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A young man with short dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt with blue and grey stripes on the sleeves, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is holding a piece of wood with a tool, possibly a chisel or a small saw, in his hands. The background is a wall with large, abstract, textured shapes in red and yellow. In the bottom right corner, there is a decorative graphic consisting of a grid of triangles in various shades of purple and blue.

► Independent high-level evaluation
of the ILO's strategies and actions
under the Youth Employment Action
Plan 2020-30

Evaluation period: 2020-24

August 2025

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ACTEMP	The Bureau for Employers' Activities (ILO)
ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities (ILO)
ADE	Agencia Distrital de Empleo (District Employment Agency, Bogota)
AfDB	African Development Bank
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
ANAPEC	National Agency for the Promotion of Employment
ANETI	Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant (National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASPTEE	African Skills Portal for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for African Development
BDS	Business Development Service
BRMM	Better Regional Migration Management
CGE	Computable General Equilibrium
CLE	Know the Enterprise
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPO	Country Programme Outcome
DAV	Digital Access and Value
DC	Development Cooperation
DET	Disability Equality Training
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DWCPs	Decent Work Country Programmes
DWT	Decent Work Team
ESS/SSE	Economie Sociale et Solidaire / Social and Solidarity Economy
EVAL	Evaluation Office (ILO)
EMPLAB	Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch (ILO)
EmpIA	Employment Impact Assessment
ENETH	National Strategy for Employability and Human Talent
GA	Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions
GB	Governing Body
GCSJ	Global Coalition for Social Justice
GIDJY	Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth
GenU	Generation Unlimited
GET Youth	Global Employment Trends for Youth
HLE	High-Level Evaluation
HQ	Headquarters

IDAG	Interdepartmental Youth Employment Action Group
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILS	International Labour Standards
InSIGHT-2	The Industry Skills for Inclusive Growth-2
IT-BPM	Information Technology and Business Process Management
HRJ	Hoja de Ruta para el Empleo Joven
KAB	Know About Business
KNQA	Kenya National Qualifications Authority
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LEP	Local Employment Partnerships
MOLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment (Philippines)
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MRC	Migrant Resource Centres
NAADAB	National Apprenticeship and Artisan Development Advisory Body
NEP	National Employment Policy
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NERS	National Employment Recovery Strategy
NES	National Employment Strategy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NITA	National Industrial Training Authority
NIYEAP	Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan
NSA	Strategic Note on Apprenticeship
ODCO	Office for the Development of Cooperation
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development / Development Assistance Committee
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PARDEV	Field Operations and Partnerships Department
PES	Public Employment Services
P&B	Programme and Budget
PN2E 35	Politique Nationale de l'Emploi et l'Entrepreneuriat à l'horizon de 2035 (National Employment and Entrepreneurship Policy to 2035)
PNED	Política Nacional de Empleo Digno
PUIDIC	Integrated Emergency Development Programme for Youth Employment
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RB	Regular Budget
RBM	Results-Based Management
RBSA	Regular Budget Supplementary Account

RBTC	Regular Budget Technical Cooperation
REC	Regional Economic Communities
RoO	Relaxed Rules of Origin
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAF	Safe and Fair
SALE	South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SfP-SEA	Skills for Prosperity in Southeast Asia
SIFA	Skills Initiative for Africa
SIYB	Start and Improve Your Business
SLM-KSP	Skills and Labour Migration Knowledge-Sharing Platform
SNA	Skills-Needs Anticipation
SNI-TEF	Integrated National Strategy for the Transition to the Formal Economy
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TAF	EU-ILO Technical Assistance Facility
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
ToC	Theory of Change
ToRs	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UoP	University of the Philippines
UCCD	University Centers for Career Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAE	Validation des acquis de l'expérience
XBDC	Extra-budgetary Development Cooperation
YEAP	Youth Employment Action Plan
YEP	Youth Employment Programme Unit (ILO)
YES	Youth Employment Strategy
YES Africa	Youth Employment Strategy for Africa
YESI	Youth Employment and Skilling Initiative
YG	Youth Guarantee



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01

► Executive summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The HLE reviewed the Office's strategies and actions under the [Youth Employment Action Plan \(YEAP\) 2020-2030](#) for the period 2020 – 24. The evaluation paid particular attention to the five policy areas of the YEAP: i) Employment and economic policies for youth employment; ii) Labour market policies; iii) Employability (education, training and skills, and the school-to-work transitions); iv) Youth entrepreneurship and self-employment; and v) Rights for young people. The HLE delivered expert-level analysis grounded in data derived from: a review of ILO documentation; 10 case studies (4 in-depth, 4 desk-based, and 2 thematic); interviews and surveys with ILO staff, constituents, donors, United Nations (UN) and other partners¹; and a synthesis review of 30 evaluation reports on youth employment.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT²



The YEAP 2020–2030 sets out a focused strategic vision that reaffirms the ILO's normative and technical leadership in youth employment, positioning it as a lever of economic and social stability. Since its inception, the ILO has positioned itself as a global knowledge leader, advancing policy integration and country-level diagnostics, and contributing to promoting youth rights at work, strengthening social dialogue and tripartism, and embed youth

employment into national frameworks aligned with international labour standards. Programming strengthened public employment services, enhanced skills systems, and promoted youth entrepreneurship—primarily through supply-side interventions. The introduction of Programme and Budget (P&B) Output 3.5 in 2024-2025 and rising donor interest in green and digital transitions provide a platform to scale the ILO's youth employment efforts.

Moving forward, the ILO's capacity to deliver on the YEAP remains constrained by critical gaps and decent work deficits. Despite progress since YEAP's inception, demand-side interventions need stronger focus to unlock solutions to job creation challenges and strengthen private sector engagement in youth job creation and talent retention. Youth participation in decision-making remains inconsistent and lacks influence. Internally, short funding cycles with limited resources, loose internal governance for interdisciplinary work, and absence of costed planning and results monitoring and reporting weaken long-term strategic delivery and impact assessment. Limited uptake of results by Member States through integration into national systems further restrict the scale, sustainability, and impact of youth employment initiatives.

¹ Case studies included: Colombia, the Philippines, Tunisia, and Kenya (in-depth country-focused); Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Youth Guarantee Scheme in the Western Balkans initiative (desk-based); the assessment of the balance between demand-side and supply-side approaches in the ILO's work on youth employment; and the assessment of ILO's Partnerships with International Cooperation Agencies on Youth Employment (thematic). A total of 170 informants (46% men; 54% women) were interviewed, while 25 per cent of staff, 36 per cent of constituents and 23 per cent of partners completed the survey.

² 6 = Highly satisfactory; 5 = Satisfactory; 4 = Somewhat satisfactory; 3 = Somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = Unsatisfactory; 1 = Highly unsatisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

Relevance

KEY FINDING 1:

The ILO has contributed to addressing constituents' priorities through stronger integration of youth employment into national policy frameworks since 2020. Strengthening youth participation in national decision-making and expanding efforts in underdeveloped areas of the ILO's programming for youth employment are important avenues to advance the relevance of the ILO's youth employment agenda.



KEY FINDING 2:

The ILO has proactively seized opportunities to adapt youth employment strategies to global and national challenges—from COVID-19 and demographic shifts to geopolitical instability, climate change, and digitalization.

The ILO's work on youth employment spans diverse contexts and development stages, guided by country priorities, demand from constituents, and resource availability. Youth employment efforts reach diverse demographics, including disadvantaged youth groups—those not in employment, education or training (NEET), youth in conflict settings and rural economy, informal workers, and women. Yet, targeting young people with disabilities and promoting youth participation in social dialogue remains limited.

The ILO's youth employment strategies under the YEAP have positioned youth employment as a pillar of economic and social stability. However, challenges persist. While supply-side efforts like skills training have gained momentum, demand-side measures—macroeconomic policies and sectoral investments highlighted in the YEAP—require greater attention and sustained commitment from ILO member States to strengthen them, reply to constituents' evolving priorities, and ensure balanced efforts that address the multifaceted challenges of youth employment. Additionally, while growing support exists to digitalization in labour market policies and skills development, green skills for youth requires continued attention in the ILO's youth employment programming.

The ILO has shown agility in addressing emerging challenges, notably supporting COVID-19 employment recovery and the resilience of young workers and entrepreneurs.

Coherence

KEY FINDING 3:

The YEAP 2020–2030 outlines a strategic approach that underscores the ILO's normative and technical leadership in youth employment. However, the absence in the YEAP of an operational implementation mechanism prohibits its potential to function as a unified, actionable framework rooted in internal policy coherence.



KEY FINDING 4:

The introduction of Output 3.5 in the P&B for 2024–25 marks progress towards institutionalizing youth employment, but continued fragmentation across multiple P&B outputs weakens synergies, and accountability. Only 9% of planned youth employment results for the biennium align with Output 3.5, limiting the reporting on and visibility of results.

The YEAP aligns with global frameworks, including the [ILO Centenary Declaration](#), the [Call for Action on Youth Employment](#) (2012), the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), and the [UN Youth Strategy](#), while promoting a human-centred, rights-based approach that embeds youth employment within wider economic, environmental, and social policies.

The implicit theory of change for YEAP 2020–2030 is conceptually grounded and strategically ambitious but lacks the operational mechanism to ensure coherence of ILO's results across its three implementation clusters.³ The absence in the YEAP of an explicit results framework, performance benchmarks, and monitoring systems undermines progress tracking and aggregation, leaving youth employment efforts dispersed and largely invisible.

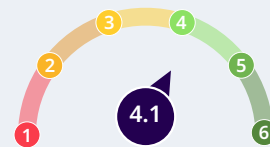
Institutional coherence with the ILO's Results-Based Management (RBM) system is developing, with scope for further alignment. Until 2024–25, youth employment had no dedicated output, with related CPOs scattered across outputs, mostly including skills (3.2), labour market programmes (3.4), and enterprise support (4.3). While the Interdepartmental Action Group (IDAG) facilitates convening, information sharing and ensures representation of social partners perspectives in internal discussions through ACTRAV and ACTEMP, IDAG's limited role hinders its ability to synergize across departments and regions.

³ Knowledge development and dissemination, technical assistance and capacity building and partnerships and advocacy

Effectiveness

KEY FINDING 5:

The YEAP has driven results at country level, particularly in policy integration, skills development, entrepreneurship and self-employment. Yet, overall effectiveness is constrained by gaps in demand-side interventions, fragmented programming, short-funding cycles, market-related barriers, limited youth involvement in social dialogue, and socioeconomic and political factors.



KEY FINDING 6:

Work under the YEAP promotes tripartism and social dialogue and reinforces ILO's normative mandate by advancing rights at work through inclusive policy development at national and sub-national levels, anchored in international labour standards. Enabling rights, such as freedom of association, and collective bargaining are not consistently included in youth-focused strategies.

All five policy areas covered by YEAP are broadly reflected in ILO interventions. Since 2020, the ILO has contributed to the adoption of 11 National Employment Policies (NEPs); assisted 24 member States in the formulation of youth-specific employment strategies; and supported policy instruments indirectly related to employment, particularly in contexts of informality, crisis, or multidimensional vulnerability. Strengthening Public Employment Services and skills development systems have been major approaches to Labour Market Policy (often in the context of Active Labour Market Programmes - ALMPs) and Employability, while initiatives on work-based learning are relatively limited. Entrepreneurship has been generally addressed as a skill, often using ILO tools, predominantly through Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme. Rights at work for youth have been implicitly promoted across the portfolio.

The ILO has taken a comprehensive approach to knowledge—leading globally on statistical data and publications, while driving regional platforms and country diagnostics. The Office prolifically developed partnerships across some sectors and levels to tackle employment challenges and promoted decent work for youth through collaboration with governments, social partners, development sector agencies, and civil society. Yet, active engagement of private sector is largely absent.

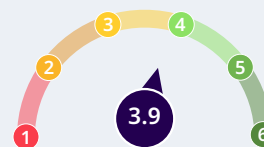
Despite progress, effectiveness remains restricted. Support to demand-side interventions like macroeconomic policy, sectoral investment, and job creation schemes requires enhanced action to overcome employment gaps, especially where decent job opportunities are limited, such as the informal economy and fragile settings. Market barriers—low private sector demand, limited access to finance, and weak market incentives—are persistent. While some initiatives embed youth rights at work, youth are often grouped with broader vulnerable populations, missing their distinct challenges.

The ILO's youth employment work has advanced key labour standards—such as the Minimum Age (C138), the Equal Remuneration (C100), and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (C111) Conventions—through integration into national policies, capacity building, and advocacy. However, youth-focused strategies do not consistently include enabling rights, such as freedom of association (C87) and collective bargaining (C98). Although tripartite dialogue exists, there is limited evidence of youth voices present in formal tripartite structures.

Efficiency

KEY FINDING 7:

Since 2020, the ILO estimated total resource expenditure reached USD 445.8 million⁴ on youth employment—22 per cent of its total expenditure—showing a 61 per cent increase in 2024 compared to 2020 levels, signalling stronger funding partners' commitment and a high fund utilization rate of nearly 80%. Evolving donor priorities — favouring niche themes like green transitions, digitalization, platform work, and crisis response— present opportunities for the ILO to effectively position youth employment as a priority within a variety of forward-looking agendas.



KEY FINDING 8:

Despite clear commitment, the ILO's delivery model for youth employment do not match the ambitions of the YEAP. Persistent staffing shortages with limited-term appointments, absence of formalized roles, and gaps in coordination between headquarters, regional, and country offices affect efforts towards youth employment outcomes. During the review period, over 95% of youth employment expenditure relied on Extra-Budgetary Development Cooperation (XBDC), with achievement of youth employment outcomes reliant on fragmented and time-bound initiatives.

KEY FINDING 9:

In the absence of a results framework, efforts to monitor progress under the YEAP have remained limited and largely ad hoc.

The ILO has played a key role in global youth employment efforts. Its main partnership, the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, has mobilized \$27.6 million⁵ in resources between 2017 and 2025⁶. Articulating the alignment and complementarity across various partnership platforms, such as the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, is needed to promote clarity for external partners.

The institutional delivery model for the YEAP does not fully capitalize on internal resources. The current setup of the recently re-established Youth Employment Unit—with two regular budget staff members and heavy reliance on XBDC-funded contracts—falls short of meeting the scale and complexity of the task. Moreover, in the absence of dedicated youth employment specialists, regional engagement is maintained through interim and informal focal points, rather than by structurally defined roles or strategic regional workplans, limiting the ILO's capacity to respond to increasing demands from constituents and ensuring continuity of youth employment efforts. Across departments, youth-related work is typically subsumed, without disaggregation of time and resource allocation. The IDAG operates as an informal structure without dedicated resource allocation and defined accountability towards results. Strategic adjustments could enable fuller deployment of internal assets and mitigate risks of discontinuity and institutional dependency on individuals rather than systems.

The dedicated P&B Output 3.5 presents another strategic opportunity to strengthen institutional capacity by unlocking regular budget resources. Yet, the absence of costed planning that links resources to measurable outcomes—alongside weak monitoring and outcome-based reporting—undermines the ability to mobilize and allocate resources effectively and weakens visibility of results.

⁴ This figure represents an internal estimate derived from the aggregation of expenditures associated with CPO initiatives and DC projects explicitly referencing the terms “youth” or “young”, and in the three official languages, drawing from data provided by the ILO Finance Department, the ILO dashboards for DC, and outcome-based work planning.

⁵ Sourced from financial data provided by ILO EVAL. ‘Financial Resources for Decent Jobs for Youth’. 2025.

⁶ This funding includes activities funded through the DJY which had implementation periods that overlapped with the evaluation period (2020 – 2024).

Sustainability and emerging impact

KEY FINDING 10:

Integrated solutions and local buy-in demonstrate potential for impact and sustainability in several countries. However, the majority of ILO's youth employment work relies on technical assistance, with limited scale, and challenged uptake of results through integration into national frameworks with sustained domestic financing. These factors undermine sustainability, while limited focus on demand-side solutions and weak private sector engagement in job creation and talent retention reduce likelihood of impact.



KEY FINDING 11:

Absence of robust monitoring frameworks severely hinders the assessment of the impact and scalability of interventions.

To promote sustainability and impact, the ILO continues to use youth-related strategies such as policy integration, capacity-building, and training, aligned with national priorities. However, short-funding cycles prevent the ILO from achieving broad national-scale viability, which is further exacerbated by changing government priorities and weak institutionalization of outcomes. Sustainability is further challenged by the complexity of delivering programmes in conflict-affected settings.

The absence of systematic monitoring in youth employment limits the ILO's capacity to generate consolidated reporting that supports internal learning and accountability, and weakens evidence use as a strategic tool for coherent delivery, outreach, and resource mobilization.

Lessons learned

LESSON LEARNED 1

The absence of a measurable integrated results framework and costed resourcing plan has limited the YEAP's strategic utility, leading to fragmented actions across the ILO. The IDAG plays a convening role but lacks the mandate to drive interdisciplinary work across departments and regions.

LESSON LEARNED 2

Youth employment efforts remain largely supply-side focused. Without strengthened demand-side measures—such as support to job creation, private sector engagement, and macroeconomic strategies—initiatives risk falling short of sustainable, long-term impact. Models like the Youth Guarantee show promise but will need significant adaptation outside the EU context.

LESSON LEARNED 3

The Youth Employment Strategy developed with the African Union provides the potential to promote and implement coherent national-level youth employment measures across Africa. Emerging opportunities exist for funding partnerships with governments of upper middle-income countries. Constituent demand is also rising in these contexts for digital and green skills. However, nurturing partnerships require dedicated strategies and human resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

To sustain its leadership role, the ILO should balance supply-side measures with a sharper focus on the active promotion of youth employment creation through targeted, demand-side interventions. This can be achieved through strengthening its work on cross-ministerial and comprehensive policy frameworks, based on social dialogue and youth engagement, and through the concrete application of newly developed tools such as employment budgeting tools, demand-side impact assessments, and more work on ALMPs. The focus should continue to be on high-job-potential sectors such as green, digital and care.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods (EMPLOYMENT), with support from: Sustainable Enterprises, Productivity and Just Transitions (ENTERPRISES) Universal Social Protection Regions and Decent Work Teams (DWTS) Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)		Short-Term	Low

Recommendation 2

For cohesive management and full realization of the YEAP results, the Youth Employment Unit should be authoritatively mandated to coordinate youth employment activities across the ILO and optimize resource utilization. To maximize delivery, the overlap between the Output 3.5 coordination team and IDAG should be addressed, resulting in a formally mandated and actively engaged network of ILO staff—with allocated time—for coordinated planning, shared accountability for results, and effective outreach across youth-related initiatives. To strengthen field delivery, results from the workforce gap analysis should be considered to address capacity needs in emerging areas in the field, such as digital and green transitions, conflict-sensitive programming, public employment services, and entrepreneurship ecosystem development. This will help ensure the ILO can provide responsive, high-quality technical support aligned with evolving youth employment challenges and opportunities.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
EMPLOYMENT Human Resources Department (HRD) Strategic Programming and Management (PROGRAM)		Medium-Term	Medium

Recommendation 3

The ILO should complement the YEAP with an integrated results framework to forge greater institutional programming and strengthen results-based planning, monitoring and reporting. This framework should guide progress tracking and be linked to monitoring field-level delivery, supported by regular reporting to inform programming and enhance results visibility. Collecting age-disaggregated and qualitative data will be essential to assess youth outcomes and strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
EMPLOYMENT		Medium-Term	Low

Recommendation 4

To strengthen sustainability and impact, the ILO should explore avenues to leverage financial resources with its national constituents, enhance private sector engagement for job creation and talent retention, promote decent work and labour rights, and engage regional and global development banks to integrate the decent work agenda for youth into their financing instruments and technical assistance programmes. The ILO should continue maximizing global partnership platforms by prioritizing the development of value propositions, adopting a unified and tailored engagement approach, and assigning dedicated partnership staff across country, regional, and HQ levels. To enable coordinated inter-agency action at regional and country levels, the ILO should continue to lead the development of partnership agreements or MOUs with other UN agencies at the headquarters and regional-office levels, ensuring they are focused on delivering concrete, results-oriented outcomes.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
EMPLOYMENT, with support from: Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation (PARTNERSHIPS) Regions and DWTS		Medium-Term	Medium



02

► Introduction

► INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE HIGH-LEVEL EVALUATION

The Evaluation Office (EVAL) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted a *High-Level Evaluation (HLE) of the ILO's Strategies and Action under the Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP) 2020 – 2030*, for the period 2020 to 2024. In November 2024, the Governing Body (GB) approved EVAL's rolling workplan which included an HLE on the ILO's strategies and actions under the YEAP 2020 – 2030. HLEs are governance-level evaluations that aim to generate insights into organizational-level performance within the context of the ILO's results-based management system. As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToRs), the evaluation report as well as the Office's response to its findings and recommendations will be discussed in the GB session in October-November 2025. A follow up plan will be prepared by the Office and monitored during implementation.

The evaluation was implemented by an evaluation team, comprising of Evaluation Officers at ILO Headquarters and a team of external evaluation experts from Cynosure with expertise in undertaking High-Level Evaluations, Youth Employment, Skills and TVET.⁷

The evaluation report is organized as follows:

- This section presents the nature of the high-level evaluation, including its approach and methodological framework.
- **Section 2** provides an overview of the Youth Employment Action Plan (2020–2030) and the ILO's strategies and approaches related to youth employment.
- **Section 3** summarizes key points arising from the assessment of the ILO's efforts to implement the Youth Employment Action Plan during the period 2020–2024.
- **Section 4** presents a summary of key findings based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria.
- **Section 5** covers the conclusions, lessons learned, and emerging practices.
- **Section 6** outlines the recommendations.
- **Section 7** includes the Office's responses to the evaluation recommendations.

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The **overarching purpose** of the HLE is to provide insights into the ILO's strategies and actions under the YEAP for the years 2020 to 2024. Furthermore, the HLE also includes forward looking considerations and provides findings, lessons learned, and emerging good practices for improved decision-making within the context of the next ILO Strategic Framework and the remaining duration of the YEAP 2020 – 2030. The recommendations from the HLE cover various organizational levels in the ILO, including at global/HQ, regional, and country levels. Therefore, the current HLE includes both **summative as well as formative approaches**. The primary objectives of this High-Level Evaluation are to:

- Provide an independent account to the Governing Body of the ILO's overall performance in the implementation of the YEAP for the period 2020 to 2024, helping Member States in making informed decisions to develop and improve actions on youth employment, in line with the strategy and key results in the context of the ILO's Results-Based Management framework.
 - Provide an opportunity to learn what works well and what less well around the implementation clusters of the YEAP, namely: developing and disseminating knowledge on youth employment, providing technical assistance to and building capacities of constituents, and advocating for and strengthening partnerships within the organisation, and with regional and international organisations.
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⁷ The external Evaluation Team is comprised of Ms. Umm e Zia as the Evaluation Team Leader, Mr Rafael Munoz-Sevilla as the Co-Team Leader/Youth Employment Expert, Ms. Maria Catharina (Gita) Poyck as the Skills and TVET Expert, and Mr. Faaiz Irfan as the Senior Evaluation Analyst. In addition, Mr. Fahad Abbasi, Ms. Mahrukh Murad, and Mr. Mohammad Usman from Cynosure also supported the team.

- Explore the efficiency gains in the external and internal coherence, including synergies with strategic partners.
- Explore how the current action plan considers the changing nature of the world of work and, therefore, the evolving needs in terms of youth employment relevant in the near future (e.g., the platform economy, demographic shifts, climate change, and crisis settings).
- Provide an account to the GB on how the ILO is contributing to global strategies, agendas and debates relating to youth employment and its coordination within partners' cross-country and global peer networks, inter-agency cooperation across the United Nations and other international agencies, private and public sectors.
- Support the Office and the constituents in making informed decisions about the future directions on this area of work.

Overall, the scope of the current HLE was determined through an elaborate consultative process that entailed the examination of work on youth employment within the ILO at the HQ, regional, and national levels. The HLE examined the ILO's work on youth employment across the organization, without limiting the scope to any particular department. This approach was informed by the understanding that while the Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch (EMPLAB) plays a fundamental role in the ILO's work on youth employment, particularly as the branch leading the Youth Employment Action Plan, the ILO's work on youth employment is also reflected in the work of other departments and units within the Organization to varying degrees. This approach strengthened the HLE by enabling a holistic examination of the ILO's work on youth employment.

As detailed in the inception report, the HLE examined all ILO programme activities and actions related to youth employment and linked to the pillars of the YEAP 2020 – 2030 between 2020 to 2024 (two full biennia: 2020-21 and the 2022-23 biennium; and one partial biennium: 2024-25). In terms of scoping of ILO actions, a detailed mapping exercise of ILO's Decent Work Results identified relevant interventions falling under various P&B Outcomes and Outputs in addition to Indicator 3.1.2 and Output 3.5, as detailed in Section 3.2.5. Overall, the HLE assessed initiatives contributing to the ILO's work on youth employment, with consideration for the work **across all five strategic pillars of the YEAP 2020 – 2030**. This approach aligns with the overarching objective of the HLE to assess the range of youth employment work across the ILO.

The following table outlines the areas of enquiry for the current HLE:

TABLE 1: AREAS OF ENQUIRY FOR THE CURRENT HLE

AREAS OF ENQUIRY
Fit of the YEAP 2020 – 2030 with the needs of the ILO constituents
Focus of the actions under the YEAP 2020 – 2030 on ILO's niche of work relative to other international agencies and development partners working on youth employment
Synergies and complementarities between outcomes related to the ILO's P&B, ILO's strategic framework, and other policy instruments (including the ILO Centenary Declaration and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization)
Integration of contributing areas of work in the implementation of the YEAP 2020 – 2030
Adequacy of resources to implement the YEAP 2020 - 2030
Efficacy of mechanisms and processes to enable interdepartmental coordination and tracking of progress towards meeting the objectives of the YEAP 2020 - 2030
Successes of the ILO's actions on youth employment and any unintended outcomes
Efficacy in benefitting the intended target population through implemented actions on youth employment
Alignment of the YEAP 2020 – 2030 with the expectations of the ILC and GB

Methodology

EVALUATION APPROACH, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with EVAL Protocol No 2.1: Policy Outcomes and Institutional Evaluations (High-level Evaluations), Version 3, March 2021. The HLE applied **outcome-based evaluation approach** to assess the **Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Likelihood of Impact, and Sustainability** of the ILO's strategies and actions on youth employment. The HLE was guided by a high-level framework for the ILO's work on promoting youth employment outlining required actions to achieve intended outcomes. Although not a fully developed ToC (see section 2.3.1), this roadmap undergirding the ILO's strategies and actions on youth employment was elaborated based on the strategic directions given by key programmatic and strategic planning documents, as well as key informant interviews at inception phase. Furthermore, the overarching design of the HLE (including its scope) targeted the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews and web-based structured surveys with ILO Staff, Constituents, and partners along with country and thematic case studies.

The **scope** of the current HLE was determined through an elaborate consultative process encompassing the examination of work on youth employment within the ILO at both the HQ and the regional level, as well as a triangulation and further validation process that took place during the inception phase mission (24-27 February 2025). Complementing this, the Evaluators initiated work on constructing a Theory of Change (ToC) for the ILO's youth employment initiatives by reviewing key strategic and programmatic documents, including the YEAP 2020–2030 and the P&B Documents for 2020–2025, as well as conducting consultations during the Inception stage. Specifically, the evaluation team developed a high-level framework for understanding how change is expected to happen through ILO's work on promoting youth employment (see Section 2.3.1), detailing the actions required to achieve the intended outcomes. While not yet a fully developed ToC, this roadmap, along with the CPO analysis, provided a foundation for mapping ILO actions, selecting case studies, and informing the evaluation's measurement framework in the HLE. Overall, as a result of this process, the scope of the evaluation was concluded to cover all ILO programme activities and actions related to youth employment and linked to the pillars of the YEAP 2020 – 2030 between 2020 to 2024 (two full biennia: 2020-21 and the 2022-23 biennium; and one partial biennium: 2024-25). In terms of scoping of specific ILO actions, a detailed mapping exercise of ILO's Decent Work Results identified relevant interventions falling under various P&B Outcomes and Outputs in addition to Indicator 3.1.2 and Output 3.5 and contributing to the ILO's work on youth employment, with consideration for the work across the five strategic pillars of the YEAP 2020 – 2030.

Evaluation questions and data collection methods

The HLE followed a multi-level approach that allowed data triangulation. The evaluation was undertaken using a **consultative and participatory approach, employing mixed methodologies**, combining multiple sources and levels of evidence with qualitative and quantitative data to capture information relating to the HLE objectives. These drew on qualitative and quantitative methods using pre-existing data, primary data collection and comparisons. It also included a reference group composed of key ILO staff with expertise on the subject matter. The methodology was based on the ILO's evaluation policy and procedures, which adhere to international standards and best practices, articulated in the OECD/DAC Principles and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in April 2016. It considered the ILO's normative and social dialogue and tripartite mandate, gender equality and inclusion, just transition, and contribution to the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Special consideration was given to existing guidance from EVAL on the subject matter.⁸

⁸ ILO, "Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation", Guidance Note 3.1, 2020; ILO, "Adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate", Guidance Note 3.2, 2020.

Issues pertaining to environmental sustainability, gender equality and non-discrimination, normative work, and social dialogue were addressed through specific evaluation questions and data triangulation. Technical expertise on international labour standards (ILS), youth employment (YE), TVET and skills, social dialogue and tripartism, and gender equality and non-discrimination were brought in by the evaluation team. Mainstreaming gender equality implied the involvement of both men and women in the consultations and in the evaluation team composition. The evaluation also reviewed data and information that was disaggregated by sex and assessed the relevance and effectiveness of gender and disability inclusion related strategies and outcomes. By triangulating the results obtained from different data sources and methods and highlighting areas of convergence and divergence, the team ensured the validity and reliability of the evaluation findings.

Key evaluation questions were developed based on the HLE Terms of Reference (ToRs) and were further based on input obtained from stakeholders consulted during the inception stage of the HLE. Annex 02 outlines the **Evaluation Design Matrix** developed to guide the current HLE, and presents the list of evaluation questions and the sources of information used to address the key evaluation questions.

The following data collection instruments were used by the evaluation:

Case studies: The Evaluation applied case studies as part of its approach and methods to support the assessment of effectiveness, coherence, and observed impacts. Based on the high-level framework developed as well as the CPO Analysis and consultations at the inception phase, an exhaustive analysis was undertaken of the ILO actions and interventions related to youth employment implemented globally, regionally, and at the national levels between 2020 and 2024 for the purpose of selecting country and thematic/regional case studies.

The evaluation encompassed in-depth **country case studies** in **four countries** (Colombia, Kenya, the Philippines, and Tunisia), and desk-based case studies in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and on the topic on Youth Guarantee Scheme in the Western Balkans initiative. The in-depth country case studies were conducted using a combination of desk research and interviews with Constituents, partners, and ILO staff, providing valuable insights into the implementation and impact of the ILO's work on youth employment. The Evaluation Team also selected **two thematic studies** based on input from stakeholders at HQ and feedback from staff in ILO's Evaluation Office. The two thematic case studies focused on: 1) Assessment of ILO's Partnerships with International Cooperation Agencies on Youth Employment; and 2) Assessment of the balance between demand-side and supply-side approaches in the ILO's work on youth employment. Annex 03 details the case studies selection criteria and process that was used at inception phase as part of delimiting the scope of the evaluation.

Secondary resources: In addition to the data already collected through the Synthesis Review and CPO analysis, a collection and desk review of available resources was carried out to analyse all relevant documentation, including declarations, instruments, policies and strategies, guidelines, project documents and published outputs, progress reports, previous project-level evaluations related to the ILO's work on youth employment, and data from reliable sources on the internet. The evaluation also considered the findings of the Synthesis Review Report, which was based on a review of a subset of evaluations of development cooperation projects involving youth employment for the period under review. The list of documents reviewed over the course of the HLE is provided in Annex 04.

Qualitative data collection through onsite and virtual interviews: A first round of key informant interviews with ILO staff members was conducted during the inception phase by the Evaluation Team during a mission to ILO HQ. These interviews served the dual purpose of refining the scope of the evaluation and collecting initial evaluation evidence. A second round of interviews with ILO staff was conducted during the data collection phase. During this stage, interviews were also carried out with regional-level and country-level staff, Constituents and partners, including government agencies, UN agencies, bilateral or multilateral donor agencies, academic and research organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In total, the evaluation

conducted interviews with 171 individuals (men: 46 per cent; women: 54 per cent). A list of various stakeholders interviewed over the course of the HLE is provided in Annex 5.

Quantitative data collection through online surveys: To gather information from the broad range of stakeholders, the evaluation carried out three surveys in English, French, and Spanish. Survey responses were used to triangulate the patterns that emanate from the above-mentioned sources, and never as the unique source of evidence to support a finding. Details of the surveys are as follows:

- ▶ **ILO staff:** A questionnaire was distributed amongst a purposive sample of 276 ILO staff members at HQ and in the regional and field offices to collect information on the ILO's strategies, approaches and outputs related to youth employment across the evaluation criteria. The survey was open for three weeks. The overall response rate was 25 per cent. The data have not been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of each target population.
- ▶ **ILO constituents:** A questionnaire was distributed to a purposive sample of 70 constituents including representatives of government ministries, workers' organizations, and employers' organizations. The survey, which was open for three weeks, had a response rate of 36 per cent.
- ▶ **ILO partners:** A questionnaire was distributed to a purposive sample of 163 partners. These partners included organizations such as the UN Agencies and other international development agencies and bilateral/multilateral donors. The survey was open for three weeks and had a response rate of 23 per cent.

In line with ILO EVAL's protocols, a summary rating is expressed by the independent evaluation at the end of the evaluation report. The assessment is based on the six evaluation criteria and the respective questions outlined in the ToR and the inception report. It uses a six-point scale ranging from "highly satisfactory", "satisfactory", "somewhat satisfactory", "somewhat unsatisfactory", "unsatisfactory", and "highly unsatisfactory".

- ▶ **Highly satisfactory:** when the findings related to the evaluation criterion show that ILO performance related to criterion has produced outcomes which go beyond expectation, expressed specific comparative advantages and added value, produced best practices.
- ▶ **Satisfactory:** when the findings related to the evaluation criterion show that the objectives have been mostly attained and the expected level of performance can be considered coherent with the expectations of the national tripartite constituents, beneficiaries and the ILO itself.
- ▶ **Somewhat satisfactory:** when the findings related to the evaluation criterion show that the objectives have been partially attained and that the expected level of performance could be for the most part considered coherent with the expectations of the national tripartite constituents, beneficiaries and the ILO itself.
- ▶ **Somewhat unsatisfactory:** when the findings related to the evaluation criterion show that the objectives have been partially attained and the level of performance show minor shortcomings and are not fully considered acceptable in the view of the ILO national tripartite constituents, partners and beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Unsatisfactory:** when the findings related to the evaluation criterion show that the objectives have not been attained and the level of performance shows major shortcomings and are not fully considered acceptable in the view of the ILO national tripartite constituents, partners and beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Highly unsatisfactory:** when the findings related to the evaluation criterion show that expected results have not been attained, and there have been important shortcomings, and the resources have not been utilized effectively and/or efficiently.

The ratings correspond to an aggregate of scores provided by the separate synthesis review of evaluation reports, scores provided by the evaluation team based on primary and secondary data, and ratings from the surveys of constituents, ILO staff and other multilateral partners.

LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

The Evaluation Team experienced some limitations over the course of the HLE:

1. **Fragmented Programming and Reporting Structure:** The ILO's work on youth employment, as envisioned under the YEAP, is implemented across multiple outputs of the Programme and Budget (P&B). Consequently, a detailed and resource-intensive mapping exercise had to be undertaken to identify relevant actions, leading to a broad but dispersed body of work that proved challenging to assess systematically.
2. **Lack of Institutional Tagging Mechanisms:** The absence of dedicated tags or trackers for youth employment in the ILO's results-based management (RBM) system necessitated the use of proxies and approximations to identify relevant interventions. While every effort was made to ensure accuracy and completeness, the possibility remains that some initiatives were inadvertently overlooked or misclassified.
3. **Limited Availability of Disaggregated Results Data:** Across many interventions, especially at country level, youth-specific results and outcomes were not systematically captured or disaggregated by age. This limited the Evaluation's ability to assess the scale, reach, and effectiveness of youth-targeted components within broader interventions.



03

► ILO's work on
youth employment

► ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

ILO'S MANDATE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK REGARDING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

As a tripartite and normative Organization, the ILO has the mandate to promote full, productive, and freely chosen employment and decent work for all, including young people, in accordance with the relevant Conventions and Recommendations. In that regard, the *Resolution concerning youth employment*, adopted by the International Labour Conference (ILC) in its 93rd Session in June 2005, recognized that most of the International Labour Standards (ILS) applied to young workers. Some standards were considered particularly relevant due to their focus on creating quality jobs or youth-specific provisions, emphasising key aspects such as enhancing employability, fostering entrepreneurship, and ensuring productive job creation, as well as essential conditions related to youth entry into the workforce.⁹

The **2005 ILC resolution's** call for an integrated and coherence approach combining macro- and microeconomic measures, focusing on both the labour supply and quality of employment, laid the groundwork for the ILO's subsequent actions and strategies on youth employment involving **three strategic pillars – knowledge building, technical assistance, and advocacy for decent work for youth**. This was recognized in a subsequent Resolution (***The Youth Employment Crisis: A call for action***) adopted by ILC in its 101st Session in 2012, which affirmed that the earlier ILC resolution concerning youth employment and its comprehensive set of conclusions provide a sound framework on which to build.¹⁰ The 2012 Call for Action was made in response to the unprecedented deterioration in youth employment in the wake of the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis, wherein an estimated 75 million young people were unemployed and an estimated 200 million young workers were earning less than USD 2 a day.

The 2012 Call for Action was centred around five key areas:

- **Employment and economic policies for youth employment:** Prioritising youth employment by implementing pro-employment policies, fostering job-generating growth through macroeconomic strategies and sectoral investments, and ensuring fiscally sustainable and targeted interventions.
- **Employability (education, training and skills, and the school-to-work transitions):** Ensure inclusive access to quality education and skills development, aligned with labour market demands, while fostering effective transitions from school to work through targeted training, apprenticeships, and support systems.
- **Labour Market Policies:** Strengthening labour market policies to promote youth employment through active measures, employment programs, social protection measures including for jobseekers, and strategies that ease transitions to formal work, with a focus on rural youth and coordinated efforts involving social partners.
- **Youth Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment:** Fostering youth entrepreneurship by creating supportive environments, improving access to finance, promoting formalization, and embedding entrepreneurship education early to ensure sustainable and inclusive outcomes

9 ILO. June 2005. Resolutions adopted by the International Labour Conference: Resolution concerning youth employment. International Labour Conference. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/public/english/standards/reim/ilc/ilc93/pdf/resolutions.pdf>

10 ILO. 2012. The youth employment crisis: A call for action. Resolution and conclusions of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. Geneva, 2012. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_185950.pdf

- **Rights for Young People:** Adopting a rights-based approach to youth employment by ensuring equal treatment, enforcing labour laws, protecting young workers' rights, and promoting fair wages and occupational safety. Efforts include social protection, targeted wage policies, and early education on workers' rights to facilitate transitions into decent and stable employment.

The 2012 Call for Action was accompanied by a seven-year follow up plan by the Office that ended on 31 December 2019. The follow up plan, approved by the GB in its 316th Session in November 2012, structured the Office's approach to operationalize the 2012 Call for Action under three main areas of work: a) Knowledge development and dissemination; b) Technical assistance and capacity building; and c) Partnerships and advocacy.¹¹

ALIGNING ILO ACTION WITH SDGS

The ILO's Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP) 2020–2030 addresses several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by placing youth at the centre of inclusive and sustainable development strategies. Central to the plan is **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**. Specifically, it supports **Target 8.5**, which calls for full and productive employment and decent work for all, including youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs), and **Target 8.6**, which aims to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs). It also aligns with **Target 8.b**, which calls for the development and operationalization of a global strategy for youth employment. The YEAP directly contributes to these targets through integrated national employment strategies, strengthened labour market institutions, promotion of quality apprenticeships, youth entrepreneurship, and targeted support for vulnerable groups. It also reinforces the ILO's custodian role in monitoring SDG indicators 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.6.1, and 8.b.1.

Beyond SDG 8, the YEAP also supports **SDG 4: Quality Education**, particularly **Target 4.4**, which focuses on increasing the number of youth with relevant technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Through its emphasis on lifelong learning, work-based learning, and digital skill development, the plan ensures young people can navigate the evolving world of work. It also aligns with Target 4.5 on eliminating gender disparities and ensuring equal access to education and vocational training, as many components of the plan target young women and other disadvantaged youth.

The YEAP explicitly addresses **SDG 5: Gender Equality**, recognizing that young women face disproportionate barriers to employment and skill development. The plan incorporates gender-responsive employment policies and interventions, ensures equal pay and protection from workplace discrimination and violence, and promotes women's participation in decision-making processes through social dialogue. This contributes not only to equality in outcomes but also to systemic change in how youth employment strategies are designed and delivered.

In support of **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**, the YEAP targets youth who are especially vulnerable, such as young people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, those in rural areas, and those living in fragile and conflict-affected settings. It promotes inclusive labour markets, ensures access to social protection (contributing to SDG 1.3.1), and supports transitions from informality to formality. Through its emphasis on rights-based approaches and social dialogue, the plan seeks to close structural gaps and enhance youth representation in institutions of work.

The YEAP contributes to **SDG 13: Climate Action** by linking youth employment with environmental sustainability. It identifies green jobs and the circular economy as key areas of opportunity for youth employment and calls for investment in climate-resilient sectors such as sustainable agriculture. Through skills development and just transition strategies, it prepares youth to engage meaningfully in the green economy.

11 GB.316/INS/5/2. Matters arising out of the work of the 101st Session (2012) of the International Labour Conference: Follow-up to the adoption of the resolution – The youth employment crisis: A call for action. Geneva, 1 – 16 November, 2012. Available at: https://www.dev.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_191163.pdf

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is also addressed, especially in contexts affected by conflict and disasters. The YEAP promotes employment as a tool for peacebuilding and social cohesion, in line with ILO Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience. The plan supports youth reintegration, strengthens social protection systems, and emphasizes the role of employment in stabilizing societies.

Finally, the YEAP strengthens **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals** through its emphasis on multi-stakeholder collaboration. It leverages global platforms like the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and the UN Youth Strategy, engages with G20, BRICS, and regional institutions, and builds partnerships with governments, employers, workers, and youth organizations. These partnerships are crucial for resource mobilization, policy coherence, and the scalability of successful youth employment interventions.

Overall, the YEAP 2020–2030 is a comprehensive and cross-cutting strategy that advances multiple SDGs by promoting decent work for young people through inclusive, rights-based, and future-oriented policies. Its alignment with the 2030 Agenda ensures that youth employment remains a central pillar of global development efforts.

OVERVIEW OF THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN 2020–2030 AND RECONSTRUCTED THEORY OF CHANGE

In 2018, the HLE of the ILO's Strategy and Actions for Improved Youth Employment Prospects (2012 – 2017) was undertaken which highlighted the continued relevance of the ILO's strategy and actions in addressing youth employment and called for a renewed action on youth employment with an emphasis on demand-side aspects, future of work issues, partnerships, and sustained **resource mobilization** efforts. Consequently, a follow up plan of action on youth employment for the period 2020 to 2030 was endorsed by the Governing Body at its 340th session in 2020, taking into consideration also the unprecedented economic and social situation caused by the **COVID-19 pandemic** and in the broader framework of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

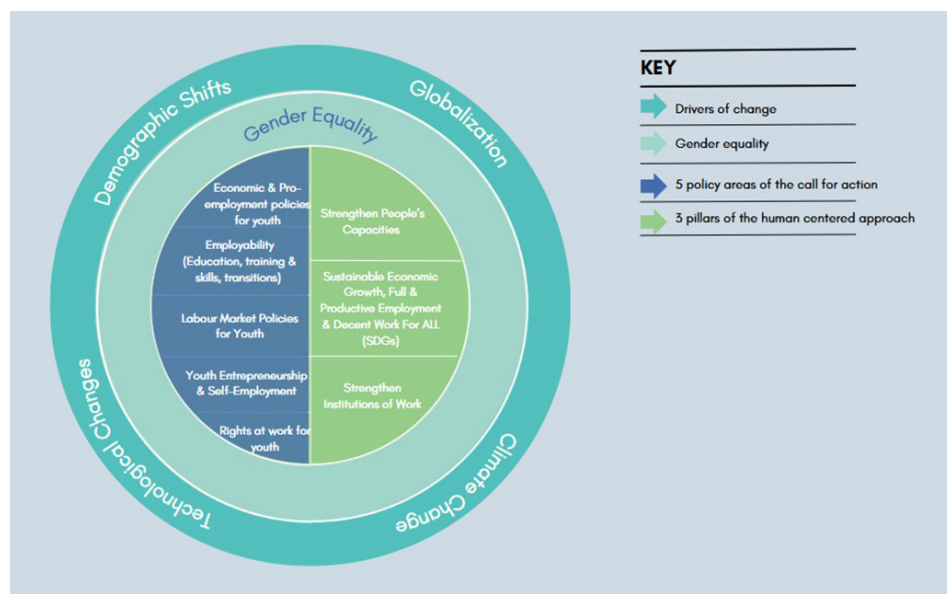
The **objective of the ILO's YEAP 2020 – 2030** is to promote full, productive, and freely chosen employment and decent work for all young people aspiring to work, and to achieve equality, including gender equality through a transformative, human-centred approach. The YEAP realigns youth employment promotion with a development framework that places young people at the centre of economic, environmental, and social policy. By promoting policies, strategies, and programmes that support the entry and integration of young people into labour markets, allowing them to become lifelong active members of society and ensuring their rights are protected, the **YEAP's approach** aims to foster effective measures to support young people through the transitions they will face throughout their working lives and promote their participation in shaping future labour markets through social dialogue. The YEAP 2020 – 2030 continues to be guided by a strategic framework centred around the **five policy areas** outlined in the 2012 Call for Action, explained above.

