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Evaluation
Office

► Decent Work Country Programme (2025)

Independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme strategies and activities in ILO-subregion of Central America with emphasis on Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico (2020 – 24)

August 2025



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This high-level evaluation has not been professionally edited, but it has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.



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ACRONYMS

ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities
ACT/EMP	Bureau for Employers' Activities
ASTRADOMES	Association of Domestic Workers of Costa Rica
AMECAFE	Mexican Association of the Coffee Production Chain
BHR/RBC	National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights
CA	Contribution Analysis
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America y el Caribe
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CCE	Business Coordinating Council
CCIT	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa
CCSS	Costa Rican Social Security Fund
CINTERFOR	Inter-American Centre for the Development of Knowledge in Vocational Training
CITI	Intersecretarial Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Working Adolescents of Permitted Age
CMT	Council of Ministers of Labour
CNE	National Employment Council
CNM	National Migration Council
CNSST	National Council for Occupational Safety and Health
CNTRLLS	National Tripartite Commission on Labour Relations and Freedom of Association
CO	Country Office
COHEP	Honduran Council of Private Enterprises
CONAMUCOP	National Council of Women's Cooperatives of Honduras
CONATO	National Council of Organized Workers
CONCAMIN	Confederation of Industrial Chambers
CPO	Country Programme Outcomes
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSS	Social Security Fund
CTM	Confederation of Mexican Workers
CTRL-C	Tripartite Council for Labour Relations
CTRN	Costa Rican Confederation of Workers
CUTH	United Confederation of Workers of Honduras
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DGME	General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs
DW	Decent Work
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
DWT	Decent Work Team

ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean
EM	Evaluation Manager
ENETH	National Strategy for Employability and Human Talent
ENIT	National Labour Inspection Strategy
ENTEF	National Strategy for the Transition to the Formal Economy
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERdE	Employment Recovery Strategy
ETOE	Telephone Survey of Occupation and Employment
EU	European Union
EVAL	ILO Evaluation Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FETRADOMOV	Federation of Women Domestic Workers and Tradeswomen
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FORLAC	Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean
GB	Governing Body
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GIG	Gender Interagency Group
GIMH	Interagency Migration Group in Mexico
GLOs	Global Products
HLE	High-level evaluation
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDAF	Centre for Applied Research on Agroforestry Development
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFAD	Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financial Institution
IHCAFE	Honduran Coffee Institute
IHSS	Honduran Institute of Social Security
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILS	International Labour Standards
IMESU	Municipal Institute of Statistics and Urban Information
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMSS	Mexican Institute of Social Security
INA	National Learning Institute
INAES	National Institute of Social Economy
INAMU	National Institute for Women

INCAFECH	National Institute of Coffee in Chiapas
INEGI	National Institute of Statistics and Geography
INFOTEP	National Institute for Technical and Vocational Training
INM	National Migration Institute
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	Integrated Resource Information System
ITC	International Trade Center
IVM	Actuarial valuation of the Disability, Old Age, and Survivors Pension Scheme
JWP	Joint Work Plans
KII	Key Informants Interview
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LMO	Labour Market Observatory
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICEX	Cuban Ministry of External Business and Foreign Investment
MIDEPLAN	Costa Rica Ministry of Planning
MINECO	Ministry of Economy of Guatemala
MINSA	Ministry of Health
MIRTI	Child Labour Risk Identification Model
MITRADEL	Ministry of Labour and Labour Development in Panama
MOOC	Massive open online course
MOPAN	Multilateral Performance Network
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MREC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Costa Rica
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MTC	Peasant Workers' Organization
MTPS	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MTSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OBW	Outcome-based Work Planning
OCHA	United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OH	Outcome Harvesting
OHCHR	Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights

OSH	Occupational safety and health
P&B	Programme and Budget
PIE	Plan for the Promotion of Green Jobs and Entrepreneurship
PRODOC	Project Document
R4V Platform	Inter-agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants
RBC	Responsible Business Conduct
RBCLAC	Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean project
RBSA	Regular Budget Supplementary Account
RBTC	Regular Budget Technical Cooperation
RCM	Regional Conference on Migration
ROLAC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
RPU	Regional Programming Unit
SADER	Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development
SCS	Social Compliance System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDESOL	Secretary of Social Development Policy Government Honduras
SEGOB	Secretariat of Interior affairs
SEMARNAT	Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources
SIALC	Labour Information and Analysis System for Latin America and the Caribbean
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIGADENA	System of Guarantees for the Rights of Children and Adolescents
SIMEL	The Labour Market Information System
SIMLA	The Labour Migration Information System in Costa Rica
SINIRUBE/ SINEDUE	National Information System and Single Registry of State Beneficiaries
SINTRAO	National Union of Domestic Workers
SINTRAHO	National Union of Domestic Workers
SIPE	System of Employability Intermediation and Promotion
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SNE	National Employment Service
SR	Synthesis Review
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STPS	Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare
STSS	Secretariat of Labour and Social Security
STyFE	Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion in Mexico
ToC	Theory of Change

ToR	Terms of Reference
UCCAEP	Costa Rica Union of Chambers of Private Enterprise
UIMEL	Labour Market Intelligence Unit
UN	United Nations
UNS	United Nations System
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development Organization
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science, Culture and Communication
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNNM	United Nations Network on Migration
UNOPS	United Nations for Project Service
UNS	United Nations System
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (former UNDAF)
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UoC	University of Colorado
USDOL	U.S. Department of Labor
VTI	Vocational training institution
VZF	Vision Zero Fund
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WIND	Work Improvement in Neighborhood Development



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01

► Executive summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This high-level evaluation evaluates the ILO's work from 2020 to 2024 in the Central America subregion: Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. It uses a utilization-focused, participatory, mixed-methods approach, drawing on 22 project evaluations, document reviews and three case studies (of Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico). Primary data included 147 interviews (91 women, 56 men) and 60 surveys: 41 from ILO staff (24 women, 15 men, 2 other) and 19 from constituents (8 women, 11 men).

OVERALL ASSESSMENT



Between 2020 and 2024, the ILO's interventions in Central America aligned well with the Decent Work Agenda, national priorities and global frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). The tripartite model enhanced national ownership in formalization, labour rights, skills, and occupational safety and health. Collaboration with UN actors improved institutional coherence,

technical reach and thematic alignment. Strategic efforts addressed gender equality, non-discrimination and a just transition, while normative and technical support fostered innovation, networks and policy reforms beyond projects.

Challenges persist as cross-cutting themes such as gender equality remain confined to individual projects, while weak political will, staff turnover and poor coordination limit impact. Participation is often procedural rather than transformative, and donor-driven priorities undermine local ownership. Bureaucratic processes, weak monitoring systems and uneven resource allocation further constrain adaptability. Without clear exit strategies and workforce planning, decent work outcomes risk being short-lived and lacking long-term relevance.

KEY FINDINGS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

Relevance

KEY FINDING 1:

Between 2020 and 2024, the ILO's country programme outcomes and projects were largely aligned with national priorities and global frameworks, showing strategic focus on areas such as formalization, labour inspection, skills, and occupational safety and health. However, perceptions of addressing vulnerable groups' needs varied, due to structural challenges, weak institutions and limited cross-cutting focus.



KEY FINDING 2:

The ILO's efforts emphasized SDG 8 and UNSDCF, boosting credibility and collaboration. Implementation was stronger in countries with robust institutions (for example, Mexico, Costa Rica). While efforts were aligned with the programme and budget outcomes overall, outcomes 4 (sustainable enterprises), 7 (social protection) and 8 (policy coherence) and enabler A (knowledge and advocacy) received limited attention.

KEY FINDING 3:

Although the ILO frameworks highlight gender equality, labour migration and youth themes, implementation remains uneven and project-based. Weak follow-up, institutional capacity and political will hinder cross-cutting progress. Legal and institutional barriers further limit social dialogue and labour rights, revealing a gap between normative goals and systemic impact.

ILO projects in Central America are closely aligned with national priorities, regional frameworks, SDG 8 and the programme and budget outcomes, supported by the Organization's tripartite model and focus on policy and capacity-building. ILO staff highlighted strong strategic coherence, particularly for workers in the informal economy, indigenous peoples and youth, while constituents emphasized projects' relevance for workers in the informal economy and women. However, limited engagement with persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups – such as caregivers, domestic workers and socially marginalized populations – together with political and structural barriers, has constrained sustainability and local ownership. Moreover, while outcome 6 (protection at work) is prioritized, other areas – including outcome 4 (sustainable enterprises), outcome 7 (social protection), outcome 8 (policy coherence) and enabler A (knowledge and advocacy) – receive less attention, limiting the overall impact of the projects.

The ILO promotes labour standards and social dialogue, but effectiveness is constrained in weak institutional contexts. Gender equality mainstreaming progressed in care work and manufacturing, but broader impact is limited by institutional gaps and poor follow-up. Inclusion of indigenous peoples, labour migrants, persons with disabilities and youth remains fragmented, and just transition efforts are inconsistently applied across the region.

Coherence

KEY FINDING 4:

The ILO is well integrated within the UN system, improving coordination on care work, child labour, formalization and labour migration. However, structural barriers, competition among agencies, internal coordination gaps and limited understanding of the ILO's mandate hinder deeper and sustainable collaboration.



KEY FINDING 5:

Adaptation in fragile contexts has been reactive and short-term, lacking systemic impact. Political caution, high staff turnover and limited presence in sensitive areas reduce effectiveness and credibility in high-risk settings.

KEY FINDING 6:

Constituents' participation is uneven, mostly consultative and less inclusive at the subnational level. Donor influence, political factors and varied capacities weaken participation, making it procedural rather than transformative. More consistent and inclusive engagement is needed.

Across several countries, the ILO has integrated into national strategies areas such as care work, child labour, formalization and labour migration, aligned with major UN and multilateral frameworks. Project-level collaboration, notably with the United Nations Development Programme, has been strong, although systemic barriers (such as overlapping roles, rigid procedures and partners' limited understanding of the ILO's mandate) reduce effectiveness.

Regional strategies (on topics such as formalization and labour migration) and crisis responses in fragile contexts (Haiti and Nicaragua) demonstrate the ILO's adaptability. However, its response often remains reactive, as restrictive rules governing its mission, high staff turnover and limited knowledge transfer mechanisms (such as specialists in DWTs) undermine operational flexibility and institutional continuity, making it difficult to sustain proactive interventions.

Constituents' participation has been central in inclusive design processes for UNSDCF's and projects (such as in Mexico, El Salvador), boosting legitimacy and national ownership. However, participation levels within the countries vary, and more consistent and inclusive subnational engagement is needed, along with efforts to overcome operational, political and structural barriers.

