contribution of the project to Zambia's skills development system?
2. What recommendations would you propose for improving or scaling up the approach in the future?

TEVET Institution Heads; Principals/Directors of TEVET institutions supported by the project

Relevance (Is the project doing the right things?)

1. How relevant are the project's interventions to the training needs of your students and the labour market demands in your sector?
2. To what extent were your institution's priorities and challenges considered during project design and implementation?

Coherence (How well does the intervention fit?)

1. How well are the project's interventions aligned with TEVETA guidelines and other national education/training initiatives?
2. Has the project facilitated stronger linkages with employers, industry associations, or other institutions?

Effectiveness (Is the project achieving its objectives?)

1. What improvements in curricula, pedagogy, or training facilities have resulted from the project?
2. How effective has the project been in strengthening staff capacity (trainers, administrators, assessors)?
3. To what extent are graduates from your institution benefiting from the skills imparted (employment, entrepreneurship, productivity)?

Efficiency (How well are resources being used?)

1. How timely and adequate was the project's support (equipment, funding, technical assistance)?
2. Could the same results have been achieved with fewer resources or alternative approaches?

Impact Orientation (What difference does the project make?)

1. What significant changes in institutional performance or student outcomes can you attribute to the project?
2. Have you observed broader effects (e.g., improved reputation of your institution, stronger employer partnerships, increased enrolment)?

Sustainability (Will the benefits last?)

1. What measures are in place within your institution to sustain project-supported reforms (curricula, facilities, staff skills) beyond project closure?
2. What risks to sustainability do you foresee (e.g., funding, staffing, equipment maintenance)?

Cross-Cutting Issues

1. How has your institution integrated gender equality and non-discrimination into training, enrolment, and institutional policies?

2. Has the project strengthened collaboration and dialogue between staff, students, employers, and communities?

Closing

1. From your perspective, what is the project's most valuable contribution to your institution?
2. What key recommendations would you propose for improving the support to TEVET institutions in the future?

Private Sector Employers (Work-Based Learning Hosts); Employers/industry representatives who have hosted students or collaborated with TEVET institutions through the project

Relevance (*Is the project doing the right things?*)

1. To what extent do the skills and competencies of trainees align with your company's labour needs?
2. How relevant has the partnership with TEVET institutions been to addressing your human resource and skills gaps?

Coherence (*How well does the intervention fit?*)

1. How well are the project-supported interventions (training, work-based learning, skills matching) aligned with other employer initiatives or industry associations?
2. Has the project improved coordination between employers and TEVET institutions?

Effectiveness (*Is the project achieving its objectives?*)

1. What has been your experience with hosting trainees (technical skills, workplace readiness, attitudes)?
2. How effective was the support provided by the project in facilitating placements (selection, matching, follow-up)?
3. Have you retained or considered retaining trainees as employees?

Efficiency (*How well are resources being used?*)

1. Did the process of engaging with the project (hosting trainees, reporting, supervision) demand a reasonable amount of your time and resources?
2. Could the collaboration have been organized more efficiently?

Impact Orientation (*What difference does the project make?*)

1. What benefits has your company gained from participating (e.g., skilled workforce pipeline, innovation, productivity, cost reduction in recruitment)?
2. Has the project influenced your company's approach to training, skills development, or workforce planning?

Sustainability (*Will the benefits last?*)

1. Are you willing to continue engaging in work-based learning and partnerships with TEVET institutions beyond the project?
2. What conditions (incentives, policies, institutional arrangements) would make this collaboration more sustainable?

Cross-Cutting Issues

1. How has the project addressed gender equality and inclusion among trainees hosted in your company?

2. Has the project promoted constructive dialogue between employers, workers, and training institutions in your sector?

Closing

1. What is the most valuable contribution of the project from your perspective?
2. What key recommendations would you propose to strengthen future collaboration between employers and TEVET institutions?

Donor Representative (EU); - EU Delegation Representative responsible for oversight of the project

Relevance & Coherence

1. To what extent is the project aligned with EU cooperation priorities, national development strategies, and the needs of target groups?
2. How does this project complement or fit with other EU-funded interventions and with the support from other development partners in Zambia?

Effectiveness

1. From your perspective, how effective has the project been in achieving its intended objectives and outcomes so far?
2. What factors have facilitated or constrained progress, and how has the project adapted to emerging needs?

Efficiency

1. How do you assess the efficiency of project delivery in terms of resource use, timeliness, and reporting?
2. To what extent has the project demonstrated value for money?