In addition, the YEAP 2020 – 2030 also takes into consideration **globalization trends, demographic shifts, emergence of new technologies, and climate change**, which further complicate youth employment challenges. In **conflict and disaster** settings, the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated vulnerabilities, potentially undermining peace, development, and social cohesion. Hence, the YEAP takes into consideration the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205) which highlights the importance of targeted support for young people in such settings, recognising their heightened exposure to economic and social risks. Similarly, **transformations in the world of work**, particularly through digitalization, present both opportunities and challenges for young workers. While new digital technologies have expanded employment opportunities, including through platform work, they also raise concerns about job quality, security, and access to social protection, necessitating calls for policies that proactively address these changes by ensuring that digital transformation leads to decent and productive work rather than exacerbating inequalities.

The Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP 2020–2030) emphasizes **demand-driven job creation, future of work readiness, partnerships, and resource mobilization**. It aims to strengthen **sectoral policies, youth entrepreneurship, and high-potential job sectors** including digital, green, and care economies. The plan integrates **technology, digital skills, and platform work protections** to adapt to evolving labour markets. **Partnerships** are reinforced through **tripartite collaboration, social dialogue, and global initiatives**. To ensure sustainability, it emphasizes on alignment with **COVID-19 recovery funds, development cooperation, and expanded apprenticeships** for long-term youth employment support.

Given these evolving dynamics, the YEAP 2020–2030 aligns with the **Centenary Declaration's** call to shape a fair, inclusive, and secure future of work. It integrates lessons learned from previous youth employment initiatives while reinforcing the ILO's role as a tripartite and normative organization dedicated to promoting full, productive, and freely chosen employment for young people.

FIGURE 1: STRATEGIC PILLARS OF THE YEAP 2020 – 2030



The YEAP 2020 – 2030 maintains the three clusters of implementation, as the follow up to the 2012 Call for Action, namely:

- a) Knowledge Development and Dissemination:** This cluster emphasizes producing and sharing research to inform national youth employment strategies, with a focus on boosting **labour demand, productivity, school-to-work transitions, and skills development**. It aligns with the 2030 Agenda's targets, particularly operationalising youth employment strategies (SDG indicator 8.b.1), and leverages new technologies to promote decent work. Dissemination occurs through publications (such as the Global Employment Trends for Youth) and platforms (such as the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth).
- b) Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** The plan supports ILO member states in implementing gender responsive employment policies that promote a **job-rich recovery from COVID-19**. Key strategies include macroeconomic and sectoral investments, entrepreneurship promotion, skills development, enhancing access to finance, and strengthening social dialogue and national capacities.
- c) Advocacy and Strengthening Partnerships:** The ILO fosters partnerships at national, regional, and international levels to leverage its contribution to youth employment. Through the **Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth** and collaboration with entities like UNICEF and other UN agencies, the ILO promotes global coordination to advance youth employment strategies.

Management Arrangements: Prior to the YEAP 2020 – 2030, the first follow-up action plan to implement the 2012 Call for Action was driven, coordinated, and monitored by the Youth Employment Programme (YEP) Unit at the ILO HQ, housed within the EMPLOYMENT Department.¹² However, in 2020, a strategic decision to coordinate and mainstream the work on youth employment across the EMPLAB led to the YEP Unit's dissolution and integration into the restructured branch.¹³

Consequently, during the implementation of YEAP 2020 – 2030, youth employment in the ILO has been under the technical leadership of the Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods Department (EMPLOYMENT), specifically the Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch (EMPLAB) which is responsible for the coordination of the Office-wide work on youth employment through the interdepartmental youth employment action group (IDAG) that includes representation from youth employment focal points from across numerous ILO units and departments and field offices (one focal point per region). As per the 2023 Review of Progress towards the YEAP provided to the GB in 2023, the IDAG included more than 40 representatives from the regional offices and HQ.¹⁴

However, the 2023 Progress report to the GB highlighted the need for strengthening the coordination and visibility of the HQ's work on youth through a clearer structure for delivery. In that regard, a youth employment unit is now being re-established within the EMPLAB to build on the existing networks and structures and provide a clear entry point for all work related to youth.

A high-level framework for the ILO's work in promoting youth employment (preliminary work towards a theory of change)

with the aim of constructing the theory of change (ToC) for ILO's work in promoting youth employment, the evaluation identified a high-level framework for the ILO's work on promoting youth employment, outlining required actions to achieve intended outcomes. Although not a fully developed ToC, this roadmap undergirding the ILO's strategies and actions on youth employment was elaborated based on the strategic directions given by key programmatic and strategic planning documents, as well as key informant interviews.

The ILO YEAP 2020–2030 is designed to address the complex challenges facing young people in the labour market, promoting full, productive, and freely chosen employment and decent work. The plan is structured around **three interconnected spheres**: control, influence, and interest, which articulate the pathways through which the ILO aims to drive systemic change in youth employment outcomes.

At its core, the **sphere of control** captures the ILO's direct actions and responsibilities in knowledge development and dissemination, technical assistance and capacity building, and strategic advocacy and strengthening of partnerships to equip governments, social partners, and development partners with the tools and frameworks necessary to improve youth employment. The ILO generates research and **evidence-based policy** recommendations on labour market dynamics, youth employment trends, and structural barriers to decent work, supporting the development

12 *Independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy and actions for improved youth employment prospects 2012–17* / International Labour Office, Evaluation Office – Geneva: ILO, 2018.

13 GB.349/POL/1. Review of progress made regarding the follow-up of the Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP) for the period 2020–30. Geneva, 30 October – 9 November, 2023. Available at: https://www.uat.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_898175.pdf

14 GB.349/POL/1. Review of progress made regarding the follow-up of the Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP) for the period 2020–30. Geneva, 30 October – 9 November, 2023. Available at: https://www.uat.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_898175.pdf

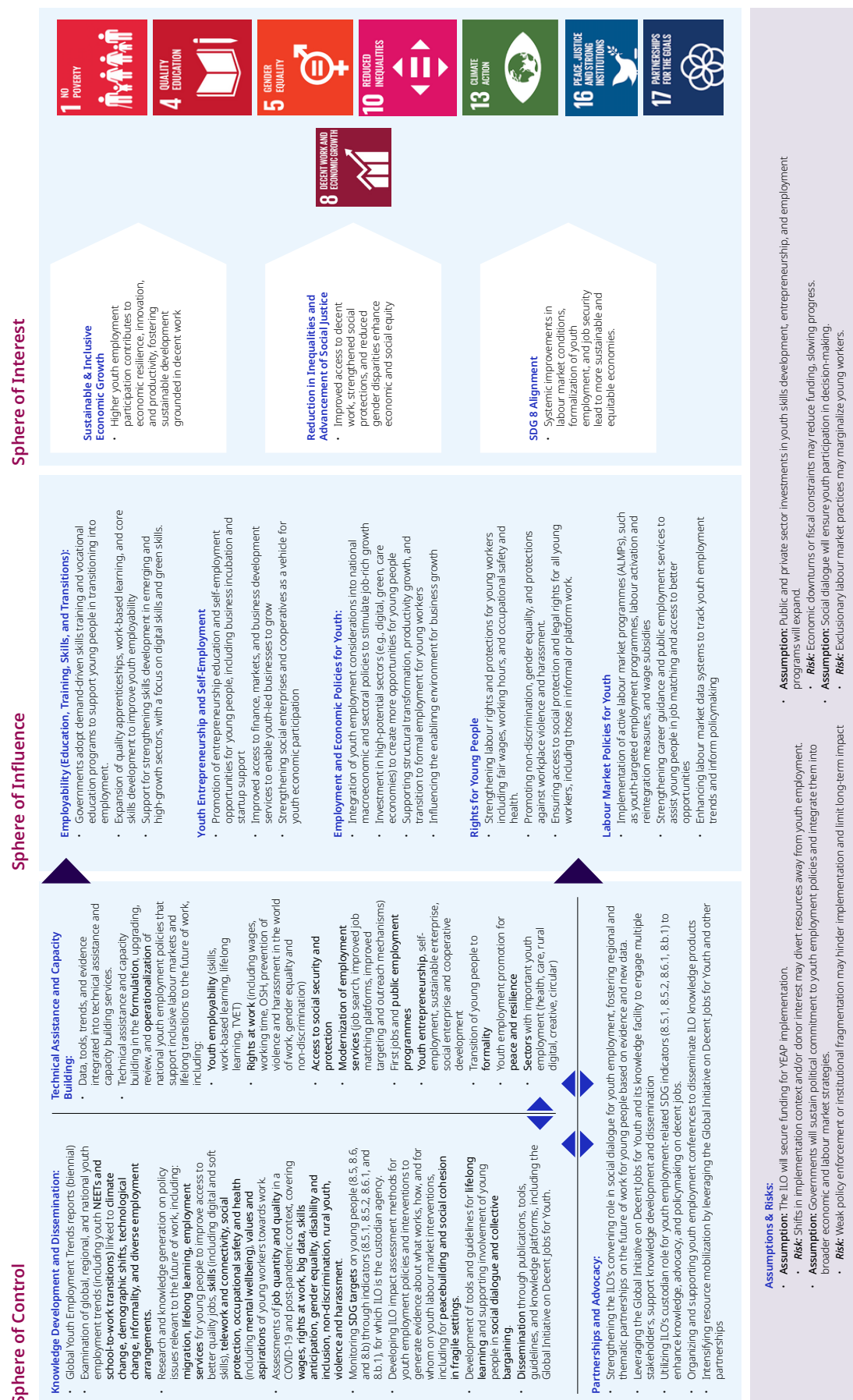
of responsive policies and labour market interventions. It plays a key role in tracking progress towards the overall SDG 8 and specifically SDG 8.5 (employment and equal pay), 8.6 (reducing youth NEET rates), and 8.b (operationalising national youth employment strategies). Through **technical assistance and capacity building**, the ILO supports governments and social partners in designing and implementing employment policies, including youth employment strategies and sectoral policies, that are inclusive, gender-responsive, and aligned with international labour standards. It also strengthens education-to-work transitions by support to the expansion of apprenticeships, vocational training, and lifelong learning opportunities. In addition, it assists countries in formalising informal employment and enhancing social protection systems for young workers. The ILO promotes youth entrepreneurship by developing actions and interventions aimed towards self-employment, sustainable enterprises and cooperatives, and business development services. It also provides guidance on Active Labour Market Policies such as wage subsidies, youth-targeted public employment programs, etc. to expand economic opportunities. As part of its **advocacy and partnerships**, the ILO engages in global, regional, and national policy processes, playing a convening role in multilateral forums, such as the G20, BRICS, and UN bodies. It fosters tripartite dialogue, ensuring that youth voices, employer perspectives, and worker rights are central to policy decisions. Additionally, the ILO mobilizes **extrabudgetary resources** to scale up youth employment initiatives and sustain long-term impact.

The **sphere of influence** is understood by the HLE as encompassing the anticipated changes in national policies, institutional frameworks, and labour market practices resulting from the ILO's actions. The ILO seeks to strengthen **five key policy** areas to create enabling conditions for sustainable youth employment.

- ▶ **1. Employability (Education, Training, and school-to-work Transitions):** Governments integrate demand-driven skills development, vocational training, and apprenticeships into youth employment strategies.
- ▶ **2. Youth Entrepreneurship and self-employment:** Business environments are strengthened to expand opportunities for self-employment, cooperatives, and youth-led enterprises. Governments and financial institutions improve access to finance, business development services, and market linkages for young entrepreneurs.
- ▶ **3. Employment and Economic Policies for Youth:** Governments develop and strengthen employment policies that explicitly address youth employment priorities, while also integrating youth dimensions into macroeconomic, sectoral, and industrial strategies. Job-rich growth is promoted through investment in high-potential sectors such as the digital, green, and care economies.
- ▶ **4. Rights for Young People:** Labour laws are enforced to ensure fair wages, occupational safety and health (OSH), non-discrimination, and protections against exploitation. Countries expand social protection coverage and formalization mechanisms to secure better working conditions for young people.
- ▶ **5. Labour Market Policies for Youth:** Governments implement active and passive labour market policies, including those aimed at strengthening public employment services and programs, wage subsidies, and better labour market activation and reintegration to support youth job placement.

Beyond these immediate policy and institutional changes, the **sphere of interest** represents the **long-term societal impact** that the YEAP aims to contribute to. This includes broader economic and social outcomes such as sustainable and inclusive economic growth, higher youth labour force participation rates, and greater social protection coverage for young workers. The plan envisions a future where young people have , contributing to economic resilience, social stability, and social justice. By addressing structural inequalities and promoting inclusive growth, the YEAP aligns with the global goals of SDG 8, ensuring that youth employment is a driver of economic development and social cohesion. Over time, the sustained implementation of national and youth employment policies/strategies is expected to reduce informality and precarious work, close gender gaps in employment, and enhance the resilience of labour markets against emerging challenges such as technological change, economic crises, and climate impacts.

This interconnected framework demonstrates how the ILO's direct actions in research, technical assistance, and advocacy form the foundation for influencing national and global policies, which in turn foster long-term, sustainable improvements in youth employment. The graphical representation that follows illustrates this progression, highlighting the cascading impact of the ILO's interventions from direct control to broader policy influence and eventual societal change.

FIGURE 2: HIGH-LEVEL FRAMEWORK FOR ILO'S WORK ON PROMOTING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (PRELIMINARY WORK TOWARDS A THEORY OF CHANGE)



04

- ▶ **Assessment highlights:
ILO's implementation
of the 2020–24 youth
employment action plan**

► ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS: ILO'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2020-24 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN

INTEGRATION OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN ILO STRATEGIES, PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCING

Design of the youth employment action plan

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- The YEAP 2020–2030 outlines a strategic approach that underscores the ILO's normative and technical leadership in youth employment. However, the Plan's effectiveness is hindered by several factors, including the lack of an integrated results framework, unclear governance structures, absence of costed planning, insufficiently developed youth engagement strategies, and an imbalance between supply- and demand-side interventions.
- In the absence of mechanisms for strategic adjustment throughout the ten-year period, the focus on pandemic-responsive priorities renders the Plan temporally limited.

COVERAGE OF THE YEAP

An overall assessment of the design of the Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP) 2020–2030 reveals a strategically ambitious and thematically wide-ranging framework that signals the ILO's continued commitment to addressing youth employment challenges. Drawing on the 2012 Call for Action and aligning closely with the ILO Centenary Declaration, the YEAP articulates a vision grounded in continuity, institutional learning, and responsiveness to global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Its three-cluster structure—knowledge development and dissemination; technical assistance and capacity-building; and partnerships and advocacy—offers a comprehensive architecture for promoting decent work for young people. However, **despite this breadth of coverage and conceptual grounding, the YEAP's design reveals important limitations in terms of operational clarity, internal coherence, implementation readiness, and governance robustness.** These design weaknesses constrain the YEAP's potential to function as an effective, integrated, and forward-looking action framework for youth employment.

At the strategic level, the YEAP builds on the 2012 Call for Action, offering continuity while incorporating key lessons learned from the previous implementation period. It organizes its proposed actions around three core clusters—knowledge development and dissemination; technical assistance and capacity-building; and partnerships and advocacy—which together reflect a comprehensive approach to youth employment promotion. Simultaneously, it also reflects a forward-looking orientation by aligning closely with the ILO Centenary Declaration, particularly through the adoption of its three human-centred pillars: i) strengthening the capacities of all people; ii) strengthening the institutions of work; and iii) promoting sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work. The YEAP also takes into account the Declaration's emphasis on addressing transformative drivers such as technological change, demographic shifts, climate change, and globalization, thereby anchoring youth employment promotion within the broader agenda of shaping a just and inclusive future of work. However, while these clusters are well aligned with the ILO's operational modalities and span relevant areas of engagement, **the absence of clear mechanisms for sequencing, integration, or feedback across clusters undermines internal coherence and creates a risk of siloed implementation, rather than reinforcing a dynamic and interconnected strategy.**

A review of the YEAP 2020–30 revealed that the ILO does not organize its implementation framework explicitly around the five policy areas of the 2012 Call for Action—employability, youth entrepreneurship, employment and economic policies for youth, rights at work, and labour market policies. Instead, the Plan is structured around the three implementation clusters—knowledge, technical assistance, and partnerships—and framed in line with the human-centred pillars of the Centenary Declaration. While the substantive content of the actions listed under the Plan's three implementation clusters continues to reflect the five original policy areas, their alignment is not made visible or systematic. **The absence of explicit cross-referencing or mapping diminishes the traceability of the Plan's commitments to the policy areas and complicates efforts to assess how well each is being addressed in practice.** More importantly, this structure does not allow actions under each policy area to be fully developed or articulated, and it risks assigning unequal weight to the five areas—some, such as entrepreneurship, are addressed more explicitly, while others, like rights at work or labour market policies, are less prominent.

While the YEAP articulates the need to stimulate demand for youth employment, including through macroeconomic and sectoral policies, entrepreneurship promotion, and support to enterprise development, **the vast majority of concrete actions outlined in the plan focus on supply-side interventions.** These include strengthening skills development systems, promoting work-based learning, expanding digital and green skills training, and fostering youth entrepreneurship through capacity-building. **By contrast, there is limited reference to demand-side outputs in the Plan.** The Plan references the importance of pro-employment macroeconomic and investment policies but does not specify how the ILO intends to support constituents in shaping or implementing such policies in practice. For instance, while “investment and other demand-side policies” are mentioned as focal areas for technical assistance, they are not matched by a detailed set of interventions, tools, or institutional arrangements equivalent to those specified for supply-side support. Similarly, entrepreneurship promotion is frequently invoked, yet the line between entrepreneurship as a form of self-employment (a supply-side response to labour market exclusion) and entrepreneurship as a means of job creation for others (a demand-side driver) is not analytically disentangled or operationally addressed. Similarly, concrete measures to influence job creation at scale, such as wage and hiring subsidies or public employment programmes, are either absent or mentioned only in passing.

THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ACTION GROUP (IDAG)

As part of its institutional design, the YEAP introduced the Interdepartmental Youth Employment Action Group (IDAG) to support implementation, coordination, and monitoring. The Plan described the IDAG as a mechanism to bring together relevant departments and regional focal points, to be convened by the Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch (EMPLAB). However, the YEAP offered only a high-level reference to the group, without elaborating on its scope, authority, or procedures. It also did not outline how the IDAG was expected to facilitate coherence, resolve interdepartmental fragmentation, or drive implementation across the Office. **While its inclusion signalled an intent to institutionalize coordination, the limited framing of the IDAG within the YEAP itself reveals a gap in the governance architecture as the Plan does not define IDAG's authority, modalities, or lines of accountability.**

MONITORING AND REPORTING

While the Plan stated that indicators for measuring progress would eventually be developed and monitored by the Interdepartmental Youth Employment Action Group, it did not embed any results framework, theory of change, or performance benchmarks within the strategy itself. **The absence of a structured results logic at the point of adoption weakened the YEAP's strategic clarity and limited its utility as a results-oriented planning instrument.** By deferring the development of indicators without outlining the conceptual approach, expected outcomes, or linkages to planned actions, the Plan undermined its own evaluability and accountability framework from the outset.

Although the YEAP highlights the importance of youth voice and references consultations held during the Global Youth Employment Forum in Abuja in 2019, **it does not embed concrete**

mechanisms to ensure meaningful youth participation in the implementation or monitoring of the Plan. The YEAP acknowledges that young people called on the ILO and its constituents to work more closely with them in designing and implementing youth employment strategies. However, this call is not matched by institutional arrangements or participatory structures within the Plan itself. No provisions are made for formal youth representation within the governance of the YEAP, such as within the Interdepartmental Youth Employment Action Group (IDAG), nor are there processes outlined to systematically gather and respond to youth feedback during implementation.

RESOURCES

While the Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP) 2020–2030 articulates an ambitious and wide-ranging strategic agenda, its implementation framework reveals significant shortcomings in terms of resourcing and resource mobilization. At the outset, the YEAP provides no estimate of overall resource requirements, either in aggregate or disaggregated for specific timeframes or by cluster, region, or thematic priority. **The absence of a costed or phased implementation plan weakens the Plan's operational logic, obscures the scope of resource gaps, and makes it difficult to assess whether the financial architecture underpinning the strategy is realistic or commensurate with its ambitions.**

The Plan's resource mobilization approach relies heavily on accessing external funding through global COVID-19 recovery instruments—such as the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and the Joint SDG Fund—and on the development of bilateral and public-private partnerships. While such an approach is pragmatic, given the fact that the overwhelming majority of ILO's actions and interventions are undertaken through extra-budgetary resources (XBDC), **the YEAP defers the articulation of a concrete resourcing strategy to a future 'development cooperation strategy in support of the implementation of the follow-up plan of action'.** While such a deferral may have been intended to allow flexibility in response to shifting external conditions, it also meant that the YEAP was adopted without a supporting financial roadmap. This strategic deferral left the Plan under-specified at the point of adoption, potentially delaying coordinated implementation and complicating early operational planning.

Responsibility for resource mobilization is also diffusely assigned. While the Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch (EMPLAB) is tasked with technical leadership, and the Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation (PARTNERSHIPS) is expected to support fundraising, **the Plan does not provide clarity on institutional roles, fundraising targets, or the division of labour across departments, regions, or country offices.** This lack of clarity diminishes institutional accountability and risks fragmented or ad hoc fundraising efforts.

COVID-19

Although conceived as a ten-year plan of action, **the YEAP is heavily shaped by the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic**, which exerts a strong influence on both its framing as well as proposed interventions. The pandemic is positioned as a pivotal disruption that exacerbated youth labour market vulnerabilities, justified renewed urgency, and reoriented priorities across all three clusters of the Plan. Illustratively, areas such as teleworking, mental health and wellbeing, and national and youth employment policies/strategies are emphasized in ways that reflect pandemic-specific needs. Similarly, the Plan also identifies COVID-19 as a catalyst for expanding decent work in the green and digital sectors. The Plan also explicitly linked its resource mobilization approach to global recovery frameworks such as the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. However, the YEAP spans 2020 – 2030, and while the pandemic's inclusion is justified in the early phases, **the Plan does not specify how or when COVID-19 recovery framing will evolve, taper, or be recalibrated as conditions change.** This lack of temporal differentiation reflects a broader design limitation in that the Plan provides no articulation of how activities are sequenced or prioritized across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons. Without such a structure, implementation risks becoming diffuse or reactive, with no clear mechanism for aligning actions to evolving priorities over the course of the decade, undermining the Plan's ability to function as a dynamic framework capable of guiding youth employment action over a full decade.

Youth employment within the ILO's results-based management framework

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Although Output 3.5 in 2024–25 is a positive step towards institutionalization, the continued dispersion of youth-related content across various outputs of the P&B without a structured approach to joint programming for results constricts policy coherence, institutional incentives and accountability towards the results of the YEAP.

This section assesses the extent to which youth employment has been strategically and systematically integrated into the ILO's Results-Based Management (RBM) framework, which includes the structure of outcomes and outputs, indicator design, and institutional prioritization mechanisms.

Youth employment has historically lacked structured visibility and prioritization within the ILO's RBM system, with no dedicated output to capture youth employment as a coherent area of work. Prior to the 2024–25 biennium, the Organization lacked any dedicated output focused on youth employment within its results framework. Instead, youth-employment-related interventions were dispersed across multiple outputs, most of which did not explicitly reference youth, and were often subsumed under broader categories such as employment services, skills development, or vulnerable groups.

A review of the output indicator measurement frameworks for the 2020–21 and 2022–23, biennia reveals that youth employment has historically had a **limited and uneven presence** in the ILO's RBM system, with only a handful of outputs and/or indicators explicitly referenced youth:

- ▶ **Output Indicator 3.1.2** tracked the number of Member States with **national youth employment strategies** (in line with SDG Indicator 8.b.1),
- ▶ **Output Indicator 5.3.2** referenced youth as one among several target groups in the context of **inclusive skills programmes**.
- ▶ **Output Indicator 3.5.1** tracked Member State efforts to improve **labour market programmes and services** for transitions to decent work, including for youth and older workers.

A deeper review of the technical notes accompanying these output indicators reveals that youth are referenced more frequently in the accompanying guidance notes than in the indicator or output formulations themselves. These notes are intended to support ILO staff in interpreting the indicator's scope and application, offering examples of relevant target groups, interventions, and contexts. In many cases, the guidance notes accompanying individual output indicators mention youth—alongside women, older persons, and other vulnerable groups—as examples of possible target populations who may benefit from programming aligned with that output. While such references are typically framed in non-prescriptive language (e.g., “may include youth,” or “such groups include youth”), they nonetheless create institutional space for projects and country programme outcomes (CPOs) to be designed with a youth focus and to be reported against the corresponding outputs. However, this approach does not establish a systematic institutional requirement to prioritize youth or to consistently reflect youth-related results across outputs.

While some outputs of substantive relevance to youth employment—such as those on entrepreneurship and enterprise development¹⁵—include general references to youth in their guidance, others do not mention youth at all. This includes outputs across a range of policy areas

¹⁵ Output 4.2 in 2020-23 biennia & Output 4.3 in 2024-25 biennium

relevant to youth employment—such as informal employment transitions, labour migration, decent work in the rural economy, social protection, occupational safety and health, the platform economy, green and just transitions, and disability inclusion—none of which explicitly identify youth as a target population or consistently reference youth in the accompanying guidance notes, which play a critical role in shaping how programming is interpreted, validated, and aligned to institutional outputs. This uneven integration makes it difficult to systematically recognize or assess youth-related work across outputs. **Without clear tagging mechanisms or structured approach to joint programming for results, youth employment efforts, as envisioned under the YEAP, remain institutionally fragmented¹⁶, with youth-specific contributions difficult to plan, monitor, or assess within the RBM framework.**

The absence of youth-specific framing across most outputs not only fragments reporting but also constrains institutional incentives. In the ILO's RBM system, output-level indicators serve as anchors for both performance measurement and resource allocation. **Interviews with ILO staff confirmed that the presence of a dedicated output is a key determinant for triggering regular budget (RB) funding**, which means that topics not explicitly reflected at the output level are structurally disadvantaged in institutional planning and resourcing. **Where youth are not explicitly referenced, programme managers face challenges in justifying youth-focused initiatives or ensuring they are adequately documented in results reporting.** This has made the implementation of the YEAP heavily reliant on project-level initiative and discretionary interpretation, rather than being embedded in formal accountability and funding structures.

A significant structural shift occurred in the 2024–25 biennium with the **introduction of a dedicated output on youth employment**. Output 3.5, titled *“Increased capacity of Member States to promote decent employment for youth”*, explicitly draws from the YEAP and seeks to consolidate youth employment work. Its **Indicator 3.5.1 tracks the number of Member States with integrated employment and skills programmes for youth, including with a focus on green, digital, care and other emerging sectors.**

This framing introduces several positive developments. First, the **definition of “integrated programme”** requires the incorporation of at least two complementary measures within the scope provided by the YEAP (e.g. skills, public employment, entrepreneurship, rights at work, or social protection, etc.). Second, the indicator accommodates a full **policy lifecycle**, recognizing adoption, implementation, evaluation, and institutional coordination mechanisms (e.g. inter-ministerial structures). Third, it anchors the programme in the YEAP's holistic vision and the ILO's human-centred approach.

However, while **Output 3.5 marks a meaningful improvement in the RBM treatment of youth employment**, it has not eliminated the fragmentation observed in previous cycles. Youth-related work continues to surface across multiple outputs in the 2024-25 P&B Results Framework:

- ▶ **Output 3.1.1 houses national employment policy work**, including policies that target youth, following the discontinuation of the standalone youth policy indicator (3.1.2).
- ▶ **Output 3.2 contains both Indicator 3.2.3** (Member States supported on inclusive skills programmes, apprenticeships, and work-based learning) and **3.2.4** (number of individuals benefiting from skills and lifelong learning services). However, youth are not explicitly referenced; though, it is highly likely that youth will comprise a significant share of intended beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Output 3.4, through Indicator 3.4.1, tracks Member States delivering employment services and labour market programmes** “including for women, youth and older persons.”

¹⁶ In the context of the ILO's RBM Framework, fragmentation refers to the division of youth employment work across multiple RBM outputs without sufficient disaggregation, thereby preventing consolidation

Thus, Output 3.5 adds a new institutional anchor but does not function as a consolidating mechanism. Its national-level, programmatic focus complements—but does not replace—existing outputs that continue to house youth-related interventions. In practice, this creates duplication of function and diffusion of accountability, as different dimensions of youth employment remain divided across the RBM architecture.

Decent work country programmes and country programme alignment with the yeap

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ While reviewed DWCPs show implicit alignment with YEAP in several regions, the scope and focus on youth employment vary depending on the country priorities and the scale of the ILO's initiatives.

A review of selected Decent Country Work Programs (DWCPs) revealed that in countries with significant focus on youth employment, the YEAP priorities have been integrated into country strategies to varying degrees. However, there is no specific mention of the YEAP in any of the DWCPs and CPOs reviewed.

For instance, **Tunisia's** DWCP for 2017–2022 explicitly integrates youth employment as a critical priority. The programme addresses youth employment through improving employability, strengthening vocational training, and facilitating transitions into productive work, with a special focus on vulnerable groups and reducing regional inequalities. The DWCP also aligns well with the ILO's global youth employment strategies, by including the promotion of skill development and entrepreneurship.

Similarly, the DWCP 2020-2024 in the **Philippines** is highly responsive to the diverse needs of youth and integrates targeted youth employment strategies under outputs through all three of its core priorities. In addition, it specifically has targeted youth focus under 'Priority 1: Enhancing employability through inclusive, demand-driven skills development and TVET reform, especially for young women and out-of-school youth' and covers multiple policy areas highlighted in the YEAP, including Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Policies. Whereas, Priorities 2 and 3 are aligned with YEAP's policy areas on labour market policies and rights at work for youth.

In **Kenya**, Outcome 2.2 of the DWCP (2021-24) emphasizes access to decent jobs, income, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Under this outcome, output 2.21 and output 2.2.3 particularly address youth employment in formal and informal sectors and also emphasize support to young NEETS.

Finally, while **Colombia** has not developed a formal DWCP, the ILO's youth employment strategy is evident through its Country Programme Outcome (CPO) COL131, which emphasizes building capacity at the sectoral and regional levels to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship. This highlights a strong focus on youth employment, particularly through productive linkages.

Conversely, youth employment has been also included to some extent in DWCPs of countries where ILO's actions in this area have been limited in scale during the evaluation period. An example in order is **Tajikistan**, where Outcome 1.1 of DWCP 2020-24 focuses on youth through 'Increased capacities of public employment services to provide quality services to employers, unemployed youth, self-employed, and returning migrants'. Whereas, in **Malaysia**, under the DWCP 2019-2025, the only focus on youth employment is with respect to migrant workers. Accordingly, output 3.3.2 states 'Awareness-raising programmes among Malaysian youth, employers, recruiters and duty bearers regarding the contributions of foreign workers'. The DWCP in **Somalia** 2023-2025 prioritizes youth under output 1.2 that is focused on gender responsive national employment-related policies, including attention to the 'care economy and youth employment towards/related to the future of work'.

ILO's programming, including country programme outcomes analysis and development cooperation portfolio overview, on youth employment during the period 2020 – 2024

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

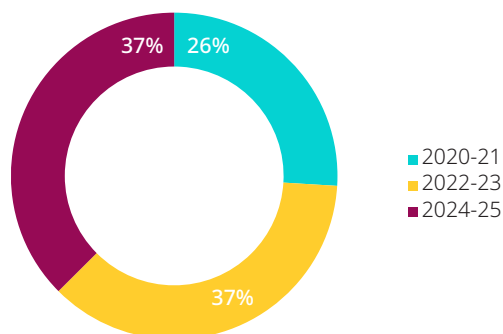
- ▶ While youth employment has gained prominence in ILO programming, efforts remain fragmented, limited in scale, and inconsistently distributed, lacking the institutional consolidation needed to align with the strategic goals of the YEAP. Youth employment results have most frequently been reported under outputs related to skills development, enterprise support, and employment policy.
- ▶ Africa accounted for the largest share of decent work results reported, comprising 48 percent of the total achieved or anticipated results, followed by the Asia and the Pacific region, which accounted for 25 percent of the results. The Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia and Arab States regions represented 9 percent each of the total reported or planned youth employment results respectively.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES AND PROGRAMMATIC AND REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS

A comprehensive examination of ILO's Decent Work Results Dashboard for the 2020-23 biennia and the OBW Dashboard for the 2024-25 biennium¹⁷ revealed a **total of 670 planned or achieved results associated with the ILO's work on youth employment (YE) between 2020 and 2024, and across all P&B outcomes**. The number of achieved or planned results were obtained by utilizing keywords, including "youth" and "young" in English, French, and Spanish to the results achieved and ILO's contribution sections of the DW Results Dashboard for the 2020-23 biennia and the CPO titles for the OBW Dashboard for 2024-25 biennium. To ensure comprehensiveness, additional keywords associated with the YEAP, namely: "digital platform", "skills", "TVET", "school", "graduates", "lifelong learning", "apprenticeships", "work-based learning" were also utilized. This yielded a total of 1,222 results across the three biennia. The identified achieved and planned results underwent another round of review to identify potential false positive results, which led to a reduction from the initial 1,222 results to 670 results. These anticipated or achieved results were linked to **286 unique CPOs**, targeting **110 countries**, through the various policy outcomes of the P&B documents for this period.

As illustrated in Figure 03, the distribution of the ILO's youth employment results varied across the three biennia, with the highest proportion of anticipated results planned in the 2024-25 biennium, constituting 37 percent of the total planned and achieved results (251 planned results). The COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruptions to the work of the ILO, impacting the reporting of youth employment results for the 2020-21 biennium. Despite these challenges, 174 (26 percent) results were reported during this period. In the 2022-23 biennium, the number of youth employment results achieved by the ILO increased to 245 results, representing a 41 percent increase over the previous biennium.

FIGURE 3: TOTAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS ACROSS THE THREE BIENNA



¹⁷ While this offers a structured basis for assessing portfolio trends, known limitations in project tagging and metadata mean that figures should be treated as indicative

The CPO Analysis revealed that across all three biennia, the ILO's work on youth employment was distributed across multiple Policy Outcomes and Outputs to varying degrees.

- ▶ In **2020-21, Output 4.2¹⁸** (14%) (Enterprise support) and **Output 5.3¹⁹** (14%) (inclusive skills programmes) reported the highest number of YE results.
- ▶ In **2022-23, Output 5.3** (17%) (Skills) reported the highest number of YE results.
- ▶ In **2024-25**, the majority of planned YE results were linked to **Output 3.2** (22%)²⁰ (Skills and lifelong learning systems).

The distribution of youth employment results across the highest-reporting outputs in Table 2 reveals **consistent patterns of thematic dispersion and partial consolidation, as identified through a targeted CPO assessment conducted by the evaluation team, in light of the absence of internal tracking and reporting mechanisms**. These trends reinforce findings from Sections 3.1.2 regarding the dispersed and invisible treatment of youth employment within the RBM framework.

Across all three biennia, youth employment results have most frequently been reported under outputs related to **skills development, enterprise support, and employment policy, as they linked to CPOs that related to youth**. In 2020–21 and 2022–23, outputs such as **5.3** (inclusive skills programmes) and **4.2** (enterprise support) featured prominently. The introduction of **Output 3.5** in 2024–25, the first output explicitly dedicated to youth employment, marked a notable structural improvement. However, it accounted for just **9%** of planned YE results in the 2024-25 biennium. The majority of youth-related work as represented by youth-related CPOs continues to surface under outputs such as **3.2 (skills and lifelong learning systems)**, **3.4 (labour market programmes)**, and **4.3 (support for enterprises)**. This indicates that while Output 3.5 improves thematic visibility and links directly to the YEAP, it has not served as a consolidating mechanism for youth employment programming. Viewed across biennia, the reliance on skills-related outputs persists, shifting from Output 5.3 to 3.2 following the P&B restructuring in 2024-25. Yet the broader pattern—of youth employment being implemented through a dispersed mix of outputs—remains.

TABLE 2: REPORTED²¹ YE OUTPUTS PER BIENNIUM

BIENNIUM	HIGHLY REPORTED OUTPUTS	COUNT OF REPORTS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
2020-21	Output 1.2. Increased institutional capacity of workers' organizations	10	06%
	Output 3.1. Increased capacity of member States to formulate and implement a new generation of gender-responsive national employment policies, including for youth	13	08%
	Output 3.2. Increased capacity of member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy	10	06%
	Output 4.2. Strengthened capacity of enterprises to adopt new business models, technology and techniques to enhance productivity and sustainability	25	14%
	Output 5.1. Increased capacity of the ILO constituents to identify current skills mismatches and anticipate future skill needs	19	11%
	Output 5.2. Increased capacity of member States to strengthen skills and lifelong learning policies, governance models and financing system	13	08%
	Output 5.3. Increased capacity of the ILO constituents to design and deliver innovative, flexible and inclusive learning options, encompassing work-based learning and quality apprenticeships	24	14%

¹⁸ Strengthened capacity of enterprises to adopt new business models, technology and techniques to enhance productivity and sustainability

¹⁹ Increased capacity of the ILO constituents to design and deliver innovative, flexible and inclusive learning options, encompassing work-based learning and quality apprenticeships

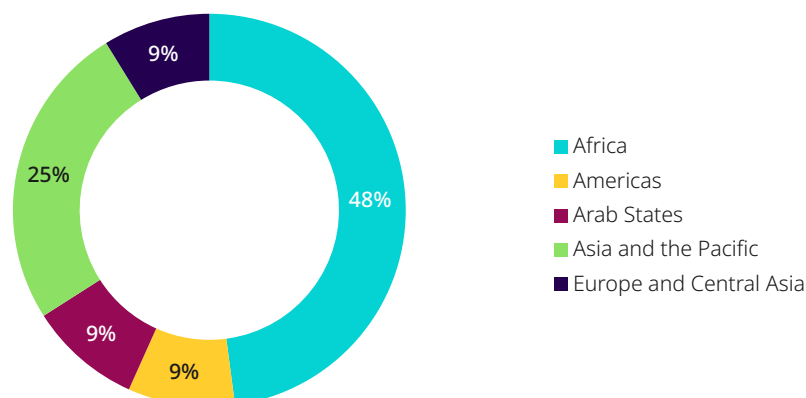
²⁰ Increased capacity of Member States to develop inclusive, sustainable and resilient skills and lifelong learning systems

²¹ For the purposes of presentation, only Outputs with 10 or more results are reported.

2022-23	Output 1.1. Increased institutional capacity of employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs)	14	06%
	Output 1.2. Increased institutional capacity of workers' organizations	13	05%
	Output 3.1. Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement national employment policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis	26	11%
	Output 3.2. Increased capacity of member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy	10	04%
	Output 4.2. Strengthened capacity of enterprises and their support systems to enhance productivity and sustainability	25	10%
	Output 5.1. Increased capacity of Member States to identify current skills mismatches and anticipate future skill needs	13	05%
	Output 5.2. Increased capacity of member States to strengthen skills and lifelong learning policies, governance models and financing system	10	04%
	Output 5.3. Increased capacity of Member States to design and deliver innovative, flexible and inclusive learning options, encompassing work-based learning and quality apprenticeships	42	17%
2024-25	Output 3.1. Increased capacity of Member States to develop comprehensive employment policy frameworks	18	07%
	Output 3.2. Increased capacity of Member States to develop inclusive, sustainable and resilient skills and lifelong learning systems	56	22%
	Output 3.3. Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in rural areas	12	05%
	Output 3.4. Increased capacity of Member States to develop effective and efficient labour market programmes and services to support transitions	26	10%
	Output 3.5. Increased capacity of Member States to promote decent employment for youth	22	09%
	Output 4.3. Increased support for enterprises – especially MSMEs – to achieve decent work and improve productivity	22	09%
	Output 4.4. Increased capacity of constituents to facilitate the transition of enterprises to the formal economy	11	04%
	Output 8.3. Improved coherence in support and action to facilitate just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies	15	06%

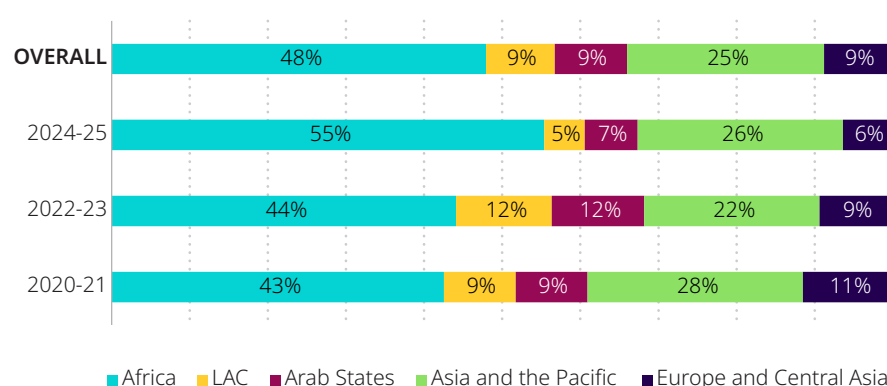
The regional distribution of youth employment results across the three biennia is depicted in Figure 4. Overall, **Africa** accounted for the largest share of decent work results reported, comprising 48 percent of the total achieved or anticipated results (321 results), followed by the **Asia and the Pacific** region, which accounted for 25 percent of the results (169 results). The Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia and Arab States regions represented 9 percent each of the total reported or planned YE results respectively.

FIGURE 4: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS ACROSS THE THREE BIENNIA



A comparison of the **regional distribution of youth employment results** across the three biennia (Figure 5) revealed a clear strategic concentration of efforts in Africa. **The Africa region consistently accounts for the largest share of results in each biennium**, increasing from 43% in 2020–21 to 55% in 2024–25. Cumulatively, Africa represents 48% of all results across the three biennia. **Asia and the Pacific emerges as the second most prominent region, though its share has declined over time**—from 28% in 2020–21 to 22% in 2022–23, before slightly rebounding to 26% in 2024–25. Other regions—Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the **Arab States**, and **Europe and Central Asia**—collectively account for less than one-third of results. While LAC and the Arab States experienced a peak in 2022–23 at 12% each, their shares dropped significantly in 2024–25 to 5% and 7%, respectively. Europe and Central Asia remained consistently low, averaging around 9% across the period.

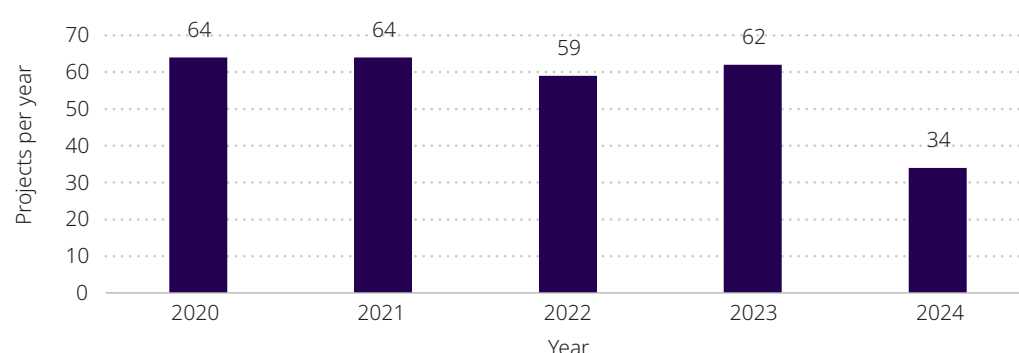
FIGURE 5: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS PER BIENNIUM



ILO'S DC-RELATED PORTFOLIO AND EXPENDITURE ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, 2020 – 24

Overall, the Evaluation found that a total of 283 development cooperation (DC) projects²² were launched between 2020 and 2024, inclusive. Between 2020 and 2023, the number of DC projects launched annually remained relatively stable, with 64 projects launched in 2020 and 2021 each, followed by a slight decrease to 59 projects launched in 2022 and a modest rebound to 62 projects in 2023. However, in 2024, there was a significant decline, with just 34 projects launched, representing a 45 percent decrease compared to the previous year. (Figure 6)

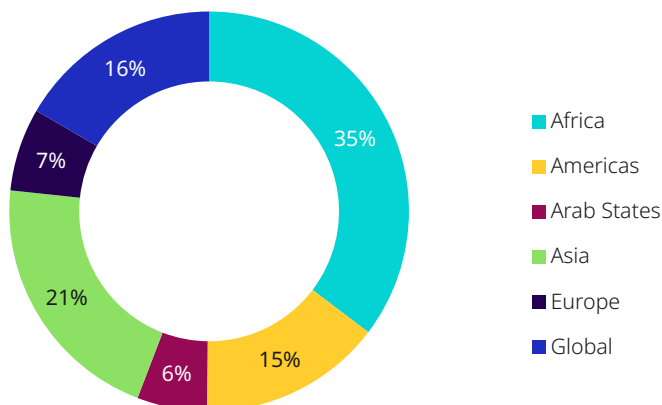
FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF PROJECTS LAUNCHED PER YEAR



²² The number of DC projects represents an internal estimate derived from the aggregation of DC projects explicitly referencing the terms “youth” or “young” in their titles and DC projects associated with CPOs explicitly referencing the terms “youth” or “young” in their titles, and in the three official languages, drawing from data provided by the ILO Finance Department, the ILO dashboards for Development Cooperation, and outcome-based work planning. These 283 DC projects represent those DC projects that started implementation between the years 2020 and 2024.