Effectiveness

KEY FINDING 7:

The ILO advanced most in the programme and budget outcomes on protection at work and social dialogue. Results are stronger in stable contexts; fragile settings reveal a need for better risk management.



KEY FINDING 8:

Positive unintended outcomes include expanded technical and collaborative networks with new partners, such as agricultural service providers and financial groups in Haiti, and labour inspector networks in the Dominican Republic.

KEY FINDING 9:

Cross-cutting progress is most visible in international labour standards, gender equality and labour migration. Progress is lagging for themes such as a just transition, non-discrimination, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

KEY FINDING 10:

ILO coordination supported thematic alignment, but complexity and fragmentation hindered coherence. Tools for tracking and monitoring interventions exist but are inconsistently used, and follow-up was often limited to reporting, reducing decision-making impact and overall effectiveness.

While the ILO has advanced the Decent Work Agenda in Central America, notably in protection at work and social dialogue, progress was limited in sustainable enterprises and social protection. Few results emerged for the knowledge and advocacy enabler. Mexico led in the subregion on efforts via legal reforms and dialogue mechanisms.

Insecurity (Honduras) and budget constraints (Haiti and Panama) highlight the need for improved risk management. The ILO interventions also yielded positive unintended effects, such as new technical networks in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and enhanced perceptions of women's economic roles through training. Cross-cutting themes advanced on the care economy, diversity certifications, health protocols for labour migrants, and inclusive employment, but progress was often fragmented and project-based due to limited funding and weak institutional integration.

The ILO's decentralized structure supports alignment with national priorities and tailored actions through regional platforms, such as the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR) and the Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean (FORLAC). Nonetheless, ILO-internal factors – such as limited flexibility, slow decision-making, communication gaps and poor integration of monitoring tools – reduce agility, coordination, continuity and strategic learning, limiting broader systemic change.

Efficiency

KEY FINDING 11:

The ILO subregion's delivery rate was 76 per cent, with uneven performance across programme and budget outcomes. Employment promotion was efficient (14 per cent of country programme outcome results achieved with 7 per cent of spending) as was gender equality (12 per cent of results achieved with 2 per cent of spending), while normative actions had low efficiency (12 per cent of results achieved with 23 per cent of spending). Country-level efficiency varied. Improved planning and strategic budgeting are needed to boost impact.



KEY FINDING 12:

Partnerships improved short-term efficiency but were mostly non-institutionalized, especially with non-UN actors, such as universities and non-governmental organizations. Often project-specific, they lacked integration into long-term strategies. The absence of coordination platforms and learning mechanisms limited sustainability and replication of good practices.

KEY FINDING 13:

Time allocation for regular budget staff focused on social protection and a just transition, while gender equality and sustainable enterprises were underserved. High staff turnover and a lack of an established regional or subregional human resources (HR) talent strategy reduced technical capacity, continuity and institutional memory. Workforce and proactive planning remain critical gaps.

The efficiency analysis, which used budget expenditure against results under Country Programme Outcomes as a proxy, found that the ILO's work in the subregion has been moderately efficient and largely cost-effective, with the highest returns in Country Programme Outcomes on employment and gender equality and weaker results in normative action. Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico performed strongly, while Nicaragua and Panama showed low results despite high costs. Some projects suffered from poor planning and a lack of budgeting for gender equality. This efficiency analysis has inherent limitations and may not fully reflect complexity issues and qualitative outcomes or long-term impact but still highlights the need for better planning and resource use.

Despite perceived relevance, partnerships were often project-based rather than part of long-term strategies. Weak institutionalization, inadequate coordination mechanisms and insufficient systems to capture and replicate successful practices were identified as barriers that limited sustainability and knowledge transfer.

Staff time focused on employment for a just transition and social protection, with less attention devoted to gender equality and sustainable enterprises. Staff shortages, turnover and a lack of an established regional/subregional HR talent strategy hindered progress. Despite constituents' appreciation of the ILO's expertise, gaps in internal technical capacity remain a concern.

Sustainability and impact

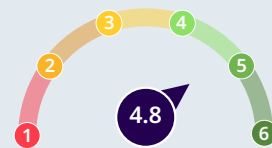
KEY FINDING 14:

In terms of impact, the ILO made notable progress in the care sector, gender equality and labour migration, although the results are not fully institutionalized. These efforts reflect normative commitments but need stronger national ownership for lasting sustainability.



KEY FINDING 15:

Sustainability depends on institutional ownership and political will. Despite some reforms, progress is hindered by inconsistent leadership, a lack of exit strategies and short project cycles. Without clear institutionalization and capacity-building plans, there is a risk of gains being reversed.



KEY FINDING 16:

Exit strategies are often weak or absent. In fragile contexts with limited capacity, clear transition plans are crucial. Sustainability must be built into project design, not assumed.

In terms of impact, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico made notable progress in international labour standards and social protection, especially in advancing in reforms in the areas of care, child labour, domestic work and labour migration, as well as developing national employability and labour recovery strategies. Social protection systems also strengthened institutional frameworks, including pension sustainability. In social dialogue, notable progress has been seen in Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico. Vulnerable groups benefited from ILO-led assistance (for example, childcare in Guatemala and care systems in the Dominican Republic). However, better alignment with local priorities to increase the impact of the ILO's work is needed.

Sustainability depends on actions backed by political will, adequate resources and UN cooperation, such as the launch of Costa Rica's Labour Migration Information System and Mexico's efforts to promote and protect labour migrants' rights. However, weak planning, limited funding, leadership turnover and the absence of exit strategies or broad stakeholder engagement have hindered long-term success. Pilots such as Mexico's Vision Zero Fund and the Ending Child Labour in Supply Chains initiative in Honduras require stronger institutional support to achieve sustainable impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Strengthen strategic alignment, coordination, communication and learning across the ILO country offices and the DWT in Central America:

- ▶ Develop and implement a DWT action plan for countries in the Central America subregion to coordinate the Decent Work Agenda. It should support regional strategies such as those for domestic work, formalization and labour migration, guide DWCP development where relevant, and be aligned with national priorities for decent work. The plan must include annual strategic reviews and mapping of needs and capacities to tailor approaches per country. A subregional theory of change should guide the plan and be adapted locally.
- ▶ Establish thematic subregional coordination mechanisms for the DWT to provide sustained structural support, beyond isolated actions. This should include standard operating procedures to improve planning, coordination and communication between the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central American Countries (DWT/CO-San José) and the ILO Country Office for Mexico and Cuba (CO-Mexico), reducing fragmentation and ensuring coherent messaging and delivery of efforts to ensure decent work.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
▶ DWT/CO-San José ▶ CO-Mexico ▶ Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) ▶ Relevant headquarters departments		Long-Term	Medium

Recommendation 2

Reinforce the ILO's work in thematic areas where limited progress has been reported:

▶ Outcome 4 – sustainable enterprises:

- ▶ Consider replicable models (such as Haiti's enterprise clusters, "My Green Business" in El Salvador and Honduras, green jobs in Mexico) for countries with limited progress, and develop partnerships with associations, cooperatives and agencies to adapt positive models.

▶ Outcome 7 – social protection:

- ▶ Lead a regional diagnostic study on actions regarding coverage, financing and governance of social protection for vulnerable groups, considering the experiences of Mexico's migrant health protocol and the Dominican Republic's "care communities".

▶ Outcome 8 – social justice:

- ▶ Systematize and analyse successful initiatives for replication (for example, gender equality, social protection and youth employment).
- ▶ Consider co-developing diagnostic studies for Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Panama on institutional gaps, regulatory reviews and national policy road maps.

▶ Enabler A – evidence for advocacy:

- ▶ Strengthen evidence-based research and country-based political intelligence on labour statistics and market dynamics to inform programming and advocacy.
- ▶ Integrate advocacy in reporting and develop accessible products that turn data into persuasive narratives.

- ▶ **Cross-cutting issues:** Prioritize persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, a just transition and non-discrimination, while continuing work on gender equality, international labour standards, labour migration and youth (for example, projects in Guatemala).

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
▶ DWT/CO-San José ▶ CO-Mexico ▶ ROLAC ▶ Relevant headquarters departments		Medium-term	Medium

Recommendation 3

Foster an adaptive approach that responds to evolving contextual challenges, while strengthening national ownership. This approach should be anchored in long-term sustainability and explicitly address the needs and priorities of vulnerable groups:

- ▶ Design solutions considering local absorption capacity, using needs assessments, context analysis, scenario planning and risk management tools integrated into project templates with adaptive triggers (such as budget shifts and political change) to ensure context sensitivity and alignment with the ILO's mandate.

- ▶ Maximize constituents' participation at all levels during project design to ensure relevance and ownership, using a "participatory design checklist" for engagement and validation, supporting long-term sustainability.
- ▶ Ensure sustainability from the start by integrating exit strategies and follow-up mechanisms co-developed with constituents and local actors. Focus on monitoring implementation beyond formal agreements, anchoring results locally and nationally. Use sustainability workshops and designate focal points to maintain continuity amid staff turnover.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
▶ DWT/CO-San José ▶ CO-Mexico ▶ ROLAC/Regional Programming Unit (RPU)		Long-term	Medium

Recommendation 4

Revise financial management, HR and strategic partnership frameworks to ensure more flexible, results-oriented and tactical resource allocation:

- ▶ Diversify extra budgetary financing by prioritizing multi-year strategic partnerships with donors (such as Canada, the European Union and Japan) to reduce dependency on a limited number of donors and secure sustainable, nationally relevant funding. Engage the private sector for long-term financing (for example, the Ford Foundation for social justice and the Mastercard Foundation for youth employment). Identify donors and match engagement to emerging subregional and national needs.
- ▶ Strengthen structured coordination with the UN system and establish multi-year cooperation with key partners, focusing on underdeveloped cross-cutting areas (such as the United Nations Population Fund for indigenous peoples and youth, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Programme for labour migration, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for rural populations). Define clear roles to avoid duplication, ensure complementarity and build long-term alliances using the tripartite ILO structure.
- ▶ Map the ILO HR capacities in Central America by Programme and Budget outcomes, identify gaps and imbalances, and promote realistic staff allocations and rotations to under-addressed areas. Consider South-South exchanges to fill thematic gaps.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
▶ DWT/CO-San José ▶ CO-Mexico ▶ ROLAC/Regional Programming Unit (RPU) ▶ Relevant headquarters departments		Medium-term	Low

Recommendation 5

Strengthen the systematic monitoring tools, streamlined decision-making processes and continuous learning mechanisms to reinforce operational aspects:

- ▶ Develop a regional or subregional knowledge management strategy with clear principles for documentation, information-sharing and learning. Assign focal points, include collaborative platforms such as joint monitoring dashboards, and foster communities of practice. Incorporate exit, handover and onboarding processes to preserve knowledge and ensure continuity.