Impact Orientation

1. What evidence do you see of the project's contribution to broader EU development goals such as skills development, employability, and private sector engagement?
2. Are there any notable policy or systemic effects attributable to the project?

Sustainability

1. What is your assessment of the sustainability of project results, especially in terms of government ownership, institutional capacity, and financing?
2. What lessons can be drawn to inform EU's future programming in skills development and employment promotion?

Cross-Cutting Issues

1. How well has the project integrated gender equality, non-discrimination, and social dialogue in its design and implementation?
2. How important are these cross-cutting themes for EU's future engagement in Zambia's skills development sector?

Closing

1. In your view, what is the single most important achievement of this project so far?
2. What key recommendations would you give to improve the ongoing implementation and inform design of future interventions?

FGD Guide

Trainees / Apprentices (Male & Female, by Sector)

Opening

- Welcome participants, introduce purpose of the discussion, and explain confidentiality.
- Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers — all experiences are valid.
- Obtain consent for participation and, if applicable, recording.
- Quick **icebreaker**: “Please tell us your name, training/apprenticeship sector, and one thing you have learned or enjoyed so far.”

Relevance & Access

1. How did you learn about this training/apprenticeship opportunity?
2. Do you feel the training/apprenticeship is relevant to your career goals and community needs?
3. Were there any difficulties in accessing the program (e.g., costs, distance, information)?

Quality & Effectiveness of Training

1. How would you describe the quality of the training you received (content, teaching methods, facilities)?
2. What skills (technical and soft skills) do you feel you have gained so far?
3. For apprenticeships: how useful was the workplace learning experience compared to classroom training?

Gender Equality & Inclusion

1. Do you think both male and female trainees/apprentices had equal opportunities to participate and benefit?
2. Were there any challenges faced by women, men, or vulnerable groups (e.g., persons with disabilities) in participating fully?
3. Did the training address issues of workplace respect, non-discrimination, and safety?

Efficiency & Support Systems

1. Were the training materials, tools, and equipment adequate and provided on time?
2. Did you receive sufficient support from trainers, mentors, or institutions during your learning?
3. Were stipends, allowances, or logistical support (if any) timely and adequate?

Sustainability & Recommendations

1. Do you think the skills and experience gained will help you long-term?

2. What can be improved in the program to better support future trainees/apprentices?
3. If you had the chance to advise the government or training providers, what would you recommend?

Closing

1. Quick round: "In one word or short phrase, how would you describe your experience in this program?"

FGD Guide – Employers / Industry Supervisors (Work-Based Learning Partners) - Private sector
firms, cooperatives, and industry supervisors who hosted apprentices/trainees under the project.

Opening

- Introduce the discussion, purpose, and confidentiality.
- Acknowledge their contribution to skills development.
- Icebreaker: “Please share your name, organization, sector, and briefly describe your role in supervising trainees.”

Relevance & Alignment with Industry Needs

1. How did your organization become involved in this apprenticeship/work-based learning program?
2. To what extent do you think the program addressed your company’s skills needs and sectoral priorities?
3. Were the trainees placed with you adequately prepared with the foundational skills needed to start learning in your workplace?

Quality & Effectiveness of Trainees

1. How would you assess the technical and soft skills of the trainees you hosted?
2. What strengths did you observe in the trainees’ performance?
3. What skill gaps or challenges did you notice during the apprenticeship period?
4. Did you provide structured mentorship or supervision — and how effective was it?

Efficiency & Support from Institutions

1. How well did the training institutions and the project coordinate with you in planning and managing the placements?
2. Did you receive adequate guidance, communication, or support from TEVET institutions/TEVETA/SSBs/ILO?
3. Were logistical and administrative arrangements (e.g., contracts, insurance, stipends) clear and timely?

Sustainability & Future Engagement

1. What would motivate you to continue hosting apprentices/trainees in the future?
2. What challenges need to be addressed to make the program more sustainable and attractive for employers?
3. How could collaboration between industry, training institutions, and government be improved to strengthen skills development?

Cross-Cutting Issues

1. Did you observe gender-related barriers or inequalities in how male and female trainees engaged during the placement?
2. How did your organization ensure a safe, respectful, and non-discriminatory environment for trainees?
3. In your view, did the program contribute to strengthening industry–training institution partnerships and dialogue?

Closing

1. Quick round: "In one phrase, how would you summarize your overall experience with the program?"