Of the 283 development cooperation projects launched between 2020 and 2024, the **largest share was implemented in Africa**, which accounted for **35% of all projects (100 projects)** (see Figure 7). This was followed by **Asia and the Pacific with 59 projects (21%)**, and **Global projects representing 16% (47 projects)**. **Latin America and the Caribbean** accounted for **15% (42 projects)**. The **Europe and Central Asia and Arab States** regions had the fewest projects, with **19 (7%)** and **16 (6%)** respectively.

FIGURE 7: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF DC PROJECTS LAUNCHED BETWEEN 2020 AND 2024



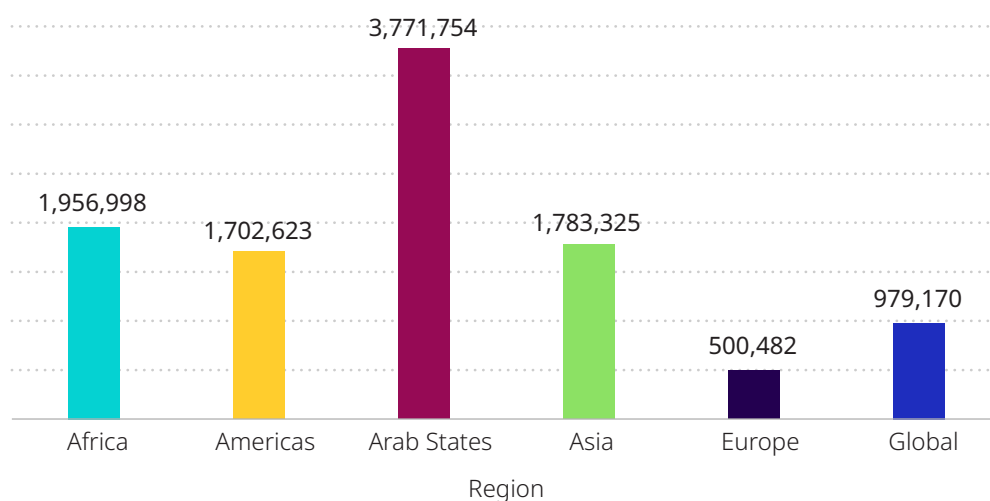
Between 2020 and 2024, a total of 283 development cooperation projects were launched with a **combined provisional budget allocation of USD 486.34 million**.²³ It should be noted that this figure represents the sum of all 283 identified projects' total budget values across their entire implementation duration. This figure is representative of the project values at time of design and not an estimate of actual expenditure.

This total value (USD 486.34 million) translates to an **average budget of just USD 1.72 million** per project—a relatively modest figure given the ambition, geographic coverage, and thematic complexity typical of the ILO's development cooperation work. More importantly, the presence of notable outlier projects obscures the complete picture of the ILO's DC portfolio on youth employment. **The Evaluation found that half of the DC projects were valued at or under USD 567,303 and three-quarters of all projects were valued at or under USD 1.56 million. Just ten of the highest valued projects (USD 164.8 million) collectively accounted for 34 percent of the total budget.** 2023 saw the highest average budget per project at **USD 2.5 million**, but even this peak remains limited when considered in light of the often multi-sectoral or multi-country scope of many interventions.

Despite having the fewest projects, the **Arab States** region recorded the **highest average project budget**, at approximately **USD 3.77 million**. This suggests that while fewer in number, projects in this region were generally larger in scale and possibly more complex or capital-intensive. (Figure 8) **Africa**, which had the highest number of projects, followed with an average project budget of **USD 1.96 million**, reflecting sustained investment in addressing the continent's expansive youth employment challenges. **Asia and the Pacific** projects had a similar average of **USD 1.78 million**, while the **Latin America and the Caribbean** saw a slightly lower average of **USD 1.70 million**.

In contrast, **global projects** received a more modest average allocation of **USD 979,170**, and **Europe and Central Asia** had the **lowest average budget**, at just **USD 500,482** per project. These lower averages may reflect the focus of global and European projects on normative work, technical cooperation, or knowledge products rather than large-scale implementation.

²³ The budget figure is the sum of the total project budget of all the 283 DC projects identified that have started implementation between 2020 and 2024. The source used for this figure is the [ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard](#).

FIGURE 8: AVERAGE PROJECT BUDGET BY REGION

The financial analysis revealed that between 2020 and 2024, the **ILO's overall expenditure on youth employment amounted to USD 445.8 million (445,884,168), representing 22 percent of its total expenditure of USD 2.02 billion (2,020,189,318) over the same period.** While annual expenditure levels varied year-on-year, the overall trend was one of sustained growth.

As previously mentioned, extra-budgetary development cooperation (XBDC) funds accounts for **95 percent** of all expenditure on youth employment between 2020 and 2024.

DURATION OF YOUTH-EMPLOYMENT WORK

In terms of planned duration, the average project spanned **approximately 2 years and 5 months**. Year-on-year data reveals that most projects were **designed as short- to medium-term engagements**, with limited variation across the period. For example, projects launched in 2020 had the longest average duration at **2 years and 9 months**, while 2021 projects averaged just **2 years and 3 months**.

ILO ACTIONS ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, 2020–24

This section shares key insights from the ILO's work on youth employment, following the assessment framework described in section 2.3.1, outlining the identified actions to reach better outcomes for young people, as per the YEAP. The key findings from this section focus on the ILO's direct contributions, including knowledge development and sharing, technical assistance, capacity building, and strengthening partnerships. Efforts in these areas are assessed against the objectives of the Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP), focusing on expected changes and areas for improvement at the level of national policies, institutional frameworks, and labour market practices. The analysis covers five critical areas essential for creating sustainable opportunities for youth: employability, youth entrepreneurship, employment and economic policies, rights at work, and labour market policies.

Technical assistance and capacity building²⁴

this section presents findings under the broad heading of *Technical Assistance and Capacity Building*, following the five policy areas set out in the YEAP—namely employment and economic policies, labour market policies, employability, youth entrepreneurship, and rights at work for youth. While this structure mirrors the original policy areas to ensure coherence with the YEAP's foundational framing, the evaluation recognizes that, in practice, ILO interventions often cut across multiple workstreams and involve integrated forms of engagement. For example, technical assistance may be delivered alongside capacity development, and knowledge generation and dissemination activities have often accompanied technical assistance and capacity building interventions. Although this categorization involves a degree of simplification, given the difficulty in cleanly disentangling overlapping areas of work, it has been adopted to support a structured and policy-relevant assessment in line with the YEAP's structure. Where relevant, overlaps and interlinkages are noted within each subsection to acknowledge integrated ILO programming.

A. ACTIONS PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC POLICIES FOR YOUTH

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO's contributions to national employment policies and youth employment strategies have been substantive and diverse, delivered across all five regions, spanning upstream diagnostic support, institutional capacity development, and in some cases, implementation planning. There are relatively few examples where macroeconomic, fiscal, or public investment strategies were explicitly harnessed to advance youth employment objectives. Substantial support was provided to national employment recovery strategies in the context of COVID-19 in the period under review.
- ▶ The ILO support is most strategically valuable when it includes implementation design, such as costed action plans, multilevel coordination frameworks, and stakeholder consultations, rather than ending at policy formulation.
- ▶ The use of analytical tools such as Employment Impact Assessments (EmpIAs) to inform youth-sensitive planning has been limited.

Within the YEAP, economic and employment policies are framed as foundational to enabling decent work for youth, particularly in the context of structural vulnerabilities, rapid global transformations, and crisis-induced shocks. The Plan emphasizes that achieving sustainable youth employment outcomes requires a balanced approach that addresses both demand- and supply-side factors in labour markets, while ensuring rights-based protections and long-term systemic reforms. **The YEAP identifies the development and implementation of national youth employment policies and strategies as a central instrument for achieving structural change.** These strategies are conceived as cross-cutting and inclusive frameworks that must support young people's transitions throughout the life course. **The scope of economic and employment policy action spans macroeconomic and pro-employment growth strategies, sectoral investment planning, and integration of youth in emerging economies (such as care, digital, rural, and circular sectors).**

By supporting such national employment and economic policy frameworks, the ILO advances young people's *right to work*—full, productive and freely-chosen employment—as set out in the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122). This is further reinforced by the Plan's commitment to aligning with SDG target 8.b.1, which focuses on the operationalization of national youth employment strategies.

²⁴ The examples of technical assistance and capacity-building activities referenced in this section are illustrative and not exhaustive. While efforts were made to ensure broad coverage and triangulation across sources, the initiatives highlighted serve to support evaluative analysis rather than provide a complete inventory of all interventions delivered under the YEAP framework.

ILO-supported efforts to advance youth employment through economic and employment policy instruments fall into **three streams**²⁵:

- ▶ Support to National Employment Policies (NEPs) that integrate youth employment priorities.
- ▶ Support to dedicated youth employment strategies, aligned with SDG indicator 8.b.1, which explicitly targets the development and operationalization of youth-specific policy frameworks.
- ▶ Support to broader structural or social policy frameworks where youth employment is addressed indirectly as part of a wider set of policy priorities.

A. Support to National Employment Policies (NEPs) that integrate youth employment priorities

The Evaluation found that **the ILO has played a significant role in the formulation, revision, and operationalization of national employment strategies in dozens of countries across all regions.** According to data from the ILO Employment Policy Gateway, between 2020 and 2025, a total of 13 Member States adopted National Employment Policies (NEPs). A review of the ILO Decent Work Results Dashboard indicates that the ILO has supported the development or revision of NEPs in the majority of cases, with 11 out of the 13 Member States receiving full or partial ILO support. Across these ILO-supported NEPs, youth were consistently included as a target group, in countries as diverse as Serbia, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Suriname, the Philippines, and Samoa, among others.

In a subset of these Member States, such as **Samoa, Suriname, and Serbia**, the NEPs included key structural elements such as employment targets, action plans, coordination mechanisms, and monitoring indicators. However, this level of comprehensiveness was not consistent across the portfolio. In countries such as **Botswana** and **Papua New Guinea**, youth were identified as target groups, but the ILO-supported NEPs lacked key implementation elements. In Botswana, the policy did not include an action plan or monitoring indicators, while in Papua New Guinea, no employment targets were set. The following table provides a snapshot of the NEPs adopted between 2020 and 2023, as per the ILO Employment Policy Gateway.

TABLE 3: LIST OF NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICIES ADOPTED BY MEMBER STATES BETWEEN 2020 AND 2023 AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS²⁶

#	MEMBER STATES	YEAR OF ADOPTION	EMPLOYMENT TARGETS SET	ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COORDINATION FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED	MONITORING INDICATORS SET	TARGET GROUPS INCLUDED	SUPPORTED BY ILO
1	Benin	2020	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	Youth Women PWDs	No
2	China	2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
3	Occupied Palestinian Territories	2020	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	Youth Women Informal Workers PWDs	Yes
4	Botswana	2021	Yes	No	No	No	Youth Women Rural workers PWDs	Yes

25 While the ILO increasingly frames its policy support under the concept of Comprehensive Employment Policy Frameworks (CEPFs), this section uses an evaluative typology grounded in how support was operationalized during the review period — through identifiable policy instruments and implementation processes.

26 These are the list of NEPs on the ILO Employment Policy Gateway that were adopted between 2020 and 2023. Source: <https://webapps.ilo.org/empolgateway/#employment-policies:1>

#	MEMBER STATES	YEAR OF ADOPTION	EMPLOYMENT TARGETS SET	ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COORDINATION FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED	MONITORING INDICATORS SET	TARGET GROUPS INCLUDED	SUPPORTED BY ILO
5	North Macedonia	2021	Yes	Yes	No	No	Youth Women Informal workers Older persons PWDs Migrant workers	Yes
6	Peru	2021	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Youth Women Informal workers Rural workers Older persons PWDs Migrant workers	Partially ²⁷
7	Philippines	2021	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Youth Informal workers	Yes
8	Serbia	2021	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Youth Women PWDs Migrant workers	Yes
9	Papua New Guinea	2022	No	No	Yes	No	Youth Women Informal workers PWDs Migrant workers	Yes
10	Paraguay	2022	No	Yes	No	Yes	Youth Women Rural workers PWDs Migrant workers	Yes
11	Suriname	2022	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Youth Women Informal workers Rural workers PWDs Migrant workers	Yes
12	Samoa	2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Youth Women Informal workers PWDs Migrant workers	Yes
13	Tajikistan	2023	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes

Based on the ILO's Decent Work Results Dashboard, over the past two biennia (2020-23), the ILO has supported 33 Member States in the development or implementation of NEPs where youth are integrated, either as a distinct beneficiary group or through policy pillars related to NEETs, informality, school-to-work transitions, or gender inclusion.

A key finding that emerges across these cases is that **ILO support is most strategically valuable when it includes implementation design, such as costed action plans, multilevel coordination frameworks, and stakeholder consultations, rather than ending at policy formulation.** For instance, in **Bangladesh**²⁸, the National Employment Policy 2022, developed with ILO support and endorsed by the Cabinet in 2023, explicitly identifies youth employment as a key national priority in the context of LDC graduation, COVID-19 recovery, and demographic change. Crucially, the ILO's support extended well beyond policy drafting: it facilitated the development of a **costed Five-**

²⁷ PER157 and PER181 in the 2020-21 biennium

²⁸ BGD101 in the 2022-23 biennium

Year National and Divisional Action Plan, supported by technical dialogues at both national and subnational levels. This represents a strong example of how ILO engagement can help translate youth policy commitments into **operational mechanisms for implementation**.

Similarly, in **Guatemala**²⁹, the ILO supported both the development and implementation of the **Política Nacional de Empleo Digno (PNED 2017–2032)**. While earlier support focused on mapping youth employment initiatives and formulating a youth employment strategy within the PNED, subsequent efforts during 2021 involved updating and implementing new PNED action plans in response to COVID-19. The ILO conducted a national labour market diagnostic, supported policy mapping across key ministries, facilitated inter-institutional workshops through the National Commission on Decent Employment (CONED), and developed short- and medium-term implementation roadmaps. This case illustrates how ILO support evolved from policy design to **operational implementation planning**, particularly in the context of post-pandemic economic recovery.

Similarly, the **Philippines** country case study found that the ILO supported the development of the National Employment Recovery Strategy (NERS) 2021–2022 during the evaluation period, in direct response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on this, the ILO subsequently also contributed to the formulation of the Trabajo Para Sa Bayan (2025–2034), a national employment master plan that offers continuity with NERS. Both plans incorporated youth-relevant components, such as pathways to labour market entry, TVET reform, and protection of vulnerable groups. The ILO's support was delivered primarily through constituent dialogue, technical assistance, capacity development, and policy advisory services.

In **Botswana**³⁰, the National Employment Policy (2022) explicitly recognizes youth as the group most affected by unemployment and outlines a detailed set of measures aimed at enhancing youth employability, including reforms to the Youth Development Fund, targeted wage subsidies, and skills development initiatives. However, **the policy does not include a costed implementation plan, a fully developed action plan, or youth-specific indicators**.³¹

In the **Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina**³², the ILO supported the formulation of the **Employment Strategy 2021–2027**, which was adopted by Parliament alongside an action plan. The strategy incorporates demand- and supply-side measures and identifies women, youth, and other vulnerable groups as targets for specific interventions. The ILO facilitated a multi-ministerial, tripartite working group, contributed to a gender-sensitive labour market diagnostic, and supported dialogue on youth-focused policy measures.

B. Dedicated Youth Employment Strategies

In parallel with its support to the integration of youth into national employment policies, the ILO has also engaged in the development of **youth-specific employment strategies**, which are more directly aligned with **SDG target 8.b.1** and has been monitored through **Indicator 3.1.2** in the 2020–23 P&Bs.³³ These strategies aim to explicitly prioritize young people as the central focus of employment policy, often in the form of standalone national frameworks or targeted action plans, and were often backed by evidence-based research.

A review of PIR data for the 2020–21 and 2022–23 biennia shows that while meaningful results were achieved, targets were only partially met in both periods, which was attributed to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic's disruptions and shifts in priority among government agencies from policy-work towards urgent recovery responses.³⁴

²⁹ GTM127 in the 2022–23 biennium

³⁰ BWA101 in the 2022–23 biennium

³¹ Republic of Botswana. 2021. National Employment Policy for Botswana. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/media/376601/download>

³² BIH128 in the 2022–23 biennium

³³ As noted in the subsection in Section 3.1.2, based on the ILO's measurement framework for output indicators of the 2024–25 P&B, the indicator on comprehensive national employment policy frameworks (3.1.1) also includes specific policies that target youth. Hence, the 2024–25 P&B no longer has a separate indicator tracking youth employment policies.

³⁴ ILO PIRs 2020–21 and 2022–23.

TABLE 4: P&B TARGETS AND RESULTS ACHIEVED FOR OUTPUT INDICATOR 3.1.2 (2020-21 & 2022-23 BIENNIA)

BIENNIUM	TARGET	RESULTS ACHIEVED	PERCENTAGE OF TARGET ACHIEVED
2020-21	18	12	67%
2022-23	17	12	71%

In **Costa Rica**³⁵, the ILO supported the formulation of the **National Strategy for Employability and Human Talent (ENETH)**³⁶, which was officially adopted in 2023. ENETH explicitly prioritizes **young people aged 15–24 and women aged 15–35** as core target groups. The strategy is structured around six components—including labour market intelligence, skills development, intermediation, and entrepreneurship—and includes a **costed action plan, financing framework, monitoring indicators, and a tripartite governance structure** under the National Employment System. ILO support extended from methodological development and technical drafting to multi-stakeholder consultations and institutional validation.

In **Nigeria**³⁷, the ILO supported the operationalization of the **Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (NIYEAP)** between 2020 and 2021. NIYEAP is a national framework structured around four pillars: employability, entrepreneurship, employment, and equality and rights. The ILO supported a **Youth Employment Inventory** to assess existing programmes and delivery gaps across more than 40 institutions. It also contributed to the design of a **monitoring and evaluation framework**, including a six-week online course for national stakeholders on tracking youth employment programmes. The ILO further supported the **revitalization of the NIYEAP Committee**, dormant since 2017, and facilitated outreach through a national youth survey (with over 100,000 respondents) and regional youth engagement labs. In addition, the ILO provided SIYB training for Ministry officials to support youth entrepreneurship. This case offers a strong example of ILO support that spanned **diagnostic, institutional, participatory, and delivery systems dimensions** of a national youth employment strategy.

In **El Salvador**³⁸, the ILO supported the development of a youth-specific employment policy instrument known as the **Hoja de Ruta para el Empleo Joven (HRJ)**, adopted in 2021 by the Ministries of Economy, Labour, and Youth. The HRJ was designed as part of the country's COVID-19 employment recovery strategy and focuses on four pillars: skills development, vocational guidance, labour intermediation, and entrepreneurship. ILO support included the conduct of a diagnostic on the impacts of COVID-19 on youth employment, a mapping of existing youth employment initiatives, and facilitation of multi-actor consultations. The ILO also contributed to drafting the strategy and developed implementation protocols for service delivery under the HRJ using a personalized trajectory model.

In **Pakistan**³⁹, the ILO supported the development of a national youth employment policy framework focused on school-to-work transitions, decent job creation, and inclusion of marginalized youth populations, including youth with disabilities. Currently, the National Youth Employment Plan is in its final stages of development and is expected to be rolled out in 2025.⁴⁰

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**⁴¹, the Integrated Emergency Development Programme for Youth Employment (PUIDIC)⁴² was adopted in 2021 as a youth-exclusive national programme. Coordinated by the ILO with funding from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and political leadership from the Office of the President, the programme includes 26 regionally tailored project documents addressing youth employment across productive sectors. PUIDIC is notable for its national ownership, territorial design, and explicit focus on youth job creation in a fragile context.

35 CR1105 in the 2022-23 biennium

36 Estrategia Nacional de Empleabilidad y Talento Humano de Costa Rica

37 NGA101 in the 2020-21 biennium.

38 SLV128 in the 2020-21 biennium

39 PAK176 in the 2022-23 biennium

40 Press Information Department, Government of Pakistan. March 2025. *Press Release No. 12: The National Youth Employment Plan* is in its final stages of completion under the Prime Minister's Youth Program. Available at: https://pid.gov.pk/site/press_detail/28224

41 COD101 in the 2020-21 biennium

42 Programme d'urgence intégré de développement axé sur l'emploi des jeunes (PUIDIC)

The ILO has also played a central role in operationalizing **Youth Guarantees in the Western Balkans—namely Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina**. These strategies target NEETs and early labour market transitions through public employment services, inter-ministerial coordination, and NEET profiling. While embedded within EU-aligned employment reform processes, they reflect key principles emphasized in the YEAP, including youth-specific design, data-driven targeting, and activation. Through the EU–ILO Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) for the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans, the ILO has supported all six economies in developing and adopting Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans. It has also provided technical assistance to review and amend national legislation to align with Youth Guarantee principles—for example, by supporting the decoupling of health insurance from employment registration in Republika Srpska, and assessing the feasibility of introducing unemployment benefits for young people in Kosovo.

C. Youth Employment within Broader Structural and Social Policy Frameworks

In several countries, youth employment has been addressed through **policy instruments outside the typical employment strategy architecture**. These interventions reflect indirect inclusion, where youth are targeted as part of broader policy reforms—particularly in contexts of informality, crisis, or multidimensional vulnerability. For instance, in Burkina Faso⁴³, the ILO supported a series of analytical studies in 2020 on the labour market impacts of COVID-19, including a focused assessment of informal economy actors. These studies informed the development of the **Integrated National Strategy for the Transition to the Formal Economy (SNI-TEF 2020–2024)** which were validated in mid-2021. The SNI-TEF, in particular, was designed to address the structural vulnerabilities of informal workers who in Burkina Faso, disproportionately include youth.

In **Zimbabwe**⁴⁴, the ILO supported the development of a **Comprehensive National Strategy on Formalization**, approved by the Parliament of Zimbabwe in 2023. The strategy includes youth employment as one of several priority areas—alongside women, informal workers, and people with disabilities, but in the overarching context of structural reform to transition enterprises and workers into the formal economy.

In **Chad**⁴⁵, the ILO supported the development of a **COVID-19 response plan** that emphasized youth employment and served as an implementation instrument under Axis 4 of the **National Development Plan (2017–2021)**. The plan targeted youth integration into the labour market as part of the country's long-term vision ("Le Tchad que nous voulons – Vision 2030"). ILO support included capacity building for labour market modelling using **CGE simulation tools**, and regional training for tripartite stakeholders on youth employment policy in fragile contexts.

While much of the ILO's work on youth employment strategies involves the design of new frameworks, some engagements have focused on **revising and strengthening existing strategies**, updating diagnostics, adapting programming, and improving inter-institutional coordination.

In **Cameroon**⁴⁶, the ILO supported the update of the country's national youth employment framework, **PANEJ-3 (2021–2025)**. This included technical assistance for an updated labour market diagnostic focused on youth, the review of youth-focused active labour market programmes, and the coordination of national consultations across all ten regions.

In **Colombia**, the ILO contributed to mainstreaming youth employment and decent work within the country's National Development Plan (2022–2026).⁴⁷ This included technical support for the formulation of labour policies and alignment with SDG 8 objectives, as well as the promotion of participatory engagement by trade unions, employers, and government stakeholders. The NDP includes targeted strategies to reduce youth unemployment, facilitate school-to-work transitions, and promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Specific youth initiatives—

43 BFA105 in the 2020-21 biennium

44 ZWE105 in the 2022-23 biennium

45 TCD101 in the 2020-21 biennium

46 CMR108 in the 2020-21 biennium

47 Based on findings from the Colombia country case study undertaken as part of this Evaluation

such as “Jóvenes Rurales y Urbanos,” “Estado Joven,” and “Sácudete”—target vulnerable youth populations, including rural youth, conflict-affected youth, and young women, with a strong emphasis on territorial, ethnic, and gender responsiveness. In addition, in collaboration with local authorities, the ILO supported the design of subnational youth employment initiatives in post-conflict territories. In Valle del Cauca, for example, this led to the adoption of a Decent Work Public Policy Ordinance in 2023, incorporating youth-focused programming on technical training and agricultural entrepreneurship.

In **Tunisia**, under the EDJEF project, the ILO supported the development of the National Employment Strategy (NES) Operational Plan 2022–2030, which established national and regional implementation mechanisms, monitoring indicators, and embedded youth employment and gender equality throughout. The plan now serves as a coordinating reference across donor and government initiatives, addressing fragmentation in Tunisia's youth employment landscape.⁴⁸

In several countries, the ILO also contributed substantively to policy formulation through the use of labour market diagnostics and economic modelling tools. For example, in **Chad** and **Gabon**, the ILO supported the application of **Computable General Equilibrium (CGE)** models to assess COVID-19 impacts on the labour market. In **Burkina Faso**, ILO-supported studies on the informal economy directly informed policy design.

D. Cross-Cutting Patterns, Structural Constraints, and Sustainability Considerations

The preceding analysis of ILO support to economic and employment policy for youth, organized across three workstreams, reveals several cross-cutting insights that extend beyond individual cases. These patterns speak to broader dynamics in how youth employment priorities are integrated into national policy processes, the types of support the ILO has provided, and the structural and institutional conditions that shape the implementation and long-term sustainability of these efforts.

A number of ILO interventions occurred in contexts affected by **fragility or crisis, such as Chad, DRC, Burkina Faso, and Zimbabwe. In these settings, ILO support was typically focused on diagnostics, strategy formulation, or coordination among national actors, rather than long-term implementation planning.** While this reflects appropriate adaptation to country context, it also suggests ILO's flexibility to provide context-specific models of youth employment support in environments where institutional capacity is limited and policy continuity is uncertain. In contrast, in other cases—such as Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Mozambique, and Nigeria—ILO support extended beyond strategy design to include elements of implementation planning, such as costed action plans, M&E frameworks, or institutionalized delivery systems. While the enabling factors behind this deeper engagement are not fully known, these cases suggest that **sustained ILO engagement is more feasible when policy commitments are matched by planning capacity and inter-institutional coordination.**

Across the portfolio of ILO-supported national employment policies (NEPs), youth employment strategies (YESs), and broader structural policy frameworks, the Evaluation found that while most interventions include a mix of demand and supply-side measures, the balance is often uneven, with supply-side actions more frequently emphasized.

The Evaluation found that **supply-side measures were more consistently and comprehensively supported across countries.** ILO-supported NEPs and youth employment strategies have consistently emphasized improving the employability of young people through education, skills development, and supply-side activation measures. Many policies include reforms to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems (e.g. Jordan, Lebanon, Tajikistan, and Chile), along with expanded use of public employment services, career guidance, and labour market intermediation (e.g. Costa Rica, Colombia, and the Philippines). Several strategies also feature labour market information systems and forecasting tools to better align training with labour market demand (e.g. Moldova, Tanzania, and Morocco). This trend reflects both the **comparative**

48 Based on findings from the Tunisia country case study undertaken as part of this Evaluation

advantage of the ILO in institutional capacity building and the relative ease of operationalizing supply-side interventions compared to structural economic reforms or investment strategies.

On the demand side, many ILO-supported national employment policies and youth employment strategies have sought to stimulate job creation and improve the enabling environment for youth employment. These include pro-employment macroeconomic frameworks (e.g. **Botswana**, where the NEP integrates sectoral investment planning with employability reforms), sectoral development strategies (e.g. aquaculture and agriculture in **Mozambique**), and forward-looking employment policy and public investment planning (e.g. **Cameroon**, where employment-focused CGE modelling and labour market diagnostics were introduced to guide investment decisions). In **Lao PDR**, the National Rural Employment Strategy—developed and piloted with ILO support—combined rural development with employment creation, with 40 per cent of beneficiaries under age 35. NEPs and YESs in countries such as **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Egypt**, and **Uganda**⁴⁹ have also incorporated enterprise development and financing mechanisms. In **fragile contexts** like Chad, the DRC, and Burkina Faso, demand-side provisions have typically focused on formalization strategies and economic recovery planning, though often with limited implementation beyond strategic design.

There are relatively few examples where macroeconomic, fiscal, or public investment strategies were explicitly harnessed to advance youth employment objectives. Most NEPs and YESs tend to reference pro-employment growth or economic transformation in broad terms but lack concrete mechanisms linking fiscal instruments or national investment planning to job creation for young people. Notable exceptions include **Mozambique**, where the ILO supported a **pro-employment budgeting exercise** and linked the Employment Policy Implementation Plan with sectoral investment strategies in aquaculture, agriculture, and industry, explicitly referencing youth among priority groups. In **Namibia**⁵⁰, the ILO supported the development of an **Employment Public Expenditure Review** and **pro-employment and gender budgeting toolkits**, alongside national and sectoral Employment Impact Assessments (EmpIAs). These tools were integrated into the formulation of the third National Employment Policy and supported through capacity-building focused on youth employment. Similarly, **Morocco's** PN2E 35 (National Employment and Entrepreneurship Policy to 2035) introduced a multi-sectoral framework that operationalizes pro-employment budgeting at national and regional levels, embeds employment targets in investment planning, and prioritizes support for MSMEs and territorial entrepreneurship as key levers for job creation, explicitly recognising youth and women as target groups.⁵¹ This provides another strong example of how fiscal and planning instruments can be mobilized to influence employment outcomes, including for young people. Nevertheless, **a structural constraint, as also reported by ILO staff, for the ILO to engage effectively on macroeconomic and fiscal policies emerges from the fact that its main governmental counterparts are Ministries of Labour, which are not involved in setting the macroeconomic and fiscal agendas of their countries.**

These patterns point to deeper structural constraints that influence not only the focus and reach of ILO interventions but also their long-term sustainability. The Evaluation found that the durability of **ILO-supported youth employment strategies hinges on three interlinked factors: institutional continuity, implementation capacity, and systemic integration into national planning and fiscal frameworks.**

In several instances, such as **Bangladesh** and **Costa Rica**, the presence of costed action plans, multilevel coordination mechanisms, and embedded monitoring systems significantly enhanced the prospects for durable implementation. In contrast, strategies that lacked these components—despite identifying youth as a priority—faced greater risks of stagnation or dilution. Political transitions and institutional reshuffles also shaped sustainability outcomes. In Colombia, for example, the ILO supported the development of a draft National Youth Policy that was ultimately shelved due to shifting political priorities and changes in the agency responsible for youth affairs.⁵² This case illustrates the limitations of technical support in the absence of a stable institutional anchor.

49 UGA128 in the 2022-23 biennium

50 NAM126 in the 2022-23 biennium

51 ILO. 2024. Projet ADWA' Maroc: Rapport final du plan d'action de la PN2E 35. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/fr/resource/project-document/rapport-final-du-plan-daction-de-la-pn2e-35>

52 Based on findings from the Colombia country case study undertaken as part of this Evaluation

Taken together, these findings suggest that effective and lasting youth employment strategies depend not only on sound design and technical support but also on systemic political alignment, inter-ministerial coordination, domestic resourcing, and the institutional resilience of delivery systems. Without these enabling conditions, youth employment frameworks may remain aspirational, with limited influence on actual outcomes for young people.

BOX 01: EMPLOYMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (EMPIAS) AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT - UNTAPPED POTENTIAL?

The YEAP Follow-up Plan of Action (2020–2030) calls for stronger use of **impact assessment methods** to evaluate “what works, how, and for whom” in youth employment policy and programming.

One such approach developed by the ILO is the **Employment Impact Assessment (EmpIA)** — a methodology used to estimate the employment outcomes of investments and public policy interventions. EmpIAs can serve multiple functions: **ex-ante simulation, sector prioritization, employment quality diagnostics, and capacity building for institutional planning.**

To date, **no EmpIA has been applied to evaluate an entire national employment policy (NEP) or youth employment strategy (YES).** However, notable advances in EmpIA practice have emerged through the **STRENGTHEN2 project** (2020–2025), a joint initiative between the ILO and the European Union. The project spans nine African countries (**Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, and Zambia**) and aims to develop, apply, and institutionalize robust methodologies to assess employment outcomes from EU-funded investments.⁵³ While not focused exclusively on youth, the project's assessments often yield **youth-relevant insights**—particularly when results are disaggregated by age.

- ▶ In **Cameroon**⁵⁴, an EmpIA of agropastoral investments under the PNDP revealed that **86.8% of jobs created were held by youth aged 15–35**, most in informal, low-wage positions. This underscores the need to improve not just the quantity but the quality of youth employment generated by public investments.
- ▶ In **South Africa and Kenya**⁵⁵, an EmpIA of the **NASIRA credit guarantee facility** (2024) showed that while the programme explicitly targeted youth, women, and migrants, the employment results revealed a **slight negative employment bias for youth (15–24)**. The findings suggest that **financial instruments alone may not effectively reach young workers** without complementary measures to improve absorptive capacity and skills matching.
- ▶ In **Madagascar**⁵⁶, the EmpIA of the **Talaky Be** project estimated that **29.4% of all jobs created were for youth**, modestly exceeding the national youth share of the labour force. Like the Cameroon case, youth were overrepresented in low-skilled and informal roles, prompting the assessment to recommend design adjustments such as stronger investment in technical training, formalization incentives, and youth-focused support to social enterprises.

These examples demonstrate that EmpIAs—when disaggregated and well-targeted—can offer valuable insights into the **actual reach and quality of youth employment outcomes**, even when the primary programme was not youth-specific.

Yet, across the portfolio reviewed, **such tools remain underutilized.** Most EmpIAs still lack:

- ▶ Systematic disaggregation by age, gender, and vulnerability.
- ▶ Integration with monitoring systems for NEPs or YESs.
- ▶ Use during ex-ante design, rather than post-hoc validation.

Going forward, **the ILO and its partners could strengthen youth employment strategy effectiveness by:**

- ▶ Applying EmpIA methods to **specific youth-focused components** of larger policies or programmes.
- ▶ **Embedding youth disaggregation** as a standard analytic requirement in employment impact assessments.
- ▶ Using EmpIAs to support **investment prioritization** under youth employment action plans and decent work strategies.

In sum, while EmpIAs are rarely used to evaluate full-scale youth employment strategies, they remain a **high-potential but underused tool** for assessing youth employment outcomes, identifying gaps in programme design, and strengthening the evidence base for implementation under the YEAP.

53 GLO/20/19/EUR. STRENGTHEN2: Employment impact assessment to maximize job creation in sub-Saharan Africa. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/employment-impact-assessment-maximize-job-creation-africa>

54 Sossa, Pamphile & Olivier, Mbock Pierre. 2024. Employment impact assessment of the 11th European Development Fund to the National Participatory Development Programme in Cameroon. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/employment-impact-assessment-11th-european-development-fund-national>

55 Michelena, Gabriel. 2025. Employment impact assessment of parts of the NASIRA risk-sharing facility. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/employment-impact-assessment-parts-nasira-risk-sharing-facility>

56 Miao, Guannan & Jeuken, Myrthe. 2025. Employment impact assessment of the Talaky Be project in Madagascar. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/employment-impact-assessment-talaky-be-project-madagascar>

B. ACTIONS PROMOTING LABOUR MARKET POLICIES FOR YOUTH

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ ILO has supported member states in expanding the reach, functionality, and responsiveness of their labour market policy systems, often through strengthening of public employment services and support to downstream service delivery through vocational education and local economic development systems. However, resource constraints, institutional capacity, and political buy-in limited the full institutionalization of these tools within national systems or in underserved rural and post-conflict zones.
- ▶ Many interventions remain predominantly supply-side oriented. However, the absence of strong demand-side pull, limited private sector engagement, weak market incentives, and insufficient alignment with firm-level capacity or demand conditions constrained the transformative potential of well-designed supply-side measures.
- ▶ The linkage of Youth Guarantee with EU accession is a key motivator for Western Balkans, having garnered political backing and public commitments for system-wide improvements, albeit with some difficulty. The chances of successful replication of this approach in contexts lacking similar incentives and resources are limited.

Labour market policies for youth constitute a core pillar of the YEAP, reflecting the ILO's commitment to promoting full, productive, and freely chosen employment and decent work for young people. The YEAP frames these policies as essential mechanisms for facilitating young people's transitions into the labour market and supporting them across their working lives. Within a human-centred approach grounded in the ILO Centenary Declaration, labour market policies are positioned to address both structural and emerging challenges through a mix of demand- and supply-side measures. **These include strengthening employment services, enhancing job-matching systems, expanding access to social protection, and adapting policy frameworks to technological change, informality, and sectoral transformation.** The YEAP emphasizes the importance of inclusive, rights-based labour market institutions and strategies that are responsive to young people's diverse realities, particularly in the **context of COVID-19 recovery and the future of work**. This section assesses how the ILO has operationalized labour market policies for youth through both institutional development and downstream implementation, identifying key contributions, limitations, orientation towards impact, and sustainability considerations.

A. Strengthening Public Employment Services and Labour Market Institutions

Across diverse regions and contexts, the ILO has supported member states in expanding the reach, functionality, and responsiveness of their labour market policy systems. A recurring area of intervention has been the strengthening of **public employment services (PES)**, particularly their capacity to provide personalized support to young jobseekers.

Such efforts include broader digital transformation initiatives to modernize PES infrastructure. In countries such as **Namibia**⁵⁷, **Indonesia**⁵⁸, and **Cambodia**⁵⁹, the ILO supported the digitalization of PES systems, the development of user-friendly job matching platforms, and the modernization of service workflows. These upgrades were complemented by training for employment counsellors, development of career guidance manuals, and efforts to improve labour market information systems.

ILO interventions in **Tunisia** contributed to the institutional strengthening of **Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant (ANETI)**, the national public employment service.⁶⁰ Through projects such as *Making Skills Visible*⁶¹ and *AcJEMP*⁶², the ILO supported the modernization

57 NAM126 in the 2020-21 biennium

58 IDN131 in the 2020-21 biennium

59 KHM201 in the 2020-21 biennium

60 Based on findings from the Tunisia country case study undertaken as part of this Evaluation

61 TUN/18/51/NOR - Making skills visible: Improving career guidance, apprenticeship and skills recognition in Tunisia. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#aico0w3>

62 TUN/19/01/FRA - ACJEMP : Accompagnement et Coaching des Jeunes et renforcement de leur Employabilité. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#ackvf34>

of ANETI by introducing digital job-matching tools, career coaching modules, and personalized employment support pathways. These efforts built on earlier initiatives like *JEMP* (2017–2019)⁶³, which pioneered digital platforms (*Maharati*, *Tadrib w Tabadel*) and institutionalized **soft skills coaching** within public employment services. ANETI staff received training and technical support to integrate these tools into routine service delivery. However, broader policy reforms—such as regulating platform work—remained largely unaddressed, and institutional continuity was occasionally disrupted by political turnover.

Evidence from the **Colombia** case study also found that the ILO provided substantial institutional support to strengthen Colombia's PES at national and subnational levels. Technical assistance was extended to the **Ministry of Labour, regional governments** (e.g. Huila, Santander), and municipal authorities in cities such as **Bogotá, Medellín, and Bucaramanga**. This included the development of **occupational profiling systems, labour market alert tools, and employability pathways** (*rutas*), as well as the alignment of technical curricula with local labour market needs. These tools contributed to the modernization of employment services and laid the groundwork for more targeted labour intermediation.

A prominent example is the *APED* project, through which the ILO supported the **reform of Bogotá's District Employment Agency (ADE)**.⁶⁴ The redesign of its employability route introduced new services such as **vocational guidance, soft skills modules, transversal competencies, and data-driven early warning systems**. The ILO also played a key role in fostering coordination between actors, including the Ministry of Education, SENA, and local governments, to streamline referral systems and integrate training, employment, and entrepreneurship services. The ILO also transferred **prospective occupational analysis methodologies** through projects like *PRAES*⁶⁵ and *Job Training and Retraining Programme for Young People and Adults* Project⁶⁶, enhancing data-informed planning across public institutions and contributing to more coherent, evidence-based service provision. However, resource constraints and political decentralization limited the full institutionalization of these tools—particularly within national systems like SENA or in underserved rural and post-conflict zones.

Elsewhere, in **Eastern Europe and Central Asia**, the ILO's "Partnerships for Youth Employment" project provided upstream support for the development and coordination of youth employment strategies across **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan**, and regions of the **Russian Federation**.⁶⁷ The project focused on building institutional capacity among public employment services and tripartite constituents, integrating youth priorities into national employment strategies, and advancing social dialogue on youth employment challenges. It contributed to the development of national policy frameworks, labour market diagnostics, and PES guidance tools, and supported labour market rapid assessments during the COVID-19 crisis.⁶⁸

In **Indonesia**, through an ILO/UNIQLO public-private partnership project, the ILO supported the development and adoption of Indonesia's Unemployment Insurance scheme, delivered capacity building and technical assistance to PES staff.⁶⁹

63 TUN/16/08/NLD - JEMP "Jeunes et employabilité" - Appui au programme FORSATI. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#bcka5f>

64 COL/22/08/COL - Estrategia de fortalecimiento de la Agencia Pública de Empleo del Distrito (APED). Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#afz6l3s>

65 COL/20/06/COL - Asistencia Técnica al programa de recuperación social y económica para jóvenes PRAES. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#aj63mnj>

66 COL/22/04/COL - Programa de cualificación y reentrenamiento laboral a los jóvenes y adultos de la ciudad de Medellín. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#bvfpof>

67 RER/17/01/LUK - Partnerships for Youth Employment in the CIS II. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btix70l>

68 ILO. 2021. Partnership for Youth Employment in the CIS II - Midterm evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#az17iib>

69 IDN/19/02/FRU - Unemployment Protection in Indonesia - Quality Assistance for Workers Affected by Labour Adjustments. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btjgc01>

B. Downstream Implementation and Youth-Centred Service Delivery

In addition to technical assistance and institutional capacity-building of public employment services, **the ILO's interventions have also involved downstream implementation support. In Ethiopia**, for instance, the **PROAGRO project integrated employment services into a broader effort to promote decent work in agribusiness**.⁷⁰ While complex in scope—spanning investment promotion, enterprise upgrading, social dialogue, and skills development—it included the establishment of job centres in Amhara and Sidama districts designed to deliver career guidance, referrals, and job matching for rural jobseekers, including youth.

BOX 2. OVERVIEW OF SELECTED BENEFICIARY IMPACT NUMBERS

- ▶ **Jordan:** Over 21,000 individuals accessed employment services, with more than 10,000 placed in formal jobs⁷¹ as a result of an EU-funded initiative that supported the establishment of five Employment Service Centres and facilitated job matching, career counselling, and work permit issuance for Jordanian and Syrian jobseekers⁷²
- ▶ **Colombia:** from 2,000 to 75,000 job placements between 2020 and 2023, as a result of ILO's support to scaling-up the reach of the District Employment Agency (ADE) through innovations such as mobile outreach units and integration with community-based care centres (Manzanas del Cuidado). These figures underscore the potential scale and reach of well-resourced service delivery platforms.
- ▶ **Tunisia:** nearly 5,000 young people (mainly young women) reached by the Employment Services, as a result of ILO's support to **employment clubs and individualized coaching services** through its collaboration with ANETI. These services specifically targeted youth who had been unemployed for over 12 months, offering structured support in job search strategies, soft skills development, and recruitment processes. Building on this experience, the ILO launched the EU-funded *Youth NEETs in Southern Neighbourhood Countries* project⁷³ in 2023 to pilot and scale new service delivery models for underserved youth, including early school leavers and discouraged job seekers.

Beyond PES-led interventions, the ILO has also supported **downstream service delivery through vocational education and local economic development systems**. For instance, in Mauritania, through two complementary projects—**PECOBAT II** (funded by France)⁷⁴ and **PECOBAT I** (funded by the European Union)⁷⁵—the ILO supported the roll-out of *chantier-école* models, which combine hands-on construction training with the delivery of public infrastructure, enabling disadvantaged youth to gain practical, market-relevant skills. This was further supported by the creation of *cellules d'insertion*—insertion support units within vocational training centres that offer career guidance, job placement assistance, and links to national employment services. In parallel, the projects contributed to strengthening the regulatory framework for *validation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE), allowing individuals to formally certify skills acquired through informal or non-formal work experience. Similarly, in Medellín, **Colombia**, through *Job Training and Retraining Programme for Young People and Adults* Project, the ILO collaborated with the city's Secretariat of Economic Development to align active labour market policies with the *Valle del Software* strategy. This included digital skills training, curricular updates, and occupational re-skilling, with over 17,000 youth and adults participating in 2022. In both contexts, the ILO promoted closer coordination between vocational training institutions and employment services to facilitate youth transitions into the labour market. This was also seen in Bucaramanga and Santander (**Colombia**) where the ILO supported the integration of employment services with local training providers and employer networks, aiming to improve both the **quality of job intermediation and the relevance of training to market demand**.

70 ETH/20/50/DEU – ProAgro – Promotion of Decent Work in Agribusiness. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#ameqog3>

71 ILO. 2023. EU-ILO collaboration in the monitoring of labour aspects in the implementation of the EU's rules of origin initiative for Jordan – Phase II - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#amjjs5i>

72 JOR/18/54/EUR - EU-ILO collaboration in the monitoring of labour aspects in the implementation of the EU's rules of origin initiative for Jordan – Phase II (COMPONENT - Syrian). Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btj1o2g>

73 GLO/23/11/EUR - Youth NEETs in Southern Neighbourhood Countries. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#b4g21cc>

74 MRT/18/01/FRA - PECOBAT II dans les zones défavorisées. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btj0h4r>

75 MRT/16/01/EUR - PECOBAT : Amélioration de l'employabilité des jeunes et des capacités des PME par le développement du sous-secteur du BTP. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btihakh>

A distinct but complementary example comes from **Egypt**, where the EYE:FORSA project supported transitions from social protection to labour market participation among vulnerable youth and women, particularly those enrolled in the Takaful and Karama cash transfer programmes⁷⁶. Implemented with ILO support, the project offered both wage and self-employment pathways through employability training, entrepreneurship coaching, job search clubs, job fairs, and technical assistance to local service providers. Over 8,000 job vacancies were identified, more than 3,400 participants received self-employment support, and over 1,500 youth were trained for wage employment.⁷⁷

Other interventions have focused explicitly on mobile and vulnerable populations, particularly in contexts affected by migration and displacement. In **Central America and Mexico**, through the EU-funded project, the ILO worked with national institutions to strengthen public employment services, expand technical and financial education, and support economic inclusion pathways for **refugees, returnees, and displaced persons**—groups that include a high share of youth.⁷⁸ In **Mexico**, institutional capacity was enhanced through the application of ILO's PES-Scan tool and the development of tailored action plans in Chiapas and Coahuila. In **Costa Rica**, migration-sensitive employment policy approaches were integrated into the National Employability Strategy. In **Honduras**, efforts focused on localized ecosystems for entrepreneurship and employability, with youth participating in job fairs, training programs, and municipal service models in violence-affected communities. In the case of ILO's support to ADE in Bogota, Colombia, the ILO's deployment of **mobile employment services and territorial outreach models** expanded geographic coverage, particularly for **vulnerable, displaced, or rural youth** in hard-to-reach areas.