- ▶ Promote consistent use of design, monitoring and review tools across offices. Organize cross-review sessions to share progress and challenges, standardize monitoring adapted to country contexts and ensure real-time access to joint monitoring dashboards. Set minimum communication standards, with regular discussions and systematic sharing of lessons and good practices.
- ▶ Ensure that monitoring and reporting reflect the ILO cross-cutting priorities using suitable indicators and disaggregated data.
- ▶ Create institutional mechanisms to identify, document and scale successful initiatives, especially pilots, through a shared internal registry maintained by the DWT or the Regional Office.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
▶ DWT/CO-San José ▶ CO-Mexico ▶ ROLAC/RPU		Medium-term	Medium

Recommendation 6

Establish a capacity-building action plan for ILO staff to ensure shared standards in the design, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting of project results and technical assistance, while allowing for adaptation to contextual challenges:

- ▶ Develop a regional or subregional capacity-building plan defining core competencies and learning outcomes for staff in project design, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting, ensuring consistency with flexibility for local contexts.
- ▶ Strengthen institutional and staff capacities for strategic risk management and adaptation by creating simple protocols for political economy analysis, scenario planning and adaptive decision-making. Provide targeted training on operational management, early warning, risk assessment, context analysis and mitigation for staff in fragile contexts.
- ▶ Offer ongoing training on gender-responsive approaches, including gender-responsive budgeting.
- ▶ Continue technical capacity-building on monitoring and evaluation and results reporting.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
▶ DWT/CO-San José ▶ CO-Mexico ▶ ROLAC/RPU		Medium-term	Medium

OFFICE RESPONSE

Recommendation 1: The Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) supports the call for a subregional action plan and theory of change to improve alignment. However, Mexico and the Central American countries differ in institutional scale and mandate, so the theory of change must be flexible and adapted to national contexts. The San José and Mexico country offices will lead the development of a concise, tailored theory of change and use it to guide existing annual planning and review processes, ensuring alignment with regional strategies such as those on formalization (FORLAC 2.0), labour migration, social dialogue and labour relations and the care economy, and others to be developed. ROLAC will provide strategic oversight and facilitate exchanges between offices to reduce fragmentation. Any new coordination mechanisms will build on current structures, remain lighttouch and avoid duplicating bureaucratic layers.

Recommendation 2: We fully support accelerating progress on outcomes 4 (sustainable enterprises), 7 (social protection) and 8 (social justice – priority action programmes) and enabler A (labour statistics). The San José and Mexico offices will lead diagnostics on social protection and policy coherence and adapt relevant good practices. Replication will be selective and contextspecific. ROLAC will strengthen evidence-based advocacy and integrate issues concerning persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples and a just transition.

Recommendation 3: We accept this recommendation. Project templates will integrate risk management (new global platform to be launched), needs assessments and participatory design. Country offices will lead engagement and develop exit strategies, with the Regional Office and the Regional Programming Unit providing guidance and training (tools developed by EVAL and ROLAC are already available for this purpose). This aims to enhance sustainability.

Recommendation 4: We agree on the need to diversify funding and strengthen partnerships. Recognizing this need, a regional position of Technical Officer on Partnerships for Policy Coherence was created in 2024; we expect similar positions may also be also considered for decentralization from headquarters to DWTs and country offices as part of the ILO review. The recently launched subregional Resource Mobilization Committee will pursue multi-year donor agreements and carefully explore private sector partnerships that align with the ILO's mandate; we will not engage with partners whose priorities conflict with decent work principles. Mapping of human resources and rotations will be coordinated with headquarters. South–South exchanges will help fill thematic gaps.

Recommendation 5: We endorse improving knowledge management and monitoring but caution that comprehensive dashboards and new tools require significant investment and constant updates. Instead, we will build on existing platforms and revitalize the Regional Evaluation Committee to track implementation and promote continuous learning. Importantly, our planned evaluation of the impact of knowledge in the Americas (2026), for which we hope to leverage funds from the regular budget supplementary account, will inform a Regional Knowledge Strategy and help prioritize realistic improvements to monitoring and learning.

Recommendation 6: We fully endorse developing a regional capacity-building plan. The San José and Mexico offices will identify skills gaps and organize targeted training in project design, monitoring and evaluation, gender budgeting and risk management, drawing on support from ROLAC, the Regional Programming Unit and headquarters. The plan will build on existing programmes and be sensitive to national contexts.



02

► Introduction



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

High-level evaluations (HLEs) constitute a core component of the ILO's governance architecture, providing strategic insights into the Organization's performance at the institutional level. Anchored in the principles of results-based management, HLEs examine the relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of policy outcomes, organizational systems, and selected Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). Their findings inform policy and strategic decision-making processes, while also reinforcing accountability mechanisms.

The identification of HLE priorities, as well as the timing and intended use of evaluations, is undertaken in close consultation with ILO senior management and the Governing Body (GB). The ILO Evaluation Office (EVAL), mandated to operate with structural independence, ensures the credibility, transparency, and impartiality of the evaluation process. In alignment with its rolling three-year work plan—endorsed by the GB—EVAL is committed to conducting a minimum of three HLEs annually.

As part of this framework, the overarching goal of HLEs focused on DWCPs is to determine the extent to which ILO interventions have supported national constituents in advancing Decent Work priorities and addressing related gaps. In its 352nd Session, the GB endorsed EVAL's proposal to carry out a High-Level Evaluation of DWCPs in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. The results of this evaluation are scheduled to be presented at the GB session to be held in October–November 2025.

PURPOSE, SCOPE AND CLIENTS OF THE EVALUATION

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), this HLE has two complementary purposes: **ensuring accountability** and **fostering organizational learning**. It aims to assess how effectively the ILO achieved its planned **Outcomes at both country and subregional levels** (ILO Subregional and Country Programme Outcomes (CPOs)) and the methods and conditions that led to those results.

Additionally, the evaluation **seeks to support organizational growth by identifying valuable lessons learned and emerging best practices**. These insights will help shape future ILO strategies, with a particular focus on the Latin America and Caribbean region.

The HLE assesses the ILO's program activities and Outcomes **from 2020 to 2024 across the entire Central America subregion**, with a particular geographical focus on three countries as case studies: Costa Rica, Honduras, and Mexico.

The main **user** for the evaluation is the ILO's Governing Body, which is responsible for governance-level decisions on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. Other users are key stakeholders, including the Director-General and members of the Senior Management Team at Headquarters and Regional Management in LAC, who are involved in promoting decent work in the region. The results of the evaluation should also serve as a source of information for ILO partners and policymakers.

Table 1 provides an overview of the main users and the intended uses of HLE.

TABLE 1. MAIN USERS AND USES OF THE EVALUATION

TYPE OF USER	DESIGNATION	INTENDED USE
Primary audience	ILO's Governing Body	Governance-level decisions
Coordinating entities	Director-General and members of the Senior Management Team (HQ) Global team of each project. ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (Regional Management) ILO DWT/CO San Jose ILO CO México	Improve programming, implementation and resource management. Accountability and learning.
ILO constituents in the subregion	Regional organizations (SICA, etc.) National, subnational and local level governments. Trade unions and regional and national representatives of employers and workers.	Improve programming, implementation and resource management. Accountability, empowerment and learning.
Secondary	Civil society in general (Academia, NGOs, media, etc.)	Accountability and awareness raising.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The HLE was guided by the [EVAL Protocol 2.2: High-level evaluation \(HLE\) protocol for DWCP evaluation](#) and the OECD DAC evaluation criteria¹, which provide the normative framework for formulating evaluative judgments in ILO. The analysis considers six criteria: relevance and strategic fit, coherence and validity of design, effectiveness and effectiveness of the management arrangements, efficiency, likelihood of impact, and sustainability. Each criterion is designed to address a specific key evaluation question.

The assignment is structured around 19 evaluation questions. These questions, originally outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), have been refined based on insights gained during the inception phase, ensuring better alignment with the overall evaluation design and objectives.

Each evaluation question is accompanied by a set of indicators that support the measurement and assessment of the respective aspects under review. In addition, relevant data sources and appropriate data collection methods have been identified to ensure a robust and credible evidence base. The proposed Evaluation Matrix is included in Annex 1.

TABLE 2. DAC CRITERIA AND KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC CRITERIA	SYNTHESIS QUESTIONS
RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT	EQ1. To what extent and how are the objectives of the ILO CPOs and related projects for the selected countries relevant to the needs of the constituents and final beneficiaries, including the vulnerable groups? EQ2. To what extent is ILO's work in Central America relevant to, and aligned with national, sub and regional, and international development frameworks (including UNSDCFs, SDGs) as well as ILO's P&B Outcomes? EQ3. To what extent do the strategies frameworks integrate gender and non-discrimination (disability, labour migration, Indigenous people, youth), International Labour Standards, Social dialogue, just transition?

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

DAC CRITERIA	SYNTHESIS QUESTIONS
COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN	EQ4. To what extent is ILO work integrated and complementary to work by other UN agencies, IFIs, and continental and subregional bodies in the countries of intervention and at the subregional level? EQ5. Has ILO successfully adapted its strategies to respond to changes in the socio-political contexts of the Central America region while continuing to achieve its planned results? EQ6. To what extent and how were constituents actively involved at all stages of projects and UNSDCF design, planning, and implementation? EQ7. To what extent is the ILO ToC -explicit or implicit- at the country and sub-regional levels realistic, evaluable and useful to promote the effectiveness of ILO work, including cross-cutting themes (gender equity and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, international labour standards and just transition to environment)?
EFFECTIVENESS	EQ8. To what extent and how effectively is the ILO advancing the DW agenda in key areas and priority topics in the Central America subregion (transition to formal economy; lifelong learning and improving labour skills; safety and health, and social protection systems; workers' rights), and what are the key success factors and those that hindrance the DW agenda results? EQ9. What progress has been made in the Central America subregion in achieving results on cross-cutting issues (gender and non-discrimination; ILS; Social dialogue; fair transition) and what are the key success factors and those that hinder them (e.g. extent to which not having DWCP has affected or facilitated achievements to DW related results)? EQ10. Has ILO obtained positive and negative unexpected results from its work in Central America? What could have been done differently to improve the ILO results?
EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS	EQ11. How have ILO management arrangements contributed to or hindered the DW Agenda results in Central America? EQ12. How effectively have ILO country offices, regional office, Decent Work Teams, and concerned HQ Departments coordinated to provide integrated and strategic technical support and policy dialogue at country level? «
EFFICIENCY	EQ13. How cost efficient was the ILO's work in terms of resource expenditure and allocation of financial resources to deliver planned results in Central America? EQ14. To what extent has ILO leveraged partnerships (with constituents, national and regional institutions, including IFIs, UN agencies, development agencies, and regional bodies) to optimize efficiencies? EQ15. Were the allocations of human resources realistic and sufficient to deliver planned results and to integrate a decent work agenda in the subregion?
LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT	EQ16. To what extent has the ILO's work in Central America contributed to measurable and perceived improvements in Decent Work conditions for employers and workers, particularly among vulnerable groups such as youth, women, labour migrants, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous Peoples?
SUSTAINABILITY	EQ17. What is the likelihood that results achieved through ILO interventions in Central America will be sustained, scaled up or replicated by constituents and partners after the phase-out of ILO support, while ensuring that governments, employers and workers maintain their commitment to Decent Work in the context of economic, social and climate-related challenges? EQ18. To what extent have ILO activities and projects in Central America incorporated clear and effective exit strategies to promote the sustainability of results and impact, and what aspects could be strengthened to enhance future interventions?" EQ19. What lessons and recommendations could be offered to improve the sustainability of ILO work in the countries of focus and the subregion and to foster ownership?

METHODOLOGY

In line with the ToR, the driving questions for the HLE can be summarized as “What are the expected and unexpected results of the ILO DW CPOs and related DC projects in supporting national constituents’ priorities to address decent work gaps? and “What implementation approaches have gone well, in what contexts, and what can be done to improve ongoing and future initiatives?

Overall evaluation approach

The methodological approach applied was **utilization-focused, participatory, and drew upon mixed methods**. It combined a **criteria-based approach** with a **theory-driven**, complexity-aware, and improvement-oriented model. A combination of **Contribution Analysis (CA)** and **Outcome Harvesting (OH)** was used to assess the intervention’s contribution to observed changes. While CA operated with a forward-looking perspective, OH worked retrospectively, allowing for stronger causal linkages to be identified. This methodological complementarity provided more robust evidence regarding the intervention’s contribution to the ILO’s Decent Work efforts.

A **Theory of Change (ToC)** was developed (see Annex 2) to guide data collection, analysis, reporting of findings, and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. The ToC illustrated the key actions carried out by the ILO and their contribution across three levels of change: the sphere of control (immediate results), the sphere of influence (program goals), and the sphere of interest (sociocultural, political, economic, and environmental impacts).

The ToC was reconstructed in different stages. It started with a detailed desk review of existing documentation, was updated through initial interviews with key informants, and was planned to be refined further with feedback from ILO representatives at global, regional, and country levels. This reconstruction helped identify key causal links, the assumptions needed for change, and the main goals to which the ILO contributed directly. It served as a comprehensive model of the ILO’s Decent Work efforts in Central America and supported the development of relevant evaluation questions.

Methodological strategies

The consulting team ensured a methodologically sound and fit-for-purpose approach to address the challenges of evaluating the ILO’s Decent Work program in Central America. **A combination of qualitative and quantitative strategies was followed through a mixed-method concurrent triangulation approach**, allowing the simultaneous generation of both data types and their comparison to identify convergences or divergences. This facilitated confirmation, disconfirmation, cross-validation, and corroboration of key findings.

Different and complementary sources of information were used, integrating primary and secondary data to address possible gaps, outdated information, or unreliability. Individual perspectives were collected through **structured interviews, focus groups, and online surveys**.

An open and flexible approach was applied, implemented in two phases: an initial review of the evaluation design during the inception phase to refine methods and techniques, and a second phase during analysis and reporting, which included stakeholder feedback to validate the information.

To enhance validity, **data triangulation, method triangulation, and investigator triangulation** were applied. Several internal quality assurance procedures were implemented, including ensuring a clear definition of qualitative data categories and a consistent understanding of key concepts across the team. These **methodological strategies** collectively strengthened the reliability and credibility of the evaluation process

The following methodological strategies and data-gathering techniques were carried out:

TABLE 3. METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES	RESEARCH TECHNIQUES	DATA GATHERING TOOLS
Qualitative strategies (Content and contribution analysis)	▶ Desk review (primary & secondary data) ▶ Semi-structured interviews ▶ Focus group discussions ▶ Workshops ▶ Direct Observation ▶ CA and OH frameworks	▶ KII protocols ▶ Analytical framework/matrix ▶ Observation diary/notes ▶ CA and OH protocols
Quantitative strategies (Descriptive statistical analysis and contribution analysis)	▶ Desk research (primary & secondary data) ▶ Online survey	▶ Scale rating ▶ Review notes ▶ Questionnaires

The analysis incorporates the six-point scale summary ratings proposed in the ToR, as follows:

TABLE 4. SIX-POINT RATING SCALE

1=HIGHLY UNSATISFACTORY	2=UNSATISFACTORY	3= SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY	4 = SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY	5= SATISFACTORY	6 = HIGHLY SATISFACTORY
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	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.	Findings related to the evaluation criterion show that the objectives have been partially attained, and the level of performance shows minor shortcomings and are not fully considered acceptable in the view of the ILO national tripartite constituents, partners and beneficiaries	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 of the ILO itself	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 of the ILO itself	Findings related to the evaluation criterion show that ILO performance related to that criterion has produced Outcomes which go beyond expectation, expressed specific comparative advantages and added value, and produced good practices

Data collection methods

The research techniques and tools used in the HLE were:

- 1. Desk review:** An extensive desk review was conducted, encompassing both internal and external documentation. Internal sources included ILO strategic and partner documents, while external sources comprised datasets, materials from other UN agencies and institutions, and academic literature. This review continued throughout fieldwork and data analysis to synthesize key documents, information systems, and M&E data.

As part of the High-Level Evaluation process, a Synthesis Review of ILO project evaluations in the Central American subregion for the period 2020–2024 was conducted (herein “Central America Synthesis Review”). Drawing on 22 evaluations, the Central America Synthesis Review assessed overall project performance against key evaluation criteria, synthesizing trends, strengths, challenges, and good practices, and offering lessons learned and strategic recommendations. The Review served as a key source of information throughout the evaluation process.

- 2. Key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD):** These methods generated crucial perceptual data and facilitated triangulation. The evaluation team carried out individual and group semi-structured interviews guided by protocols aligned with the evaluation matrix. FGDs with beneficiaries complemented the KIIs to explore specific perceptions and opinions.

The table below summarizes the number of participants and the data collection techniques (key informants' interviews or group discussions) employed during the evaluation phase.

TABLE 5. NUMBER AND TYPE OF TECHNIQUES, AND PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH KII AND FGD, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER

			N° TECHNIQUE	PEOPLE REACHED
Global level				
ILO HQ staff (Technical units)			2 KII	3 (1F, 2M)
Regional level (ROLAC)				
ILO Regional Office staff (Management and RPU)			3 KII	4 (4F)
ILO DWT			4 KII	4 (2F; 2M)
Sub regional level				
ILO CO San Jose (Management)			3 KII	3 (1F; 2M)
ILO CO Mexico (Management and finance)			3 KII	4 (2F; 2M)
ILO DWT (San Jose and México)			10 KII	10 (4F; 6M)
Total			25 KII	28 (14F; 14M)
Country level (case studies)	Costa Rica	Honduras	Mexico	
ILO Project staff (teams)	3 KII (1F; 2M)	2 KII (2F)	3 KII (3F)	8 (6F; 2M)
Government representatives	3 KII (2F;1M) - 2 FGD (4F; 5M)	2 KII (1F;1M) - 2 FGD (9F;4M)	5 KII (3F;2M)	32 (19F; 13M)
Employers' representatives	1 KII (1M)	1 KII (2F) - 1 FGD (2F;1M)	3 KII (1F;2M)	9 (5F; 4M)
Workers' Representatives	1 KII (1M) - 1 FGD (4F; 4M)	1 KII (1F) - 1 FGD (1F;4M)	1 KII (1M)	16 (6F; 10M)
Final beneficiaries	2 KII (4F)	1 KII (1M)	3 KII - 1 FGD (29F; 1M)	35 (33F; 2M)
UN Partners	3 KII (2F;1M)	2 KII (2M)	1KII (2M)	7 (2F; 5M)
Funding partners	1 KII (1F)	2 KII (1F;1M)	0	3 (2F; 1M)
Total	14 KII - 3 FGD	11 KII - 4 FGD	17 KII - 1 FGD	110 (73F; 37M)
Country level (non-case studies)				
ILO CO Technical Focal Point	7 KII			8 (5F;3M)
GRAND TOTAL	78 KII - 8 FGD			147 (92F; 54M)

Note: F (Female) M (Male)

- 3. Online survey:** An online survey was designed to complement qualitative techniques and gather quantitative insights from key stakeholders, including those who could not be reached through interviews. Two versions were distributed—one for constituents and one for ILO staff—via SurveyMonkey, with concise formats to encourage participation. The response rate was 26% for ILO d (41 respondents out of 161, with 24 women, 15 men, and 2 identifying as other), and 25% for constituents (19 respondents out of 75, with 8 women and 11 men).

TABLE 6. NUMBER OF RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY

COUNTRY	ILO STAFF	EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION	WORKERS' ORGANIZATION	GOVERNMENT	TOTAL
Costa Rica	15	1	0	0	16
Cuba	0	0	0	1	1
Dominican Republic	1	1	0	1	3
Guatemala	1	1	2	1	5
Haiti	3	0	3	0	6
Honduras	5	1	0	1	7
Mexico	7	2	1	2	12
Nicaragua	1	0	0	0	1
Panama	3	1	0	0	4
Geneva (Headquarters)	2	0	0	0	2
Lima (ROLAC)	1	0	0	0	1
Total	39	7	6	6	58

- 4. Case studies:** Three country case studies (Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico) were developed to examine ILO interventions in depth. These studies assessed achievements, identified challenges and good practices, and extracted lessons to provide a comprehensive understanding of results within national contexts.

As part of the case study component, nine projects were selected to serve as the basis for the analysis. The table below lists the selected projects. The case studies were identified in consultation with the ILO during the inception phase through purposive sampling based on contribution to P&B outcomes, relevance given by key informants during the inception interviews, accessibility of informants, data availability, and donors' diversity; This resulted on a final set of nine projects and relevant non-project initiatives across three countries.