C. Systemic Barriers to Impact: Structural, Design, and Sustainability Challenges in Youth Labour Market Policies

While these interventions demonstrate considerable breadth, scale, and ambition, a number of systemic limitations continue to constrain their overall effectiveness. First, **many interventions remain predominantly supply-side oriented**, emphasizing employability, counselling, and upskilling, but doing relatively less to stimulate labour demand, incentivize youth hiring, or support job creation in growth sectors. For example, in **Mauritania**, despite efforts to link training with public infrastructure delivery through *chantier-école* schemes, youth labour market insertion remained limited due to weak private sector uptake, volatility in the construction sector, and low sustained demand for ecological building methods. As in other cases, **the absence of strong demand-side pull constrained the transformative potential of well-designed supply-side measures**.⁷⁹

Where demand-side interventions are present, ILO-supported projects have often faced challenges with uptake, including limited private sector engagement on youth job creation and talent retention, weak market incentives, and insufficient alignment with firm-level capacity or demand conditions. For instance, in **Jordan**, the ILO project operated in a policy landscape shaped by the EU's Relaxed Rules of Origin (RoO) scheme, which provided firms with preferential export access conditional on hiring Syrian refugee workers. While the project did not directly drive firm participation in the scheme, it supported enabling measures such as work permit facilitation and compliance with decent work standards. However, **only 19 companies had registered under the RoO scheme by the end of the project**, reflecting broader uptake challenges. Evaluative findings attributed the low registration to limited awareness of EU markets, low external demand, and constrained production capacity.⁸⁰ **The limited demand-side traction, despite supportive measures on the supply side, underscores the need for closer alignment**

76 EGY/20/01/NOR - Egypt Youth Employment: Economic Empowerment under FORSA programme. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btjjiplh>

77 ILO. 2024. Egypt Youth Employment: Economic Empowerment under FORSA programme – Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bdxhmyz>

78 RLA/18/05/EUR - Promoting Employment and Social Protection under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Central America and Mexico. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btjhmpms>

79 ILO. 2023. Appui à la dynamisation du développement économique local dans les zones défavorisées - Final cluster evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#ax8c08t>

80 ILO. 2023. EU-ILO collaboration in the monitoring of labour aspects in the implementation of the EU's rules of origin initiative for Jordan – Phase II - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#amjjs5i>

between macro-level incentive frameworks and the employment realities of firms, particularly when youth or vulnerable groups are expected to benefit. Similar challenges were observed in Egypt under the EYE: FORSA project, which aimed to support transitions from social assistance to employment through wage and self-employment interventions. While over 8,000 job vacancies were identified and job fairs were organized in Upper Egypt, only 14 percent of those trained for formal employment secured jobs.⁸¹ Evaluative findings attributed this gap to limited demand-side absorption, weak job quality—particularly for women—and a mismatch between training and actual labour market conditions. In addition, many potential beneficiaries hesitated to participate due to fears of losing access to government cash transfers, **underscoring the need for stronger coherence between ALMPs and social protection systems**, as well as improved alignment between training offers and decent work opportunities. The evaluation findings are consistent with recent ILO thinking that highlights the importance of aligning skills development with social protection systems across the lifecycle, particularly to support young people in school-to-work and informal-to-formal transitions.⁸²

Similarly, the ILO's work on Youth Guarantees in the **Western Balkans** have revealed that the effectiveness of Youth Guarantee initiatives has often been constrained by limited demand-side absorption and structural barriers in the labour market. Interviews with key ILO staff and evaluations of Youth Guarantee-related projects highlight the limited availability of quality employment opportunities as a constraint to retaining youth in the local labour market, prompting many to emigrate in search of better working conditions.

Second, **a growing set of initiatives exhibit more intentional, youth-centred design** as illustrated by examples from Tunisia, Colombia, Mauritania, Jordan, and the Western Balkans. Notably, these efforts reveal an emergent recognition of and responsiveness to the **distinct needs of vulnerable youth subgroups**, including young women, rural youth, youth in informality, migrants, displaced youth, and youth NEETs. However, in some other contexts—including **Ethiopia, Paraguay, and Morocco**—youth remain one of several demographic groups reached through generalized ALMPs.

Third, pilot fragmentation and sustainability emerge as recurring concerns. While the ILO has successfully introduced promising models—such as employment services embedded within TVET institutions in **Cambodia** or municipal employment strategies in **Honduras**—their uptake into national systems remains uneven. In most cases, interventions rely on project-specific funding or donor-driven agendas, raising questions about their long-term viability. For instance, in **Jordan**, despite strong job placement outcomes through ILO-supported Employment Service Centres, the evaluation found no clear transition strategy to public ownership; the centres' continued operation depended on renewed donor support, with no evident mechanisms for budget integration or institutional absorption by the Ministry of Labour.⁸³ A similar situation was observed in **Ethiopia** under the PROAGRO project, where job centres established in Amhara and Sidama were not yet embedded in regional governance frameworks and remained reliant on project resources. These examples highlight a structural risk that **without deliberate sustainability planning—from financing and staffing to policy alignment—even well-performing employment services risk remaining temporary delivery platforms rather than becoming durable components of national labour market systems.**

In the context of the ILO's work supporting the operationalization of **Youth Guarantees** in the Western Balkans, interview with a key ILO staff revealed substantial gaps, with many countries lacking even the foundational terminology, legal frameworks, or baseline capacity to design and operationalize YG schemes. In response, the ILO's support has involved the provision of tailored technical assistance through its Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) as well as capacity-building efforts including training for frontline staff, improving individualized service delivery, and

81 ILO. 2024. Egypt Youth Employment: Economic Empowerment under FORSA programme – Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bdxhmyz>

82 Aligning skills development and national social protection systems, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2023. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_protect/%40soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_900970.pdf

83 ILO. 2023. EU-ILO collaboration in the monitoring of labour aspects in the implementation of the EU's rules of origin initiative for Jordan – Phase II - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#amjjs5i>

enhancing cross-sectoral coordination. However, progress has been uneven, with challenges such as high staff turnover, limited institutional capacity within some Public Employment Services in managing the influx of youth NEETs registering for Youth Guarantee services, and weak engagement from key actors, including employers and social partners. The Evaluation underscores that the long-term sustainability of these reforms hinges on embedding YG structures into national policy and financing frameworks, institutionalizing coordination mechanisms, and continuing to invest in system-wide capacity development. To that end, the **Youth Guarantee due to its linkage with EU accession requirements has served as a major motivator in the context of the Western Balkans, providing political leverage to push reforms and make public commitments to systemic improvements.** However, in view of ILO's programming in other regions, the challenges of replication of Youth Guarantee outside of such incentive-based and resource-rich context are obvious.

An example in that regard is the ongoing *Youth NEETs in Southern Neighbourhood Countries* project, implemented in **Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and Tunisia**, seeks to draw inspiration from the EU Youth Guarantee while adapting to the distinct political and institutional landscape of the MENA region. The project operates in settings marked by significant institutional capacity constraints and limited existing frameworks to support targeted activation of NEET youth. In many participating countries, national employment strategies remain absent or nascent, and public employment services lack the coverage and capability to implement complex outreach and referral systems. As such, a review of the Project Brief indicates that the project takes a demand-driven and flexible approach, implemented through a regional Technical Assistance Facility designed to build foundational structures—such as coordination mechanisms, baseline data systems, and tailored service delivery models—from the ground up. While the Youth Guarantee serves as a conceptual reference point, particularly in terms of outreach, activation, and service integration, **the project avoids assuming direct transferability. Instead, it focuses on piloting context-appropriate models**, with particular attention to green and digital economic pathways and rural employment opportunities.⁸⁴

Fourth, even where enabling policy frameworks exist, the systems needed to operationalize labour market policies that support young people often remain underdeveloped. In **Indonesia**, for example, the adoption of a national unemployment insurance scheme positioned PES as a key delivery mechanism for re-skilling and job matching—services that are especially critical for first-time and displaced young jobseekers. However, the evaluation found that PES infrastructure remained limited, with gaps in service protocols, digital access, and institutional capacity. Project efforts such as PES staff training and ICT-based job matching were foundational in nature, underscoring that in many contexts, building effective pathways for youth employment begins with establishing the basic delivery infrastructure itself.⁸⁵ In contrast, **Colombia** illustrates how coordinated action across municipal governments, vocational training systems, and public employment services can lay the groundwork for more integrated delivery systems—though even here, challenges persist in ensuring coherence across national and subnational levels.

C. ACTIONS PROMOTING EMPLOYABILITY

The YEAP frames youth employability as a broad and multidimensional concept, encompassing support for technical and transferable skills development, strengthening of quality training systems, and promotion of work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships. The YEAP also highlights the importance of preparing young people for evolving labour market demands, including through the development of digital and green skills.

84 ILO. 2024. ILO Project Brief: Youth NEETs in the Southern Neighbourhood. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Youth%20NEET%20-%20Project%20Brief_EN.pdf

85 ILO. 2021. Unemployment Protection in Indonesia – Final evaluation. Available at <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#a32womr>

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The Organization's ability to combine technical assistance with policy influence has yielded important institutional gains across diverse contexts, with notable strengths in systems strengthening and the promotion of work-based learning and inclusive TVET. Yet, while the ILO has supported integrated approaches to improve the quality, relevance, and accessibility of youth training, these initiatives have often faced contextual and institutional constraints—such as limited technical and financial capacity and sociopolitical volatility—that hinder their scale, depth, and integration, leading to weak sustained system-level impact and the effective implementation of developed policies.
- ▶ The ILO's institutional-level work on skills development has primarily concentrated on strengthening TVET systems. Apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes supported by the ILO have served as both skills-building and protective pathways for adolescents transitioning out of child labour. While policy support around work-based learning and apprenticeship systems has increased, broader systems and structures beyond post-secondary TVET remain largely unsupported, and progress is constrained by limited multi-year funding, stakeholder buy-in, and robust monitoring frameworks.
- ▶ Digital skills development has emerged as a growing area within the ILO's youth employability agenda, with stronger and more advanced programming observed in middle-income countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colombia. However, engagement remains uneven, with limited depth and reach in lower-income contexts such as Kenya and across the African region more broadly.
- ▶ The absence of systematic age-disaggregated data and limited tracking of employment outcomes further restrict the ILO's ability to assess the true reach and effectiveness of its employability work for young people. Moving forward, greater attention will be needed to fostering national ownership, institutionalizing reforms, ensuring follow-up on employment outcomes, and promoting more coherent, integrated approaches that link system-level transformation with meaningful and measurable improvements in young people's access to decent work.

A. System-Level TVET Reforms and Skills Governance

A central strand of the ILO's work on youth employability involves supporting structural reforms and system-level strengthening in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), with the aim of aligning training supply with evolving labour market needs. These **upstream reforms are relevant to youth employability given that young people represent a large share of TVET participants**, and many national skills strategies explicitly prioritize youth inclusion.

In a number of cases, the ILO's support towards system-level strengthening in the TVET sector have yielded strong results. For instance, the Skills 21 Project in **Bangladesh** stands out as an example of a more **integrated and transformational approach**. It combined strategic-level reforms—such as support to the Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework (BNQF), digitalization of curricula, and the institutionalization of training quality standards—with direct investments in strengthening selected public TVET institutions to deliver competency-based training.⁸⁶ These efforts enabled the project to affect both the **enabling environment** and the **delivery infrastructure** for youth employability. Parallel direct-service streams certified 18,356 learners, 6,791 of them youth (37 percent), and piloted Recognition of Prior Learning, enterprise-linked apprenticeship, and gender-responsive entrepreneurship training. In addition, under the ongoing *Improving Skills and Economic Opportunities for the Women and Youth in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (ISEC)* Project being implemented jointly with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the ILO developed competency standards and rolled out standardized training programs for key sectors such as tourism, construction, light engineering, agriculture, and ICT, ensuring alignment with the National Qualifications Framework.⁸⁷ The delivery capacity of TVET institutions has also been strengthened by successfully accrediting 20 Skills Training Providers (STPs) with the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA).

86 BGD/16/04/EUR – Skills 21 – Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btj1ta6>

87 BGD/21/02/CAN – Improving Skills and Economic Opportunities for the Bangladeshi Community and Rohingya Women & Youths in Cox's Bazar. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btk2uis>

The Decent Employment for Youth in **Cambodia** – Phase II (2020 – 2023) project serves as another example of a multi-pronged intervention combining upstream policy support with downstream delivery across multiple YEAP pillars. Key achievements included the integration of entrepreneurship curricula (e.g., C-BED) into the national TVET system and the adoption of Local Life Skills Education into the lower secondary school curriculum. These actions strengthened national systems to better equip youth for the changing world of work.

In the **Philippines**, the majority of ILO-supported youth employment initiatives concentrated on skills development in high-growth sectors such as STEM, Information Technology and Business Process Management (IT-BPM), and construction. Several flagship projects contributed to building institutional capacity and expanding access to training, with a particular emphasis on strengthening the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The Industry Skills for Inclusive Growth-2 (InSIGHT-2) programme played a central role in advancing a Skills-Needs Anticipation (SNA) approach, piloted in the IT-BPM and construction sectors.⁸⁸ It complemented existing TESDA methodologies by generating labour market intelligence to inform career guidance, private investment, public spending, and TVET system improvement. The project also updated the national SNA manual and trained over 200 TESDA staff in employment forecasting and related tools.

In **Kenya**, under the PROSPECTS Programme, the ILO supported the institutionalization of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Kenya, building on earlier efforts by national actors such as the Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA) and the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA). The initiative aimed to formalize the assessment and certification of informally acquired skills—particularly relevant for Kenya's large informal sector—through a standardized, multi-step RPL process. Stakeholders widely credited ILO's convening role, technical support, and capacity building as instrumental to advancing a more inclusive, sustainable RPL system.⁸⁹

While some initiatives pursued integrated approaches to improve training relevance, accessibility, and quality for youth, their ability to achieve lasting system-level impact has often been constrained by contextual and institutional factors. For instance, in **Lebanon** the ILO worked through two inter-linked initiatives that together aimed to pursue an integrated approach, yet the breadth and depth of their achievements remained more circumscribed. Under the *Towards improved formal and non-formal TVET in Lebanon* (ILO-UNICEF), the project paired direct service delivery with modest but strategic system inputs.⁹⁰ It offered short, modular, competency-based courses to Lebanese and Syrian youth through local NGOs piloted work-based learning and developed ten new curricula. Labour-market assessments and new career-guidance tools were produced, yet delivery remained dispersed across many partners, limiting institutionalisation. The companion initiative, *Improved access to employment opportunities for Lebanese and refugee graduates from skills training Project*, worked further upstream to reinforce the structures that underpin effective training.⁹¹ It established a referral network and employment-service framework, coached staff of public institutions, trade unions, and NGOs in labour rights and career guidance, and generated labour-market evidence—sector studies and a tracer study—that is now informing the update of the National TVET Strategic Framework for 2023-30. Taken together, the Lebanese projects show an integrated model that touches policy analysis, curriculum development, provider capacity, and limited direct service delivery. However, significant technical and financial capacity constraints within government institutions combined with sociopolitical volatility create significant hurdles to sustain activities and translate the developed policy into action.

88 RAS/19/01/JPN - Industry Skills for Inclusive Growth (InSIGHT) Phase 2. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#agkqmg2>

89 ILO. 2023. Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities (ILO/PROSPECTS) - Midterm cluster evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bksbn4w>

90 LBN/16/08/CEF - Towards improved formal and non-formal TVET in Lebanon. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#aakh9ky>

91 LBN/18/04/ITA - Improved access to employment opportunities for Lebanese and refugee graduates from skills training. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#bwku3vg>

Beyond the national level, the ILO has also contributed to regional-level systems strengthening through its implementation of Output 3 of the AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme (SYEP), which formed part of the broader Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA).⁹² This component focused on enhancing the capacity of African Union institutions, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and national authorities to **anticipate labour market needs** and design responsive, evidence-based skills development policies. Notably, the project contributed to the **adoption of a recommendation on skills anticipation by the AU's Ministerial Committee on Education in 2022**, effectively elevating the agenda to the continental policy level.⁹³ At country level, action plans were institutionalized across five countries (Eswatini, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), and new coordination mechanisms were established or strengthened—laying foundations for more coherent and demand-responsive skills development ecosystems.⁹⁴ The evaluation of the SIFA project confirms that these actions effectively raised awareness and built foundational capacities among national stakeholders. In **Zimbabwe**, this systems-level engagement contributed to the adoption of a new National TVET Policy in 2022, aligned with the Education 5.0 strategy to promote innovation, digitalization, and stronger links with industry and the rural economy. The ILO, through SIFA and in collaboration with UNESCO, provided financial and technical support for the policy's development, including consultations, validation, technical reviews, and publication.⁹⁵

B. Education and Career Services

As illustrated thus far, the **ILO's engagement on skills development at the institutional level primarily revolves around strengthening TVET systems and institutions, with limited evidence of support to systems and structures beyond post-secondary TVET systems**. Under the *Higher Education for Life and Work (2020 – 2023)* project⁹⁶ in **Egypt**, the ILO supported seven public-sector universities through the development and launch of a cloud-based Career Service Management portal to connect students, career centres, and employers, and supported the delivery of core- and soft-skills and English-language proficiency trainings combined with STEM-awareness and business-plans competitions. While the project reached a total of 7,266 students/graduates, only 1,918 job placements (26 percent) were reported due to a combination of challenges attributable to the project's short-implementation window (18 months, after long delays and budget cuts) and potentially the predominant focus on soft-skills training without accompanying efforts for more technical skills.⁹⁷

The HELW project in **Egypt** highlights common challenges the ILO encounters when working with ministries beyond its traditional counterparts, such as Ministries of Labour and TVET institutions. In this case, the ILO's limited prior engagement with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) contributed to delays in establishing coordination mechanisms, misunderstandings of institutional protocols, and gaps in political navigation.⁹⁸ Similar challenges were also identified in the **Philippines** where under the Skills for Prosperity Philippines, training was delivered to school teachers on active learning strategies to help students improve thinking and analytical skills. However, as signing an MOU with the Department of Education took nearly two years, the activity had to be undertaken toward the end of the project, leaving no time for monitoring and guidance by the training developers at the University of the Philippines (UoP) to teachers in the utilization of the training.

92 RAF/19/01/DEU - AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme Component 2: Skills Initiative for Africa – funded by the EU. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btjgiq0>

93 ILO. 2023. Youth Employability Programme Component 2: Skills Initiative for Africa - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bdm2vwd>

94 ILO. 2023. Youth Employability Programme Component 2: Skills Initiative for Africa - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bdm2vwd>

95 ZWE102 in the 2022-23 biennium

96 EGY/20/04/GBR - Egypt Skills for Prosperity (S4P): HELW – Higher Education for Life and Work. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#bhrmrad>

97 ILO. 2024. Egypt Skills for Prosperity (S4P): HELW – Higher Education for Life and Work - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#a4jwgfo>

98 ILO. 2024. Egypt Skills for Prosperity (S4P): HELW – Higher Education for Life and Work - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#a4jwgfo>

C. Digital and Green Skills Initiatives

The Evaluation found that digital skills development has emerged as a distinct and growing area within the ILO's youth employability programming, though the prevalence and depth of ILO's engagement in these areas **varies across regions and socioeconomic development contexts**. Efforts have been particularly strong in the Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean regions, with comparatively limited attention observed in Africa. Programming in this domain has also tended to be more advanced in middle-income countries—such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colombia—than in lower-income contexts like Kenya.

In the Asia and the Pacific context, the Industry Skills for Inclusive Growth-2 (InSIGHT-2) programme was implemented by the ILO in Indonesia and the Philippines between 2019 and 2022 with Government of Japan funding. In **Indonesia**, the project helped convert public training centres to blended and distance-learning modalities; developed and piloted two digital-skills curricula (motion graphics and computer networking), and developed and tested e-learning platforms. In **Indonesia**, through the ILO/UNIQLO public-private partnership project, the ILO also developed and piloted digital re-skilling courses, including those aimed at youth.⁹⁹

In **Colombia**, the SENATIC project, implemented in partnership with MINTIC and SENA, aims to train over 300,000 individuals—including 68,000 secondary students and 1,000 instructors—in digital competencies between 2023 and 2026. The project supports labour market transitions for youth, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, and includes certified short courses in fields such as cloud computing, cybersecurity, UX design, and artificial intelligence. These are delivered via platforms such as Coursera, while SOFIA Plus and GOYA provide systems for monitoring participant progress, managing training data, and supplying labour market intelligence. SENATIC also aligns training curricula with the National Qualifications Framework and decent work standards, contributing to system-wide policy coherence.

In contrast, the ILO's engagement in **Kenya** represents a more nascent stage of work on digital skills development. Under the PROSPECTS programme, the ILO supported an assessment of digital skills supply and digital job demand among refugees and host communities, which informed the revision of a training curriculum with Learning Lions. This curriculum includes basic digital literacy, specialized training in web development and animation, and advanced self-guided modules, which is currently under review by TVETA for accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).¹⁰⁰ The pilot targets 210 youth and 50 RPL candidates. Complementing this, the ILO facilitated a 2023 national diagnosis on digital labour platforms, with particular attention to women's experiences and decent work deficits across sectors such as e-commerce, online freelancing, domestic work, and personal services.

Green skills are an emerging area of ILO's employability programming for youth, but the depth and consistency of engagement remain more limited. The Evaluation found that in most contexts, **green skills appear in the form of specialized training modules, short courses, or targeted projects within specific sectors, rather than through integrated, youth-specific national strategies or institutional frameworks**.

For example, in **Haiti**, a youth training programme in Cité Soleil incorporated eco-occupations related to canal cleaning, environmental restoration, and solid waste recycling, resulting in the certification and employment of 250 youth in green jobs.¹⁰¹ In Comoros, ILO-supported interventions in the blue economy included training and support for youth and women entrepreneurs in the processing and marketing of fish and octopus, as well as sensitization on just transition principles and economic opportunities in environmentally significant sectors such as coastal tourism and waste management.¹⁰²

99 IDN/19/02/FRU - Unemployment Protection in Indonesia - Quality Assistance for Workers Affected by Labour Adjustments. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btjgc01>

100 Based on findings from the Kenya country case study undertaken as part of this Evaluation

101 HTI127 in the 2020–21 biennium

102 COM102 in the 2022–23 biennium

In the **Philippines**, green components were integrated under the InSIGHT-2 programme, which focused on embedding “greening TVET” measures—including business-continuity training for MSMEs—into national frameworks. The ILO also supported the provision of green skills training as exemplified by the *Water Supply Equipment Management Capacity for Peace in Mindanao* project. Under this initiative, 3,300 young people were equipped with technical and soft skills in plumbing, masonry, and the operation and maintenance (O&M) of water systems, with a strong emphasis on green construction practices. The project embedded environmental sustainability in its design by incorporating reforestation activities and deploying solar-powered water systems, fostering climate resilience and environmentally responsible service delivery.

Similarly, findings from the **Colombia** case study also revealed that green skills development integration remains nascent. While the ILO supported green skills development through sector strategies (e.g., circular economy value chains in used tires and e-waste) and diagnostic tools in cities with large youth informal economies, the Evaluation found that youth-specific green employment strategies or institutional frameworks were not fully developed.

In **China**, the ILO provided support to the China New Enterprise-based Apprenticeship programme by incorporating, among other aspects, green skills into the core competency curriculum, and delivering capacity-building to over 100 institutions across 10 cities and sectors. As detailed in the sub-section on Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships, this program has engaged over 2 million apprentices since 2019.

BOX 3. OVERVIEW OF SELECTED BENEFICIARY IMPACT NUMBERS

- ▶ Colombia: over 300,000 individuals—including 68,000 secondary students and 1,000 instructors targeted through the SENATIC project, implemented in partnership with MINTIC and SENA. They will be trained on digital competencies between 2023 and 2026
- ▶ Kenya: 210 youth targeted under the PROSPECTS initiative.
- ▶ Haiti: 250 youth trained on eco-occupations related to canal cleaning, environmental restoration, and solid waste recycling.
- ▶ Philippines: 3,300 young people equipped with technical and soft skills in plumbing, masonry, and the operation and maintenance of water systems, with a strong emphasis on green construction practices
- ▶ China: over 100 institutions across 10 cities and sector, training over 2 million apprentices since 2019 as part of the China New Enterprise-based Apprenticeship programme

D. Work-based Learning and Apprenticeships

Across the regions, the ILO is supporting governments in developing national and sub-national policies and strengthening institutional and governance mechanisms around work-based learning and apprenticeships. For instance, in **Tunisia**¹⁰³, the ILO supported the development and validation of a Strategic Note on Apprenticeship (NSA) in 2021 through a consultative, multi-stakeholder process involving technical ministries and social partners. The NSA promotes participatory governance, regional adaptation, and improved visibility of apprenticeships. The ILO also facilitated the establishment of pilot regional apprenticeship networks in five governorates, trained ministry officials in facilitation methods, and developed a competency framework for in-company tutors to enhance the quality of workplace-based training. Similarly, in **South Africa**¹⁰⁴, the ILO contributed to the development of the National Apprenticeship and Artisan Development Strategy 2030, adopted in July 2022, and supported the establishment of the National Apprenticeship and Artisan Development Advisory Body (NAADAB) in 2023. In the **Bahamas**¹⁰⁵, the ILO supported the development of a National Apprenticeship Policy (NAP), finalized in July 2023 by a tripartite taskforce under the Cabinet. Framed in direct response to persistently high youth unemployment—especially among young women—in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Dorian, the NAP provides national-level guidance for implementing a quality apprenticeship system tailored to young Bahamians. It aims to facilitate the acquisition of both

103 TUN101 in the 2020-21 biennium

104 ZAF155 in the 2022-23 biennium

105 BHS127 in the 2022-23 biennium

classroom and on-the-job skills through structured placements with local employers. In Asia-Pacific, the ILO is implementing "Advancing Digital and Green Skills for Youth in ASEAN," project that aims to enhance apprenticeship programmes, improving young people's access to the labour market while providing opportunities for upskilling existing workers in construction sector with digital and green competencies and facilitate skills mobility within ASEAN¹⁰⁶.

Beyond policy development, **ILO's support has also extended towards the implementation of apprenticeship programmes. However, the scale remains modest, largely pilot in nature, and heavily reliant on external funding.** For instance, in **Burkina Faso**, a quality apprenticeship programme in the construction sector trained 150 young people (including 18 girls), supported by capacity building in three training centres and the development of new teaching tools.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the HELW project in **Egypt** partnered with the Federation of Egyptian Industries to structure internships that became partially integrated into companies' CSR strategies, resulting in the placement of 240 university students. While these internships yielded some employment outcomes, they also underscored the need for stronger employer follow-up.¹⁰⁸ In **Kenya**, the ILO was able to support 227 vulnerable youth and women across 7 counties through access to work-based learning.¹⁰⁹ Complementing this, the BUSY project mobilized informal sector employers and master crafts persons via social marketing forums and coordination committees; however, uptake remained limited due to the lack of demonstrated best practices and delayed delivery of planned trainings.

Under the **ILO-PROSPECTS programme**, more formalized employer involvement was seen in countries like Egypt and Uganda, where business associations and dual-education models helped facilitate apprenticeships and job placements. Nevertheless, broader uptake was constrained by factors such as low awareness, weak incentives, regulatory hurdles (particularly regarding refugee employment), and limited engagement by employers' and workers' organizations. Gender disparities and the marginal inclusion of persons with disabilities further restricted the reach and effectiveness of these efforts. In Indonesia, the **InSIGHT-2** project built strong partnerships with industry associations, produced tools for competency standards and mentor training, and worked to align vocational curricula with labour market needs. However, progress was hindered by COVID-19 disruptions and persistent concerns among employers about the reputational value of apprenticeships, including their misuse as sources of cheap labour. These experiences point to the importance of improving employer incentives, demonstrating effective models in practice, and addressing reputational and structural barriers to foster broader and more sustainable private sector participation.

Thus far, **China represents a rare example of large-scale, institutionalized apprenticeship programming, with over 2 million apprentices engaged since 2019** through the China New Enterprise-based Apprenticeship programme. Unlike many other contexts where ILO-supported initiatives remain pilot in nature and externally driven, the Chinese model reflects strong domestic ownership and sustained public investment. The ILO made meaningful technical contributions—providing recommendations during the 2022 drafting of the national workplan, supporting the integration of green skills into the core competency curriculum, and delivering capacity-building to over 100 institutions across 10 cities and sectors.¹¹⁰ **These efforts reflect the ILO's capacity to influence the quality and inclusivity of large-scale systems when working with committed national counterparts.**

An area where the ILO's work on **Employability and Rights for Young People** has intersected is in the **use of apprenticeships and work-based learning as a means of removing adolescents (14–17 years old) from child labour and hazardous work.** In **Burkina Faso**, 705 children aged 14–17, including 330 girls, were removed from child labour and reintegrated through vocational training and apprenticeships across ten trades, including sewing, welding, plumbing, and poultry farming,

106 <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/Factsheet%20of%20the%20project.pdf>

107 BFA102 in the 2020-21 biennium

108 ILO. 2024. Egypt Skills for Prosperity (S4P): HELW – Higher Education for Life and Work - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#a4jwgfo>

109 KEN127 in the 2020-21 biennium

110 CHN252 in the 2022-23 biennium

under the EU-funded GLO/17/15/EUR project. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the ILO supported the Directorate of Apprenticeships and Professional Integration in implementing quality apprenticeships for youth over 14 in cocoa-growing areas, placing 60 adolescents in certified apprenticeship programmes between August and November 2023. These efforts were underpinned by tools and curricula adapted to the needs of young learners and master craftsmen, with support from the Netherlands-funded RAF/18/08/NLD project. In **Pakistan**, under the *Asia Regional Child Labour Project*, 90 adolescents involve in informal and hazardous work participated in competency-based training programmes in car and motorbike repair through structured placements at Toyota and Honda workshops in Lahore, with most graduates securing formal employment. Together, these initiatives illustrate how quality apprenticeships have served not only as skills development pathways but also as protective mechanisms for vulnerable adolescents transitioning out of child labour. However, the scale of such initiatives has been limited and such activities have remained highly dispersed and sporadic across projects.

BOX 4. OVERVIEW OF SELECTED BENEFICIARY IMPACT NUMBERS

- ▶ **Burkina Faso:** 150 young people trained as part of an apprenticeship programme in the construction sector; and 705 children aged 14–17, including 330 girls, removed from child labour
- ▶ **Egypt:** 240 university students successful involved in internships
- ▶ **Kenya:** 227 vulnerable youth and women across 7 counties accessed work-based learning
- ▶ **Côte d'Ivoire:** 60 adolescents placed in certified apprenticeship programmes
- ▶ **Pakistan:** 90 adolescents involve in informal and hazardous work participated in competency-based training programs in car and motorbike repair through structured placements

E. Sustainability and Structural Constraints

Sustained and transformational impact requires the availability of multi-year funding, longer timeframes, continuous stakeholder engagement and advocacy, stakeholder buy-in, and robust monitoring and impact measurement frameworks. The Skills 21 project in Bangladesh (2017 – 2027) represents a decade long effort funded through a USD 22.6 million grant which itself builds on the earlier eight-year long TVET Reform project (2007 – 2015) funded by the EU (USD 17.7 million).¹¹¹ Similarly, the Decent Employment for Youth Programme, now in its third phase, builds off of the work of two previous phases and represents a multi-agency joint effort led by the ILO with substantial financial commitments by the SDC, co-implementing partners, and the Government of **Cambodia**. While the **China** New Enterprise-based Apprenticeship programme has been scaled-up due to its institutionalization by the Government that has led to the engagement of over 2 million apprentices since 2019. As a follow up, the Quality Apprenticeship and Lifelong Learning in China – Phase 2 (2023-2025) project is now being implemented by the ILO, with the aim to promote working women and men's employability, reduce job-skill mismatch in the labour market in China, and enhance international exchanges on apprenticeships and lifelong learning.

While ILO-supported reforms in skills system are technically sound and contextually relevant, their long-term sustainability remains contingent on continued domestic political will, financial commitment, and deeper integration into national governance and financing frameworks. For example, under the SIFA programme, national action plans were developed in countries such as Eswatini, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe to strengthen skills anticipation and responsive TVET systems. However, in most of these countries, national partners lacked the financial capacity to implement the reforms independently once external support tapered off. Similarly, although regional knowledge tools—such as the STED methodology and rapid skills assessments—were taken up by AUDA-NEPAD, sustained institutional engagement has been constrained by limited staffing and resourcing at the continental level.¹¹²

111 BGD/06/01/EEC - Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform in Bangladesh. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btd515t>

112 ILO. 2023. Youth Employability Programme Component 2: Skills Initiative for Africa - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/evaldiscovery/#bdm2vwd>

While the **Skills 21** project in **Bangladesh** laid a strong foundation in strengthened institutional capacities and policy reforms, key components—such as the enactment of BNQF, institutionalization of teacher training quality standards, and operational scaling of digital learning platforms—require substantial follow-up.¹¹³ **Government actors highlighted that without external support, including from the ILO and other donors, they may be unable to maintain momentum, especially in underfunded areas like green skills, inclusive training for persons with disabilities, and expansion of RPL systems.** Moreover, the project revealed systemic issues that undermine sustainability, such as **chronic understaffing in key institutions (e.g., BTEB and DTE)**, weak integration of private and non-governmental training providers into national TVET governance, and an absence of robust national mechanisms to finance or monitor continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and trainers.¹¹⁴ These limitations mirror the SIFA experience, where institutional and technical success did not automatically translate into lasting national ownership or budgetary prioritization. In both cases, the ILO's support contributed to institutional and technical development, but without parallel strategies for domestic resource mobilization and long-term planning, the durability of results remains at risk.

D. ACTIONS PROMOTING YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO's youth entrepreneurship programming under YEAP has achieved notable breadth and visibility, with tools such as Start and Improve Your Business and Know about Business deployed across regions and adapted to local contexts. In several countries, the ILO has played a catalytic role in integrating entrepreneurship training tools and delivery mechanisms into national strategies, vocational systems and public employment services, thereby strengthening supply-side capacities and enabling sustainability through public ownership and budget allocation.
- ▶ There is growing demand from governments and ecosystem actors for more advanced, tailored support that reflects the changing landscape of entrepreneurship—particularly in relation to digital business models and online platforms.
- ▶ Despite the breadth of interventions, demand-side measures such as access to finance, market linkages, and enabling environments remain underdeveloped. This lack of demand-side integration has limited the transformative potential of YEAP's multidimensional approach and constrained the growth of youth-led enterprises beyond initial training.
- ▶ The causal link between ILO-supported entrepreneurship interventions and job creation or business sustainability remains weakly evidenced. The absence of real-time, disaggregated, and outcome-level data—particularly regarding the number of youth-trained entrepreneurs who launched sustainable businesses or created jobs—has posed a significant barrier to assessing the effectiveness and impact of the ILO's entrepreneurship interventions under YEAP.

Within the YEAP, youth entrepreneurship is conceptualized as a strategic response to the persistent and evolving challenges facing young people in the labour market. In particular, **youth entrepreneurship is framed as a legitimate, proactive and scalable pathway to decent work, particularly in contexts marked by informality, underemployment and limited job creation**, and not just as an ancillary and residual option for youth unable to access formal employment.

The YEAP frames youth entrepreneurship as a critical pillar for decent job creation, emphasizing not only the promotion of self-employment but also the development of sustainable and productive enterprises. The YEAP's framing is holistic and multidimensional: it spans **support for individual entrepreneurs** (especially marginalized youth, such as rural youth, young women, and returned migrants), the **creation of enabling ecosystems for entrepreneurship**, and the promotion of social and solidarity economy models such as cooperatives. It includes both supply-side (skills, training, awareness) and demand-side (policy, finance, market access) measures. Moreover, the YEAP calls for **context-sensitive** approaches, such as entrepreneurship for peacebuilding in fragile settings, and stresses the need for coherence with climate, digital, and care economy transitions. It also

113 ILO. 2024. Skills 21 – Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bpioltv>

114 ILO. 2024. Skills 21 – Empowering citizens for inclusive and sustainable growth - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bpioltv>

encourages leveraging tools like the SIYB, partnerships with the private sector, and policy dialogue on financial literacy, digitalization, and inclusive business models.

In several countries, the ILO has supported the development of **youth entrepreneurship strategies** or contributed to the integration of entrepreneurship promotion into broader national employment, education, formalization, and youth strategies. In **Morocco**¹¹⁵, the ILO played a substantive role in the formulation of the new Employment and Entrepreneurship Policy (PN2E), which explicitly recognizes youth as a priority group in its employment projections and territorial planning.¹¹⁶ The ILO provided both technical and political support to the government-led process, spearheaded by the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills. The draft policy was validated by a high-level interministerial group in October 2023 and submitted for adoption by the Council of Ministers. In **Côte d'Ivoire**¹¹⁷, the ILO supported the development and pilot implementation of the government's National Integrated Strategy for the Transition from the Informal Economy to the Formal Economy (SNIT-EF), which includes youth-relevant measures such as training in enterprise management for young entrepreneurs, expanded apprenticeship pathways, and support for youth insertion through Agence Emploi Jeunes.¹¹⁸ Tools such as GERME, Think.Coop, and Start.Coop, were used to strengthen the capacities of employment services, business associations, and trade unions to support formalization and social protection objectives. In **Cambodia**, entrepreneurship training was incorporated into national policy frameworks, with KAB and related tools adopted by four ministries and aligned with the country's National Education Strategic Plan (2019–2023). Finally, in **Zambia**¹¹⁹, the ILO supported the development of the 2023 National Youth Policy, which incorporates entrepreneurship, formalization, and innovation as part of its demand-side employment strategy, with a focus on marginalized youth populations and alignment with just transition and future-of-work priorities.

The Evaluation found that the central tenet of the ILO's approach towards youth entrepreneurship is the provision of entrepreneurship skills development trainings and training cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets, which are ILO's entrepreneurship-related interventions widely implemented across regions, with **training delivery emerging as the dominant mode of engagement**. The Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme remains a cornerstone of ILO's entrepreneurship training approach and was found to be widely deployed in youth-targeted interventions across a variety of countries across the socio-economic development spectrum.¹²⁰ The SIYB is structured as a modular training package, comprising of four levels: a) Generate Your Business Idea (GYB); b) Start Your Business (SYB); c) Improve Your Business (IYB); and d) Expand Your Business (EYB) to respond to different stages of the business lifecycle. Importantly, the ILO does not directly deliver SIYB modules to entrepreneurs. Instead, it follows a training of trainers (ToT) model wherein ILO technical experts or certified master trainers conduct ToT sessions, certifying trainers within national or local partner associations, government bodies, NGOs, or business development networks—who then go on to deliver SIYB to entrepreneurs on the ground. **The ILO's use of a Training of Trainers (ToT) model for SIYB delivery has enabled impressive scale and outreach, allowing millions of entrepreneurs—including youth—to be reached through a wide network of certified trainers and partner institutions.**¹²¹ Other than the SIYB suite, the ILO utilizes its **Know About Business (KAB)**, a pre-entrepreneurship awareness and education programme, targeting young people in secondary schools, TVET, and universities, now

115 MAR176 in the 2022-23 biennium

116 ILO. 2024. Projet ADWA' Maroc: Rapport final du plan d'action de la PN2E 35. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/fr/resource/project-document/rapport-final-du-plan-daction-de-la-pn2e-35>

117 CIV110 in the 2020-21 biennium

118 Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Protection sociale, Cote d'Ivoire. 2019. Stratégie Nationale Intégrée de Transition vers l'Economie Formelle (SNIT-EF). Available at: <https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/112648/CIV-112648.pdf>

119 ZMB126 in the 2022-23 biennium Stratégie Nationale Intégrée de Transition vers l'Economie Formelle (SNIT-EF)

120 The French-language adaptation of SIYB is Gerez Mieux Votre Entreprise (GERME) whereas the Spanish-language adaptation is Incie Y Mejore Su Negocio (IMESUN).

121 By the end of 2020, SIYB had 417 active master trainers and more than 55,000 trainers in more than 10,900 partner organizations across over 100 countries. Together, these trainers had trained an estimated 23.7 million entrepreneurs. Source: ILO. 2021. Expanding entrepreneurship: 23 million and counting – Start and Improve Your Business Global Tracer Study 2016 – 2020. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40emp_ent/%40ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_830294.pdf

housed at ITCILO. KAB focuses on developing entrepreneurial mindsets, positive attitudes towards self-employment, and foundational business literacy.

The practical application of these tools at the country level illustrates how the ILO's training-based approach has translated into tangible support for youth entrepreneurship in diverse settings. Under *The Inclusive Growth through Decent Work in the Great Rift Valley* Project in **Kenya**¹²², the ILO identified and trained 34 Business Development Service (BDS) providers on ILO tools, including SIYB, GET Ahead, and TREE, which in turn provided entrepreneurship training to 1,054 youth, which led to the creation of 608 new sustainable enterprises within 12 months after start-up and generated 655 jobs.¹²³ In **Liberia**¹²⁴, the ILO supported the Government in operationalizing its rural employment strategy by delivering entrepreneurship and cooperative training using tools to 287 vulnerable persons as part of a FAO-led and United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) funded project on building social resilience.

In fact, **the Evaluation found numerous instances where the ILO-developed tools such as SIYB were used during implementation of donor-funded projects implemented by other UN Agencies.** For example, as part of the *Aquaculture Business Development Programme* – a Government of Kenya and UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (UN IFAD) initiative – 600 young individuals from 15 **Kenyan** counties were trained through ToTs who in turn train ten more young people in identifying innovative business ideas in the fish value chain and developing bankable business plan to be supported by the Programme.¹²⁵ Similarly, under the **Government of DRC**-implemented and **African Development Bank** funded *Youth Entrepreneurship in Agriculture and Agri-Business* Project, 1,943 entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs received training across the four SIYB modules¹²⁶. In DRC, the SIYB programme has also been promoted to several organizations in the country in 2024, such as **UNDP**, the Ministry of Industry and Development of SMEs, and **Save the Children**, with potential partnerships reportedly expected.¹²⁷ These examples highlight the broader utility, adaptability, and recognized value of ILO's entrepreneurship tools in inter-agency programming contexts, even when the ILO is not the lead implementer or not involved at all and provide a potential avenue for partnerships as well.

In the **Tunisian** context, a core pillar of the ILO's youth entrepreneurship strategy was the promotion of youth-led cooperatives under the **Social and Solidarity Economy (ESS/SSE)** framework. In particular, under the ongoing JEUN'ESS Project alone facilitated the creation of over 140 youth-led cooperatives and 3,000 jobs—particularly in marginalized regions such as Kef, Gafsa, and Siliana. These projects delivered entrepreneurship training, technical assistance, and financial support for youth-led cooperatives and associations, especially in rural areas. In addition, the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) methodology was used to strengthen entrepreneurial capacities, particularly for young women and first-time entrepreneurs. Similarly, in 2023, the AcJEMP project in partnership with the Tunisian Employment and Self-Employment Agency (Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant, ANETI) continued to implement SIYB. Working groups of Trainers adapted the SIYB manuals and tools to the Tunisian context with the support of a national Master Trainer. In this context, 871 young entrepreneurs (587 women and 284 men) were trained.

In particular, the deployment of SIYB reflects the scalability of outreach. and cooperative training tools were delivered in select counties under a rural employment strategy, in collaboration with national ministries, but with implementation limited to project geographies and reliant on UN interagency funding. In **Colombia**¹²⁸, SIYB and business development services were delivered through the Puente Aranda Local Development Fund in Bogotá, demonstrating strong local

122 KEN/17/01/SWE - The Inclusive Growth through Decent Work in the Great Rift Valley. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#auwk39n>

123 ILO. 2023. Inclusive Growth through Decent Work in the Great Rift Valley - Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bosc45f>

124 LBR101 in the 2022-23 biennium

125 ILO. 2023. SIYB Update 2023: Global Highlights. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/siyb-update-2023>

126 ILO. 2025. SIYB 2024: Global Highlights. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/2024%20English%20%287%29.pdf>

127 ILO. 2025. SIYB 2024: Global Highlights. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/2024%20English%20%287%29.pdf>

128 COL127 in the 2022-23 biennium

ownership but with no clear linkage to national policy or system integration. In **Moldova**, as part of the ILO support to **localized operationalization of the national Employment Strategy (2017–2021)** through **Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs)** in three rural regions, women and youth in rural areas were targeted and entrepreneurship tools were integrated alongside cooperative development, handicrafts, and access-to-finance mechanisms. For instance, in Myanmar, over 13,000 young people were trained in entrepreneurship between 2020 and 2021 with dedicated programmes for rural youth and specific efforts to engage young women.

Training delivery remains the most visible entry point for ILO's youth entrepreneurship interventions. As the roll-out of trainings using tools such as SIYB are decentralized, a more consequential **marker of systemic change** lies in the degree to which such entrepreneurship tools and programmes have been **institutionally embedded within national structures** and are sustained by the public and private/civil society institutions that adopt them. In some contexts, ILO support has gone beyond one-off trainings and instead contributed to building or reinforcing public systems, policy frameworks, and organizational platforms capable of sustaining entrepreneurship promotion over time.