TABLE 7. PROJECTS SELECTED FOR THE ANALYSIS AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE P&B OUTCOMES

PROJECT CODES/ COUNTRIES	ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSITIONS	GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS	PROTECTION AT WORK FOR ALL	SKILLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING	STRONG TRIPARTITE CONSTITUENTS	SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISES	UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION
Costa Rica								
CRI/18/02/CRI				X				
CRI/19/50/UND		X						X
RLA/22/07/EUR							X	
Honduras								
HND/21/02/ HND								X
HND/22/50/ EUR			X					
HND/23/01/RBS		X				X		
Mexico								
MEX/23/01/RBS	X		X					
MEX/20/05/ USA				X				
MEX/23/02/ HCR		X						

5. **Participatory workshop with ILO staff:** A virtual debriefing session was held in June with the Reference Group to present preliminary findings, address pending issues, and request clarifications before circulating the draft report.
6. **Circulation of draft report:** The draft report was shared with all individuals involved in the evaluation, including interviewees, to collect comments and identify factual inaccuracies. The evaluation team prioritized feedback from the Reference Group and internally assessed how to address the comments to incorporate into the final version.

Methodological notes

During the evaluation, **three key methodological considerations** were considered:

- ▶ First, the analysis of achievements was based on data reported up to 2023. This is because the 2024 data reflect planned activities rather than actual results, as achievements are only reported at the end of the Programme and Budget (P&B) biennium.
- ▶ Second, due to the absence of a Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in most countries of the subregion during the review period (2020–2024), progress in advancing the Decent Work agenda was assessed through a direct mapping of CPOs and the thematic areas of each P&B Outcome (and associated Outputs).
- ▶ Finally, due to changes in Outcome nomenclature over the review period, a harmonization—or mapping—of Outcome titles within the results framework was undertaken, using the Outcome titles defined in the 2024–2025 Programme and Budget as a reference. This approach ensured consistency and comparability of reported Outcomes across different years.

NORMS AND STANDARDS

The evaluation followed relevant ILO and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards² and Ethical Guidelines for evaluation. The consultants were fair and assessed with integrity and honesty. Issues of confidentiality were taken seriously. Data collected and any resulting information were not linked to any person or office. The participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary. Dissent or unwillingness to participate was respected, and participants were informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the exercise/interview at any time without negative consequences.

The consultants declare no conflicts of interest, as they have not directly or indirectly participated in any of the interventions under review nor have a personal relationship with ILO managers and/or consultants involved in those. The Code of Ethics includes Artival's commitments in terms of responsibility to society and the profession, competence, integrity, impartiality, fairness, and non-corruption. Artival will also adhere to the UN supplier code of conduct. Preventing, detecting, and sanctioning corrupt practices throughout the execution of services will rely on the procedures stated in Artival's Data Protection Policy. staff are required to declare any potential conflict of interest upfront.

2 UNEG standards.



03

► Limitations to the HLE

▶ LIMITATIONS TO THE HLE

The following are the main methodological limitations encountered, and the mitigation strategies implemented.

TABLE 8. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

LIMITATION	EXPLANATION	MITIGATING STRATEGY
Fieldwork scope reduction	Initially, the evaluation design included 15 days of fieldwork across the three case study countries—five days allocated to each (Costa Rica, Honduras, and Mexico). However, due to scheduling constraints and logistical limitations, the total number of fieldwork days was reduced to 12, and in-country site visits were reduced to Mexico only. As a result, fieldwork activities were limited to meetings held in the country capital cities in Costa Rica and Honduras, restricting the evaluators' direct engagement with local stakeholders and project beneficiaries in implementation areas. This may affect the depth and representativeness of the data collected.	To compensate for the reduced field presence and the cancellation of site visits, the evaluation team complemented interviews and focus groups conducted during country visits to Costa Rica and Honduras with a remote data collection approach using virtual interviews with key stakeholders. Tailored data collection tools were designed to capture essential information, with a focus on reaching final beneficiaries whenever possible. This approach was complemented by the systematic review of secondary sources to ensure data validity and depth of analysis.
Access to relevant documentation	During the evaluation, the team had limited access to key documents such as the project documents (PRODOC), or minutes from tripartite meetings. This limited the ability to analyze the evolution of objectives and to adequately triangulate the information.	Due to the limited of access to key documents—such as PRODOC reports of the projects selected as case studies, and minutes of tripartite meetings—a mitigation approach was adopted, based on the collection of primary data through qualitative interviews and triangulation with available secondary sources. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the projects, which allowed for a partial reconstruction of the missing elements from the unavailable documents.
Incomplete datasets	The information extracted from the databases (Development Cooperation Dashboard and Outcome Based Results Dashboard) did not contain the same categories, and many of the results could not be measured in a comparable manner. Specifically, the first database included information on results reported by the CPO and their links to the SDGs or the gender marker, while the second lacked this information.	It was necessary to combine both databases to harmonize the available information, with support from ILO staff at the Subregional Office to clarify outstanding issues. Nonetheless, some information could not be analyzed (e.g., gender marker, SDGs) in the total sample (562 results) due to a lack of supporting evidence.



04

- ▶ Decent work challenges in the Central America subregion

▶ DECENT WORK CHALLENGES IN THE CENTRAL AMERICA SUBREGION

The Central America subregion faces significant and multifaceted challenges in achieving decent work for its population, impacting socio-economic development, exacerbating inequalities, and contributing to social unrest and migration. These challenges are often structural, deeply rooted, and have been intensified by recent global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change impact. The subregion struggled with high levels of informality, insufficient formal job creation, and limited access to social protection (e.g., low coverage and fiscal sustainability risks further worsened by demographic pressures). Employment losses during the pandemic were only partially recovered, and informal work dominated the rebound—offering little security or social coverage.

Vulnerable groups—including women, youth, indigenous and afro-descendant peoples, and migrants—continued to face systemic barriers and growing inequalities. During the reporting period, women and young people were disproportionately affected by unemployment, informal work, and limited access to quality education and skills training. Indigenous and afro-descendant communities suffered from structural exclusion and frequent violations of land and human rights, while migrants and refugees, especially in Costa Rica and Panama, experienced discrimination, informality, and lack of access to essential services. These groups remained largely “left behind” in national development processes, despite targeted efforts by governments and international organizations.

Governance and environmental fragility compounded these challenges. Corruption, weak rule of law, and shrinking civic space limited institutional effectiveness and public trust. At the same time, the subregion's vulnerability to climate change—evident in storms, droughts, and food insecurity—posed direct threats to livelihoods and economic stability. The digital divide further restricted equitable access to employment and social services, especially in rural and low-income areas. These challenges collectively impeded progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and often exacerbated existing inequalities, leaving many behind.

The following highlights are challenges enumerated in the context of decent work and the SDGs that characterised the DW Agenda in the subregion of Central America.

INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKETS INEQUALITIES

A persistent and structural challenge across Central America, Mexico and Cuba is the high prevalence of informal employment, which undermines progress toward Decent Work and inclusive development. The pandemic triggered an unprecedented crisis, leading to sharp reductions in employment and working hours. While some recovery occurred, it was often incomplete, with employment levels barely returning to 2019 figures in many cases. High informal employment remained a critical issue across the region, contributing significantly to job recovery but offering precarious conditions and limited social security.

According to the ILO's *Panorama Laboral 2021*³, the employment recovery observed since the latter half of 2020 has been predominantly driven by informal job creation, accounting for between 57% and 78% of net employment gains from Q3 2020 to Q3 2021 in selected Latin American countries. This trend continued into 2022, with the regional informality rate averaging nearly 50% across 11 countries—similar to 2019 levels and those observed a decade ago². Document review reveals that, in the absence of sufficient formal job creation to absorb returning labour force participants, labour informality could remain persistently high, exacerbated by current macroeconomic uncertainty and regional economic slowdown.

3 https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@americas/@ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_836196.pdf

Informality has far-reaching implications. Informal workers are significantly more exposed to poverty, being three to four times more likely to be poor than their formal counterparts. They also constitute an estimated 70% to 90% of the region's working poor. Lack of access to social security, limited protections in times of crisis, and precarious working conditions are defining features of informal employment. Both constituents and ILO documentation confirms that informal occupations continue to lead the recovery in overall employment, reinforcing concerns about the quality and sustainability of job growth.

In Honduras, nearly 80% of the population faced employment problems, with 62% of the workforce in subemployment, and a concerning loss of 34,000 maquila jobs due to external factors like the US recession. Guatemala also reported a significant number of people working informally, lacking labour protection and social security access. The inability to generate enough formal jobs posed a continuous risk of increasing informality.

In addition to high informality, labour market disparities persist along youth and gender lines. Young people continue to face entrenched difficulties, including higher unemployment, job intermittency, and a concentration in informal, low-skilled, and precarious sectors. The ILO's 2022–2025 strategy for Honduras supports vocational training and youth labour market insertion programs to address these barriers. In Costa Rica, youth unemployment remains a pressing concern, with young women particularly affected. Triangulated data from document reviews and interviews with key stakeholders highlights that youth unemployment rates are more than double those of the general population, and their labour participation and employment rates remain significantly lower (30.4% youth unemployment rate and 16.6% female unemployment). In Panama, unemployment rose significantly during the pandemic, disproportionately affecting women.

Gender disparities are similarly pronounced. Women are disproportionately affected by both unemployment and informality, facing structural barriers to labour market entry and progression. ILO staff underscores the need for gender-responsive labour policies that expand opportunities for women, particularly those with lower education and skill levels. This includes recognizing and addressing the unequal burden of unpaid care and domestic work, which remains a critical obstacle to women's full economic participation. The ILO's strategic frameworks for the region emphasize the importance of promoting socio-economic inclusion of women, youth, and other vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and the long-term unemployed.

REGULATORY AND INSTITUCIONAL CHALLENGES

Across all countries in the subregion, weaknesses in the rule of law, institutional fragmentation, and limited state capacity constrain effective governance. Discretionary law enforcement, political polarization, and the absence of coherent inter-institutional coordination have undermined public trust and policy implementation. Corruption and impunity remain widespread, with few accountability mechanisms in place, particularly in public procurement and justice systems. A lack of reliable, disaggregated data and inadequate statistical systems has further limited evidence-based policymaking and monitoring of national and international commitments, including the SDGs.

The region also grapples with fiscal constraints, high public debt, and restricted capacity for public investment in key sectors. Social dialogue remains weak due to fragmented civil society and limited inclusion of marginalized groups in policymaking. Institutional structures are frequently overly centralized and complex, inhibiting effective decentralization and local service delivery. Meanwhile, labour regulation frameworks have yet to adapt to emerging forms of work, such as telework and platform-based employment, leaving many workers without adequate protection or rights.

Across the countries analyzed common regulatory and institutional challenges are rooted in institutional fragility, social inequality, and environmental vulnerability. Costa Rica grapples with the pressures of an aging population and unresolved indigenous land rights, compounded by political polarization and weak digital governance. El Salvador faces persistent governance deficits, limited stakeholder coordination, and climate vulnerability, all within a constrained

fiscal environment. In Honduras, democratic backsliding and fragile institutions hinder public service delivery, while structural employment issues and gendered land access disparities remain unresolved. Mexico contends with systemic corruption, insecurity, and entrenched inequalities that undermine inclusive growth and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Cuba's development is significantly constrained by the U.S. embargo, outdated institutional frameworks, and technological obsolescence, which limit access to financing and hinder international cooperation. Meanwhile, Panama struggles with persistent social protection gaps, environmental risks, and fragmented development efforts due to weak inter-agency coordination and insufficient local integration of the SDGs. Despite their unique contexts, these countries share cross-cutting challenges that demand coordinated, inclusive, and forward-looking policy responses.

The complexity of institutional and regulatory challenges in the subregion highlights the need for comprehensive structural reform and strengthened governance. Advancing toward inclusive and sustainable development requires a long-term commitment to institutional modernization, decentralization, civic engagement, and coordinated investment in state capacity. Ensuring rights-based, transparent, and inclusive policy processes is critical to overcoming structural barriers and fostering social cohesion, economic transformation, and resilient institutions across Central America, Mexico, and Cuba.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROTECTION CHALLENGES

There is a general perception of too many bottlenecks, excessive procedures, and regulatory impediments that prevent concrete results, contributing to low citizen trust in state institutions. political fragmentation and polarization are significant concerns, obstructing agreements for key reforms and contributing to social instability. For example, in Costa Rica, political fragmentation, hate speech, and polarization obstruct agreements for key reforms in pensions, health, and education.

Social protection challenges across the Central America subregion continue to constrain inclusive labour market participation and the realization of Decent Work. Systems remain underdeveloped, fragmented, and severely underfunded, offering limited coverage—particularly for informal workers and marginalized populations. Fiscal constraints, driven by low tax revenues and high debt burdens, significantly reduce the capacity of states to invest in social safety nets, unemployment protection, pensions, and public healthcare. Widespread labour informality, which exceeds 60% in many countries, leaves millions of workers without access to social security, decent working conditions, or legal protections, perpetuating cycles of working poverty and vulnerability. The demographic pressures of aging populations, particularly in Costa Rica and Cuba, are placing unsustainable demands on pension and health systems, while low labour force participation among youth and women threatens long-term viability. Deep-rooted structural inequalities continue to marginalize women, indigenous communities, Afro-descendants, persons with disabilities, and rural populations, limiting their access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Gender gaps persist due to unpaid care responsibilities, inadequate childcare infrastructure, weak maternity protections, and discriminatory labour practices, all of which restrict women's participation in formal employment and subject them to increased risk of workplace violence. At the same time, the region faces sustained pressures from irregular migration and forced displacement driven by violence, economic instability, and environmental shocks. Migrants and displaced persons often work under precarious and informal conditions, with limited access to legal protections or essential services, a situation worsened by weak migration governance. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and recurrent climate-related disasters have further exposed the fragility of labour markets and underscored the urgent need to modernize and expand social protection systems. These shocks have disproportionately affected informal workers and highlighted the inadequacy of current frameworks to regulate emerging forms of employment such as telework and platform-based jobs. A comprehensive, equity-focused approach to social protection is therefore critical to address these structural gaps and ensure sustainable, inclusive labour market integration.

Governance and rule of law deficiencies

The subregion grappled with widespread **corruption, impunity, and political polarization**, which eroded trust in institutions and hindered effective governance. Weak justice and security systems, coupled with attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, and justice operators, underscored the fragility of the rule of law

Governance and institutional capacity deficits across Central America present significant barriers to achieving inclusive labour market outcomes and advancing the Decent Work agenda. The region is characterized by weak rule of law, limited state capacity, and the inconsistent enforcement of labour legislation, which undermines regulatory oversight and erodes the legitimacy of institutions charged with safeguarding labour rights and delivering social protection. Corruption and widespread impunity further weaken institutional credibility, diverting critical resources from labour and social programs while diminishing public trust and accountability. Administrative centralization and bureaucratic inefficiencies hinder the effective coordination and delivery of labour and social protection services, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, where policy fragmentation and regulatory complexity often result in exclusion. Recent democratic setbacks—including increased political polarization, the erosion of civic space, and constraints on civil society and trade unions—have compromised participatory governance and obstructed inclusive dialogue on labour policy reform. At the same time, pervasive insecurity, driven by high levels of violence and organized crime, especially in countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, directly disrupts economic activity, deters investment in formal employment, and restricts core labour rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining. These structural challenges are further compounded by persistent data gaps, including the absence of timely, disaggregated, and reliable labour market information, which limits the capacity of governments to design, implement, and evaluate responsive employment and social protection policies. Addressing these institutional weaknesses is essential to creating an enabling environment for inclusive growth, robust labour markets, and equitable access to social protection.

Climate change and environmental vulnerabilities

Climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly recognized as critical structural challenges undermining labour markets and decent work across the subregion. The Central America subregion is highly susceptible to extreme climatic events, including tropical storms (like Eta and Iota in Honduras and Guatemala) and prolonged droughts (especially in Guatemala's Dry Corridor), exacerbating food insecurity and internal displacement. Environmental degradation, including deforestation, water contamination, and biodiversity loss, further compounded these vulnerabilities, impacting livelihoods and public health.

According to the ILO Panorama Labour series, climate change intersects with labour systems through multiple pathways, including the rise of occupational diseases linked to heat stress, declining productivity under extreme temperatures, and direct economic losses for businesses and workers. These challenges are particularly acute in a region where a significant portion of the workforce operates informally—reaching 71% in Guatemala and over 50% in El Salvador—without access to social security or labour protections, thereby heightening their exposure to climate-induced shocks.

A recurring theme in ILO strategies is the imperative for a “just transition” toward environmentally sustainable and inclusive economies. This includes the promotion of green jobs—defined as decent employment that contributes to environmental preservation, enhances resource efficiency, limits emissions and pollution, and supports ecosystem restoration and climate adaptation. However, transitioning toward green economies requires significant structural changes, including investments in professional training, digital capacity, sustainable infrastructure, and social protection systems capable of responding to demographic, technological, and environmental transitions. The existing gaps in social protection coverage, particularly for informal and rural workers, pose a major barrier to climate resilience and equitable economic participation.

Country-specific experiences further underscore the differentiated yet converging nature of these challenges. In Costa Rica, where climate impacts threaten infrastructure and coastal

livelihoods, efforts are underway to promote green businesses and social dialogue on just transition strategies aligned with national climate commitments. El Salvador faces severe climate risk, with nearly 89% of its territory exposed to environmental hazards. Here, informal workers are particularly vulnerable, and strategies focus on strengthening climate-resilient agro-food systems and infrastructure. Honduras, severely affected by hurricanes and extreme weather, is promoting a green recovery agenda centred on circular economy initiatives and green job creation, while integrating climate resilience into national development planning and social dialogue. In Guatemala, environmental degradation exacerbates rural poverty, food insecurity, and migration pressures, especially for indigenous and smallholder farming communities. The ILO identifies opportunities for green job development in high-emission sectors, alongside the need for investments in sustainable agriculture and water resource management. Mexico, grappling with widespread environmental degradation and social vulnerability, is prioritizing climate adaptation, renewable energy, and the promotion of green businesses to generate decent employment and mitigate forced displacement. Panama, as a small and highly vulnerable state, is advancing strategies to promote sustainable consumption, relocate affected communities, and transform value chains toward greener alternatives such as ecotourism.

DIGITAL DIVIDE AND TRANSFORMATION CHALLENGES

Digital transformation in Central America, Mexico, and Cuba is reshaping labour markets with profound implications for the Decent Work agenda. While technological change offers opportunities to boost productivity and expand employment, it also risks deepening structural inequalities, displacing workers, and widening gaps in labour protections—particularly in regions marked by high informality, weak infrastructure, and fragile institution

The region generally lagged in digital readiness, with significant disparities in access to digital infrastructure and skills, particularly for lower-income populations and rural areas. While the pandemic accelerated telework adoption, this also presented new challenges for labour rights and social protection, especially for platform workers operating outside traditional regulations.

A major obstacle across the region is the limited and uneven access to digital infrastructure, particularly in rural, remote, and indigenous areas. In Guatemala, for example, as of 2018, only 29% of the population reported using the internet, with even lower access among rural communities. In Honduras and Panama, large segments of the population—especially those in indigenous comarcas—continue to lack reliable access to ICTs and broadband connectivity. This digital divide restricts access to education, remote work, e-commerce, online public services, and participation in the broader digital economy, further entrenching existing socio-economic disparities.

The ongoing digital transformation requires new skillsets, particularly in areas such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), digital literacy, and innovation. However, education and vocational training systems in many Central American countries, as well as in Mexico and Cuba, are not fully equipped to deliver the necessary competencies at scale. Vulnerable groups—including youth, women, and indigenous populations—face disproportionate barriers to acquiring these skills, which limit their ability to access new economic opportunities and adapt to evolving labour market demands.

The proliferation of digital platform work and telework, while creating flexible employment options, has also raised concerns about the quality of work and adequacy of labour protections. Many digital jobs operate outside traditional labour laws, often lacking social security coverage, collective bargaining rights, and income stability. In countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador, where informality exceeds 65% of total employment, these new digital work forms risk reinforcing existing patterns of labour market exclusion.

Automation, artificial intelligence, and robotics are transforming production systems and service delivery models. While these technologies can enhance competitiveness, they also carry the risk of displacing routine, low-skilled jobs—especially in labour-intensive sectors. In Honduras, for instance, it is estimated that nearly 14% of existing jobs are at risk due to automation. Without

targeted reskilling strategies and transition support, this trend could exacerbate unemployment and widen income inequality.

Most countries in the region lack comprehensive labour and social protection frameworks that are adapted to the digital economy. Regulatory gaps exist in areas such as telework, platform work, data protection, digital labour rights, and the right to disconnect. Additionally, social dialogue mechanisms have not been fully updated to incorporate the perspectives of digital workers and employers, limiting consensus-building around fair and inclusive transitions.

Effective digital transformation—particularly one that advances Decent Work—requires substantial investment in infrastructure, skills development, innovation systems, and enterprise support. However, public budgets in the region are constrained by high debt burdens and limited fiscal space. In Guatemala, for example, low levels of tax collection restrict state capacity to fund digital and social development priorities.