In **Cambodia**¹²⁹, under DEY II, the ILO's entrepreneurship tools, particularly the Know About Business, have been adopted and implemented by four ministries (Education, Labour, Agriculture, and Tourism), alongside public universities and 19 civil society organizations. This signals a high degree of horizontal institutional integration across government functions. The engagement of multiple UN agencies (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNIDO) further positioned the ILO within a multi-actor platform for decent employment for youth.

A similarly mature system-anchoring approach is seen in **Myanmar**¹³⁰, where the ILO supported the establishment of the **SIYB Myanmar Association**, a formally registered non-profit entity. This platform not only houses over 700 certified trainers and a core team of master trainers, but also offers structured services in trainer accreditation, product development, and BDS marketing. The association has developed localized e-training modules and M&E tools, conducted online training-of-trainers, and engaged in external resource mobilization to ensure sustainability. Moreover, the ILO worked with implementing partners in Myanmar to conceptualize **three complementary BDS structures**: the SIYB Association, informal trainer consortia, and freelance trainers. This multi-tiered institutional model reflects one of the strongest examples of **local ownership and capacity continuity** in the ILO's youth entrepreneurship portfolio.

In **Iraq**¹³¹, the launch of the *Riyada* initiative in 2023 marked a significant turning point in institutional engagement. Within this framework, the ILO helped train 100 trainers from 36 institutions—including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), chambers of commerce, and financial institutions—while both MOLSA and MOYS allocated dedicated budget lines to mainstream entrepreneurship and financial education across vocational and youth training centres. These measures illustrate a shift from donor-driven training delivery to **state-financed service provision**, with potential for longer-term impact.

Mali¹³² provides an example of institutional anchoring within the vocational training system. Under the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the ILO introduced the Know the Enterprise (CLE) methodology KAB in 16 training institutions, aimed at building entrepreneurial awareness and supporting transitions to self-employment. This was complemented by the development of master trainers and the strengthening of the GERME SIYB network, supporting micro-enterprises and cooperatives through embedded business services.

In **Morocco**¹³³, the ILO partnered with the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC), the public employment service, to institutionalize entrepreneurship support for youth, women, and migrants. Certified trainers from ANAPEC and the Office for the Development of Cooperation (ODCO) deployed SIYB, GET Ahead, and My.Coop tools, collectively supporting over 1,000 youth entrepreneurs in the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors. ANAPEC-led

129 KHM204 in the 2020-21 biennium

130 MMR127 in the 2020-21 biennium

131 IRQ126 in the 2022-23 biennium

132 MLI103 in the 2020-21 biennium

133 MAR102 in the 2022-23 biennium

activities included support for women circular migrants, integration of entrepreneurship modules into rural employment caravans, and pilot initiatives in green enterprise development. These examples highlight how ILO tools were aligned with state-led employment promotion plans and operationalized through public systems.

However, the Evaluation also found that **in some instances, ILO interventions on promoting entrepreneurship among youth were not as successful in resulting in adoption and institutionalization of ILO tools and methodologies into public institutions.** For instance, under the South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship (SALE) project¹³⁴, while the project was successful in raising awareness and interest for entrepreneurship among both youth and education institutions, actual integration of its KAB and SYB training tools within public institutions was not achieved.¹³⁵ Similarly, the *Improved Business Development Support Services and Entrepreneurship Education Targeting MSMEs and Youth* project¹³⁶ in Iraq, though highly relevant and appreciated by beneficiaries, faced challenges in institutional sustainability. While KAB was formally adopted within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) vocational training centres in the Kurdistan Region supported by the project, system-wide institutionalization was not achieved, and the continuation of both KAB and SIYB training activities remained largely dependent on external donor funding.¹³⁷ In **Colombia**¹³⁸, SIYB and business development services were delivered through the Puente Aranda Local Development Fund in Bogotá, demonstrating strong local ownership but with no clear linkage to national policy or system integration.

In many contexts, traditional ILO tools such as SIYB, SYB, KAB, and GET Ahead continue to serve as valuable foundations for entrepreneurship training, particularly for first-time or early-stage entrepreneurs. However, **there is growing demand from governments and ecosystem actors for more advanced, tailored support that reflects the changing landscape of entrepreneurship—particularly in relation to digital business models and online platforms.** The SALE project in **Sri Lanka** and **Nepal** illustrates this evolving expectation. While the ILO's core training packages provided a solid starting point, project staff, trainers, and participants noted the need to update and supplement materials to better address topics such as e-commerce, digital marketing, and online business operations.¹³⁹ This was also echoed by government stakeholders interviewed as part of the Philippines country case study.

While the YEAP conceptualizes youth entrepreneurship as a multidimensional strategy that includes both supply-side (skills, training, awareness) and demand-side (policy, finance, market access) measures, ILO's portfolio has remained disproportionately oriented toward supply-side engagement, with comparatively fewer initiatives that address the structural barriers young entrepreneurs face in securing capital or accessing markets. The ILO has made notable strides in scaling entrepreneurship training and embedding its tools within public institutions and policy frameworks; however, these efforts have largely focused on **enhancing individual and institutional capacities, with less systematic attention given to the market-facing and structural conditions** that enable youth-led enterprises to grow and survive. In particular, the demand-side dimensions of the YEAP's vision, such as access to finance, market linkages, and enabling business environments, remain underdeveloped in many interventions.

The Evaluation found only a **limited number of cases reflecting linkages between entrepreneurship support and financial services.** In **Iraq**¹⁴⁰, under the Riyadh initiative, the ILO supported the development of a **national financial inclusion strategy** and worked with the Central Bank of Iraq, commercial banks, and microfinance institutions to pilot youth-sensitive financial

134 RAS/21/09/USA - South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship (SALE). Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btk1g2p>

135 ILO. 2024. South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship (SALE) – Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/jevaldiscovery/#acjalqt>

136 IRQ/19/03/DEU - Improved business development support services targeting MSMEs for the creation of Decent Work opportunities in KR-I. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#b9c1pog>

137 ILO. 2024. Improved Business Development Support Services and Entrepreneurship Education Targeting MSMEs and Youth for the Creation of Decent Work Opportunities in Iraq - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/jevaldiscovery/#az1onbw>

138 COL127 in the 2022-23 biennium

139 ILO. 2024. South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship (SALE) – Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/jevaldiscovery/#acjalqt>

140 IRQ126 in the 2022-23 biennium

products. This resulted in the disbursement of 923 loans valued at USD 3.35 million, benefitting over 850 entrepreneurs, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and youth in host communities. The ILO also facilitated the development of a **standardized credit delivery protocol** and conducted capacity-building workshops for financial institutions, enhancing their ability to serve underserved populations. **Ethiopia** represents another case of integrated, youth-relevant demand-side programming. The ILO worked closely with national and subnational institutions to support unemployed youth, refugees, and potential and returned migrants—especially women. A total of 364 SMEs were established in poultry, fruit, and vegetable value chains, generating employment for 1,555 individuals. The SIYB tool was adapted for returning migrants and rolled out across multiple regions, accompanied by financial education, cooperative development, and sector-specific enterprise training. Notably, 632 individuals accessed revolving loans totalling USD 800,000, and 571 refugees were supported in **accessing financial services to launch small businesses**. These efforts were reinforced through public delivery structures, including regional bureaus, cooperatives, and the creation of a business development services provider association.

The evaluation also found some evidence of **value chain-anchored approaches targeting specific economic sectors** and geographies, **combining entrepreneurship support with market access facilitation and localized financial education**. In **Mauritania**¹⁴¹, the ILO supported youth entrepreneurship through value chain interventions in fisheries, dairy, leather, and construction sectors across five regions. The ILO supported the creation of 13 economic interest groups (EIGs), 50 cooperatives, and one integration company, and provided training using My.Coop, Think-Start, and GERME tools. A network of 170 service providers and 50 employment counsellors was mobilized to supervise youth entrepreneurs and local organizations, and over 700 youth received financial education training. While the initiative has not been nationally institutionalized, it reflects a youth-targeted model of embedding demand-side responsiveness into local productive ecosystems.

A key constraint is the absence of current tracer data: the SIYB Programme publishes a Global Tracer Study every five years, with the most recent covering 2016–2020 and therefore outside the current evaluation period. As such, **a comprehensive assessment of SIYB's impact during the evaluation timeframe was not possible**. Furthermore, the 2016–2020 study does not provide age-disaggregated data, limiting visibility into how many youth were trained or how many youth-led enterprises were created. While some ILO interventions featured more robust M&E systems—capturing data on business creation and job outcomes—many did not, with monitoring limited to outputs such as number of youth trained or self-reported knowledge gains. This presents a significant barrier to assessing the effectiveness of youth entrepreneurship programming beyond immediate training delivery.

141 MRT107 in the 2020-21 biennium

E. ACTIONS PROMOTING RIGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO's interventions have made important contributions to advancing youth rights by integrating them into broader national legal and policy frameworks and embedding rights-based approaches into national and youth employment policies/strategies in some countries. However, when it comes to implementation, many youth employment programmes group youth with broader vulnerable groups, rather than addressing their specific needs and vulnerabilities, especially in sectors like migration and informal work, etc.
- ▶ The ILO has provided substantial support for workers' organizations in some countries, including modernized collective bargaining agreements and promoting youth representation. However, the institutionalization of youth representation and protection within workplace governance remains to be addressed. Trade unions have also played a facilitating role in reaching young workers, but the consistency of youth-focused advocacy and policy implementation remains fragmented.
- ▶ Gender equality is consistently prioritized as a cross-cutting theme in ILO-supported youth employment interventions. However, the extent to which gender considerations are integrated and institutionalized varied across different components and country contexts. Overall, the ILO's efforts to include persons with disabilities in youth employment initiatives were limited, often missing from programme design.

Within the YEAP, “*rights for young people*” are articulated as one of five core policy areas fundamental to achieving the Plan's overall objective of promoting full, productive, and freely chosen employment and decent work for young people. The Plan commits to strengthening youth employment outcomes through the application of international labour standards and the promotion of rights in the workplace, particularly in relation to non-discrimination, gender equality, OSH, violence and harassment, access to social protection, and fair labour migration. In addition, the YEAP emphasizes youth representation, rights, and voice, including through mechanisms such as social dialogue and dedicated forums for youth engagement.

In 2024, the ILO launched the *Work Wise Youth* guide, a substantially updated and rebranded version of earlier materials on youth rights at work. Since its launch, the guide has been translated into six languages and contextualized to the labour market and legal environments of Mongolia, Iraq, Ethiopia, and Argentina, with additional country adaptations underway. The guide has been used as a core tool for capacity-building, including through the 2023 Youth Employment Academy and national-level trainings with youth employment stakeholders and trade unions. A dedicated session on youth rights at work was also organized during the 2024 Global Conference on Decent Jobs for Youth. Internally, the guide has been featured across a range of corporate learning and coordination platforms, and it has anchored a global advocacy campaign designed to raise awareness among young people about fair working conditions, non-discrimination, OSH, and social protection. The campaign's uptake across other technical departments signals both its resonance and potential for broader institutional mobilization.

Notably, several global partnerships—such as the Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) and Generation Unlimited (GenU) through the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (DJY)—have also promoted earlier iterations of the guide (then titled *Rights@Work 4 Youth: Decent Work for Young People*) within their strategic documents.

ILO interventions contributed to **embedding rights-based approaches into broader legal and policy frameworks**. In **Bangladesh** (BGD101), the ILO supported the development and implementation planning of the country's first National Employment Policy, which explicitly commits to non-discriminatory, rights-based employment creation and names youth employment as a strategic priority. In **Kenya** (KEN107), the ILO supported the revision of both the Children Act 2022 and the national Child Labour Policy, embedding ILO standards on child labour, forced labour, and youth work. The new policy's objective to promote decent work for youth above minimum working age exemplifies how child labour frameworks can evolve into broader youth employment protections. In **Lebanon**, the National Disability Allowance launched in 2023 specifically targets youth aged 18–28 to facilitate their education and labour market access — a landmark example of rights-based income support for young people with disabilities. This case, along with Lebanon's

National Social Protection Strategy and pension law reform, underscores how the ILO helps build inclusive policy infrastructure for youth within broader social protection reforms.

Several interventions focused on protecting youth in contexts where rights vulnerabilities are pronounced, such as unregulated training arrangements or sectors facing higher risks of rights vulnerabilities. In **Azerbaijan**, through an RBSA project, the ILO provided targeted policy advice on regulating apprenticeships and internships, aiming to prevent the exploitation of young people under the guise of training. The resulting engagement prompted government recognition of diverse work-based learning (WBL) pathways and revisions to the proposed legal framework aligned with the Paid Education Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140) and the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142).¹⁴²

The Evaluation found that **trade unions have served as an important vehicle** through which the ILO has supported youth-focused training, outreach, legal support, and organizing. This is often in response to their needs for support aimed towards broadening trade union memberships, particularly through the inclusion of young members. For instance, in **Ghana**, the ILO supported the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to modernize collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) across nine sectors by updating clauses to address contemporary challenges such as violence, harassment, and OSH. Notably, these CBAs were then deployed as organizing tools to reach and recruit over 1,000 young workers in non-standard employment, including domestic, gig, and informal work.¹⁴³

In **India**¹⁴⁴, national trade union centres created OSH committees that formally include youth leaders, drawn from the ILO-supported *South Asia Youth OSH Volunteers Network* — providing a rare example of institutionalized youth representation in labour governance. In **Botswana**, unions mobilized young workers around HIV awareness and workplace health rights, with support from the ILO to train young worker leaders — aligning with the YEAP's emphasis on rights as multidimensional and intersectional.¹⁴⁵ In **Bahrain**, ILO-supported the training of 17 young GFBTU leaders in international labour standards and social justice through regional and international union development programmes.¹⁴⁶ In **Azerbaijan**, the ILO facilitated the national trade union confederation's participation in national policy dialogue processes, with proposals explicitly addressing youth employment and social protection for informal and platform workers.¹⁴⁷ These examples illustrate how trade unions have functioned as a key channel for reaching young people and promoting rights-based advocacy, particularly in relation to occupational safety and health, workplace equality, and social protection. However, **the institutionalization of youth voice, representation, and protection within workplace governance remains nascent**.

With regards to ILO's programming, the Evaluation found that **rights at work are inconsistently integrated in youth employment initiatives across thematic areas**. While some interventions demonstrate clear and intentional efforts to extend labour rights protections to young people, most treat youth as an assumed subset of broader vulnerable groups rather than a distinct demographic with specific needs and vulnerabilities. This tendency to group youth with other vulnerable groups often results in limiting tailoring and lack of explicit institutional measures to ensure meaningful engagement and inclusion of youth in rights-based interventions.

Some interventions did make partial efforts to address rights at work for youth, particularly in relation to occupational safety and health (OSH). In **Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco**, under the *Safety + Health for All* Project¹⁴⁸, the ILO promoted Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) among vulnerable workers including youth and women by undertaking awareness-raising campaigns.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, under the *Water Supply Equipment Management Capacity for Peace in Mindanao* project in the **Philippines**, OSH awareness was raised through delivering community-based trainings to local

142 AZE/22/01/RBS – Promoting apprenticeship and on-the-job training for transition to decent work (SDG targets 8.5; 8.6).

Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btk3d0f>

143 GHA802 in the 2022-23 biennium

144 IND802 in the 2022-23 biennium

145 BWA105 in the 2020-21 biennium

146 BHR802 in the 2022-23 biennium

147 AZE802 in the 2020-21 biennium

148 RAF/22/04/EUR - Safety + Health for All in Maghreb countries: Promoting a safe and healthy working environment for workers in vulnerable situations such as young workers and women. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#bezwc7>

149 Based on findings from the Tunisia country case study undertaken as part of the Evaluation.

young workers and Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE). In **Cambodia**, the ILO worked to improve OSH standards in the construction sector—a field with a high prevalence of young workers—by integrating OSH content into vocational training curricula at TVET institutions.

In contrast, under the ONEILO SIRAYE project¹⁵⁰, workers and managers in textiles and garment factories in **Ethiopia** received training on OSH, soft skills, workers' rights and responsibilities, and prevention of gender-based violence—with a strong emphasis on improving conditions for women. Despite the garment and textile sector in Ethiopia employing large numbers of young workers, especially young women, the project's design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks made no reference to youth as a specific target group, nor did the project design acknowledge how age might shape vulnerabilities in the workplace.¹⁵¹

Youth-specific elements have appeared across ILO labour migration programming, but these have largely remained fragmented, limited in scale, or loosely integrated into programme structures and monitoring frameworks. For example, under a global project on fair migration¹⁵², the ILO supported the Ivorian Football Federation, Didier Drogba Foundation, and the Union of Professional Footballers of **Cote d'Ivoire to educate over 300 aspiring footballers** on the risks of ill-prepared emigration, labour rights and contract clauses, social protection and professional supervision, and risks such as fake agents and career-ending exploitation.¹⁵³ While contextually relevant, this was a standalone initiative not embedded in broader governance reform. Similarly, the *Free Movement of Persons and Transhumance in the IGAD Region* project¹⁵⁴ implemented across seven **IGAD member states** included support for the development of a Youth Employment and Skilling Initiative (YESI). However, the project's final evaluation noted that the YESI component received the least attention during implementation and that it was unclear whether the target of 100 returnees and youths benefitting from the Project's reintegration and employment support would be reached.¹⁵⁵

Even in projects where youth were more explicitly identified, links to migration outcomes remained weak. The "Providing a Reason to Stay" project in **Egypt**¹⁵⁶ directly targeted youth through skills development, entrepreneurship training, and peer-led community engagement. However, despite its stated aim to reduce irregular migration by improving economic alternatives, the project did not assess migration-related outcomes such as intent or behaviour, leaving its impact on irregular migration assumed rather than demonstrated.¹⁵⁷

Similarly, under the Safe and Fair (SAF) Programme¹⁵⁸ implemented across the **ASEAN region**, youth-specific needs and vulnerabilities were not reflected in the design, implementation, or monitoring of upstream policy and legal reforms.¹⁵⁹ The frameworks supported by the ILO focused on strengthening gender-responsive protections for women migrant workers overall, without incorporating an age-differentiated lens or addressing youth as rights-holders with distinct risks in migration and labour contexts.

150 ETH/17/01/MUL – Advancing Decent Work and Inclusive Industrialization in Ethiopia. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btizuvx>

151 ILO. 2025. Advancing Decent Work and Inclusive Industrialization in Ethiopia – ONEILO SIRAYE – Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#ak3wste>

152 GLO/21/18/MUL – Integrated Programme on Fair Recruitment (FAIR), phase III. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btk3ye9>

153 CIV904 in the 2022-23 biennium

154 RAF/16/06/EUR – Free Movement of Persons and Transhumance in the IGAD Region: Improving Opportunities for Regular Labour Mobility. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btivzah>

155 ILO. 2023. Free Movement of Persons and Transhumance in the IGAD Region: Improving Opportunities for Regular Labour Mobility – Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#amw7tdu>

156 EGY/17/04/HSF – Employment for youth in Egypt (EYE): Providing a reason to stay. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btiz5ia>

157 ILO. 2023. Employment for Youth in Egypt (EYE): Providing a Reason to Stay – Final Evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#atqi0u4>

158 RAS/17/12/UND – Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btiyksk>

159 ILO and UN Women. 2024. Final Independent Evaluation of the Safe and Fair Programme: Realizing Women Migrant Workers' Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN Region (RAS/17/12/UND). Bangkok: ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#am0wve>

Similarly, the FAIRWAY programme¹⁶⁰ aimed to improve labour migration conditions from **Africa to Arab States** by promoting fair recruitment, protecting migrant rights, and enhancing access to information and services through legal reform, private sector engagement, shifting social norms, and migrant support systems. Despite the Programme operating in labour migration corridors heavily populated by young migrants, particularly in low- and medium-skilled sectors such as domestic work, construction, and hospitality, youth realities were only indirectly addressed through training and awareness activities, and some initiatives, such as cross-border storytelling projects, actively involved young people. However, the programme did not systematically apply a youth lens or collect age-disaggregated data, limiting the ability to assess outcomes for young migrant workers or tailor interventions to their specific risks. This pattern is reinforced by the High-level independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy and actions on labour migration policies (2016–20), which—despite its comprehensive scope—is entirely silent on youth.¹⁶¹

While the *Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa* (THAMM) programme in **Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia** was not explicitly youth-focused, several of its components intersected with institutional barriers disproportionately affecting young people. These included efforts to strengthen mechanisms for skills recognition, improve job-matching systems, and expand pre-departure orientation services—areas of particular relevance for young migrants navigating transitions into labour markets abroad. As with other programmes, THAMM did not systematically apply a youth lens or track age-disaggregated outcomes. However, its focus on structural reforms—rather than solely on awareness-raising or training—positioned it to address youth-related constraints more substantively, if indirectly. Engagement with complementary initiatives such as the *Youth – Migration, Enterprise, Development* (YMED) programme further reinforced this alignment by facilitating circular migration opportunities for young graduates. In this respect, THAMM reflects similar limitations to other labour migration initiatives, such as SAF and FAIRWAY, in the absence of youth-targeted design and monitoring mechanisms, but differs in the extent to which its core areas of work aligned with the institutional conditions shaping youth access to safe and regular migration.

Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion

Gender equality was consistently treated as a cross-cutting priority across ILO-supported youth employment interventions, with varying degrees of integration and institutionalization across components and country contexts. The evaluation finds that while gender considerations were commonly embedded into both the design and delivery of activities, the extent to which they translated into tangible outcomes was uneven and often dependent on the strength of national systems and the commitment of implementing partners.

As illustrated throughout the report, gender inclusion and equality considerations are consistently present within the ILO's work in the policy areas outlined in the YEAP. At the upstream policy level, ILO-supported National Employment Policies (NEPs) and Youth Employment Strategies (YESs) consistently identified women—alongside youth and other vulnerable groups—as key target populations. At the institutional and systems level, the ILO has worked with public employment services (PES), training institutions, and national skills systems to improve access and responsiveness for young women. Gender equality was also pursued through ILO's entrepreneurship and employability programming. Tools such as SIYB and KAB, while not inherently gender-specific, were frequently deployed in ways that emphasized outreach to marginalized youth, including young women.

Several interventions demonstrated a shift from inclusion as a downstream deliverable to upstream efforts to embed gender and social inclusion within national systems. For instance, under the *Skills for Prosperity in Southeast Asia* (SfP-SEA) programme, the ILO supported the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for harassment-free learning environments

160 GLO/19/06/CHE – FAIRWAY. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btjh2mg>

161 ILO. 2021. High-level Independent Evaluation of ILO's Strategies and Action for Promoting Fair and Effective Labour Migration policies, 2016 – 2020. Geneva: International Labour Office. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/high-level-independent-evaluation-ilos-strategy-and-action-promoting-fair>

in **Indonesia**; provided technical support to training institutions in the Philippines to improve accessibility for learners with disabilities; and facilitated the mainstreaming of gender and inclusion considerations in **Malaysia's** national TVET coordination mechanisms. Across the three countries, the programme also supported the development and delivery of gender-responsive and inclusive training content, as well as capacity-building for government partners and institutional actors on inclusive planning and delivery. While the degree of institutional uptake varied, these measures were embedded within broader efforts to strengthen the quality and governance of national TVET systems and were not limited to standalone or downstream project components.

In some projects, the ILO's programming reflected a nuanced engagement with intersecting dimensions of gender, disability, and migration. In ASEAN, efforts under the *Women in STEM Workforce Readiness* project implemented in the **Philippines**, **Indonesia**, and **Thailand** aimed to enhance women's participation in STEM fields through targeted training and industry collaboration¹⁶². In the Philippines more than 500 women were trained in digital sectors such as animation, software programming, and e-commerce. In **Indonesia**, approximately 1,000 young women received STEM-related pre-employment technical training in public sector TVET institutions, more than 600 youth were trained during COVID-19 to set up online small businesses, and the provisioning of sign language was included in the e-commerce training in the retail sector to enable participants with hearing disabilities to join the training. Whereas, in **Thailand**, more than 1,500 low-skilled women workers received upskilling through a training program on Digital Access and Value (DAV). As part of the training, a hybrid online course was developed for people with hearing impairment. While soft skills training through the In Business (I-B) programme was scaled up and well-received, its contribution to actual career advancement was limited. Only about 25% of trainees found employment, falling short of the 50% placement target. Interviews attributed this gap to hiring disruptions during COVID-19, the absence of robust job matching and career support services.

In **Latin America**, several initiatives in **Brazil** underscored the ILO's gender-responsive programming. The "TODAS in-Rede" programme in São Paulo targeted women with disabilities—including transgender and Afro-descendant women—through intersectoral actions spanning employment, health, rights awareness, and violence prevention.¹⁶³ The ILO provided training to government civil servants and developed a gender- and diversity-integrated online course. Additionally, the Office facilitated partnerships for skills training in entrepreneurship for migrant women vulnerable to forced labour and integrated a gender perspective into the design and delivery of these interventions.¹⁶⁴ These actions also included improving the physical infrastructure of training sites to accommodate women with children.

Argentina's care economy initiatives illustrate the ILO's upstream influence on national policy dialogue and fiscal planning for gender equality. The Office supplied technical input to the Interministerial Table on Care Policies—comprising 15 state agencies—to evaluate investment needs in care services and their potential for creating decent jobs, particularly for women. This work culminated in tools like a time-use calculator and inputs for a proposed comprehensive care system.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the ILO contributed to the tripartite dialogue on the "Caring in Equality" Bill and provided training and technical assistance to the Government of Santa Fe for the professionalization and regulation of care work, particularly through a public registry of trained care workers.¹⁶⁶

At the community level, the ILO also deployed gender-responsive entrepreneurship training. In **Belize**, the ILO deployed its Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET Ahead) programme to support rural entrepreneurship with a strong gender lens. Through targeted training sessions delivered in collaboration with national institutions, 90 women entrepreneurs across four districts were trained in business management and soft skills.¹⁶⁷ The ILO also helped ensure that this

162 RAS/17/04/JPN – Women in STEM Workforce Readiness Program. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#btix75r>

163 BRA107 in the 2020-21 biennium

164 BRA126 in the 2022-23 biennium

165 ARG126 in the 2020-21 biennium

166 ARG126 in the 2022-23 biennium

167 BLZ201 in the 2022-23 biennium

gender-responsive entrepreneurship training was anchored in government-led programmes, thereby supporting systemic institutionalization

Overall, the Evaluation found that disability inclusion within ILO-supported youth employment interventions was limited and largely ineffective. Most interventions did not incorporate meaningful strategies to include persons with disabilities (PWDs), and where inclusion did occur, the scale was minimal. For instance, while people with disabilities were included in the design of the *Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People – Tackling the Challenge in Damietta* Project as cross-cutting target, no dedicated activities and resources were allocated to ensure PWD inclusion. Ultimately, only two PWDs were reported to have participated in some trainings undertaken by the project. A review of various evaluation reports revealed that major challenges reported for the effective inclusion of PWDs include limited access to PWDs, lack of interest among stakeholders, and insufficient consideration during project design.

Nevertheless, a few interventions demonstrated relatively stronger efforts. For instance, the *Inclusive Growth through Decent Work in the Great Rift Valley* Project in **Kenya** promoted equitable access for persons with disabilities through a partnership with the Disability Resource and Information Centre which increased awareness of disability mainstreaming and led to the inclusion of PWDs in county government committees, school management boards, and health facility boards in Raplands, the formal disability assessments for at least 100 PWDs and the registration of 70 PWDs during project implementation to ensure their inclusion in public planning and budgeting process.

In the case of *Support to University Centers for Career Development (UCCD) in Egyptian Public Universities* project, enhancing the inclusiveness of UCCD services for students with disabilities was one of the project's three core objectives. In that regard, the project provided Disability Equality Training (DET) to 24 UCCD staff and was successful in certifying 10 DET facilitators. In addition, the project also conducted 18 Accessibility Assessments of UCCD premises and development inclusion action plans for each university and guidelines for physical accessibility assessment for existing facilities. While physical changes and new constructions were initiated to enhance accessibility in some universities, key implementation challenges such as high renovation costs, limited resources, and insufficient support from some university leadership limited the effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention.

F. INCORPORATION OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO has demonstrated a strong commitment to social dialogue and tripartism as foundational elements in youth employment strategies and programming. However, the systematic inclusion of youth as a distinct stakeholder group in these tripartite bodies remains limited, with youth representation often peripheral or absent in decision-making processes.
- ▶ The ILO has effectively integrated international labour standards into youth employment programmes, focusing on protection areas like child labour, forced labour, and discrimination. However, enabling rights, such as freedom of association and collective bargaining, have not been as consistently included in youth-focused strategies. Strengthening the normative dimension of youth employment programming will require more intentional strategies that empower young people as rights-holders, and not only as beneficiaries of protective frameworks.

Social dialogue and international labour standards constitute foundational pillars of the ILO's approach to promoting decent work, including for young people. As part of its broader mandate, the ILO seeks to ensure that youth employment strategies are grounded in tripartite dialogue and aligned with the Organization's normative framework. This includes both the institutionalization of participatory governance—through mechanisms that involve governments, workers, and employers—and the application of international labour standards that safeguard rights and promote equity. The evaluation found that these principles were widely referenced across youth

employment initiatives, though the depth and consistency of their application varied significantly across contexts and intervention types.

Across diverse contexts, the ILO has demonstrated strong commitment to **social dialogue and tripartism** as a core governance principle in employment and sectoral policy formulation. For example, **Senegal's national policies**, such as the **Strategy for the Development of Digital Technology in Vocational and Technical Training**¹⁶⁸ and the **National Strategy for the Formalization of the Informal Economy (SNIFEI)**¹⁶⁹, were explicitly developed in collaboration with **employers' and workers' organizations**, reflecting **tripartite participation** in policy-making.

The ILO also supported the establishment and strengthening of **tripartite steering committees, technical working groups, and sectoral councils** in countries such as **Morocco, Mexico, and Kenya**. In Morocco, the ILO provided capacity building to the National Steering Committee and the Technical and Operation Monitoring Committee for the assessment of skills mismatches and measurement of future skills needs in priority sectors such as IT offshoring and agrifood.¹⁷⁰ In **Myanmar**, the ILO supported the establishment of a tripartite Skill Development Technical Working Group to strengthen the skills development of workers and address the requirements of local and foreign companies willing to invest in Rakhine State.¹⁷¹, while in **Kenya**, the ILO facilitated the establishment of a tripartite national steering committee responsible for the rollout of the *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy Framework*.¹⁷² These mechanisms served as critical vehicles for inclusive planning, policy validation, and alignment with labour market needs—particularly when they moved beyond consultation to become frameworks for **joint decision-making and co-governance**.

However, while social dialogue structures were consistently present, the **systematic inclusion of youth as a distinct stakeholder group remained limited**. In most cases, young people were not directly represented in tripartite bodies or formal policy dialogues, and there was scant evidence of sustained engagement with youth organizations or advisory mechanisms. Even where youth associations were consulted—such as in Senegal—their involvement tended to be **episodic and peripheral**, with little indication of influence over decision-making processes.

Across most ILO-supported national employment policy and strategy processes reviewed, there was limited evidence of direct engagement by youth organizations, councils, or representative networks. While young people were consistently identified as a priority group in policy content, their institutional role in shaping, steering, or overseeing these strategies was often not documented. An important exception is **Mozambique**¹⁷³, where the Secretariat of State for Youth and Employment led the revision of the NEP Implementation Plan and where youth associations, including the National Youth Council, were actively engaged in high-level consultations. Evidence from country case studies undertaken as part of the Evaluation also shows limited active youth participation in policy development processes. For instance, in Colombia the ILO facilitated youth participation in the drafting of the National Youth Policy as well as the Decent Work Policy (Política de Empleo Digno y Decente – CONPES). However, this was not evident in the other countries, indicating that **ILO support has not systematically translated YEAP's emphasis on youth participation into national policy processes, and that youth-inclusive governance remains an area for improvement**.

At the global level, the ILO has demonstrated growing awareness of the need to embed youth perspectives within social dialogue structures. The 2022 high-level meeting on “Social Dialogue With and For Youth” brought together governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and youth representatives to explore ways of strengthening youth inclusion in tripartite dialogue.

168 SEN101 in the 2020-21 biennium

169 SEN103 in the 2022-23 biennium

170 MAR103 in the 2020-21 biennium

171 MMR127 in the 2020-21 biennium

172 KEN127 in the 2020-21 biennium

173 MOZ101 in the 2020-21 biennium

The event marked a normative signal of intent: it framed youth not merely as beneficiaries but as active stakeholders in labour governance. Participants discussed institutional barriers to youth participation, the need for capacity development, and the role of social partners in creating more inclusive environments. While this initiative reflects the ILO's strategic commitment to participatory governance under the YEAP, its evaluative value depends on downstream translation. The 2024 ILO Social Dialogue Flagship Report emphasized the need for social partners to expand their outreach to under-represented groups—particularly youth—as a key ingredient for inclusive and trusted social dialogue.¹⁷⁴ At present, evidence of systematic follow-through at the country level remains limited. The Evaluation noted that a joint programme between ACTRAV and ACTEMP was initiated in 2024 which includes enhancing the capacity of workers' organizations to address youth employment issues and organizing and including participation of youth in social dialogue processes as one of its anticipated results.¹⁷⁵ Overall, the Evaluation found that youth participation in national tripartite structures is often ad hoc or symbolic, rather than institutionalized.

Across its portfolio, the ILO has made consistent efforts to align youth employment interventions with its **normative foundation**—particularly in areas related to protection and vulnerable groups. These standards were often directly referenced in policy documents and frameworks, especially in sectors with high youth participation or elevated risk of abuse. In **Senegal**, for example, the ILO supported the development of a **national Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP)** targeting rural youth. Adopted in 2023, the programme explicitly referenced multiple ILO conventions—including **C100, C111, C138, C182, C29, and C98**—and incorporated gender, HIV inclusion, and tripartite governance. The ILO played a central role in convening social partners, facilitating technical consultations, and promoting awareness of international labour standards throughout the programme's design and validation.¹⁷⁶

In **Eswatini**¹⁷⁷, the ILO contributed to the development of the **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2024)** and its associated **Joint Work Plan** under the Strategic Priority on accountable governance and human rights. Drawing directly on **Observations by the ILO Committee of Experts (CEACR)** related to child labour conventions, the Joint Work Plan incorporated concrete actions to strengthen labour inspection, establish a list of hazardous work prohibited for children under 18, and enhance data collection on the worst forms of child labour. The ILO provided technical inputs to both the **Common Country Analysis (CCA)** and the **UNSDCF**, explicitly linking national development planning to international labour standards—particularly **C138** and **C182**.

In **Rwanda**¹⁷⁸, the ILO supported the trade union confederations **CESTRAR** and **COTRAF** in developing a three-year action plan (2022–2025) focused on the ratification and application of international labour standards. The plan addressed youth-specific priorities including school-to-work transitions, skills development, and the extension of social protection to informal workers. It also promoted the inclusion of youth in trade union structures and policy dialogues. With ILO technical assistance, the confederations contributed to national labour policy reforms and conducted public advocacy for the ratification of key conventions, including **C190**.

The ILO's work on apprenticeships and work-based learning policy development also showcases ILO's contribution towards embedding its normative standards into policies as well as supporting the development of quality-assurance mechanism grounded in international labour standards. For instance, both ILO-supported national apprenticeship policies in South Africa and The Bahamas were developed in alignment with Recommendation 208 (Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023) on quality apprenticeships. In **Senegal**¹⁷⁹, the apprenticeship reform process in 2020–21 was guided by Recommendation No. 117 on vocational

174 Social Dialogue Report 2024: Peak-Level Social Dialogue for Economic Development and Social Progress, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2024. © ILO. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/ILO_Social_Dialogue_2024_Full-R11.pdf

175 GLO/24/05/RBS - ACT/EMP-ACTRAV Joint Programme on Enhanced capacity workers' organization and Employers and business membership organizations to promote and implement social and environmental policies and practices. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#b8r779w>

176 SEN106 in the 2022–23 biennium

177 SWZ828 in the 2020–21 biennium

178 RWA802 in the 2022–23 biennium

179 SEN101 in the 2020–21 biennium

training and drew on the ILO's quality apprenticeship model. These efforts, supported by the ILO and funded by Norway, led to the integration of in-company and institutional training, the formalization of learner-employer arrangements, the introduction of new regulatory and financial frameworks, and the capacity building of national actors to strengthen management practices and enhance the quality and inclusiveness of the apprenticeship system.

Across these examples, the application of international labour standards in youth employment programming has been strongest in areas related to protection, such as the prevention of child labour, discrimination, and forced labour. Conventions like C138, C182, and C100 which feature prominently in national policy support and programme design. In contrast, enabling rights such as freedom of association (C87) and collective bargaining (C98) have been less consistently foregrounded in youth-specific strategies. Where addressed, they were often situated within broader institutional or union renewal efforts, rather than through targeted approaches aimed at supporting young people to exercise these rights.

At the **regional level**, ILO's engagements with regional intergovernmental bodies demonstrate how **social dialogue** and **normative frameworks** can be embedded in policy-making and implementation processes when regional political and technical bodies provide structured entry points for engagement. In both Africa and Asia-Pacific, the ILO has effectively engaged regional institutions to institutionalize social dialogue and integrate international labour standards into policy processes that shape young people's access to decent work.

In **Asia-Pacific**¹⁸⁰, ILO supported the ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC) in gaining formal participation in the ASEAN TVET Council, a critical entry point for influencing regional skills development and youth employability agendas. Simultaneously, ILO-supported Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), managed with trade unions, provided organizing platforms and legal support for migrant workers. Regional initiatives such as the Youth Trade Union Volunteers Camp on OSH fostered youth leadership among Workers' Organizations in South Asia in advocating for safer and fairer working conditions.

In **Africa**¹⁸¹, the ILO supported the African Union in adopting continental guidelines on Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) and a Declaration on the Rights of Migrant Workers, both developed through a tripartite process involving workers' and employers' organizations. These instruments — grounded in ILO standards — address structural barriers faced by migrant workers and are now subject to systematic monitoring under AU frameworks. Their implementation is sustained through the ILO-AUC Joint Implementation Programme, reinforcing normative governance on labour mobility.

Knowledge development and dissemination¹⁸²

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO's knowledge development and dissemination efforts under the YEAP reflect a broad and multi-tiered strategy—spanning global statistical custodianship, flagship publications, regional platforms, and country-level diagnostics. These efforts have solidified the ILO's role as a leading producer and curator of youth employment evidence.
- ▶ The uptake of global knowledge products in shaping field-level action is often indirect, and national-level outputs, though rich, frequently lack outward-facing dissemination. As the YEAP enters a new phase, there is a clear opportunity for the ILO to strengthen institutional feedback loops, streamline knowledge-sharing across levels, and invest in dissemination practices that enhance visibility, accessibility, and utility of its knowledge work for a broader set of actors.

Knowledge Development and Dissemination constitutes a central pillar of the YEAP, grounded in the ILO's comparative advantage in producing robust, evidence-based research, labour market data, and policy guidance. The knowledge development and dissemination cluster serves as a

¹⁸⁰ RAS802 in the 2022-23 biennium

¹⁸¹ RAF903 in the 2022-23 biennium

¹⁸² This section references selected knowledge products, platforms, and dissemination efforts undertaken during the review period. These examples are not intended to represent a full mapping of all outputs. Rather, they are illustrative of broader trends and patterns emerging from the ILO's knowledge development and dissemination work under the YEAP.

foundation for policy and programmatic action, informing the design and operationalization of national youth employment strategies. Through this cluster, the ILO aims to contribute to shaping a more inclusive and responsive policy environment by documenting what works, identifying promising practices, and strengthening the analytical foundation for decision-making.

The ILO's work on the production and dissemination of labour statistics constitutes a substantial and enduring contribution to the global evidence base on youth employment. Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ILO serves as custodian, co-custodian, or partner agency for 17 SDG indicators—reflecting its central role in monitoring progress towards decent work. In this capacity, the ILO is directly responsible for several youth-specific indicators, including 8.6.1 (proportion of youth not in education, employment, or training—NEET) and 8.b.1 (existence of national youth employment strategies), and acts as a partner agency to UNESCO for indicator 4.3.1 (participation in formal and non-formal education and training). In addition, it generates age-disaggregated data for broader indicators such as 1.3.1 (social protection coverage)¹⁸³, 8.5.1 (average hourly earnings), 8.5.2 (unemployment rate), and 8.7.1 (child labour). These efforts ensure that youth-related dimensions are consistently captured within global monitoring frameworks and serve to maintain the visibility of youth employment issues within policy and development agendas.

Beyond its contributions to SDG reporting, the ILO has invested in developing dedicated data infrastructure to enable deeper and more nuanced analysis of youth labour market dynamics. **The Youth Labour Market Statistics Database (YouthSTATS), which includes 62 indicators covering individuals aged 15 to 29, provides one of the most comprehensive statistical resources available globally on youth labour.** The database captures a range of dimensions—including labour force participation, employment and unemployment rates, school-to-work transitions, working time, and earnings—allowing for detailed cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. Notable advances in recent years include greater disaggregation of youth labour market indicators—by age, sex, educational attainment, disability, and urban/rural location—alongside the piloting of youth-specific indicators and the integration of dedicated survey modules such as school-to-work transition into national labour force surveys. These efforts have expanded the granularity and relevance of available data, helping to strengthen the analytical foundations for more targeted policy and programme design.¹⁸⁴ This resource is widely recognized as a global public good and has supported both ILO internal programming and external research. Complementing these technical databases, the ILO also utilises the ILOSTAT Blog as a dissemination channel which distils key labour market insights into more digestible and less technical content. Articles published on the Blog help demystify complex statistical concepts and bring attention to emerging trends, including those affecting youth, thereby expanding the reach of ILO-generated evidence to a broader and more diverse audience.

Building on this statistical foundation, the ILO has also developed a range of analytical products that synthesize and interpret global labour market trends for youth. **The Global Employment Trends for Youth (GET Youth) series has emerged as the ILO's flagship product in this domain.** Published biennially, the 2020, 2022, and 2024 editions provided robust data and analysis on the evolving state of youth employment globally. The reports have garnered visibility and media traction and remain among the few key global sources offering disaggregated labour market estimates for youth. Beyond headline statistics, the ILO's analytical work in the Global Employment Trends for Youth reports have also emphasized the **qualitative dimensions of youth employment**, including informality, insecurity, and underemployment, helping reframe policy debates beyond unemployment rates alone. However, the evaluation found that their contribution to influencing ILO's operational programming is more diffuse. Despite being widely referenced in donor briefings, presentations, and inter-agency dialogues, the uptake of insights from GET Youth in shaping country-level programme design is often indirect, hindered by the absence of institutional feedback loops and the disconnect between headquarters and field offices.

¹⁸³ Indicator 1.3.1 disaggregates the population into three broad age groups: (a) below 15 years; (b) 15 to 65 years; and (c) above 65 years. As such, "youth" (typically defined as 15–29 years) is not separately identifiable and is instead subsumed within the broader 15–65 age group.

¹⁸⁴ For more information, please refer to the High-level evaluation of the ILO's strategies and approaches for the development and use of labour statistics for promoting decent work and social justice, 2018-23, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2024. © ILO. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/HLE_Labour%20statistics_WEB%202024.pdf

Beyond its own flagship publications, the ILO has played a key role in global knowledge curation and dissemination through platforms such as **YouthForesight**, which it co-hosts with UNICEF's Generation Unlimited (GenU). YouthForesight is a dedicated knowledge-sharing platform that compiles and organizes evidence, tools, databases, and guidance to support youth-focused action across education, skilling, employment, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. The evaluation found that the platform is actively used for dissemination and engagement, with regular events and webinars covering a wide range of emerging topics and trends. In addition to serving as a repository of research, briefs, tools, and other publications, the platform is accompanied by the **YouthForesight Community Forum**, a space where practitioners, policymakers, and young people converge—featuring live expert-led discussions and thematic communities of practice. Collectively, the YouthForesight exemplifies how the ILO complements its own research and data production with broader ecosystem-level knowledge facilitation—extending the reach and relevance of evidence on youth employment beyond its institutional boundaries.

The ILO's knowledge function was especially prominent during the COVID-19 crisis, when it significantly expanded its evidence generation efforts to respond to the wide-reaching disruptions affecting youth employment worldwide. Beyond its ongoing statistical reporting, the ILO swiftly mobilized its global technical expertise to produce targeted research, data collection, and policy analysis aimed at supporting governments, social partners, and international stakeholders in navigating the crisis. In April and May 2020, the ILO and partners under the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth conducted a survey of over 12,000 young people from 112 countries to capture the immediate effects of the pandemic on the lives of young people with regards to employment, education, mental well-being, rights and social activism.¹⁸⁵ The ILO also undertook analytical studies, such as its joint-publication with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for Asia and the Pacific, which estimated the crisis's impact on youth employment in terms of job losses, disruptions to employment, education and training, and school-to-work transition, while also offering targeted policy recommendations.¹⁸⁶ In parallel, the ILO reviewed national and global policy responses to the crisis. Its global review of COVID-19 youth employment measures mapped government interventions, identified policy and evidence gaps, and highlighted future challenges, including the limited attention to gendered dimensions in existing responses.¹⁸⁷ Such qualitative reviews were also complemented by quantitative analyses, including a regional econometric assessment of employment protection policies during COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific, which examined the impact of policy timing, expenditure levels, and program duration on employment and working-hour losses.¹⁸⁸ These efforts complemented the ILO's country-level engagements by generating timely insights and recommendations to inform national and regional recovery strategies

Beyond its global knowledge work, the ILO has invested in **continental knowledge infrastructure** to promote coordinated action across African states. Under the Better Regional Migration Management (BRRM) project, the ILO developed a knowledge sharing platform prototype on skills and labour migration in 2022, which was operationalized and integrated into the **African Skills Portal for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (ASPYEE)** hosted by the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for African Development (AUDA-NEPAD) as the Skills and Labour Migration Knowledge-Sharing Platform (SLM-KSP) in 2023.¹⁸⁹ The SLM-KSP, a joint initiative of the African Union Commission and the ILO, serves as a centralized hub for collaboration and information exchange on skills recognition and labour migration. It brings together institutions and stakeholders to share national and regional laws, policies, and practices through tools like **Communities of Practice** and tailored training resources. Informed by experiences from Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa, the platform supports knowledge sharing on a wide range of thematic

185 ILO and Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. 2020. Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on jobs, education, rights, and mental well-being. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/youth-covid-19-impacts-jobs-education-rights-and-mental-well-being>

186 Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis in Asia and the Pacific: International Labour Organization, Bangkok (Thailand), and Asian Development Bank, Manila (Philippines), 2020. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/tackling-covid-19-youth-employment-crisis-asia-and-pacific>

187 ILO. 2021. Youth Employment in Times of Covid: A global review of COVID-19 policy responses to tackle (un)employment and disadvantage among young people. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/youth-employment-times-covid>

188 ILO. 2021. COVID-19 and employment protection policies: A quantitative analysis of the Asia-Pacific region. ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_810842/lang-en/index.htm

189 RAF903 in the 2022-23 biennium

areas, including **mutual recognition of qualifications, skills anticipation, labour market information, skills development for migrant workers, and harmonization of occupational standards**—all aimed at fostering coordinated, skills-based labour migration across Africa.¹⁹⁰

Similarly, knowledge products developed under the SIFA project, including the national action plans on strengthening skills anticipation practices, the rapid skills assessments on the impacts of COVID-19 on labour market undertaken in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia, and the skills anticipation awareness and orientation videos were also published on the ASPYEE.¹⁹¹ The evaluation found that the majority of national and regional stakeholders viewed the ILO's efforts towards knowledge development and dissemination under the SIFA project favourably.¹⁹²

The ILO has also developed diagnostic knowledge products that offer country-specific insights while contributing to broader regional understanding. A key example is the launch of a series of country and cross-country briefs on youth employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, developed in collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation and released in June 2023. These briefs span seven countries—**Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda**—and offer targeted diagnostics for individual contexts alongside comparative regional perspectives.¹⁹³

In the Western Balkans, the ILO's collaboration with the **EU and ETF on the Youth Guarantee** resulted in mapping NEET youth to support policy planning in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia, demonstrating the ILO's capacity to respond to region-specific knowledge needs through targeted support.

At the national level, a wide range of knowledge products have been developed through ILO's Development Cooperation (DC) projects, often tailored to address specific country contexts, sectors, or thematic areas. These include diagnostic assessments, guidelines, toolkits, training materials, and policy briefs that aim to inform local programme design, strengthen institutional capacities, and respond to context-specific youth employment challenges. In many cases, these outputs represent valuable intellectual contributions—demonstrating methodological innovation, contextual specificity, and practical utility.

However, the evaluation finds that the dissemination of these knowledge products has been largely inward-facing. **Most outputs were shared primarily with implementing partners, beneficiary institutions, and project stakeholders, with limited efforts to package, publish, or communicate findings for broader national or international audiences. As a result, the potential for cross-country learning, peer exchange, and external uptake was diminished.** While many of these products are accessible on the ILO's website, their visibility and accessibility are often constrained by fragmented publication practices and limited integration into broader knowledge platforms or thematic repositories. This inward orientation stands in contrast to the more visible and accessible nature of global and regional ILO knowledge outputs and highlights an **opportunity to strengthen the outward-facing dissemination and policy influence of knowledge generated at the national level.**

190 Skills and Labour Migration Knowledge-Sharing Platform (SLM-KSP). <https://aspyee.org/focus-area/skills-labour-migration>

191 ILO. 2023. Youth Employability Programme Component 2: Skills Initiative for Africa - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bdm2vwd>

192 ILO. 2023. Youth Employability Programme Component 2: Skills Initiative for Africa - Final evaluation. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bdm2vwd>

193 ILO. 2023. ILO launches a series of country briefs on youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-launches-series-country-briefs-youth-employment-sub-saharan-africa>

Partnerships and advocacy¹⁹⁴

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO engaged in a broad array of partnerships designed to tackle youth employment challenges across global, regional, and national levels, with a strong focus on promoting decent work for youth. Yet, partnerships have been highly fragmented as there is currently no dedicated operational framework. Furthermore, concerns over overlapping initiatives led to confusion among external partners and diluted focus on the core Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (GIDJY) platform.
- ▶ Although initiatives like the GIDJY have attracted significant partner commitments, the ILO's share of youth employment funding remains relatively low and is concentrated among a few donors, creating risks for long-term sustainability. Furthermore, limited staffing, internal coordination issues, and a lack of a centralized system for tracking partnerships have also hindered the ILO's ability to leverage synergies.

By collaborating with stakeholders such as governments, social partners, the private sector, and civil society, the ILO works to develop effective policies, improve skills development, and enhance employment opportunities for young people. Additionally, the ILO fosters knowledge-sharing initiatives to better understand youth employment trends and provides technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of various actors working on youth issues. These partnerships align with the YEAP goals and include initiatives focused on project execution, resource mobilization, knowledge sharing, and political advocacy.

At the **global-level**, ILO's multi-organizational partnership portfolio demonstrates a comprehensive, holistic approach to promoting decent youth employment and reducing NEET rates. The **Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (GIDJY)** is the ILO's flagship partnership network on youth employment, bringing together over 100 partners, including UN agencies, governments, and the private sector, to foster system-wide cooperation and mobilize resources. This initiative has successfully generated \$27.6 million¹⁹⁵ in resources between 2017 and 2025¹⁹⁶ (with an estimated \$ 740 million of partner commitments)¹⁹⁷, and fostered key projects such as the **Youth Foresight Knowledge Facility**¹⁹⁸ in partnership with UNICEF, and research initiatives with INCLUDE and International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Other more recent global partnership platforms include the **Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions (GA)**, which integrates youth employment efforts into broader social protection and environmental policies; and the **Global Coalition for Social Justice (GCSJ)**, which unites 372 partners to scale up action on employment and sustainable enterprises. The **UNEP-ILO-UNICEF Green Jobs for Youth Pact** commits partners to create one million new green jobs, green another million and back 10,000 youth-led enterprises by 2030, linking YEAP ambitions to SDG 8.5 growth and the transition language of P&B Outcome 3. It has resulted in the development of the Alliance for Greening Skills and Opportunities in Kenya, the UNDA Project in Cuba, Senegal, and Madagascar, as well as a regional green upskilling initiative in partnership 74 universities in the Latin America and Caribbean region.¹⁹⁹ Together, these platforms illustrate a progressive architecture that integrates global, regional, and national actions, reinforcing the ILO's role in leading and supporting concerted efforts towards the SDGs 8.5, 8.6, 8.b, and 8.8. Importantly, **these initiatives intend to collaborate with the GIDJY; rather, they are increasingly designed to reinforce one another, with the GA and the GCSJ explicitly aligning their youth employment-related contributions under the DJY banner.**

¹⁹⁴ The partnerships and advocacy efforts described in this section reflect a selection of initiatives examined through document review and stakeholder consultations. They do not constitute an exhaustive list of all collaborative activities undertaken during the review period. The examples cited are intended to support the evaluation's thematic analysis of partnership modalities, coordination mechanisms, and strategic positioning.

¹⁹⁵ Sourced from financial data provided by ILO EVAL. 'Financial Resources for Decent Jobs for Youth'. 2025.

¹⁹⁶ This funding includes activities funded through the DJY which had implementation periods that overlapped with the evaluation period (2020 – 2024).

¹⁹⁷ ILO. YOUTH: Our portfolio and more. ILO. Geneva. 2025.

¹⁹⁸ Details on the Youth Foresight Facility are available in the section on Knowledge Management and Dissemination

¹⁹⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. Green Jobs for Youth Pact. UNEP. Nairobi. Available at: <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/education-environment/what-we-do/green-jobs-youth-pact>

The ILO is also a member of the Steering Committee of the **Youth Employment Funders Group**, which convenes over twenty donor organizations to align financing with evidence-based youth employment programming.²⁰⁰ The Group supports countries in formulating national youth employment strategies in line with SDG target 8.b. Within the African region, the IDRC–ILO–INCLUDE “Boosting Decent Employment for Africa’s Youth” initiative—operating under the GIDJY umbrella—has mobilized 65 researchers across 18 countries to strengthen the youth employment evidence base on themes such as soft skills, digital work, and work-based learning.²⁰¹ Similarly, the World Bank-led Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) initiative seeks to connect donor finance and implementation with knowledge generation, with its Impact Portfolio serving to assess, showcase, and scale innovative youth employment models.²⁰²

The 2020 ILO–UNICEF MOU with UNICEF’s Education Sector includes an annex referencing the relationship between the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (DJY) and GenU. It outlines areas for collaboration on skills development and youth transitions, including knowledge-sharing through the DJY Knowledge Facility. Outside of the ILO, UNICEF is the most notable agency working towards youth employment through its various ‘Learning to Earning’ initiatives. In addition, **international financial institutions (IFIs)** recognize ILO’s globally recognised mandate, expertise on labour standards, and measurement tools. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) signed an MOU with the ILO in 2022 that would enable the IsDB to share knowledge, build capacity, and economically empower youth in its member countries with support from various ILO departments.

At the **regional level**, a partnership with the African Union resulted in the recently adopted Youth Employment Strategy for Africa (YES Africa) which aims to call upon African governments, social partners, development partners and other stakeholders to invest in and promote the creation of decent jobs for youth. In the upcoming P&B for 2026–2027, ILO intends to operationalise the YES Africa to promote decent work for young people in the African continent. Similarly, through Boosting Decent Jobs for Youth in Africa’s Digital Economy promote youth employment through policy integration, skills development, and digital economy opportunities. In partnership with **ASEAN** and UNICEF, ILO coordinated the conference titled *Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: ASEAN Regional Dialogue on Young People’s Skills, Employability and Transition to Decent Work in Jakarta* in 2023. This conference was attended by 150 partners from governments, UN agencies, youth, the private sector and workers and employers’ organizations and resulted in a joint recommendation that highlights need for increased collaborations, including with private sector and young people to advance equal opportunities for youth. The ILO’s collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and ASEAN also encourage the integration of youth employment into national development and skills strategies.

At the **national level**, ILO has worked closely with governments and UN partners to develop targeted initiatives that address both youth unemployment and the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups such as migrants, women, and refugees. Projects like the Talent Partnership Project in **Bangladesh** and the R4V labour integration initiative in **Colombia** are prime examples of how the ILO fosters collaborations that improve livelihoods for vulnerable youth and migrants through skills development, job creation, and safe migration pathways. These efforts are often supported by multi-partner funding models, like the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Youth and Employment in **Tunisia**, which is expected to create 1,200 jobs for marginalized youth. Similarly active collaboration is visible in the **Philippines**, where the ILO has joined UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank to support the country in developing a national roadmap for the implementation of the GA on Jobs and Social Protection after it successfully became a ‘pathfinder’²⁰³ country for the GA. Across these diverse contexts, the ILO’s national-level partnerships are **rooted in a government-owned strategy, mobilise complementary UN or multilateral strengths, and channel resources toward reforms that promise the greatest payoff for youth employment under the YEAP.**

200 Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. Youth Employment Funders Group Annual Meeting. GIDJY. 2018. Available at: <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/event/1200>

201 Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. Boosting Decent Employment for Africa’s Youth. Gathering evidence: How can soft skills development and work-based learning improve job opportunities for young people? GIDJY. Available at: <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d009c791-c944-476b-b479-57999c5aef9e/content>

202 Solutions For Youth Employment. S4YE Impact Portfolio. SY4E. 2025. Available at: <https://www.s4ye.org/impact-portfolio>

203 Pathfinder countries are defined as those countries which the GA has identified that have considerable potential to amplify investments in jobs and social protection and have expressed a commitment to do so.

Through the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN), the ILO has also advanced partnerships that promote work-based learning opportunities for youth. Notably, under the BUSY Project in Kenya (2016–2021), the ILO collaborated with the Federation of Kenya Employers and GAN's Geneva office to establish a national GAN chapter, fostering private sector engagement in apprenticeship systems.²⁰⁴ This partnership has contributed to the dissemination of ILO Recommendation No. 208 among companies, efforts to improve the appeal of apprenticeships among youth and parents, and the expansion of national employer networks offering apprenticeships.

Certain ILO regional and national partnerships directly target work towards improving decent work outcomes for particularly **vulnerable youth groups**. Such examples can be seen in ILO's partnerships with the UNFPA and UNHCR. With the UNFPA, for example, ILO is working towards improving labour policies in Pakistan preventing violence against women. Given that 30% of Pakistan's female labour force is between the ages of 15 and 29,²⁰⁵ this partnership has the potential to play a significant role in promoting decent work opportunities in the country. In partnership with UNHCR, the ILO is also implementing activities under the PROSPECTS Partnership which aims to provide employment opportunities and upskilling for displaced people across numerous countries in **Africa and the Arab States**.

Across these multilayered alliances and repeated bilateral agreements—whether with UNICEF, UNEP, FAO, UNHCR, the IsDB or the AU—**partners consistently return to the ILO when they need tripartite coordinated youth-employment interventions that deliver not just more jobs but decent jobs, grounded in international labour standards, inclusive governance, and robust labour-market evidence. At the strategic level**, partnerships on youth employment are consistent with the priorities set out in the YEAP 2020-2030 and the Strategic Plans 2018–2021 and 2022–2025.

However, partnerships have been highly fragmented as there is currently no dedicated operational framework, central monitoring database, or partnership strategy specifically for youth employment that systematically integrates lessons learned across regions and departments. Furthermore, concerns over overlapping initiatives, such as the GA and the GCSJ, have led to confusion among external partners and diluted focus on the core GIDJY platform. Although initiatives like the GIDJY have attracted significant partner commitments, the ILO's share of youth employment funding remains relatively low and is concentrated among a few donors, creating risks for long-term sustainability. Furthermore, limited staffing, internal coordination issues, and a lack of a centralized system for tracking partnerships have also hindered the ILO's ability to leverage synergies and document its cumulative impact.

Initiating partnerships at the global level has also proven to be a time-consuming process for the ILO. While the precise channels of consultation vary by partner type, partnership formation is often affected by internal coordination and procedural requirements, which elongates the process to respond to time-sensitive partnership opportunities. More broadly, **bureaucratic processes involving multiple levels of reviews and sign-offs often delays the ILO's ability to secure and formalize partnerships**.

The ILO does have opportunities to improve the scope and resource generation of its youth employment initiatives by capitalizing on their collaborations with multilateral development banks (MDBs) and private sector partners. Representatives from MDBs showed a willingness to increase their collaboration with the ILO, while the private sector is seen to be increasing their involvement in youth employment initiatives, as demonstrated by the wide number of partners collaborating with GenU, the Global Coalition, and the GIDJY.

²⁰⁴ ILO. Better Utilization of Skills for Youth through Quality Apprenticeships (BUSY). ILO. 2021. Geneva. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/better-utilization-skills-youth-through-quality-apprenticeships-busy>

²⁰⁵ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Labour Force Survey 2020 – 2021. PBS. Islamabad. 2021. Available at: https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/labour_force/publications/lfs2020_21/LFS_2020-21_Report.pdf

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES TO SUPPORT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Governance of the YEAP

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The governance architecture of the YEAP 2020 – 2030 reflects a combination of formal structures, informal mechanisms, and evolving institutional arrangements shaped by internal restructuring and recalibrations. The establishment of the IDAG in 2020 facilitated cross-departmental communication, awareness, and occasional collaboration on youth employment across the ILO. However, an informal structure, lack of decision-making authority, absence of clear mandates, and insufficient resourcing limits the Group's effectiveness, maintaining a siloed approach to youth employment actions. The IDAG's limited impact on aligning efforts across departments and regions is further exacerbated by the lack of a theory of change and a results framework for the YEAP. Its overlap with the formal Output Coordination Team (OCT), introduced under Output 3.5 in the 2024–25 biennium, has also contributed to role ambiguity and coordination incoherence.
- ▶ The re-establishment of the Youth Employment Unit within EMPLAB in 2025 signals a renewed commitment to youth employment at the ILO, providing a focal point for coordination and governance. However, its limited resources, narrow mandate, and lack of formal authority to drive the implementation of the YEAP across departments and regions constrain its ability to effectively coordinate and align youth employment initiatives, limiting its potential to address existing governance gaps.

The YEAP's approval by the Governing Body in 2020 and its reflection within the Programme and Budget (P&B) documents accorded the YEAP with high-level endorsement and visibility. However, its governance is marked by fragmentation, weak coordination, and an overreliance on voluntary engagement across departments and regions.

The technical leadership of the YEAP has been situated within EMPLAB branch of EMPLOYMENT department. Under the previous action plan developed in response to the 2012 Call for Action, coordination was led by the dedicated Youth Employment Programme (YEP) Unit, based at ILO headquarters within EMPLAB. However, in 2020, a strategic shift toward mainstreaming youth employment across EMPLAB's broader workstreams resulted in the **dissolution of the YEP Unit and the integration of its functions into the restructured branch. This reorganisation created a vacuum in cross-Office coordination**, which the subsequent formation of the Inter-Departmental Action Group (IDAG) was intended to fill.

The IDAG, established in 2020, is part of the implementation framework of the new Action Plan. The IDAG was conceived as an inclusive platform bringing together focal points on youth employment from across numerous HQ departments and units, ACTRAV and ACTEMP, and regional offices (one focal point per region). As per the 2023 Review of Progress towards the YEAP provided to the GB in 2023, the IDAG included more than 40 representatives from the regional offices and HQ.²⁰⁶

A notable strength of IDAG's composition is the regular inclusion of the ACTRAV and ACTEMP alongside technical departments and regional representatives. Their participation has helped ensure that perspectives of social partners are present in internal discussions on youth employment. Similarly, ACTRAV and ACTEMP's presence in the IDAG also provides them an opportunity to be informed about the Office's work on youth employment, enabling them to better communicate the ILO's activities to the constituents. Nevertheless, interviews with ACTRAV and ACTEMP revealed that their ability to influence project design and outputs has often been constrained by late-stage involvement in proposal development processes.

A review of the IDAG concept note revealed a broad and ambitious scope of work. The IDAG was expected to fulfil several functions: facilitating internal communication and coordination; supporting joint technical work and capacity-building; contributing to the P&B (particularly Output 3.5); guiding strategic orientation; enabling resource mobilization; and helping coordinate the ILO's

206 GB.349/POL/1. Review of progress made regarding the follow-up of the Youth Employment Action Plan (YEAP) for the period 2020-30. Geneva, 30 October – 9 November, 2023. Available at: https://www.ualo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_898175.pdf

youth employment narrative within the UN system.²⁰⁷ At the same time, the IDAG was explicitly positioned as an informal structure, lacking formal decision-making powers, with its added value intended to come from leveraging the existing work and structure of the Office rather than creating parallel structures. As such, it does not have a mandate to assign responsibilities, track implementation, or ensure alignment across departments or regions.

In practice, **IDAG has primarily served as an internal platform for information-sharing and promoting visibility of youth employment work across the Office.** It convenes regularly, at least once a quarter, and is broadly appreciated for fostering cross-departmental awareness, facilitating exchange of updates, and occasionally small-scale collaborative efforts such as joint policy briefs. **In addition, the IDAG has also been used as a tool for internal and external monitoring,** elaborated further in Section 3.3.5 **PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPORTING OF YEAP.** However, the Evaluation found that the IDAG has not been effectively used as a mechanism for driving delivery, aligning efforts across departments and regions, or advancing sustained joint programming and resource mobilization despite those being its roles.

The introduction of Output 3.5 in the 2024–25 Programme and Budget led to the institutionalisation of a formal Output Coordination Team (OCT), tasked with coordinating and facilitating the implementation of activities under this output, consolidating related information, and supporting progress monitoring and reporting. The OCT is institutionally responsible for driving joint work on youth employment within the Office. Its establishment has introduced an unresolved overlap with the IDAG, which had already been operating as an informal platform for internal communication and coordination on youth employment. While the IDAG brings together motivated staff from across departments and regions, it does not have a formal mandate or decision-making authority. The OCT, by contrast, has a defined institutional role under Output 3.5. However, the two structures share largely overlapping membership, comprising many of the same individuals at both headquarters and regional levels. This dual arrangement has contributed to a lack of role clarity and coordination coherence that warrants further consideration. Overall, **the IDAG has not yet demonstrated added value beyond what the various departments involved would have achieved independently, continuing a siloed approach to implementing youth employment related actions and an unclear value added beyond the existing coordination team for output 3.5.**

The Evaluation also identified **a disconnect between IDAG and field-level operations.** Although regional focal points participate actively and share updates during IDAG meeting, this engagement has not translated into broader awareness or use of the YEAP or the IDAG among Decent Work Teams (DWTs) and country-level staff. Interviews revealed that beyond the regional focal points, knowledge of the Action Plan and the coordination function of the IDAG remains limited. There is no structured mechanism for cascading the YEAP or the work of the IDAG into field-level programming, nor for systematically integrating field-level perspectives into IDAG discussions. Youth employment activities at the country level are typically implemented independently of the YEAP framework, and the IDAG is not widely perceived as a vehicle for cross-level coordination or strategic guidance.

IDAG's limited impact also stems from the absence of key planning and performance tools. The IDAG's strategic utility is also undermined by the absence of an accompanying theory of change, results framework for the YEAP which outlines measurable indicators for outputs and outcomes, and an effective monitoring plan. It is difficult to coordinate effectively without clarity on intended results. **Insufficient resourcing also poses challenges to effectively leveraging the IDAG, particularly given its stated role and scope.** The Evaluation found that the IDAG coordination has been carried out by a single staff member on a part-time basis, with limited accompanying administrative support. These limitations have contributed to the IDAG's constrained capacity to function as a meaningful coordination mechanism.

The need to strengthen Office-wide coordination for youth employment was expressed in the 2023 Report to the GB, which called for the re-establishment of a youth employment programme within

²⁰⁷ ILO. 2024. Concept **Note:** ILO's Interdepartmental Action Group on youth employment – IDAG.

EMPLAB to provide a clear entry point for all work related to youth. Consequently, in **January 2025, a dedicated Youth Employment Unit was re-established within EMPLAB**. The YEU is intended to serve as the ILO's central coordination point and technical hub for all youth employment-related activities, with a dual mandate: mainstreaming youth across the Office and providing targeted technical, policy, and analytical support.²⁰⁸

The Unit's mandate is broad and ambitious. It is tasked with leading internal coherence, fostering partnerships, and scaling up integrated, evidence-based solutions for decent work for young people. In addition to providing technical support on youth guarantees, ALMPs, and youth rights, it coordinates the implementation of P&B Output 3.5 and leads both the EMPLAB Youth Task Team and the Inter-Departmental Action Group (IDAG) on Youth Employment. The Unit also houses the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and contributes to knowledge development, including the flagship GET Youth report and SDG reporting.

Despite this strategic positioning, the Unit currently operates with limited resources. Only two staff members (P5 and P4) are funded through the regular budget, with the remainder of youth-related contributions coming from project-based staff not formally embedded in the Unit. This represents a contraction in core staffing compared to the former Youth Employment Programme, which had a more robust regular budget footprint.

Staffing and coordination

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO's current staffing and resourcing arrangements for youth employment are not commensurate with the strategic ambition set out in the YEAP. The absence of dedicated personnel across most regions and country offices, combined with the Office's reliance on short-term, project-based and overstretched staffing, has limited the ability to sustain strategic focus, ensure continuity, and scale coherent youth employment interventions.
- ▶ While individual staff commitment has enabled important contributions across levels, the institutional model remains fragmented and under-resourced. Currently, 23 staff within EMPLAB are involved in youth employment work, with six staff fully dedicated to this area. The remaining 17 staff allocate between 5 percent and 80 percent of their time to youth employment, averaging 35 percent. In other departments/branches/units, youth-related work is typically subsumed within their respective thematic portfolios—such as skills development, labour migration, or gender, without a clear disaggregation of time and resource allocation. While this reliance on personal commitment and initiative has enabled important contributions, it also exposes the ILO to risks of discontinuity and institutional dependency on individuals rather than systems.
- ▶ While focal points on youth employment are assigned across all regions, there are currently no dedicated youth employment specialist positions in any region. At the country level, youth employment work is generally not supported by dedicated staff, with responsibilities typically embedded within broader employment or development cooperation roles, and specialized capacity for emerging topics such as just transitions, entrepreneurship ecosystems, or the digital economy varies widely. Country and Regional Office engagement with headquarters more broadly was found to be limited.

The evaluation found that the current human resources for youth employment across the ILO are characterized by a narrow core of fully dedicated staff, extensive dependence on staff with partial or unofficial mandates, and heavy reliance on development cooperation-funded personnel. Based on data obtained in March 2025, **there are currently 23 staff within EMPLAB involved to varying degrees in the department's work on youth employment**. Of these, six staff, all within the Youth Employment Unit, are fully dedicated (100 percent) to this area. In comparison, the remaining 17 positions dedicate anywhere between 5 percent and 80 percent of their time to youth employment, with an average allocation of 35 percent. Crucially, while 13 positions within EMPLAB are funded through the regular budget, only two (15 percent) are dedicated full-time to youth employment and four (40 percent) of the ten extra-budgetary (XB)-funded positions are dedicated fully to youth employment. This points to a disproportionate reliance on XB funding, which renders the staffing base more vulnerable to project cycles and the availability of short-term external financing.

²⁰⁸ ILO. 2025. Terms of Reference: Youth Employment Unit (YOUTH). *ILO Internal Document*

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF STAFF POSITIONS IN EMPLAB AND AVERAGE TIME SPENT ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (YE) BY UNIT AND FUNDING SOURCE

	RB		XB		TOTAL AVERAGE % TIME ON YE	TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF
Unit	Average % time on YE	Number of Staff	Average % time on YE	Number of Staff		
Other ²⁰⁹	31	11	43	6	35	17
Youth Employment Unit	100	2	100	4	100	6
Total	42	13	66	10	52	23

While comparable staffing data from other departments were not available, interviews with staff from various departments revealed that youth-related work is typically subsumed within their respective thematic portfolios—such as skills development, labour migration, or employment services—and addressed as one of several cross-cutting lenses. As a result, **departments are generally unable to disaggregate the time or resources allocated specifically to youth, limiting both its visibility in the ILO's portfolio as well as strategic planning and monitoring.**

At the **regional level, while focal points on youth employment are assigned across the regions, there are currently no dedicated youth employment specialist positions in any region.** Regional engagement on youth employment is instead maintained through interim and informal arrangements. In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, the only dedicated regional youth employment position lapsed following the end of its XB funding. Since then, youth-related responsibilities have been distributed between two general employment specialists—one in Delhi and one in Bangkok—who act as informal focal points while also covering other thematic areas. Interviewees across the region acknowledged that while the current arrangement has facilitated some degree of continued engagement, the relative strategic coherence, visibility, and continuity of youth employment efforts have been constrained.

Similar patterns were observed in other regions. In Africa, for instance, youth employment activities are actively led by a committed senior specialist, but this work is not tied to a formal youth employment post and is sustained only through the continuous acquisition of project-based resources. In Europe, youth-related responsibilities are described by interviewees as largely “honorary,” with no formal mandates or reporting lines. Similarly, in Latin America and the Caribbean, interviewees reported that responsibilities for youth employment are generally covered through part-time or informal arrangements, including a regional specialist working on youth employment on a part-time basis. **Across all regions, the delivery of youth employment programming relies heavily on the initiative and commitment of individual staff, rather than being driven by structurally defined roles or strategic regional workplans.** While this reliance on personal commitment and initiative has enabled important contributions, it also exposes the ILO to risks of discontinuity and institutional dependency on individuals rather than systems.

At the country level, the evaluation found that youth employment work is generally not supported by dedicated staff on youth employment, with responsibilities typically embedded within broader employment or development cooperation roles. Across the case study countries, delivery has relied heavily on project-based personnel, contributing to fragmentation, limited continuity, and institutional memory loss.

Country offices are often leanly staffed, which further constrains their capacity to develop or sustain youth employment initiatives. For instance, in the Philippines, the country office comprises only three staff responsible for a wide array of functions, leaving limited bandwidth to proactively pursue youth employment programming. Similarly, in Colombia and Tunisia, while staff were technically strong, the delivery model relied heavily on project-funded personnel, with minimal integration of youth employment into broader workplans or staffing structures.

209 These include: SERVICES (05), STRATEGIES (04), ANALYSIS (04); EMPLAB (03), and GENDER (01)

In the absence of dedicated in-country capacity, country offices rely heavily on regional staff for technical guidance and backstopping. However, this support is often uneven and constrained, as regional specialists are typically responsible for multiple thematic areas and responsible for supporting several countries simultaneously.

An exception to this regional model was observed in the area of public employment services and labour market policy, where technical support has at times been provided directly from headquarters. This pattern reflects **gaps in specialized technical expertise within some regional offices and Decent Work Teams (DWTs)**, necessitating more direct HQ-to-country engagement in these areas. More broadly, the evaluation found that technical support arrangements vary significantly by thematic area, revealing **gaps in internal capacity for topics such as just transitions, entrepreneurship ecosystems, or the digital economy**—areas of growing relevance to youth employment.

Country and Regional Office engagement with headquarters more broadly was found to be limited. Staff awareness of the YEAP is consistently low, and few mechanisms exist to ensure structured dialogue or strategic alignment across levels. While many interventions align with the YEAP's policy areas, this alignment occurs organically rather than through deliberate operationalization. Tunisia presented a relative exception, where coordination with both HQ and the regional office was described as more consistent—though even there, awareness of the YEAP remained limited.

Resource mobilization for youth employment

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The ILO's resource mobilization efforts for youth employment have not been commensurate with the ambitions articulated in the YEAP. Fundraising for youth employment has remained decentralized, fragmented, opportunistic, and dependent on the initiative of individual departments, regions, or projects.
- ▶ Donors increasingly prefer entry points framed around broader thematic trends within which youth may be identified as a priority group but not necessarily the central focus. Furthermore, emerging shifts in donor priorities—toward broader themes and private-sector-led models—further underscore the urgency of recalibrating the ILO's resource mobilization strategy. Moving forward, a more deliberate and structured approach will be required—one that combines internal coordination, external positioning, and differentiated strategies tailored to both evolving donor landscapes and constituent needs across diverse development contexts. The inclusion of a dedicate output on youth employment in the P&B triggers the availability of regular budgetary resources such as RBSA and RBTC. Also, strong domestic financing cases such as Colombia demonstrate the feasibility and value of country-led models.

The YEAP explicitly called for the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources and the establishment of strong partnerships for its implementation. The Action Plan further committed the Office to increasing efforts to redeploy internal resources and to strengthen coordination across units in support of a consolidated youth employment portfolio. In practice, however, these ambitions have not been systematically pursued or realized. Interviewees confirmed that a draft resource mobilization strategy was prepared but was never finalized or operationalized. As a result, **resource mobilization efforts related to youth employment have remained decentralized, fragmented, opportunistic, and dependent on the initiative of individual departments, regions, or projects.**

Resource mobilization for youth employment at the ILO has remained highly disjointed with both HQ-based technical departments and field offices pursuing donor-funded initiatives independently, often based on specific donor opportunities or regional priorities. While such initiatives align thematically with the YEAP, they are not coordinated or positioned within a unified institutional portfolio. In the absence of structured internal coordination, different parts of the ILO engage with the same donors independently, sometimes conveying overlapping or unaligned proposals. Several interviewees noted that, in certain cases, this has prompted donors to encourage more internal coordination before pursuing further engagement—highlighting the importance of presenting a more consolidated institutional approach.

Crucially, one of the stated roles of the IDAG was to pursue resource mobilization in joint collaboration with the aim of scaling up work on youth employment.²¹⁰ However, as mentioned earlier, the IDAG has primarily functioned as an information-sharing platform and the Evaluation did not find evidence of joint cross-departmental fundraising efforts undertaken as a result of the IDAG. While the re-established Youth Employment Unit within EMPLAB is currently focusing on convening IDAG, fulfilling its internal and external reporting, and coordinating Output 3.5, several interviewees suggested that its presence could also help restore coordination and build momentum around youth-focused resource mobilization. Moreover, **the presence of a dedicated output on youth employment also triggers the availability of regular budgetary resources such as RBSA and RBTC, which could be used to support and supplement efforts wherever they are needed most.**

Shifting donor preferences have further complicated fundraising efforts. Interviews across headquarters, regions, and country offices indicated a declining appetite for standalone “youth-branded” projects. Instead, **donors increasingly prefer entry points framed around emerging thematic trends—such as green transitions, digital transformation, platform work, or responses to fragility and crises—within which youth may be identified as a priority group but not necessarily the central focus.** Interview with donor representatives also provided insights into this emerging shift. For instance, a prominent donor to the ILO revealed that its development cooperation strategy is undergoing a revision with a shift away from youth employment as a primary focus towards prioritizing SME-strengthening for trade, with youth job creation viewed as a welcome side-effect of private-sector-oriented aid.

Among ILO staff, there is a recognition that shifting donor preferences necessitate adaptation which has prompted ILO staff to relabel or reframe proposals to align with evolving donor interests, particularly with respect to emerging areas of work. For example, the “Young, Green and Digital” conference was highlighted as successful in attracting donor attention and external interest. Similarly, ILO staff based in regions where many countries are fast graduating from ODA eligibility have also highlighted the need to anchor future work of the ILO on future of work issues such as technology, greening, and ageing. However, some interviewees cautioned that **such framing strategies, while pragmatic, may undermine the continuity and long-term investment needed to develop a durable and recognizable youth employment portfolio.**

At the same time, **demand for ILO support on youth employment remains strong in lower-income countries, particularly those with large youth populations.** In these contexts, youth employment continues to be seen not only as an economic priority but also as a critical dimension of social stability. Government stakeholders in such countries consistently rank youth employment among their top concerns and require ILO support for institutional capacity development, labour market governance, and systems-strengthening. Demand for “traditional” ILO services—such as employment services, skills development, and public employment policy—remains robust in these settings.

Together, these findings point to the need for a **comprehensive and differentiated resource mobilization strategy** to support the future of the ILO's youth employment work. Such a strategy should reflect the diversity of constituent needs across development contexts while taking into account evolving donor preferences. It should also integrate coordinated internal planning, clearer messaging, and more deliberate portfolio-building to position youth employment as both relevant to emerging global challenges and grounded in the ILO's comparative strengths.

While much of the ILO's youth employment resource mobilization remains externally funded and fragmented, the case of Colombia offers a contrasting example of a domestically financed model. With nearly 90 percent of youth employment funding sourced from national trust funds, Colombia illustrates both the opportunities and challenges of high-volume domestic financing. The following box highlights key features and implications of this distinctive arrangement.

210 ILO. 2024. Concept **Note:** ILO's Interdepartmental Action Group on youth employment – IDAG. [Internal Document]

BOX 5. COUNTRY-LED RESOURCE MOBILIZATION – LESSONS FROM COLOMBIA

The case of Colombia presents a noteworthy exception within the ILO's youth employment portfolio, where resource mobilization has been driven predominantly by domestic financing rather than traditional donor contributions. Between 2020 and 2024, nearly 89 percent of youth employment funding in Colombia was sourced from national government trust funds, amounting to approximately USD 55 million. This model, in which the government acts both as national counterpart and principal funder, offers financial stability and strong alignment with national priorities, but also positions the government in a role akin to that of a donor—shaping programmatic direction and introducing expectations around counterpart contributions. While this arrangement underscores the potential of public domestic financing as a viable resource stream, it also reinforces the need for the ILO to maintain a clear normative compass and develop robust co-financing strategies to navigate emerging complexities. Colombia's experience illustrates how high-volume national funding can be leveraged for youth employment, while also highlighting the importance of institutional capacity-building and strategic diversification of the resource base, particularly through multilateral and private-sector engagement.

It is also important to note that the Colombian government recently introduced a requirement for counterpart contributions in order to access trust funds. This development adds a layer of complexity to the resource mobilization landscape, potentially affecting the scope and predictability of ILO interventions unless addressed through clear co-financing strategies.

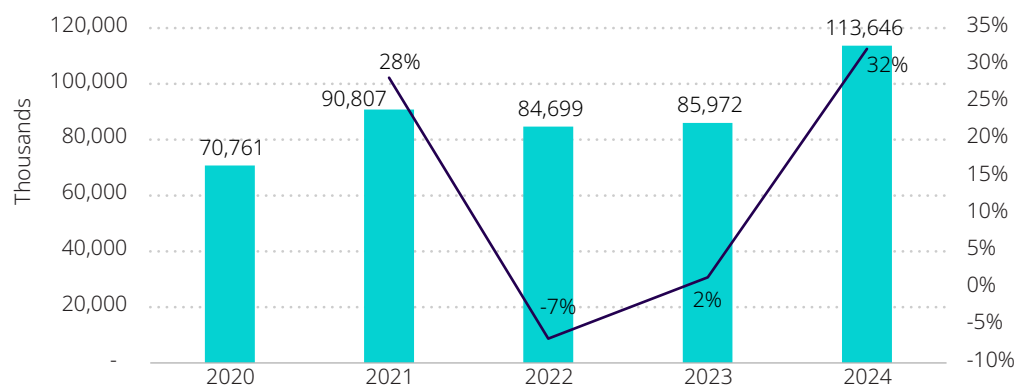
Financial management

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Between 2020 and 2024, the ILO's overall expenditure on youth employment amounted to USD 445.8 million, accounting for 22 percent of the Office's total expenditure over the same period. In 2024, youth employment expenditure represented 60.6 percent increase compared to 2020 levels, reflecting a clear expansion in the scale of financial commitment to youth employment. However, the overall reported utilization rate approximately 76 percent.
- ▶ Extra-budgetary Development Cooperation (XBDC) resources accounted for approximately 95% of ILO's total expenditure on youth employment. Africa accounted for nearly half of the total expenditure (47 percent), amounting to USD 209.8 million.

As part of the HLE, the Evaluation also undertook a financial analysis of the ILO's expenditure on youth employment CPOs between 2020 and 2025. The internal estimate was derived from the aggregation of expenditures associated with CPO initiatives and DC projects explicitly referencing the terms "youth" or "young" in their titles, and in the three official languages, drawing from data provided by the ILO Finance Department, the ILO dashboards for Development Cooperation, and outcome-based work planning. Thus, it includes expenditures linked to several outputs, including those beyond Outcome 3. The financial analysis revealed that between 2020 and 2024, the **ILO's overall expenditure on youth employment amounted to USD 445.8 million (445,884,168), representing 22 percent of its total expenditure of USD 2.02 billion (2,020,189,318) over the same period.** While annual expenditure levels varied year-on-year, the overall trend was one of sustained growth.

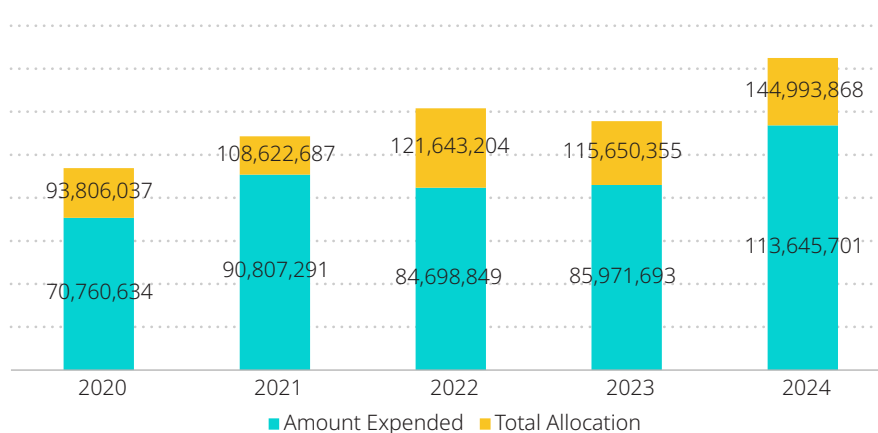
Expenditure increased from USD 70.76 million in 2020 to USD 90.81 million in 2021, reflecting an increase of 28.3 percent. This was followed by a moderate decline, with spending decreasing by 6.7 percent in 2022 (USD 84.7) and a marginal increase of 1.4 percent in 2023 (USD 85.9 million). In 2024, however, youth employment expenditure rose sharply by 32%, compared to 2023, reaching a five-year peak of about USD 113.6 million. Overall, this represents **a significant 60.6 percent increase compared to 2020 levels, reflecting a clear expansion in the scale of financial commitment to youth employment.** The following figure illustrates the actual expenditure on youth employment through the years 2020 to 2024.

FIGURE 9: ANNUAL EXPENDITURE (IN USD '000) AND YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGE IN EXPENDITURE

Between 2020 and 2024, approximately **95% of ILO's total expenditure on youth employment was made through Extra-budgetary Development Cooperation (XBDC) resources**, which amounted to USD 427 million. Approximately, 2.1 percent of the total expenditure was made through the Regular Budget Technical Cooperation (RBTC) resources (USD 9 million) while the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) accounted for 1.8 percent of the total expenditure in this period (USD 8 million).

The analysis also revealed a consistent underutilization of allocated resources, with actual expenditures falling short of annual allocations in every year of the period. Cumulatively, **the ILO expended USD 445.8 million against allocations totalling USD 584.7 million, reflecting an overall utilization rate of approximately 76 percent**, indicating that nearly one-quarter of the planned resources remained unspent.

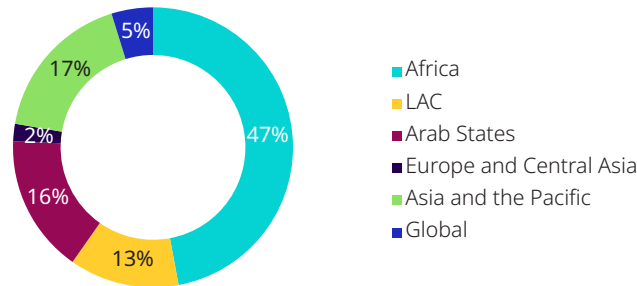
Execution rates varied across the years. The highest performance was recorded in **2021**, with **84%** of allocated funds utilized. By contrast, **2022** saw the lowest execution rate at 70%, despite receiving the second-largest allocation in the period. 2020 registered a 75% execution rate, likely reflecting the operational disruptions caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Performance improved slightly in **2023** and **2024**, reaching **74%** and **78%**, respectively, though still falling short of full absorption. Figure 10 illustrates a five-year comparison between Actual Expenditure and Allocated Budget from 2020 to 2024.

FIGURE 10: COMPARISON OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE WITH ALLOCATIONS (ANNUALLY)

Overall, Africa accounted for nearly half of the total expenditure (47 percent), amounting to **USD 209.8 million. (Figure 11)**. This was followed by Asia and the Pacific, which accounted for 17 percent (USD 78 million), and the Arab States with 16% (USD 71.1 million). Expenditure towards the Latin America and the Caribbean amounted to USD 56.52 million (13 percent). While expenditure towards Global initiatives accounted for USD 21.35 million (5 percent). Europe and Central Asia

accounted for the lowest share of total expenditure, with USD 8.9 million (2 percent). Overall, the data indicates a strong emphasis on funding activities in the African, Asian, and Arab States regions, with relatively more modest allocations for the European region.

FIGURE 11: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE (2020 – 2024)



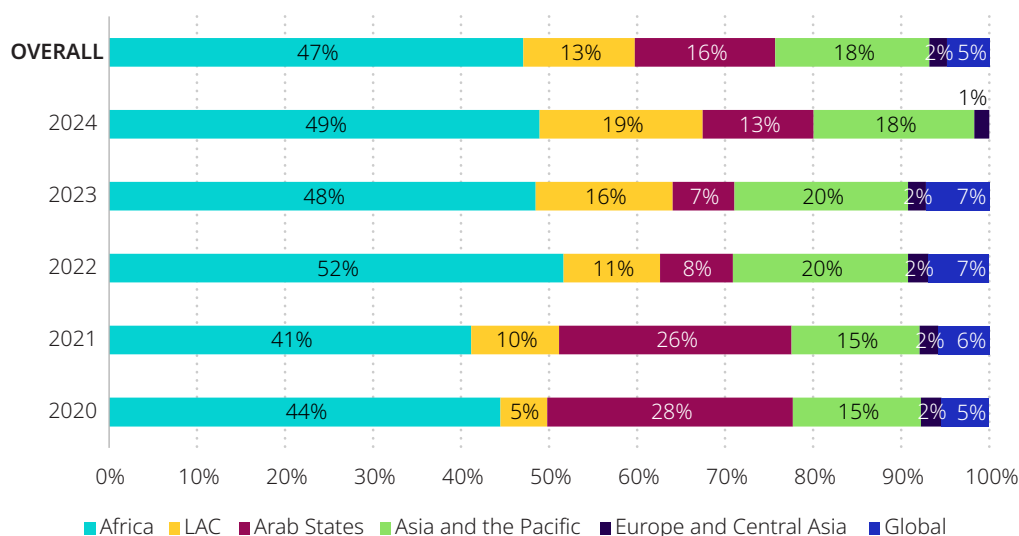
An examination of the annual share of expenditure across the regions shows that between 2020 and 2024, Africa consistently accounted for the largest share of total annual expenditure, ranging from **41% to 52%** each year, and averaging **47% overall**. (Figure 12) The **Asia and the Pacific** region maintained a relatively steady share of expenditure, fluctuating between **15% and 20%**, and averaging **18%**.

Latin America and the Caribbean saw a marked upward trajectory in expenditure. Starting from just 5% in 2020, the region's share steadily increased year on year, reaching **19% by 2024**. This makes LAC the only region to show consistent growth in its share of expenditure across the five-year period.