Digital transformation risks amplifying structural inequalities if not managed inclusively. Women face persistent underrepresentation in STEM fields and the digital economy. Migrants, rural communities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups remain largely excluded from digital education, formal employment pathways, and innovation ecosystems. Without corrective policies, the digital economy could reinforce labour market segmentation rather than reduce it.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) which account for a significant share of employment across the region, often struggle to adopt digital tools due to financing limitations, lack of technical knowledge, and cultural or informational barriers. This limits their ability to participate in digital value chains, reduce costs, or increase productivity—constraining their capacity to generate quality employment.

These interconnected issues underline the need for comprehensive, inclusive policy responses centred on job formalization, social protection expansion, environmental resilience, and regional cooperation—while recognizing the constraints imposed by limited fiscal space and high public debt.

Overall, the Central American subregion faces a complex landscape of decent work challenges, rooted in structural issues like high informality, deep-seated inequalities, the rise of digital work and institutional weaknesses, all of which have been compounded by climate change and the socio-economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing these challenges demands inclusive, rights-based strategies that prioritize formal job creation, social protection, climate resilience, and equitable digital access, ensuring no one is left behind.



05

► Findings

► FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

EQ1. To what extent and how are the objectives of the ILO CPOs and related projects for the selected countries relevant to the needs of the constituents and final beneficiaries, including the vulnerable groups?

To assess the extent to which, and how, the objectives of the ILO's CPOs and related projects in selected countries respond to the needs of constituents and final beneficiaries – including vulnerable groups – a three-dimensional approach was applied. This included examining the intrinsic relevance of the CPOs, their alignment with the priorities and needs expressed by national stakeholders, and the challenges and limitations affecting their implementation and pertinence. This analysis allows for an assessment not only of the strategic coherence of the CPOs, but also of their capacity to deliver context-appropriate responses to populations with varying levels of vulnerability.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE CPOS

The ILO structures its collaboration with Member States⁴ through CPOs and related projects. CPOs define country-specific results aligned with the ILO's overall P&B Outcomes⁵ and serve as a core framework for guiding activities and reporting progress. They also underpin the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCPs),⁶ which are the ILO's main vehicle for engagement at the national level. Each CPO includes performance indicators, baselines, and targets to enable consistent monitoring of progress over time. These are systematically tracked, with results feeding into global reporting and contributing to broader international agendas. CPOs play a critical role in linking national interventions to the ILO's global objectives, such as inclusive growth and decent work. CPOs are also aligned with UNSDCF in partner countries and contribute directly to the SDGs – primarily SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), and also to SDGs 1 (no poverty), 5 (gender equality), and 10 (reduced inequalities).⁷

This approach enhances relevance and legitimacy. In Central America, where formal DWCPs are less common (Honduras is the only country with a DWCP for the 2024–2027 period, other countries such as the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Panama have MoU signed by the three constituents towards developing a DWCP), CPOs play a central strategic role, ensuring alignment with national plans, P&B Outcomes, and SDGs. They provide a results-based framework linking projects to national development priorities.

The ILO's work in the Central America subregion during 2020–2023 aligns with the P&B Outcomes, as demonstrated in the table below, which displays how the 562 CPO results⁸ 2020–2024 are distributed across each Outcome.

⁴ ILO's Handbook on the Development and Implementation of DWCPs. The DWCP articulates a coherent and integrated strategy for advancing decent work in a specific national context, often over a three- to five-year period. By building around CPOs, the DWCP promotes alignment between national objectives and international labour standards and facilitates coordination among ILO-supported projects and activities.

⁵ ILO's Programme and Budget for 2020–2021, 2022–2023 and 2024–25.

⁶ ILO's Handbook on the Development and Implementation of DWCPs.

⁷ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020–2024), pages 20–21.

⁸ The total of 562 includes both the results reported from 2020 to 2023 and those planned for 2024.

TABLE 9. CPO ALIGNMENT WITH P&B OUTCOMES 2020-2024⁹

Country	Outcome 1: Strong, modernized normative action for social justice	Outcome 2: Strong, representative and influential tripartite constituents and effective social dialogue	Outcome 3: Full and productive employment for just transitions	Outcome 4: Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work	Outcome 5: Gender equality and equality of treatment and opportunities for all	Outcome 6: Protection at work for all	Outcome 7: Universal social protection	Outcome 8: Integrated policy and institutional responses for social justice	Enabler A: Improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work	Total general
Costa Rica	7	7	18	7	6	23	2	3		73
Cuba			5					3		8
Dominican Republic	7	19	6	2	10	10		1		55
El Salvador	4	8	13	1			8	3	1	38
Guatemala	22	8	3	1	10	12		3		59
Haiti		1	11	12	14	12	6	3		59
Honduras	16	9	2	2	10	12	8	3		62
Mexico	8	10	35	8	7	32	13	24	6	143
Nicaragua		13								13
Panama	3	9	3	4	5	5	3			32
Subregional						1				1
Central America						19				19
Total general	67	84	96	37	62	126	40	43	7	562

Source: Evaluation Team

The **analysis of reported results by Outcome** within the ILO's Decent Work Agenda in Central America reveals a distribution that provides valuable insights into operational priorities, contextual challenges, and the functionality of the programme's strategic components.

Outcome 6 (Protection at Work for All) accounts for the highest number of results (126), indicating a strong focus on strengthening working conditions, regulatory frameworks, and enforcement mechanisms related to occupational safety and health, labour rights, and other forms of protection. This emphasis aligns with the region's historical needs, which are characterized by high levels of informality, precarious employment, and occupational risks. Next is **Outcome 3 (Full and Productive Employment for Just Transitions)** with 96 results, reflecting attention to youth employment, post-pandemic economic recovery, and ecological and digital transitions, key issues in the region. **Outcome 2 (Strengthened Tripartism and Social Dialogue)** with 84 results also stands out, underscoring the ILO's structural commitment to its constituents and to the promotion of national agreements in settings often marked by institutional fragmentation and social tensions.

In contrast, Outcomes with fewer reported results include Enabler A¹⁰ (Improved Knowledge and Influence for Promoting Decent Work) with 7 results, Outcome 4 (Sustainable Enterprises for Inclusive Growth) with 37 results¹¹, and Outcome 7 (Universal Social Protection) with 40 results. This lower incidence may be attributed to several factors: limited institutional capacities, measurement challenges, low operational prioritization, budget constraints or human resources constraints (e.g. only one specialist in labour statistics in the subregion and long vacancy of specialists in enterprises and skills).

⁹ To allow for comparison across periods, the report uses the 2024–2025 P&B Outcome formulation throughout. This is because P&B Outcomes were adjusted or reorganized in some cases between P&B 2020–2021/2022–2023 and 2024–2025. Accordingly, outputs from P&B 2020–2021 and 2022–2023 have been aligned with the 2024–2025 formulation, as explained in the methodological note in Annex 8.

¹⁰ Enabler A is an internal enabler of the other P&B Outcomes. Enablers are designed to create an environment within the ILO that fosters a culture of inquiry, critical reflection, cooperation, and continuous learning from evaluation evidence. They help ensure that the ILO's strategies and programmes are effectively planned, managed, and evaluated, contributing to the overall achievement of decent work and social justice

¹¹ Despite these results for the evaluated timeframe, emerging efforts in 2024 reflect a shift toward longer-term, institutionalised approaches. In Guatemala, the first national mapping of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) was carried out with MINECO, producing clear policy recommendations for integration into national strategies. In Costa Rica, Spanish cooperation funds were mobilised through the Ministry of Labour to support the development of national training programmes, to be formally adopted by the Ministry of Labour and National Learning Institute (INA). These actions signal growing national ownership, alignment with public systems, and potential for policy sustainability

However, the limited number of results under Enabler A holds strategic significance, as this outcome serves as a catalyst. It is essential for generating evidence, technical knowledge, and tools that support, guide, and amplify the effectiveness of other results. Weaknesses in this area compromise the programme's ability to influence policy through evidence and may undermine its political and technical leverage in the region.

The analysis of the volume of reported results by country in the region reveals a clear correlation between installed operational capacity and programmatic performance in terms of results generation. Mexico (143 results) and Costa Rica (73) lead the list, consistent with their roles as hosts of the ILO CO in the subregion. This grants them not only greater technical and political presence, but also proportionally higher allocations of human and financial resources. This structural advantage enables broader thematic coverage, operational continuity, and stronger engagement with key national actors.

Honduras (62 results), and Haiti, and Guatemala (each with 59 results) also show significant levels of results, which may reflect a strategic prioritization in response to complex socioeconomic contexts marked by high informality, poverty, and institutional fragility. In these countries, ILO cooperation may play a compensatory role, driving more visible – though possibly more thematically focused – results in areas such as youth employment, social dialogue, or labour protection.

In contrast, Nicaragua (13 results) and Cuba (8 results) report significantly fewer results. Nicaragua represents a special case, given its recent announcement to withdraw from the ILO in 2025. This has led to the closure of the Country Office (managed from CO San Jose) and the termination of ongoing projects, disrupting programmatic continuity and sharply reducing the potential to consolidate or report results in the short term. In Cuba, the absence of a dedicated ILO focal point substantially limits the Organization's ability to manage, monitor, and generate evidence, which in turn reduces the visibility of interventions and may hinder coordination with national stakeholders.

This territorial logic suggests that the ILO's operational structure has a direct influence on countries' ability to generate results under the CPOs, although in specific contexts the presence of ILO can be stronger (i.e. Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras). It also raises important evaluation questions regarding geographic equity and the sustainability of technical cooperation in politically sensitive or institutionally constrained settings. This highlights the need for differentiated country strategies and regional mechanisms to help offset asymmetries in institutional presence and operational capacity.

ALIGNMENT OF THE CPOS TO THE NEEDS OF CONSTITUENTS AND FINAL TARGET GROUPS

The CPOs align with constituent needs through five key pathways:

1. Direct requests for specific technical assistance (e.g., CRI/19/50/UND; HND/23/50/EUR);
2. Support for the development and implementation of national policies and strategies, such as National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights or formalization strategies (CRI/18/02/CRI, RLA/22/07/EUR, MEX/23/01/RBS);
3. Targeted capacity building for government institutions, employer organizations, and trade unions to address identified gaps and priorities (RLA/22/07/EUR; CRI/19/50/UND, CRI/18/02/CRI among others);
4. Adaptation to national political contexts and emerging needs, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continued relevance of interventions;¹² and
5. Integration with and contribution to national development plans, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and broader Sustainable Development Goals (HND/23/01/RBS).¹³

¹² Further details are available in the Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024).

¹³ Further details are available in the Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024).