By contrast, the **Arab States** experienced a significant decline. In 2020 and 2021, the region received more than a quarter of all expenditures (**28% and 26%**, respectively), but this dropped to single digits in the following years, reaching just **7% in 2023** and **13% in 2024**. The overall average for the region stood at **16%**, masking the steep drop-off in more recent years.

Europe and Central Asia consistently received a very small share of expenditure—**1–2% annually**, with no significant variation across the period. Finally, **global-level expenditures** accounted for 5–7% of annual spending between 2020 and 2023, before dropping to **less than 0.5% in 2024**. Across the full period, global programming represented **5% of overall expenditure**.

FIGURE 12: ANNUAL BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE BY REGION (2020 – 2024)



Planning, monitoring and reporting of YEAP

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ While the YEAP has helped elevate youth employment as a strategic priority, its operationalization has been hampered by the absence of a robust planning, monitoring, and reporting architecture.
- ▶ In the absence of a results framework, the YEAP has functioned as a broad statement of intent rather than an operational plan. The challenge of monitoring is compounded by the transversal nature of youth employment work. The lack of output indicators in the P&B specifically targeted towards youth employment efforts further affected monitoring of YEAP results. Output 3.5, introduced in the 2024–25 biennium, partially revived institutional tracking of youth-related activities. However, the Output does not capture the full breadth of youth-related work and is insufficient for holistic oversight of the Action Plan's implementation.
- ▶ To strengthen internal monitoring, the newly established Youth Employment Unit has implemented promising efforts—such as the YEAP survey tool and regional reporting initiatives— that demonstrate potential but remain fragmented and insufficiently institutionalized. Moving forward, a more coherent and integrated approach is needed: one that anchors the YEAP within the ILO's results-based management systems, strengthens quality assurance and guidance, and leverages consolidated reporting not only for internal learning and accountability, but also as a strategic instrument for positioning, outreach, and resource mobilization.

The YEAP 2020–2030 was presented to the Governing Body in 2020 as a high-level strategic framework for advancing youth employment outcomes across the ILO. While the Action Plan outlined a series of clusters and thematic priorities, it was not accompanied by a technical implementation plan, operational roadmap, or a monitoring and evaluation framework. As such, the Evaluation found **that the YEAP has functioned as a broad statement of intent rather than an operational tool, noting that the absence of time-bound targets, indicators, and accountability mechanisms limited its utility for guiding concrete ILO-wide action or assessing progress.**

Although the Action Plan included a commitment to periodic reporting to the Governing Body and referenced the use of indicators, no formal results framework was established. Existing reporting is done on the P&B results framework, but **the lack of output indicators in the P&B specifically targeted towards youth employment efforts further compounded this gap. Output 3.5, introduced in the 2024–25 biennium, has partially revived institutional tracking of youth-related activities.** This Output seeks to promote integrated policy and programme support on youth employment and provides a limited channel for reporting and accountability. However, as elaborated in Section 3.1.2, **Output 3.5 does not capture the full breadth of youth-related work** taking place under other outputs, and has not been sufficient to enable holistic oversight of the Action Plan's implementation.

The challenge of monitoring is compounded by the transversal nature of youth employment work. Many initiatives that benefit young people—such as skills training, entrepreneurship promotion, or employment in the care economy—are implemented under broader thematic programmes and are not consistently framed, tagged, or reported as youth employment interventions. This lack of consistent tagging or categorization across internal systems has made it difficult to quantify the scope or coherence of the ILO's youth employment portfolio. A proposal by EMPLAB to introduce a youth marker for tagging and tracking youth-related interventions was rejected by PROGRAME. As a result, much of the Office's youth employment work remains invisible in formal reporting.

As part of efforts to strengthen internal monitoring, the newly established YEU has developed and institutionalized a standardized survey tool to collect information on youth employment-related initiatives across the Office. The survey, circulated annually, seeks to capture a broad range of interventions aligned with the YEAP's clusters and policy areas, while also documenting

geographic coverage, target groups, funding modalities, and linkages to relevant CPOs and Programme and Budget outputs. Respondents are prompted to identify whether their initiatives contribute to knowledge development, technical assistance, or advocacy, and to indicate specific youth populations served, including marginalized and hard-to-reach groups. A positive feature of the survey is its alignment with the reporting requirements of the UN Youth 2030 Strategy, enabling the ILO to present a more comprehensive and representative picture of its youth-related work and to reduce dual reporting burdens.

While the tool represents a step forward in systematizing institutional information flows and improving the visibility of youth-related work, **in its current form, the survey functions more as a mapping and visibility instrument than as a tool for results-based monitoring or strategic oversight.** Nonetheless, it provides a foundation upon which more robust institutional monitoring systems could be built, particularly if linked to a dedicated results framework for the YEAP. However, given the number of HQ departments and regional offices involved in reporting on youth-related work, there is a clear need for quality control and standardization, supported by guidance and a shared understanding of what constitutes a relevant intervention in terms of intensity, scale, and level of youth targeting.

The need for clearer guidance also extends to the ILO's work through its development cooperation portfolio. The Evaluation found significant variation in practice across interventions with respect to the extent to which youth-informed lenses were applied during project design, the presence of youth-specific indicators, and the age-disaggregation of results.

With regard to institutional reporting, a progress update on the YEAP was submitted to the Governing Body in 2023 and published as an official report. However, the Evaluation found that **there remains a need to strengthen mechanisms for disseminating results—not only to showcase the breadth and diversity of the ILO's work on youth employment, but also to support institutional learning and to serve as a strategic tool for resource mobilization.** Timely and accessible dissemination of consolidated results can help demonstrate the ILO's value proposition to donors and development partners, reinforcing its leadership in the youth employment space. This need is particularly pressing given that **reporting through the P&B and the Decent Work Results Dashboard remains highly rigid, offering limited space to present results in a meaningful or disaggregated manner.** Furthermore, the P&B does not systematically facilitate or signal reporting on youth, as its indicators rarely make specific reference to youth employment.

In this context, the Evaluation noted a promising but isolated example from the Asia and the Pacific region, where a report was prepared in 2023 drawing on the YEAP survey data submitted to the GB, alongside other internal and external sources. The report provided a consolidated view of youth employment work across clusters and policy areas. However, this effort was the result of individual initiative rather than an institutionalized reporting practice—and the report itself was not published.



05

- ▶ Key findings and conclusions by evaluation criteria

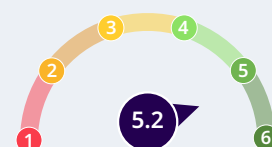
▶ KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

This section summarizes the high-level findings of the evaluation against the OECD-DAC criteria and answers the evaluation questions (see Annex 01). Ratings against the criteria use a six-point scale (with 1 being “highly unsatisfactory” and 6 being “highly satisfactory”). The ratings are based on the assessments of the evaluation team, the Synthesis Review of project evaluation reports completed in the period, and the survey to staff, constituent, and partners.

RELEVANCE

KEY FINDING 1:

The ILO has contributed to addressing constituents' priorities through stronger integration of youth employment into national policy frameworks since 2020. Strengthening youth participation in national decision-making and expanding efforts in underdeveloped areas of the ILO's programming for youth employment are important avenues to advance the relevance of the ILO's youth employment agenda.



KEY FINDING 2:

The ILO has proactively seized opportunities to adapt youth employment strategies to global and national challenges —from COVID-19 and demographic shifts to geopolitical instability, climate change, and digitalization.

The ILO has made significant contributions to addressing the **priorities** and **needs** of its constituents by integrating **youth employment** into national policy frameworks, particularly through **skills development**, **entrepreneurship**, and **social protection** initiatives. The ILO has facilitated the creation of **National Employment Policies** in countries like **Bangladesh**, **Côte d'Ivoire**, and **Rwanda**, which explicitly prioritize youth employment and embed youth-specific protections into national strategies. These efforts have strengthened **institutional capacities** and mainstreamed youth employment within broader national frameworks.

The ILO has made notable progress in addressing the needs of **disadvantaged youth groups**, including **young women**, **youth with disabilities**, **migrant youth**, **rural youth**, and youth in the informal economy through targeted programs and initiatives. While the ILO has been successful in **skills training** and **entrepreneurship support**, the **institutionalization of youth participation** in decision-making processes remains inconsistent. **Youth engagement** in **social dialogue** and **tripartite governance** structures is often symbolic or episodic, limiting the full impact of policies designed to benefit them. Furthermore, while the ILO has embedded rights at work for youth rights in policies related to **child labour**, **forced labour**, and **discrimination**, there is a noticeable gap in supporting **enabling rights** such as **freedom of association** and **collective bargaining**, which are essential for empowering young workers to claim their rights in the workplace.

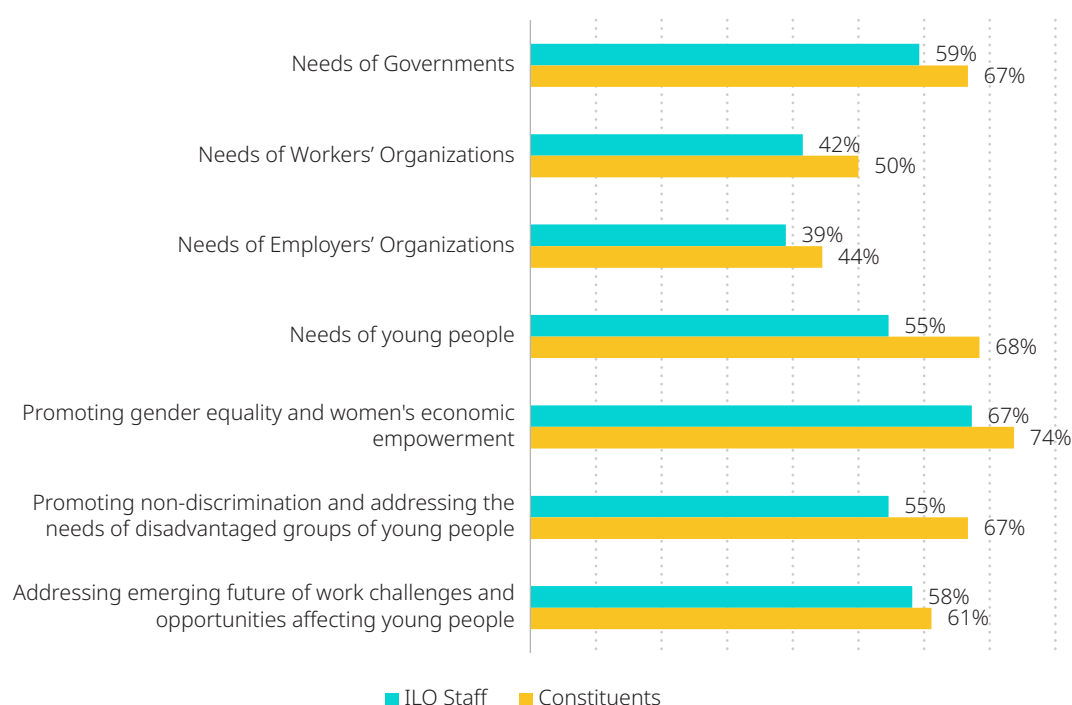
The ILO has also adapted its strategies to **global challenges**, including **COVID-19**, **digitalization**, **climate change**, and **migration**. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist in addressing **market access**, **finance**, and **job creation**, particularly in **fragile contexts**. However, the ILO's youth employment strategies have primarily focused on **supply-side interventions**, with **demand-side factors** remaining underdeveloped.

Regions where many countries are fast graduating from ODA eligibility have also highlighted the need to anchor future work of the ILO on future of work issues such as technology, greening, and ageing. Youth employment continues to be seen not only as an economic priority but also as a critical dimension of social stability. Government stakeholders in such countries consistently rank youth employment among their top concerns and require ILO support for institutional capacity development, labour market governance, and systems-strengthening. Demand for “traditional” ILO services—such as employment services, skills development, and public employment policy—remains robust in these settings.

The survey results reveal important differences between ILO staff and constituents in their perceptions of how responsive the ILO's youth employment work has been across key dimensions. Both groups rated the ILO's responsiveness most highly in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment (74% of constituents, 67% of staff) and in addressing the needs of young people more broadly (68% of constituents, 55% of staff). Similarly, there is relatively strong alignment on the ILO's role in promoting non-discrimination and reaching disadvantaged groups, as well as in addressing future of work challenges affecting youth.

However, relatively lower ratings were observed for the ILO's responsiveness to its tripartite constituents. (Figure 13) Perceived responsiveness to employers' organizations was lowest among all categories (44% of constituents, 39% of staff), followed by workers' organizations (50% and 42%, respectively). Responsiveness to governments received moderately higher ratings (67% of constituents, 59% of staff).

FIGURE 13: SURVEY RATINGS OF ILO STAFF AND CONSTITUENTS ON THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT²¹¹



²¹¹ To what extent do you think the ILO's work on youth employment has been responsive to the following needs and priorities since 2020? (ILO Staff N = 55; Constituents N = 19)

COHERENCE

KEY FINDING 3:

The YEAP 2020–2030 outlines a strategic approach that underscores the ILO's normative and technical leadership in youth employment. However, the absence in the YEAP of an operational implementation mechanism prohibits its potential to function as a unified, actionable framework rooted in internal policy coherence.



KEY FINDING 4:

The introduction of Output 3.5 in the P&B for 2024–25 marks progress towards institutionalizing youth employment, but continued fragmentation across multiple P&B outputs weakens synergies, and accountability. Only 9% of planned youth employment results for the biennium align with Output 3.5, limiting the reporting on and visibility of results.

The YEAP aligns well with key ILO frameworks, including the 2012 Call for Action on Youth Employment, the ILO Centenary Declaration, and the ILO Strategic Plan 2022-25, reinforcing the organization's overarching goals related to decent work, inclusive growth, and social dialogue. It incorporates critical elements such as rights at work and gender equality, ensuring that the needs of vulnerable youth groups, such as young women, youth with disabilities, and youth in informal economies, are addressed, while reflecting a human-centred, rights-based approach that integrates youth employment into broader economic, environmental, and social policy.

The **YEAP 2020–2030** is strongly aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly with **SDG 8** on decent work and economic growth. It specifically supports Target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all, including youth and persons with disabilities), Target 8.6 (reduce the portion of youth NEETs), and Target 8.b (development and operationalization of a global strategy for youth employment). It also reinforces the ILO's custodian role in monitoring SDG indicators 1.3.1, 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.6.1, and 8.b.1. It further supports youth employment, education, and gender equality (SDG 4 and SDG 5) through initiatives focused on skills development, entrepreneurship, and inclusive labour markets. The YEAP also addresses SDG 10 by promoting equal access to education and social protection, contributes to SDG 13 by fostering green jobs, and supports SDG 16 by using employment for peacebuilding in conflict zones. It strengthens SDG 17 through multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The **Theory of Change** underpinning the YEAP 2020–2030 presents a strategically ambitious framework aimed at addressing the complex challenges youth face in the labour market. However, while the vision is conceptually sound, the operational coherence of the YEAP is undermined by several design limitations. YEAP emphasizes **skills development, entrepreneurship promotion, economic and employment policies, job creation, rights at work, and social dialogue**, while paying attention to **global** trends such as digitalization, climate change, and COVID-19 recovery. However, although supply-side interventions, such as skills development and work-based learning are well-articulated and widely implemented, demand-side measures such as macroeconomic policies, sectoral investment strategies, and market linkages remain underdeveloped. Furthermore, the YEAP lacks a results framework or performance benchmarks, making it difficult to assess progress or refine strategies over time. Additionally, the plan for youth participation in the plan's implementation and monitoring is weak, limiting their role as active stakeholders in shaping their employment futures.

The YEAP has also faced challenges in terms of coherence within the ILO's **Results-Based Management** system. Historically, youth employment has lacked structured visibility and prioritization, with no dedicated output focused solely on youth employment until the 2024-25

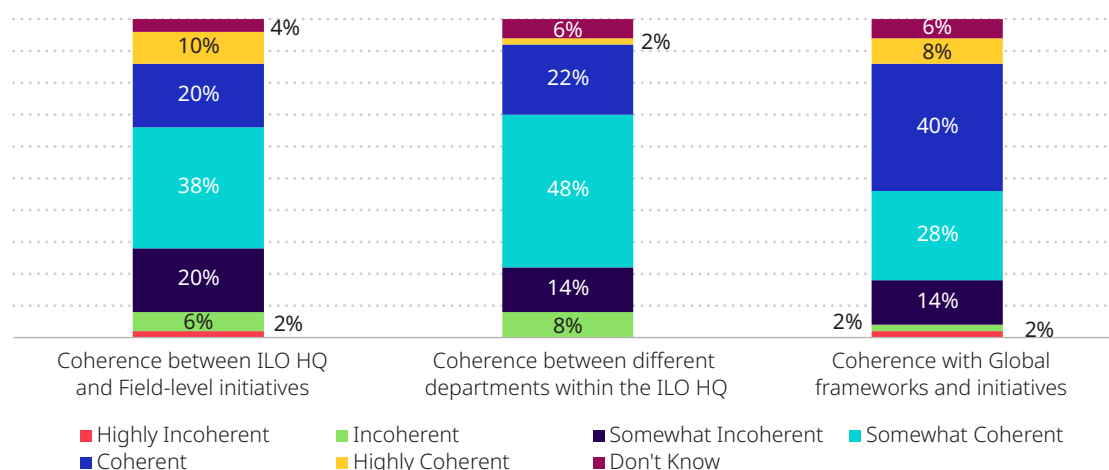
biennium. Prior to this, youth-related interventions were scattered across multiple outputs related to skills development, enterprise support, and employment policy, making it difficult to systematically track and assess youth employment initiatives. The **introduction of Output 3.5 in the 2024-25 P&B cycle** has improved the visibility of YEAP within the RBM system, tracking **integrated youth employment programmes** that focus on sectors like **green, digital, and care economies**. However, youth-employment initiatives continue to be fragmented as only 9% of the CPOs on youth employment were linked to Output 3.5, while the majority of youth-related CPOs continues to surface under outputs such as 3.2 (skills and lifelong learning systems), 3.4 (labour market programmes), and 4.3 (support for enterprises).

Programming varies across regions, with the **Africa region consistently accounting for the largest share of youth employment results**, cumulatively representing 48% of all results across the three biennia; and Asia and the Pacific emerging as the second most prominent region, representing 25% of results. Other regions—Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the Arab States, and Europe and Central Asia—collectively account for less than one-third of results. Europe and Central Asia remained consistently low, averaging around 9% across the period.

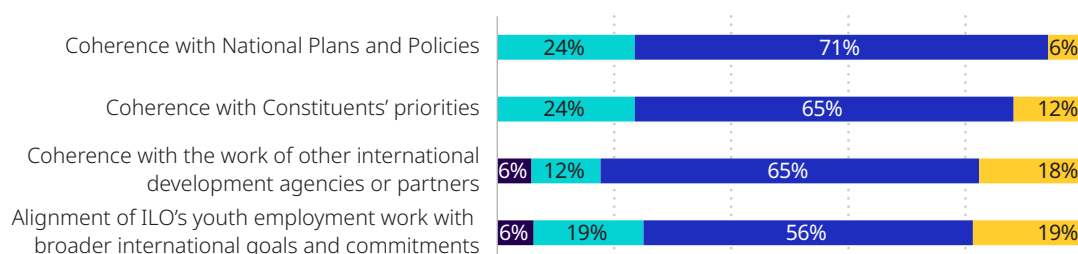
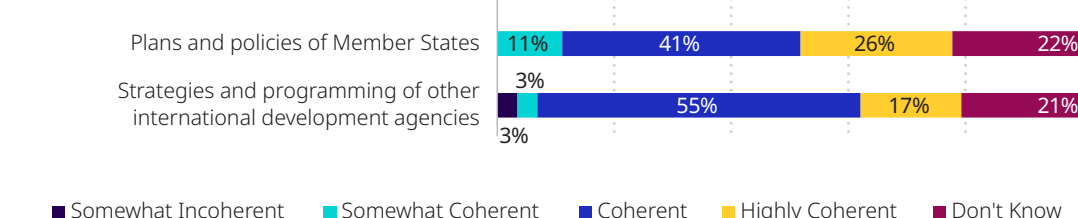
The **four Priority Action Programmes** of the ILO also align well with the YEAP's strategic objectives, particularly in areas of sustainable employment, skills development, youth entrepreneurship, and rights at work. However, there is room to strengthen the integration of youth-focused interventions, particularly in migrant workers' rights and supply chains. While the programmes support demand-side and supply-side interventions, a more systematic focus on youth leadership, social dialogue, and institutionalization of **youth participation** across these programmes would enhance their coherence with the YEAP.

The **IDAG** has functioned primarily to raise cross-departmental awareness and support as a means of mapping youth employment activities across the organization for internal and external reporting. Additionally, the inclusion of ACTRAV and ACTEMP has ensured that tripartite perspectives are represented in internal discussions, strengthening the connection between the ILO's work and its constituents. However, **IDAG's contributions** have been primarily focused on **coordination and information-sharing**, rather than **strategic planning** or operational follow-up. In response to these challenges, the **ILO** re-established the Youth Employment Unit within EMPLAB in **January 2025**. While this move is seen as a positive development, it currently operates with limited resources and a narrow mandate.

At the country-level, the YEAP's priorities have been integrated to varying degrees across **DWCPs**, albeit, without direct reference to the Action Plan. Several countries like Tunisia, the Philippines, and Kenya with high representation of young workers showcasing strong alignment with the plan's goals. However, fragmented integration exists in other countries, such as Malaysia and Tajikistan, where the focus on youth employment remains limited or sector-specific. The absence of direct references to the YEAP in DWCPs leads to challenges in tracking actions on YEAP, especially for projects that do not explicitly reference and/or track youth employment, such as projects targeting rights and social protection of migrant workers. Survey data (Figure 14) confirm these internal coherence challenges: only 24% of ILO staff rated departmental coherence at HQ as coherent or highly coherent, and just 30% did so for HQ–field coordination.

FIGURE 14: SURVEY RATINGS OF ILO STAFF ON THE COHERENCE OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT²¹²

In contrast, external perceptions of coherence are markedly more positive (Figure 15). Among constituents, 76% rated the coherence of ILO's youth employment work with national priorities as coherent or highly coherent. Similarly, 72% of partners found the ILO's work aligned with the strategies and programming of other international development actors.

FIGURE 15: SURVEY RATINGS OF CONSTITUENTS AND PARTNERS ON THE COHERENCE OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT²¹³**CONSTITUENTS****PARTNERS**

²¹² How would you rate the coherence of ILO's work (i.e., the extent to which ILO's work on youth employment is internally aligned and coordinated across different levels and departments and with global frameworks and initiatives) on youth employment in terms of... (ILO Staff N = 50)

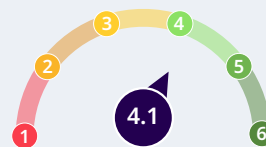
²¹³ To Constituents: How would you rate the coherence of ILO's work (i.e., the extent to which ILO's work on youth employment is internally aligned and coordinated across different levels and departments) on youth employment in relation to the following dimensions? (N = 17)

To Partners: How would you rate the coherence (in terms of alignment with strategies and priorities of other development agencies, and national plans and policies) of ILO's actions on youth employment concerning the following dimensions? (N = 29)

EFFECTIVENESS

KEY FINDING 5:

The YEAP has driven results at country level, particularly in policy integration, skills development, entrepreneurship and self-employment. Yet, overall effectiveness is constrained by gaps in demand-side interventions, fragmented programming, short-funding cycles, market-related barriers, limited youth involvement in social dialogue, and socioeconomic and political factors.



KEY FINDING 6:

Work under the YEAP promotes tripartism and social dialogue and reinforces ILO's normative mandate by advancing rights at work through inclusive policy development at national and sub-national levels, anchored in international labour standards. Enabling rights, such as freedom of association, and collective bargaining are not consistently included in youth-focused strategies.

The ILO has undertaken notable initiatives in addressing youth employment challenges using the three clusters outlined in the plan, namely: knowledge development and dissemination; technical assistance and capacity-building of constituents; and advocacy and partnerships. This work has been undertaken at the country, regional, and global levels, and covers all five policy areas of the YEAP, including support to: i) Economic and Employment Policies; ii) Labour Market Policies; iii) Employability; iv) Entrepreneurships; and v) Rights at Work for Youth.

In several countries, the ILO has successfully integrated youth employment priorities within **national policies** and frameworks. Since 2020, a total of 13 Member States adopted National Employment Policies (NEPs)²¹⁴. Of these, 11 received full or partial ILO support, with youth consistently included as a target group, either as a distinct beneficiary group or through policy pillars related to NEETs, informality, school-to-work transitions, or gender inclusion. In addition, ILO also engaged in the development of youth-specific employment strategies, which are more directly aligned with SDG target 8.b.1. This activity was tracked under indicator 3.1.2 of the 2020-23 P&Bs and has achieved approximately 70% of its target during this period, with support provided to 24 Member States against the combined target of 35. In several countries, youth employment has been addressed through policy instruments outside the typical employment strategy architecture. These interventions reflect **indirect inclusion**, where youth are targeted as part of broader policy reforms—particularly in contexts of informality, crisis, or multidimensional vulnerability. In addition, the ILO provided evidence-based support to COVID-19 employment recovery plans and strategies, e.g. in the Philippines, El Salvador, Burkina Faso, and Chad. ILO's support to policy development was tailored to a range of contexts and economies, including in fragility and crisis situations. While most of policy interventions included a mix of supply-side and demand-side measures, the focus was predominantly supply-side across countries. Furthermore, not all policies were accompanied by implementation frameworks, such as action plans, coordination mechanisms, monitoring indicators, and employment targets, etc.

As part of its work under **Labour Market Policies**, the ILO has supported countries in strengthening Public Employment Services, improving job-matching systems, and enhancing access to social protection, particularly for youth. This has been done through digitalization efforts in countries like Namibia, Indonesia, and Cambodia, and by supporting tailored initiatives like the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans. The ILO has also contributed to institutional capacity-building of government TVET services and policy frameworks in several countries, such as revision of TVET curricula, soft skills and career counselling modules, and job matching tools, etc. The ILO's interventions in this area also included the delivery of downstream support, such as the establishment of employment service centres to facilitate job matching, career counselling,

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and work permit issuance for Jordanian and Syrian jobseekers; hands on TVET training for disadvantaged youth in Mauritania; and supporting transitions from social assistance to labour market participation among vulnerable youth and women in Egypt. However, challenges for uptake persist, including limited private sector engagement, weak market incentives, and insufficient alignment with firm-level capacity or demand conditions, which are also reflected in the survey findings

Findings from the staff and stakeholder surveys reinforce this supply-side emphasis. Interventions related to **skills development and access to training** were rated among the most effective by all groups, with 70 percent of development partners, 50 percent of ILO staff, and 44 percent of constituents viewing these efforts as effective or highly effective. However, only 19% of ILO staff, 28% of constituents and 30% of partners viewed the ILO's efforts towards creation of private sector incentives as effective, highlighting a critical gap in efforts to align labour market interventions with employer needs and market realities.

The ILO's support to youth **employability** has primarily focused on providing technical support for TVET, work-based learning and apprenticeships, and green and digital skills development. Work in the area of TVET has often included support to policy development and system strengthening to align training with the evolving needs of the labour market. These efforts have often led to positive results, especially when they focus on enhancing the relevance, accessibility, and quality of training programs. The ILO's support also extended towards the implementation of apprenticeship programmes in some instances. However, the scale remains modest, largely pilot in nature, and heavily reliant on external funding. There is also limited evidence of ILO supporting formal educational systems, such as secondary and higher education institutions in its employability work, generally owing to difficulties in engagement of education ministries/departments. Furthermore, the ILO's ability to assess the effectiveness and reach of its youth employability initiatives is hampered by the lack of systematic tracking and disaggregated data on youth employment outcomes. Furthermore, ILO's initiatives also faced challenges in achieving long-term, system-level impacts due to contextual, resource, and institutional barriers, such as the absence of robust national financing mechanisms for TVET and buy-in from private sector for apprenticeships.

The development of **digital skills** has become an increasingly important focus within the ILO's youth employability programming, though its scope and intensity of engagement vary across regions and socioeconomic contexts. The ILO has made particularly strong efforts in the Asia and Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean regions, while Africa has received comparatively less attention in this area. In response to the growing demand by constituents to support digitalization in the world of work, several ILO projects worked on building national TVET capacities for the delivery of digital skills training to prospective young workers and MSMEs. However, the digital divide experienced by many countries where the ILO works has been a major challenge for inclusive support to marginalized young workers. **Green skills** are an emerging focus within the ILO's youth employability programming, although the extent and consistency of engagement remain relatively limited. The evaluation found that, in most contexts, green skills are addressed through specialized training modules, short courses, or targeted projects in specific sectors, rather than being incorporated into comprehensive, youth-specific national strategies or institutional frameworks.

The ILO's actions to support youth **entrepreneurship** has been significantly based on building the entrepreneurial capacity of youth. The deployment of signature ILO tools like SIYB and KAB have been a key feature of several such initiatives. The ILO has also successfully integrated entrepreneurship into national policies, as seen in countries like Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, and Zambia, where government efforts were supported to promote entrepreneurship and formalize youth businesses. These initiatives have contributed to increased visibility and have helped create an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship. Furthermore, in some countries, ILO interventions directly led to the creation of new businesses.

However, challenges persist in fully realizing the YEAP's vision for youth entrepreneurship. While the ILO has made significant progress on the supply side, particularly through training and capacity-building, the demand-side interventions, such as access to finance, market linkages, and

supportive business environments, remain underdeveloped. Many youth-led enterprises face difficulties in scaling due to these barriers, limiting the long-term impact of ILO interventions. Furthermore, while SIYB and other tools have been widely used, there is limited data on the actual outcomes, such as the number of businesses sustained or jobs created, which hinders the ability to assess the true effectiveness of the programming. Additionally, the institutionalization of ILO's entrepreneurship tools and methodologies within national systems has been uneven, with some countries successfully embedding them into public frameworks, while others have struggled with sustainability due to reliance on external funding. Survey respondents echoed this: only 28% of constituents and 45% of partners rated youth entrepreneurship efforts as effective or highly effective, pointing to the need for a more comprehensive and systemic approach.

Gender equality and non-discrimination have been consistently embedded into the design and implementation of their programmes. Gender has often been incorporated into design with the objective to eliminate gender disparities in employment, ensuring that young women, especially in the informal sector, have access to education, skills training, and entrepreneurship opportunities. This has been recognized positively by external stakeholders: 78% of constituents and **53% of partners** rated the ILO's gender-related actions as effective or highly effective. However, ILO staff expressed more cautious views (44%). While efforts to include persons with disabilities in youth employment initiatives have been made, they largely remain limited and often absent from programme design.

The ILO has also provided significant support to **young migrant workers**, addressing their unique challenges through a variety of programmes and initiatives aimed at improving their working conditions, ensuring their rights, and promoting decent work. Key efforts have focused on the development of national and regional frameworks for the protection of migrant workers' rights, particularly in countries with high levels of migration; training and awareness-raising activities to help young migrant workers understand their legal rights and access social protection services in their host countries; and provision of skills development and vocational training for migrant youth to increase their employability and facilitate their integration into the labour markets of host countries. For instance, the ILO has supported youth migrant workers in countries across the ASEAN region and Africa through tailored migration policies and capacity-building efforts aimed at improving decent work standards and access to labour rights. However, challenges remain in fully addressing the diverse and evolving needs of young migrant workers, particularly in the face of geopolitical instability, informality, and climate change.

The ILO's youth employment work also plays a significant role in advancing its **normative function**, particularly by promoting fundamental rights at work and tripartism and social dialogue at the country level. Through actions on integration in national legal and policy frameworks, capacity building, and advocacy with social partners, some of the conventions and standards promoted by the ILO in its work on youth employment. These have included C138 (Minimum Age), C182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour), C100 (Equal Remuneration Convention), C111 (Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)), and C159 (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons)).

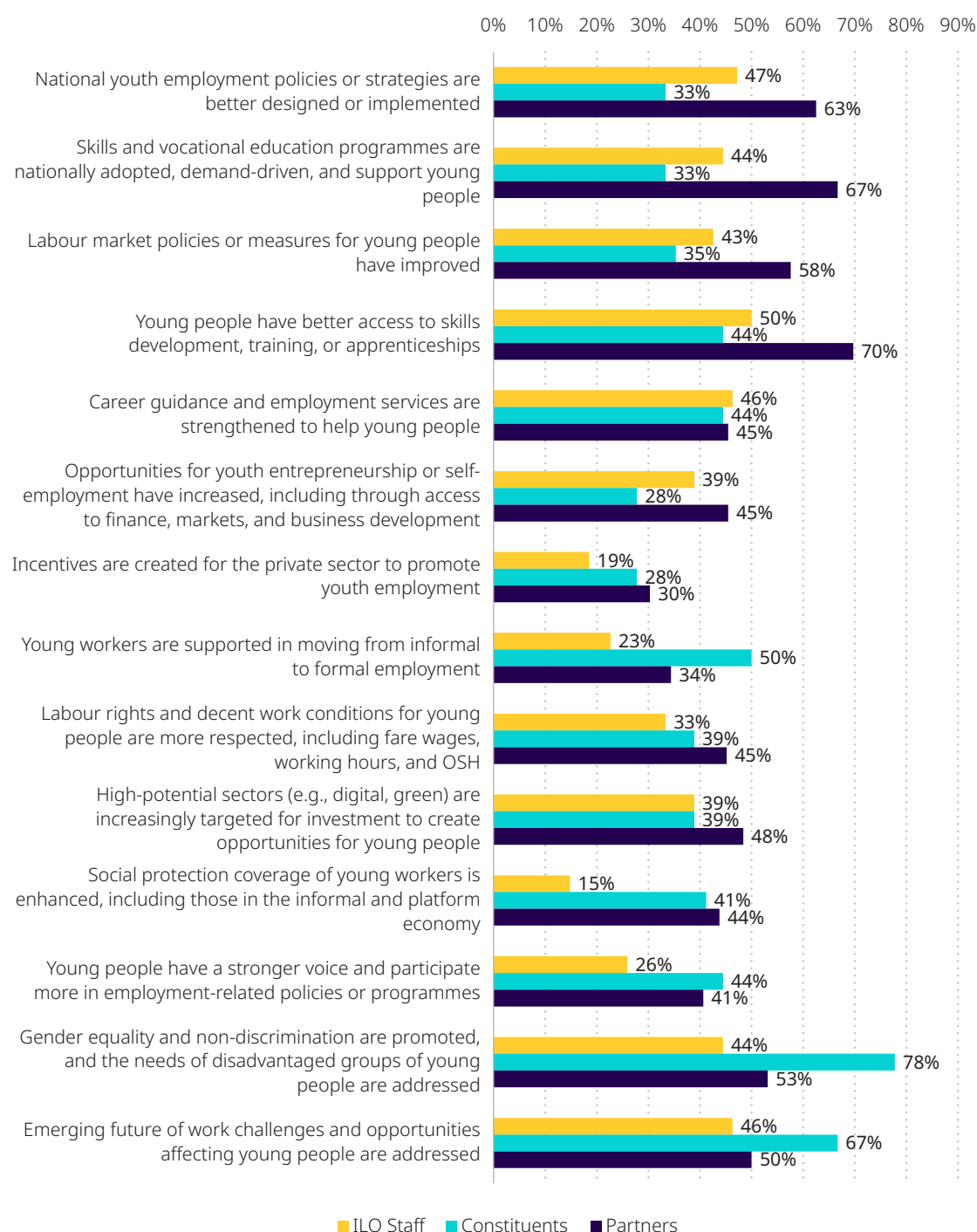
Although, ILO's actions are aligned with its normative mandate, this link is generally not specified in design documents. Also, while some initiatives have successfully integrated rights at work for youth, many youth employment programmes still group youth alongside broader vulnerable populations, failing to address their specific needs and vulnerabilities, particularly in sectors like migration and informal work. The extent and effectiveness of this contribution also vary depending on specific regional and national contexts.

Furthermore, the ILO has consistently facilitated **tripartism** and **social dialogue**, especially feeding into the development and implementation of national and sub-national policies and strategies. However, there is limited evidence of youth being systematically included as active participants in tripartite dialogue or as agents in the promotion of their own rights. While the ILO has promoted youth engagement through events like the Global Youth Employment Forum and Youth Trade Union Volunteers Camps, youth voices are often not institutionalized within national tripartite structures. Survey data reinforce this gap: only 26% of ILO staff and 44% of constituents and 40% of partners rated youth voice and participation as effective. Moreover, **enabling rights**, such as

freedom of association and **collective bargaining**, have not been as consistently included in youth-focused strategies.

The following figure (Figure 16) provides the summative breakdown of the effectiveness ratings from the survey across different dimensions of the ILO's work on youth employment and across type of respondent.

FIGURE 16: SURVEY RATINGS ON THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (% OF THOSE CHOOSING 'EFFECTIVE' OR 'HIGHLY EFFECTIVE')²¹⁵

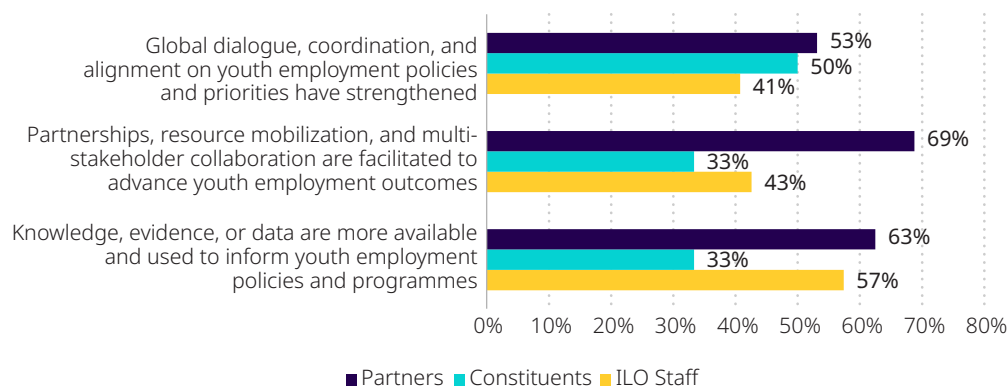


²¹⁵ In your view, how effective has the ILO's support on youth employment been in delivering meaningful improvements in the following areas? (ILO Staff N = 54; Constituents N = 18; Partners N = 33)

Overall, the YEAP's five policy areas have generally been well-integrated into ILO interventions, although there has been variation in the emphasis placed on each. **Employability and Youth Entrepreneurship have been the most prominent areas**, with strong attention to employment policies, strengthening of public-sector training strategies and capacities, and improving youth employability; while integrating emerging issues such as COVID-19, digital skills, and green jobs to varying degrees. Most of these supply-side focused measures have been successful in improving the skill sets of young people and facilitating their transitions into the workforce. Nevertheless, market-related barriers such as low private sector demand, limited access to finance, and insufficient job creation have hindered the sustainability of youth-led businesses and youth employment in general. Conversely, **demand-side** interventions (e.g., macroeconomic policies, sectoral investment strategies, private sector incentives, and public employment schemes) have been limited. Although some countries, like Mauritania and Mozambique, have integrated youth employment goals into their national economic strategies, there is a lack of clear, widespread focus in ILO programming on creating the demand for youth employment at scale. This imbalance has led to gaps in job creation, with gaps being especially more evident in sectors with low youth absorption, like the informal economy and fragile contexts. The limited demand-side interventions in the ILO's youth employment strategies can be attributed to the organization's historical focus on supply-side measures due to its work with labour ministries and TVET institutions, resource constraints, weak private sector engagement, and the difficulty of addressing macro-level challenges such as job creation and economic growth.

The ILO's **knowledge development and dissemination** initiatives in the area of Youth Employment represent a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach, encompassing global statistical leadership, flagship publications, regional platforms, and country-level diagnostics. Key knowledge products include: the Youth Labour Market Statistics Database (YouthSTATS), considered one of the most comprehensive statistical resources available globally on youth labour; the **Global Employment Trends for Youth (GET Youth)** series, providing quantitative and qualitative research on multiple issues of youth employment covered by the ILO; research and knowledge products related to COVID-19; and numerous country-level research and analysis on youth employment. These efforts have established the ILO as a key producer and curator of youth employment data and research. The survey also revealed the ILO's knowledge work on youth employment to be well-perceived, with 57% of ILO staff and 63% of partners viewing knowledge and data use as effective or highly effective. However, while significant in scope and technical quality, the integration of these outputs into programming and feedback loops remain inconsistent. At the field level, the influence of global knowledge products on shaping actions is often indirect, and while national-level outputs are rich in content, they often lack broader dissemination and external visibility. Compared to ILO staff and partners, the ILO's knowledge development work was rated effective or highly effective by a lower proportion of constituents (33 percent).

FIGURE 17: SURVEY RATINGS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF ILO'S KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS DIMENSIONS (% OF THOSE CHOOSING 'EFFECTIVE' OR 'HIGHLY EFFECTIVE')²¹⁶



²¹⁶ In your view, how effective has the ILO's support on youth employment been in delivering meaningful improvements in the following areas? (ILO Staff N = 54; Constituents N = 18; Partners N = 33)

The ILO is engaged in a wide range of **partnerships** to address youth employment challenges at global, regional, and national levels. These partnerships focus on promoting decent work for youth by collaborating with various stakeholders, including governments, social partners, the private sector, and civil society. Globally, the ILO has successfully initiated and integrated itself into various multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives, such as the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (GIDJY), the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, and the Global Coalition for Social Justice. These platforms bring together a wide range of stakeholders, strengthening collective efforts towards youth employment. In particular, the ILO GIDJY is the ILO's flagship partnership network on youth employment, bringing together over 100 partners, including UN agencies, governments, and the private sector, to foster system-wide cooperation and mobilize resources. This initiative has successfully generated \$27.6 million between 2017 and 2025.

At the **regional** level, the ILO has partnered with the African Union supported the adoption of the Youth Employment Strategy for Africa (YES Africa). In Asia, ILO collaborated with ASEAN and UNICEF to promote youth employment through policy integration, skills development, and digital economy opportunities. The ILO also works with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and ASEAN to integrate youth employment into national development and skills strategies as well as integration of decent work agenda in their financing approaches and strategies.

At the national level, the ILO works closely with governments and UN partners to develop targeted initiatives that address youth unemployment and the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups such as migrants, women, and refugees. These partnerships are often with organizations that have specialized expertise (e.g., UNICEF for education, UNHCR for refugee support) to strengthen the overall value and reach of its youth employment initiatives.

The ILO also targets partnerships to improve decent work outcomes for particularly vulnerable youth groups. For instance, in partnership with the UNFPA, the ILO is working towards improving labour policies in Pakistan to prevent violence against women. Additionally, the ILO collaborates with the UNHCR under the PROSPECTS Partnership to provide employment opportunities and upskilling for displaced people across numerous countries in Africa and the Arab States.

The absence of dedicated human resources affect ILO's collaboration with existing and potential partners. Furthermore, the lack of a centralized tracking system for youth employment partnerships has led to fragmented efforts and missed opportunities for leveraging synergies across regions and departments. This has resulted in compartmentalized efforts, duplicated workstreams, and missed opportunities to leverage synergies. Furthermore, while the ILO enjoys funding partnerships with some private sector entities, it largely lacks partnerships to influence or guide the work of large businesses with respect to decent work.

EFFICIENCY

KEY FINDING 7:

Since 2020, the ILO estimated total resource expenditure reached USD 445.8 million²¹⁷ on youth employment—22 per cent of its total expenditure—showing a 61 per cent increase in 2024 compared to 2020 levels, signalling stronger funding partners' commitment and a high fund utilization rate of nearly 80%. Evolving donor priorities — favouring niche themes like green transitions, digitalization, platform work, and crisis response— present opportunities for the ILO to effectively position youth employment as a priority within a variety of forward-looking agendas.



KEY FINDING 8:

Despite clear commitment, the ILO's delivery model for youth employment do not match the ambitions of the YEAP. Persistent staffing shortages with limited-term appointments, absence of formalized roles, and gaps in coordination between headquarters, regional, and country offices affect efforts towards youth employment outcomes. During the review period, over 95% of youth employment expenditure relied on Extra-Budgetary Development Cooperation (XBDC), with achievement of youth employment outcomes reliant on fragmented and time-bound initiatives.

KEY FINDING 9:

In the absence of a results framework, efforts to monitor progress under the YEAP have remained limited and largely ad hoc.

Efficiency was assessed from the perspective of human resources, and financial resource mobilization and utilization, monitoring and reporting, timeliness of interventions, and coordination with partners.

STAFFING

While individual staff commitment has enabled important contributions across levels, the institutional model remains fragmented and under-resourced. Currently, 23 staff within EMPLAB are involved in youth employment work, with six staff fully dedicated to this area. The remaining 17 staff allocate between 5 percent and 80 percent of their time to youth employment, averaging 35 percent, often balancing multiple priorities. In other departments/branches/units, youth-related work is typically subsumed within their respective thematic portfolios—such as skills development, labour migration, or gender, without a clear disaggregation of time and resource allocation. At the regional level, no region currently has a dedicated youth employment specialist, and responsibilities are informally shared among staff covering wider employment themes. At the country level, youth employment work is rarely supported by dedicated staff and is instead embedded within generalist roles or reliant on short-term project personnel. Across all levels, the absence of structurally defined roles, institutional mandates, and dedicated funding streams has constrained the ILO's ability to sustain strategic focus, ensure continuity, and scale youth employment efforts. Engagement with headquarters remains limited, with staff awareness of the

²¹⁷ This figure represents an internal estimate derived from the aggregation of expenditures associated with CPO initiatives and DC projects explicitly referencing the terms “youth” or “young”, and in the three official languages, drawing from data provided by the ILO Finance Department, the ILO dashboards for DC, and outcome-based work planning.

YEAP consistently low and few mechanisms in place to support structured dialogue or alignment. This overreliance on personal initiative—though enabling in the short term—renders the ILO's youth employment work vulnerable to discontinuity, loss of institutional memory, and uneven visibility within the broader organizational portfolio. Nonetheless, across levels, staff have often demonstrated resourcefulness and flexibility in delivering results despite limited structural and financial support.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND UTILIZATION

The ILO's **resource mobilization** efforts for youth employment have not been commensurate with the ambitions articulated in the YEAP. A draft resource mobilization strategy was prepared but was never finalized or operationalized. As a result, fundraising efforts related to youth employment have remained decentralized, fragmented, opportunistic, and dependent on the initiative of individual departments, regions, or projects. Joint cross-departmental resource mobilization is lacking, and there is also a disconnect within and across HQ and field offices. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a dedicated output on youth employment in the P&B facilitates access to regular budgetary resources such as RBSA and RBTC, which could be used to support and supplement efforts wherever they are needed most.

Between 2020 and 2024, the ILO's overall expenditure on youth employment amounted to USD 445.8 million, accounting for 22 percent of the Office's total expenditure over the same period. The level of expenditure has risen sharply during this period, with expenditure of 2024 representing a 60.6 percent increase compared to 2020 levels, representing an increase in the financial commitment to youth employment. During this period, approximately 95% of ILO's total expenditure on youth employment was made through XBDC resources, amounting to USD 427 million. However, the overall reported utilization rate approximately 76 percent, pointing to the need for review of financial planning and improved execution rates.

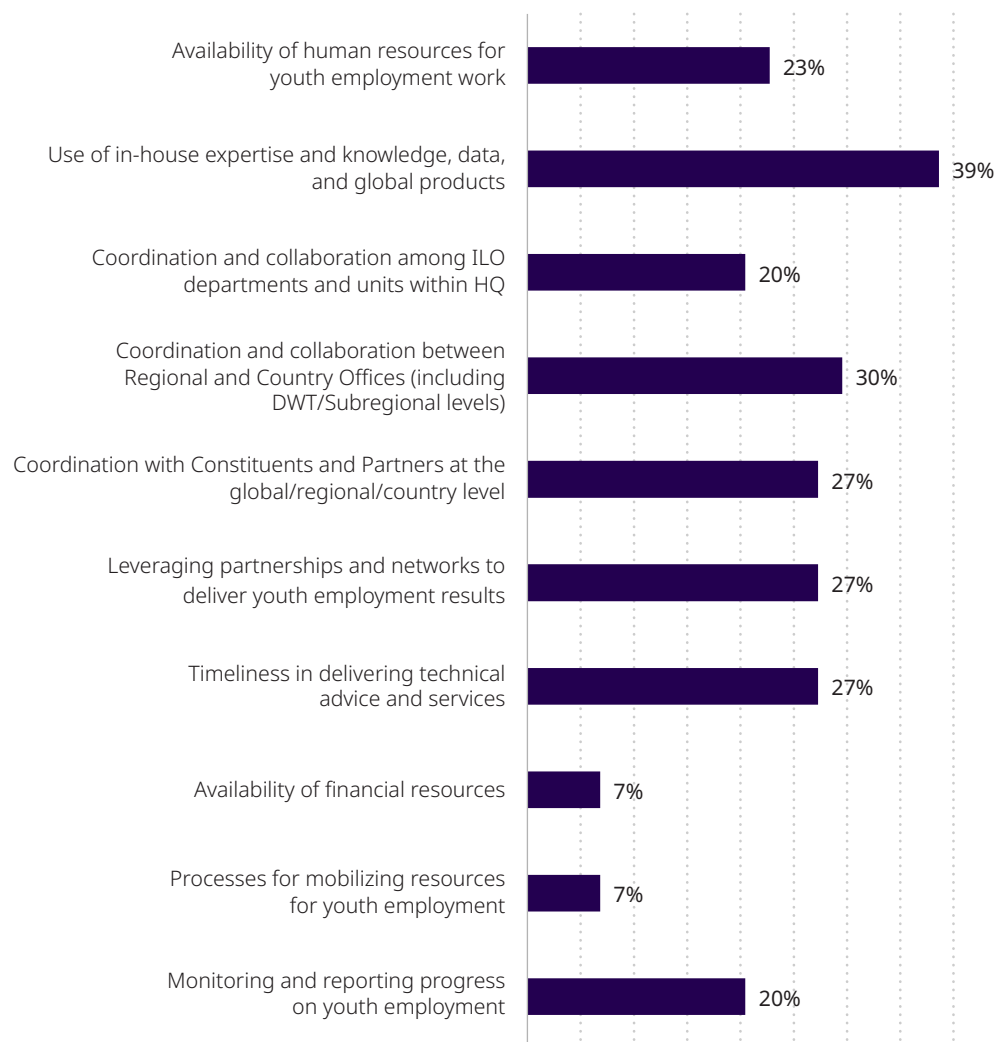
Shifting donor priorities continue to complicate fundraising efforts, with an increasing preference for framing entry points around broader thematic trends—such as green transitions, digital transformation, platform work, or responses to fragility and crises. In addition, several donors are also pivoting towards market-based strategies, such as trade development and impact investment. These preferences may target youth as a priority group but not necessarily the main focus of interventions.

While much of the ILO's youth employment resource mobilization remains externally funded, the case of Colombia offers a contrasting example of a domestically financed model, with nearly 90 percent of youth employment funding sourced from national trust funds. This experience provides insight into both the opportunities and challenges of high-volume domestic financing.

Among those surveyed, ILO staff highlighted significant **efficiency bottlenecks**. Only 23 percent of ILO staff rated the **availability of human resources** for youth employment work as efficient or highly efficient, and just 7 percent found the **availability or mobilization of financial resources** efficient or highly efficient—underscoring severe resourcing constraints.

The following figure (Figure 18) illustrates the ratings of ILO Staff across various dimensions of efficiency of the ILO's work on youth employment.

FIGURE 18: SURVEY RATINGS OF ILO STAFF ON DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF EFFICIENCY OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (% OF THOSE CHOOSING 'EFFICIENT OR 'HIGHLY EFFICIENT')²¹⁸



MONITORING AND REPORTING

While the YEAP outlined several clusters and thematic priorities, it lacked a technical implementation plan, operational roadmap, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. This gap has hindered systematic tracking and oversight of the Action Plan's implementation. Reporting on youth employment is primarily done through the P&B results framework, but the absence of output indicators specifically targeting youth employment has compounded this issue. Although Output 3.5, introduced in the 2024–25 biennium, has partially addressed this gap by reviving institutional tracking of youth-related activities, it does not capture the full range of youth-related work taking place under other outputs, such as skills, enterprises, migration, and GESI, etc., leaving much of the ILO's youth employment efforts untracked in formal reporting.

The challenge of monitoring youth employment initiatives is further exacerbated by the transversal nature of this work. Many interventions that benefit young people, such as skills training, entrepreneurship promotion, or employment in the care economy, are implemented under broader thematic programmes without being specifically framed, tagged, or reported as youth employment initiatives. This lack of consistent categorization across internal systems makes it difficult to quantify or assess the scope and coherence of the ILO's youth employment portfolio.

²¹⁸ How would you rate the efficiency (this includes reasonable and well-balanced use of financial and human resources, technical expertise, and timeliness of activities) of the ILO's work on youth employment on the following parameters: (ILO Staff N = 44)

The Evaluation also found significant variation in how youth-informed approaches were applied in project design, the presence of youth-specific indicators, and the disaggregation of results by age.

While a progress update on the YEAP was submitted to the Governing Body in 2023, there is a need for monitoring and reporting to be oriented towards outcome harvesting and lessons learned. Such an approach will also be contributing to improving visibility of results and assist in resource mobilization efforts. An isolated example from the Asia and the Pacific region in 2023 demonstrated potential, where a report was created based on YEAP survey data. However, this effort, while promising, remains isolated and was not institutionalized or published.

To address monitoring challenges, the newly established Youth Employment Unit has developed a standardized survey tool to collect information on youth employment-related initiatives across the Office. The survey aligns with the UN Youth 2030 Strategy's reporting requirements, offering a more comprehensive view of the ILO's youth-related work while reducing dual reporting burdens. However, in its current form, the survey functions more as a mapping tool for visibility rather than a robust mechanism for results-based monitoring or strategic oversight.

TIMELINESS OF INTERVENTIONS

The timeliness of the ILO's actions on youth employment has been mixed, with notable efforts to address urgent and evolving needs, but also challenges in adapting swiftly to changing global circumstances. On one hand, the ILO has been responsive to emerging challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing timely support for youth employment recovery and advocating for youth-inclusive labour market policies. For instance, the ILO's initiatives like the "Youth Employment Recovery Plan" during the pandemic and support for digital skills development have addressed immediate issues in youth employment transitions.

However, despite these efforts, the ILO's actions have sometimes been constrained by the slow pace of operationalizing policies and frameworks. For instance, while the ILO has developed and promoted the long-term YEAP, there have been delays in the development of a results framework and resource mobilization framework. At the country, timeliness of initiatives is affected by a variety of factors, including but not limited to the responsiveness of constituents, security challenges, weak infrastructure, lack of data and evidence, and donor project management and financing procedures, etc. For instance, the Youth Employment Programme in Ethiopia faced delays due to political instability, changing government priorities, lack of coordination between government ministries and stakeholders in rural areas. Similarly, introduction of the Youth Guarantee (YG) model in the Western Balkans suffered from timeliness challenges. Despite the momentum from the EU's pre-accession funding, political and financial constraints within the participating countries, such as Albania and Kosovo, caused significant delays in the adoption and implementation of the YG framework.

COORDINATION WITH CONSTITUENTS AND PARTNERS

Findings from the survey (Figure 19) showed that external stakeholders—particularly constituents—rated ILO efficiency very positively, especially in operational and procedural domains. A striking 93 percent of constituents and 75 percent of partners rated the ILO's use of their organization's time and resources as efficient or highly efficient. Similarly high ratings were recorded for clarity of communication, accessibility, follow-up and continuity of engagement, and administrative processes, with around 78 percent of constituents expressing satisfaction across these dimensions. In addition, 86 percent of constituents rated ILO as efficient or highly efficient with regards to the flexibility and adaptability of its processes, and coordination with other actors each. While development partners also reported broadly favourable views, their ratings were consistently more moderate—for instance, only 57 percent found ILO's coordination with other actors efficient, and 64 percent found ILO's technical support timely.

FIGURE 19: SURVEY RATINGS OF CONSTITUENTS ON DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF EFFICIENCY OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (% OF THOSE CHOOSING 'EFFICIENT OR 'HIGHLY EFFICIENT')²¹⁹

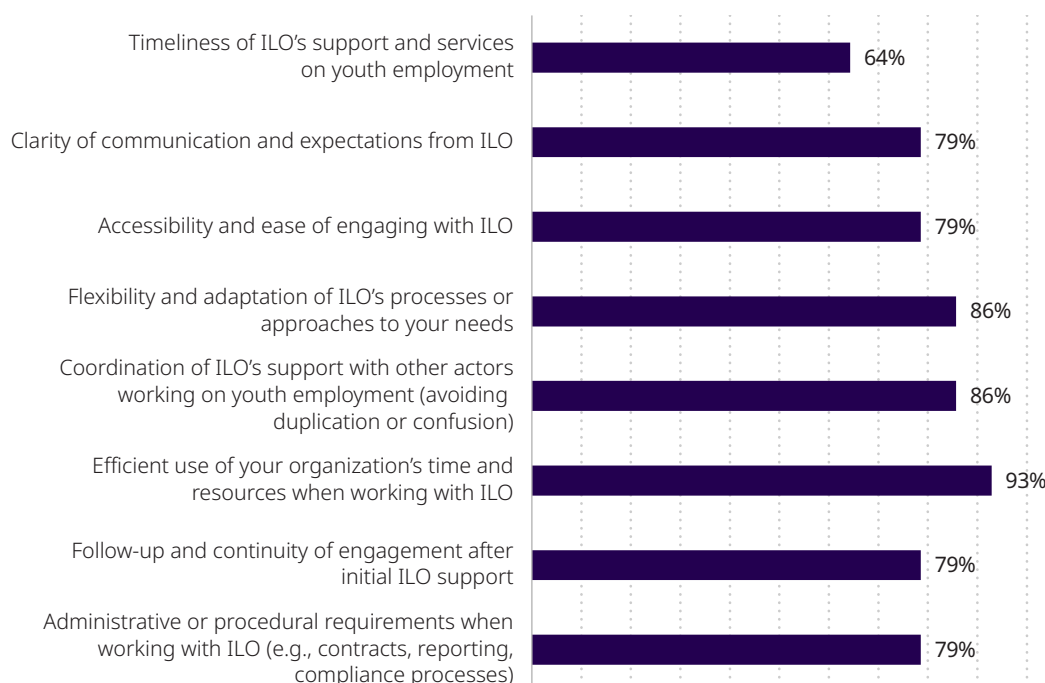
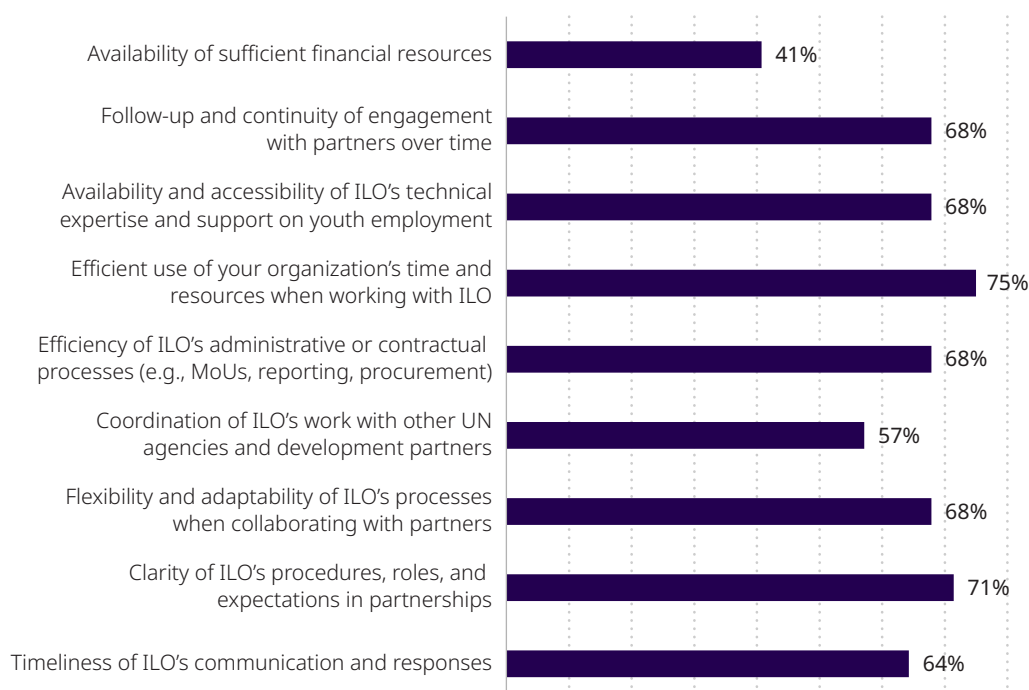


FIGURE 20: SURVEY RATINGS OF PARTNERS ON DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF EFFICIENCY OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT²²⁰



²¹⁹ How would you rate the efficiency (i.e., this includes reasonable and well-balanced use of resources, technical expertise, and timeliness of activities) of ILO's support on youth employment in the following areas, since 2020? (Constituents N = 14)

²²⁰ In your experience, how would you rate the efficiency (i.e., this includes reasonable and well-balanced use of resources, technical expertise, and timeliness of activities) of ILO's engagement and collaboration with partners on youth employment? (Partners N = 28)

The ILO's partnerships are an essential element in advancing youth employment initiatives. However, ILO faces certain challenges in managing its partnerships with respect to internal coordination, especially between headquarters, regional offices, and country offices. Staffing shortages and fragmented coordination mechanisms further complicate the alignment of efforts towards youth employment outcomes. The lack of dedicated resources for youth employment initiatives at the ILO, especially at the country level, hampers the effectiveness of partnerships.

Some partners also report lack of clarity with respect to engaging with the complementary partnership platforms, such as the Global Accelerator for Jobs and the Global Coalition for Social Justice. In addition, the lack of internal cohesion can lead to redundancies or challenges and may also put various departments or programmes within the Organization at the risk of competing against each other. Furthermore, limited human resources and the centralization of technical specialists in the regional offices and/or headquarters also affects the timeliness of ILO's response to new and emerging partnerships. Finally, initiating partnerships at the global level can be time consuming at the risk of losing significant opportunities when the ILO has to get engaged with its constituents in lengthy consultations for decision making.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ORIENTATION TOWARDS IMPACT

KEY FINDING 10:

Integrated solutions and local buy-in demonstrate potential for impact and sustainability in several countries. However, the majority of ILO's youth employment work relies on technical assistance, with limited scale, and challenged uptake of results through integration into national frameworks with sustained domestic financing. These factors undermine sustainability, while limited focus on demand-side solutions and weak private sector engagement in job creation and talent retention reduce likelihood of impact.



KEY FINDING 11:

Absence of robust monitoring frameworks severely hinders the assessment of the impact and scalability of interventions.

The ILO has made significant efforts to design and implement interventions in ways that maximize sustainability at the country level. This has been achieved through aligning initiatives and tools with national priorities, embedding research and outputs within local institutional frameworks, and capacity building of stakeholders.

The ILO has supported the development and revision of **NEPs** that explicitly prioritize youth, providing them with frameworks for sustainable job creation. In some countries, the ILO's support has included integrated, multi-faceted elements to **Labour Market Policies and TVET systems**. For instance, support under the Skills 21 Project in **Bangladesh**, in alignment with the national skills development strategy, helped modernize PES infrastructure and introduced job-matching platforms, career guidance modules, and digital tools for labour market data collection; provided training for PES staff; and contributed to the institutionalization of these services within national policy frameworks. A similar example exists at the sub-national level in **Colombia**, where under the APED project, the ILO supported the redesign and expansion of Bogotá's District Employment Agency (ADE) to include integrated vocational guidance, soft skills development, transversal competencies, and data-driven early warning systems, and improved outreach to marginalized areas through the use of mobile units and community-based care centres. This intervention enabled the scaling of the ADE's impact, from 2,000 job placements to 75,000 between 2020 and 2023. This helped streamline employment, entrepreneurship, and training services, integrating them into one cohesive system, thereby significantly improving youth access to decent work opportunities. The project also collaborated with local governments, educational institutions (such

as SENA), and employers, helping integration into the existing national framework, increasing its sustainability and potential for replication in other regions.

The example of ILO's support to the New Enterprise-based Apprenticeship Programme in **China** is a unique example of sustainable youth employment intervention, demonstrating how local ownership and resource availability can ensure sustainability. This large-scale program, which has engaged over 2 million apprentices since 2019, focuses on providing apprenticeships in a range of industries while simultaneously integrating green skills into the curriculum. The program is fully embedded within national structures, with strong institutional ownership and continuous public investment, making it one of the most successful examples of ILO's long-term impact.

The ILO has also contributed to the modernization of **national TVET systems**, helping countries to better align skills development with labour market needs. For instance, **Vietnam's** Skills Development Strategy and **Indonesia's** vocational reforms have benefited from ILO's technical expertise, which has increased local ownership and institutional capacity to carry out youth employment initiatives independently over time.

The ILO's tools like the **SIYB** program, **KAB**, and **RPL** have been widely adopted by countries to equip youth with entrepreneurial skills, improve employability, and enhance social mobility. In some instances, these tools are embedded in national policies and institutions, ensuring that the benefits extend beyond the duration of specific ILO interventions. In Tunisia, SIYB methodology has been integrated into national employment framework, and in Cambodia the ILO's KAB has been adopted by multiple ministries.

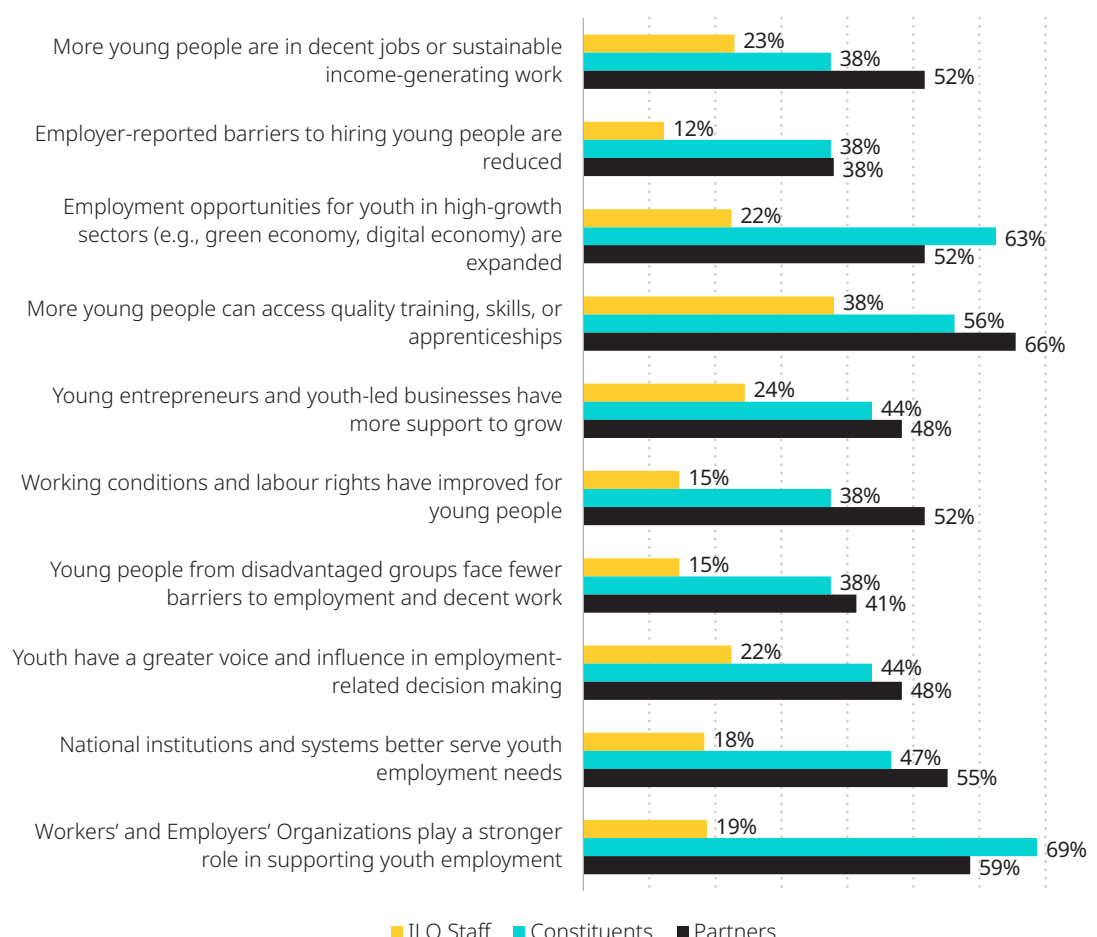
Through its partnerships, the ILO's support has also led to sustainable outcomes at the **regional and global levels**. For instance, support to the AfDB has led to the mainstreaming of youth employment within the Bank's financing mechanism. The evaluation also observed that the high transferability of the ILO's tools supports replication and upscaling, as in several cases, to promote youth employment the SIYB has been implemented by other development organizations, independent of ILO collaboration.

While the above stated examples reveal the potential for broad-based and lasting impact, they represent exceptional cases. In most countries, **the lack of continued financing, weak institutional capacities, and evolving socio-political and security contexts continue to be major threats to the potential for impact and sustainability**. The majority of ILO initiatives being donor-funded pilots, continue to rely on external funding and technical assistance or are limited in scope, preventing them from achieving broad national scale or long-term viability. Weak governance frameworks, changing government priorities, and limited coordination among stakeholders also affect the implementation of policies, institutionalization of outcomes, and allocation of longer-term domestic financing. For example, in countries like Ethiopia and Jordan, while employment services have been expanded, the reliance on donor support and the lack of clear plans for government ownership post-project highlight ongoing risks to the sustainability of these initiatives. Moreover, a significant share of ILO's youth employment programming is delivered in conflict or post-conflict settings, which suffer from high levels of uncertainty, unfunctional infrastructure, and weak governance, thereby having implications for sustainability. While pilots under the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans are facing challenges with respect to developing collaborative linkages between different ministries.

Survey data reinforce this uneven picture. Stakeholder perceptions suggest that while the ILO has contributed to positive change in areas like **access to skills and training**—rated as impactful or highly impactful by 66% of partners and 56% of constituents—perceived impact in other key areas remains limited. For instance, only 23% of ILO staff and 38% of constituents felt that the ILO had been impactful or highly impactful in terms of increasing the number of young people who are now in decent jobs or sustainable income-generating work. Impact on **working conditions and labour rights, barriers facing disadvantaged youth, and youth voice in decision-making** were also rated modestly by all groups. Notably, just **12% of ILO staff** viewed the ILO's work as impactful or highly impactful in reducing **employer-reported barriers** to hiring youth, underscoring the continued challenge of achieving transformative change on the **demand side** of youth employment. The

following figure (Figure 21) illustrates the survey ratings on impact of the ILO's work on youth employment across various dimension.

FIGURE 21: SURVEY RATINGS ON THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (% OF THOSE CHOOSING 'IMPACTFUL OR 'HIGHLY IMPACTFUL')²²¹

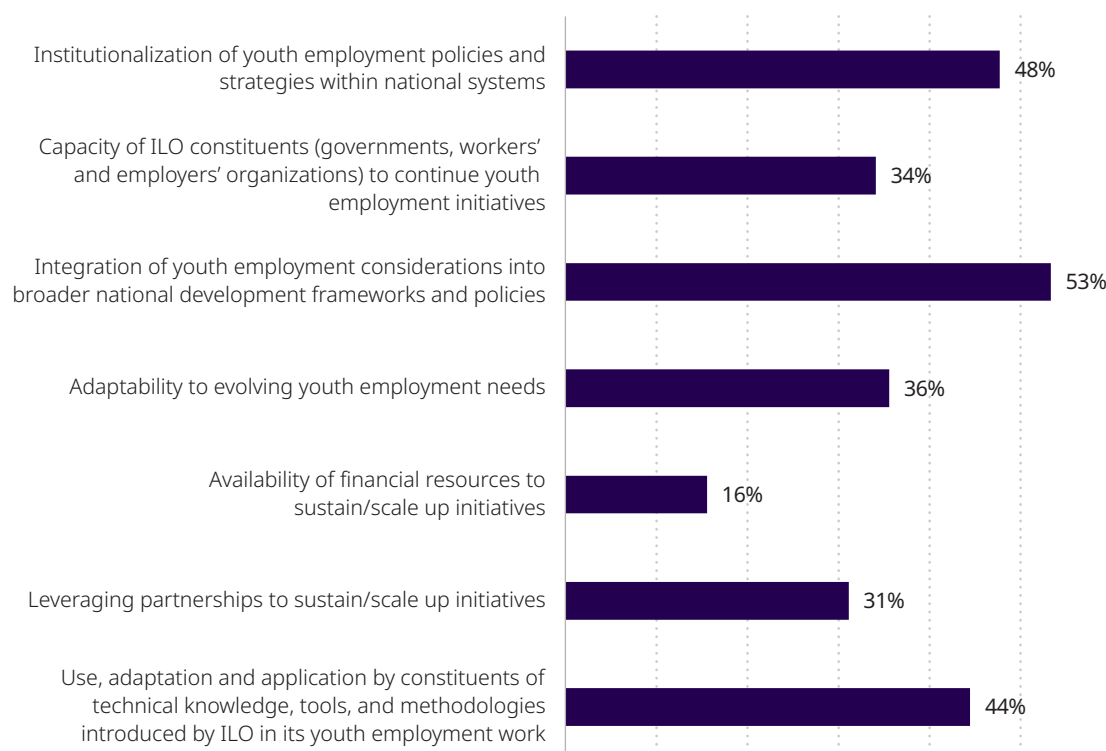


With regards to the sustainability of the ILO's work on youth employment, among ILO staff, perceptions are mixed. The highest confidence lies in the **integration of youth employment into broader national development frameworks** (53%) and **institutionalization youth employment policies within national systems** (48%), suggesting some perceived success in policy mainstreaming.

However, far fewer staff believe that results will be sustained in practice. Only 34 percent see constituents' capacity as sufficient, and just 16 percent believe **financial resources** will be available to continue or scale up initiatives—highlighting major gaps in operational and financial sustainability. Confidence is also relatively lower in **partnerships for scale-up** (31%) and adaptability to evolving needs (36%).

While 44% believe **ILO-introduced tools and methodologies** will continue to be used, overall the results point to a need for stronger support to national actors, financing strategies, and adaptive capacities to ensure lasting impact. The following figure (Figure 22) illustrates the ratings provided by ILO staff across different dimensions of sustainability.

²²¹ To what extent do you consider that the ILO's work has had an impact—defined as the positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention—in contributing to meaningful, positive changes in the following areas related to youth employment, since 2020? (ILO Staff N = 50; Constituents N = 16; Partners N = 29)

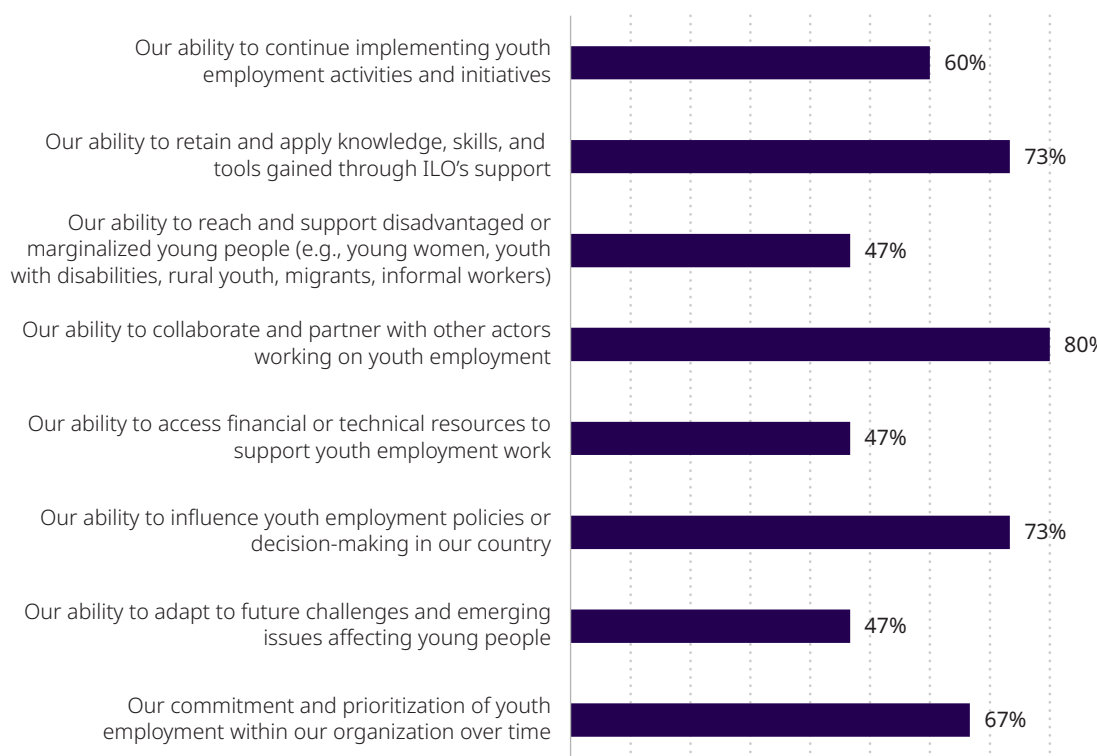
FIGURE 22: SURVEY RATINGS OF ILO STAFF ON DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (% OF THOSE CHOOSING 'LIKELY OR 'HIGHLY LIKELY) ²²²

Conversely, constituents express a generally higher level of confidence in their own ability to sustain youth employment work compared to ILO staff perceptions. Notably, **80%** of respondents rated their **ability to collaborate and partner with other actors** as strong, and **73%** felt confident in both their capacity to retain and apply knowledge/tools gained through ILO support and their **influence on youth employment policy**. These results suggest that many constituents feel institutionally anchored and capable of continuing engagement in youth employment, at least in terms of knowledge, advocacy, and partnerships.

However, there are clear limitations. Fewer than half of the respondents rated their **ability to access financial or technical resources** (47%) and their **capacity to adapt to emerging challenges** (47%) as likely or highly likely in ensuring the sustainability of their work, echoing similar concerns raised by ILO staff. Likewise, only **47%** expressed confidence in reaching marginalized youth, pointing to persistent equity and outreach challenges. While **commitment to youth employment appears solid (67%)** and **implementation capacity is rated fairly high (60%)**, the lower ratings on resourcing, adaptability, and inclusion indicate that sustainability is uneven.

²²² In your opinion, what is the likelihood of sustainability of the results achieved through ILO's work on youth employment — that is, the likelihood that these results will continue or be maintained after ILO's direct support ends? (ILO Staff N = 45)

FIGURE 23: SURVEY RATINGS OF CONSTITUENTS ON DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ILO'S WORK ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (LIKELY OR HIGHLY LIKELY)²²³



²²³ How would you assess your organization's ability to sustain its work on youth employment — through your activities, capacities, partnerships, and engagement — without ILO's direct support? (Constituents N = 15)



06

- Conclusions, lessons learned and emerging good practices



CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES

CONCLUSIONS

The YEAP 2020–2030 sets out a focused strategic vision that reaffirms the ILO's normative and technical leadership in youth employment, positioning it as a lever of economic and social stability. Since its inception, the ILO has positioned itself as a global knowledge leader, advancing policy integration and country-level diagnostics, and contributing to promoting youth rights at work, strengthening social dialogue and tripartism, and embed youth employment into national frameworks aligned with international labour standards. Programming strengthened public employment services, enhanced skills systems, and promoted youth entrepreneurship—primarily through supply-side interventions. The introduction of Programme and Budget (P&B) Output 3.5 in 2024-2025, and rising donor interest in green and digital transitions provide a platform to scale the ILO's youth employment efforts.

Moving forward, the ILO's capacity to deliver on the YEAP remains constrained by critical gaps and decent work deficits. Despite progress since YEAP's inception, demand-side interventions need stronger focus to unlock solutions to job creation challenges and strengthen private sector engagement in youth job creation and talent retention. Youth participation in decision-making remains inconsistent and lacks influence. Internally, short funding cycles with limited resources, loose internal governance for interdisciplinary work, and absence of costed planning and results monitoring and reporting weaken long-term strategic delivery and impact assessment. Limited uptake of results by Member States through integration into national systems further restrict the scale, sustainability, and impact of youth employment initiatives.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following key lessons learned emerged from this HLE:

Lesson learned 1: The absence of a measurable integrated results framework and costed resourcing plan has limited the YEAP's strategic utility, leading to fragmented actions across the ILO. The IDAG plays a convening role but lacks the mandate to drive interdisciplinary work across departments and regions.

Lesson learned 2: Youth employment efforts remain largely supply-side focused. Without strengthened demand-side measures—such as support to job creation, private sector engagement, and macroeconomic strategies—initiatives risk falling short of sustainable, long-term impact. Models like the Youth Guarantee show promise but will need significant adaptation outside the EU context.

Lesson learned 3: The Youth Employment Strategy developed with the African Union provides the potential to promote and implement coherent national-level youth employment measures across Africa. Emerging opportunities exist for funding partnerships with governments of upper middle-income countries. Constituent demand is also rising in these contexts for digital and green skills. However, nurturing partnerships require dedicated strategies and human resources.

EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES

The following emerging good practices have been identified and highlighted by the evaluation:

Increasing trend of support to digitalization

The ILO's support for digital skills has emerged as an effective strategy for promoting youth employment, particularly by equipping young people with the skills required for success in the digital economy. The organization has increasingly integrated tailored digital tools into its programming, creating impactful opportunities for youth in regions facing high unemployment. For example, in the Philippines, the ILO has implemented training programmes on the use of internet and IT for young entrepreneurs in the rural areas as a strategy to enhance their resilience during COVID-19, while another initiative enhanced the market-responsive skills of young women in advanced IT topics, such as web development and coding, software development, and data analysis and management, etc. Similarly, in Indonesia, the ILO helped integrate digital technologies into TVET by creating blended learning models that combined online and face-to-face training. It focused on equipping youth with in-demand skills in IT, e-commerce, and digital marketing, while also developing essential soft skills, ensuring a workforce ready for the digital economy. Through such efforts, the ILO is shaping an emerging good practice that supports youth employment by harnessing the power of digitalization to bridge skills gaps and foster sustainable livelihoods.

Leveraging domestic financial resources

In Colombia, the ILO has effectively leveraged local financing resources to support its development initiatives, making it a noteworthy example of utilizing national resources for sustainable youth employment actions. For instance, the ILO has worked closely with the Colombian Ministry of Labor and other local entities to access resources from national employment funds and social protection programmes. This integration of local financing into ILO's programming in Colombia has also enhanced local ownership of ILO support and is a clear example of maximizing national assets for greater development impact.

Transferability of ILO tools

The Evaluation found that some ILO tools are highly transferable across contexts and geographies and are being utilized by other major development organizations. For example, as part of the *Aquaculture Business Development Programme* – a Government of Kenya and IFAD trained 600 young individuals through ToTs in the fish value chain and developing bankable business plan to be supported by the Programme. Similarly, under the Government of DRC-implemented and AfDB funded *Youth Entrepreneurship in Agriculture and Agri-Business* Project, 1,943 entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs received training across the four SIYB modules. In DRC, the SIYB programme has also been promoted to several organizations in the country in 2024, such as UNDP, the Ministry of Industry and Development of SMEs, and Save the Children, with potential partnerships reportedly expected.² These examples highlight the broader utility, adaptability, and recognized value of ILO's entrepreneurship tools in inter-agency programming contexts, even when the ILO is not the lead implementer or not involved at all, and also point to a potential entry point for developing partnerships.

Ownership of ilo outcomes for scaling up

China's upscaling of the ILO-supported apprenticeship programme serves as another emerging good practice in scaling up. Initially launched as a pilot initiative, the programme has now successfully trained thousands of young people, equipping them with practical skills in industries such as manufacturing, construction, and technology. The apprenticeship model, which combines on-the-job training with classroom instruction, has been instrumental in improving youth employability by ensuring that apprentices gain hands-on experience and are ready to meet the specific demands of employers.



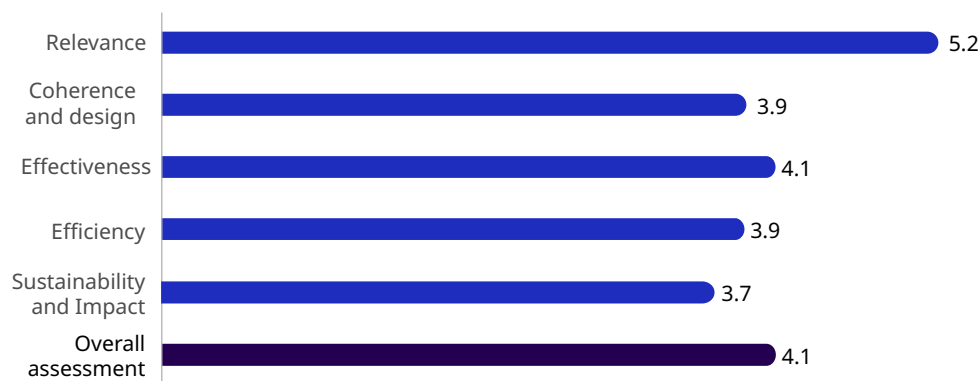
07

► Overall
assessment

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Figure 24 depicts the scores attributed to the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the ILO's work on youth employment. Ratings comprise the survey results, scores from the Synthesis Review Report, and the assessment of the evaluation team. The evaluation used a six-point scale (also used in the survey) to express these scores, with 1 being the lowest score, indicating highly unsatisfactory, and 6 being the highest, indicating highly satisfactory.

FIGURE 24: EVALUATION OF THE ILO'S STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS UNDER THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN - RATINGS BY CRITERION



ALT Text insertion: Overall Assessment Ratings. Relevance: 5.2; Coherence and Design: 3.9; Effectiveness: 4.1; Efficiency: 3.9; Sustainability and Impact: 3.7; Overall: 4.1



08

► Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

To sustain its leadership role, the ILO should balance supply-side measures with a sharper focus on the active promotion of youth employment creation through targeted, demand-side interventions. This can be achieved through strengthening its work on cross-ministerial and comprehensive policy frameworks, based on social dialogue and youth engagement, and through the concrete application of newly developed tools such as employment budgeting tools, demand-side impact assessments, and more work on ALMPs. The focus should continue to be on high-job-potential sectors such as green, digital and care.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods (EMPLOYMENT), with support from: Sustainable Enterprises, Productivity and Just Transitions (ENTERPRISES) Universal Social Protection Regions and Decent Work Teams (DWTS) Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)		Short-Term	Low

RECOMMENDATION 2

For cohesive management and full realization of the YEAP results, the Youth Employment Unit should be authoritatively mandated to coordinate youth employment activities across the ILO and optimize resource utilization. To maximize delivery, the overlap between the Output 3.5 coordination team and IDAG should be addressed, resulting in a formally mandated and actively engaged network of ILO staff—with allocated time—for coordinated planning, shared accountability for results, and effective outreach across youth-related initiatives. To strengthen field delivery, results from the workforce gap analysis should be considered to address capacity needs in emerging areas in the field, such as digital and green transitions, conflict-sensitive programming, public employment services, and entrepreneurship ecosystem development. This will help ensure the ILO can provide responsive, high-quality technical support aligned with evolving youth employment challenges and opportunities.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
EMPLOYMENT Human Resources Department (HRD) Strategic Programming and Management (PROGRAM)		Medium-Term	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 3

The ILO should complement the YEAP with an integrated results framework to forge greater institutional programming and strengthen results-based planning, monitoring and reporting. This framework should guide progress tracking and be linked to monitoring field-level delivery, supported by regular reporting to inform programming and enhance results visibility. Collecting age-disaggregated and qualitative data will be essential to assess youth outcomes and strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
EMPLOYMENT		Medium-Term	Low

RECOMMENDATION 4

To strengthen sustainability and impact, the ILO should explore avenues to leverage financial resources with its national constituents, enhance private sector engagement for job creation and talent retention, promote decent work and labour rights, and engage regional and global development banks to integrate the decent work agenda for youth into their financing instruments and technical assistance programmes. The ILO should continue maximizing global partnership platforms by prioritizing the development of value propositions, adopting a unified and tailored engagement approach, and assigning dedicated partnership staff across country, regional, and HQ levels. To enable coordinated inter-agency action at regional and country levels, the ILO should continue to lead the development of partnership agreements or MOUs with other UN agencies at the headquarters and regional-office levels, ensuring they are focused on delivering concrete, results-oriented outcomes.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
EMPLOYMENT, with support from: Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation (PARTNERSHIPS) Regions and DWTS		Medium-Term	Medium



09

► Office
response

► OFFICE RESPONSE

The Office remains committed to strengthening its leadership and delivery on youth employment through the YEAP, aligned with its normative mandate and constituents' evolving priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Office will further support constituents to implement demand-side interventions. The Employment Policy Department (EMPLOYMENT) will strengthen the theory of change and advocacy tools to clarify the relevance of proposed demand-side interventions, including macro-economic and sectoral policies for structural transformation. The Office will intensify support to constituents to design and implement comprehensive cross-ministerial, tripartite, youth-inclusive, and gender-sensitive employment policies. It will broaden the use of tools like employment budgeting and impact assessments, and target job creation in high-potential sectors, notably green, digital, and care economies. Job creation through youth entrepreneurship, access to finance, etc. will remain a focus led by Entreprises Department. The Office will continue strengthening expertise on youth targeted ALMPs, capturing labour demand, supply and intermediation issues. In collaboration with ACTRAV and ACTEMP, guidance will be further developed to enhance meaningful youth engagement, including in social dialogue.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Office will strengthen internal coordination and delivery capacity through additional resource mobilization and internal restructuring. The Youth Employment Unit will be mandated to coordinate youth employment across the Organization, including:

- Coordinating delivery under Output 3.5 (P&B 2026-2027) to ensure all YEAP areas are addressed.
- Convening the Interdepartmental Action Group (IDAG) under the EMPLOYMENT Director, supporting communication and collaboration to foster greater clarity on roles, responsibilities, identify opportunities for action and co-creation and increase IDAG accountability.
- Promoting stronger partnerships and multi-stakeholder alliances including through the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth.

These tasks will seek greater coherence and less fragmentation in the ILO's youth employment work, with efforts made to reflect time commitments of IDAG members in their BoC. The Office will – upon resource availability – strengthen technical capacities in digital and green transitions, crisis-sensitive responses, entrepreneurship ecosystems, and public employment services.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Office will develop an integrated results framework for the YEAP for institutional coherence. Monitoring and reporting responsibilities will be clarified and formalised to enhance accountability. The Office will continue high quality reporting under the UN Youth Strategy. Based on the successful expansion of youth statistics, age-disaggregated data and youth-specific indicators will be further developed, collected and analysed.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Office will promote leveraging of domestic resources for youth employment, and work with constituents to deepen private sector engagement. At global level, the ILO will expand collaboration with development banks and further integrate decent work for youth into financing instruments, building on the successful Youth, Jobs and Skills Marker launched by the African Development Bank with the support of the ILO. The Office will further refine its value proposition for partners and strengthen presence in global and regional platforms and partnerships. In Africa, it will build on the AU-ILO YES Africa achievements. It will continue leading the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and further integrate youth employment into multi-stakeholders' initiatives, such as the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions.