In terms of actual **alignment**, the Synthesis Review of this HLE confirmed the strong relevance of ILO initiatives to the needs of constituents and beneficiaries. Notably, 77% of the evaluated projects were rated as either “satisfactory” or “highly satisfactory”. Ten projects fully met all assessment criteria, earning the highest rating, while twelve (12) met one or more elements. Moreover, 17¹⁴ out of 22 projects (77%) also demonstrated a strong link between their objectives and the DC Pillars, showcasing the ILO’s commitment to core labour principles.¹⁵

Concrete examples of how the ILO in Central America has consistently aligned its CPOs during 2020–2024 with the priorities of governments, employers’ organizations, and workers’ organizations across various countries are as follows.

Some projects also made deliberate efforts to consult vulnerable groups. For example, the “Fair Recruitment” project (RLA/22/03/CAN), implemented in **Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama**, planned to create national platforms for advice and consultation with organized women’s organizations and migrant organizations to provide inputs on improving access to childcare services for women migrant workers. The INAMU project (CRI/18/02/CRI) included initiatives to develop a gender-focused System of Employability Intermediation and Promotion (SIPE), implement formalization strategies for vulnerable groups like domestic workers and women in artisanal fishing, and integrate a gender perspective into labour inspection processes. In **Honduras**, the CLEAR project (HND/23/05/EUR) ensured the participation of women, indigenous peoples, and young people within relevant coordination mechanisms and planned participatory research involving children, young people, women, indigenous peoples, and migrants on the root causes of child labour. The “CUIDADOS project- Promotion of policies and services of care to improve the conditions of access to decent employment for women in two departments of rural” (HND/23/01/RBS) further focused on improving employment access for rural women, women’s groups, indigenous communities through care services and local social dialogue committees.

In **Mexico**, the ILO supported the development of a National Policy on Business and Human Rights in collaboration with government and employer groups (MEX/23/01/RBS), addressing the government’s need for a comprehensive framework to help businesses incorporate human rights considerations into their operations and decision-making. This policy also received support through partnerships with the Secretary of Interior Affairs (SEGOB) and technical assistance provided to business organizations. Additionally, the document review showed that targeted capacity-building initiatives were carried out in the agriculture and minerals sectors in close cooperation with major business associations (e.g., Business Coordinating Council (CCE) and Confederation of Industrial Chambers (CONCAMIN)). This direct engagement ensured that training and technical help were customized to the specific needs and challenges of these industries.

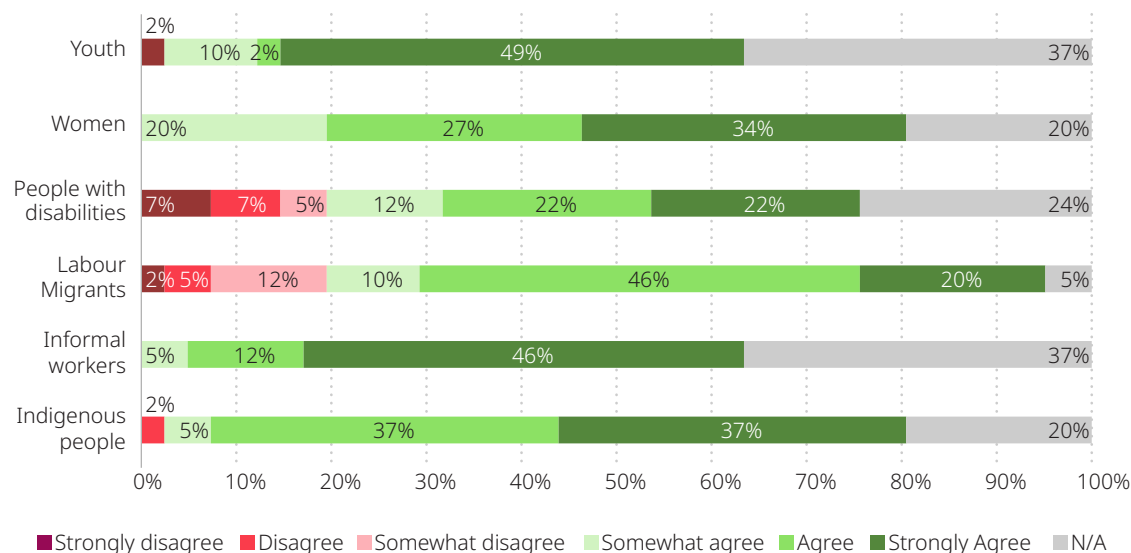
When it comes to how constituents perceive the relevance of ILO’s support, a strong majority of survey respondents (84%) found it relevant, with 47% rating it as “very relevant,” the most common response, and 16% as “Extremely relevant.” However, 15% of respondents considered the support to be minimally or only somewhat relevant, indicating that while overall agreement is high, there are still gaps or limitations in certain contexts or projects.

Survey data on priority areas for ILO action further support this alignment. These responses highlight the constituents’ focus on structural and regulatory issues in labour markets, while suggesting that social dimensions, though acknowledged, may receive relatively less attention in operational priorities. This underscores the need for a balanced approach that combines economic, legal, and inclusion-focused interventions (see Figure 1).

14 DOM/17/01/USA, GLO/18/63/SWE, GTM/18/01/USA, GTM/18/52/SWE, HTI/16/01/NOR, HTI/18/01/RBS, HTI/20/01/NOR, MEX/20/01/NAA, NO_DC_SYMBOL_70, NO_DC_SYMBOL_75, PAN/22/01/UNO, PER/20/01/RBS, RLA/16/03/ESP, RLA/17/03/EUR, RLA/18/05/EUR, RLA/21/09/SWE, RLA/98/03/PAN.

15 Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020–2024).

FIGURE 1. ILO STAFF RESPONSES TO THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS



Source: Survey ILO's staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

Additionally, survey responses from ILO staff generally reflected positive perceptions of ILO's engagement with vulnerable populations, though results varied. The strongest approval was for indigenous peoples (74%) and informal workers (58%). Women's needs were also well addressed, with 81% expressing some level of agreement. Support for youth (51%) and migrant workers (66%) was moderate, though migrant support included 7% critical feedback. The lowest satisfaction was for people with disabilities, with only 56% agreement and the highest disagreement (14%), indicating a need for improved inclusion efforts.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS IN ALIGNING ILO'S WORK TO THE NEEDS OF CONSTITUENTS AND TARGET GROUPS

Data from the desk review and interviews showed the following challenges and limitations toward aligning the CPOs and related projects to the needs of the constituents and final users.

A key identified issue was **uneven engagement from constituents across projects**. While the Synthesis Review found that 64% of projects demonstrated strong consultation efforts, 36% had limited or no constituent involvement. The main challenge in underperforming projects was reported as a lack of documented participatory processes. Some initiatives may have engaged stakeholders, but failed to record these efforts formally, or evaluation reports did not mention it.¹⁶

Another structural limitation identified in the Synthesis Review of this HLE was related to **externally funded, pre-designed projects and political sensitive environments**. The Synthesis Review found that some donor-funded initiatives, especially those financed by the U.S. Department of Labour (USDOL) and the European Commission, were developed with limited consultation of national stakeholders during the design phase. This often led to a disconnect between project objectives and national priorities, which could affect legitimacy and uptake (DOM/17/01/USA; GTM/18/01/USA and RLA/18/05/EUR). Others showed limited engagement of trade unions and employer organizations in some projects, which led to weaker tripartite collaboration (MEX/20/01/NAA). The evaluation team also noted that in certain politically sensitive environments, such as Nicaragua, sociopolitical crises severely disrupted tripartite governance. ILO staff confirmed that the government's withdrawal from ILO cooperation and the closure of institutional spaces, including the legalization of private sector actors, significantly limited consultation and operational capacity, forcing the ILO to adapt by working mainly with unions.

¹⁶ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024), page 19.

Frequent **changes in government and ministerial staff** also emerged as a recurring challenge during interviews with key informants from the ILO, undermining relevance, continuity, and political ownership. Informants emphasized the need for sustained engagement with changing administrations, as political transitions often disrupt previously agreed initiatives and compromise long-term impact.

Finally, **internal bureaucracy** also affects performance. ILO processes are often viewed by constituents and ILO staff as slow and overly centralized, with decision-making concentrated in Headquarters (HQ). This slows response times and limits contextual flexibility, which is crucial for adapting to emerging constituents' needs. Conversely to these opinions, the Synthesis Review showed that 82% of projects adapted well, particularly in response to COVID-19, and a minority of projects (three out of 22) demonstrated limited capacity to adapt to emerging constituents' needs (GTM/18/52/SWE; HND/17/01/USA; MEX/20/01/NAA).¹⁷

In times of major global crises, the ILO has demonstrated its ability to adapt and streamline internal bureaucratic processes. This indicates that more agile and responsive approaches are both possible and feasible, suggesting that the slower standard procedures identified in the survey can be overcome when there is sufficient institutional will and prioritization.

EQ2. To what extent is the ILO's work in Central America relevant to, and aligned with national, sub and regional development frameworks?

The relevance and alignment of the ILO's work in Central America with development frameworks at different levels are crucial for assessing the strategic appropriateness of its interventions. This analysis helps determine if the ILO's actions properly address the priorities and needs identified by the countries while also aligning with international commitments and the Organization's global goals.

To address this evaluation question, the analysis is structured around four key dimensions. Alignment with international development frameworks examines the extent to which the ILO's work in Central America is articulated with global commitments such as the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs, and the United Nations system's cooperation frameworks at the national level. Alignment with subregional frameworks considers coherence with strategies promoted by the Central American Integration System (SICA). In terms of alignment with national frameworks, the analysis examines how the interventions address the priorities and public policies of each country in the UNSDCF. Finally, alignment with the ILO's global objectives assesses the consistency of regional actions with the Organization's worldwide strategic Outcomes and priorities, including the Centenary Outcomes Framework and the biennial Programme and Budget.

ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

The ILO's work in the Central American subregion is directly and significantly **aligned with the SDGs**, particularly **SDG 8, which focuses on decent work and economic growth**. On average across the 10 countries, this goal represents 71% of the results reported under the CPOs, reflecting strong coherence with the ILO's institutional mandate. This relatively high alignment highlights the ILO's core mandate to promote full and productive employment, labour rights, social protection, and social dialogue. Through these actions, the ILO contributes to building inclusive and sustainable economies, generating structural impacts on labour systems.

At the national level, significant disparities are apparent. Mexico (66 results, 37%) and Costa Rica (36 results, 20%) stand out for their high number of reported results contributing to SDGs, indicating stronger implementation and possibly greater institutional capacity and political commitment to ILO priorities. In contrast, Nicaragua (1 result), along with Cuba and Haiti (each one with 2 results) report very low values, which may reflect limitations in technical cooperation, structural challenges, or less favourable sociopolitical environments. These variations show an uneven distribution of the ILO's contribution to the SDGs across the region, which could affect subregional unity in promoting decent work.

¹⁷ Idem.

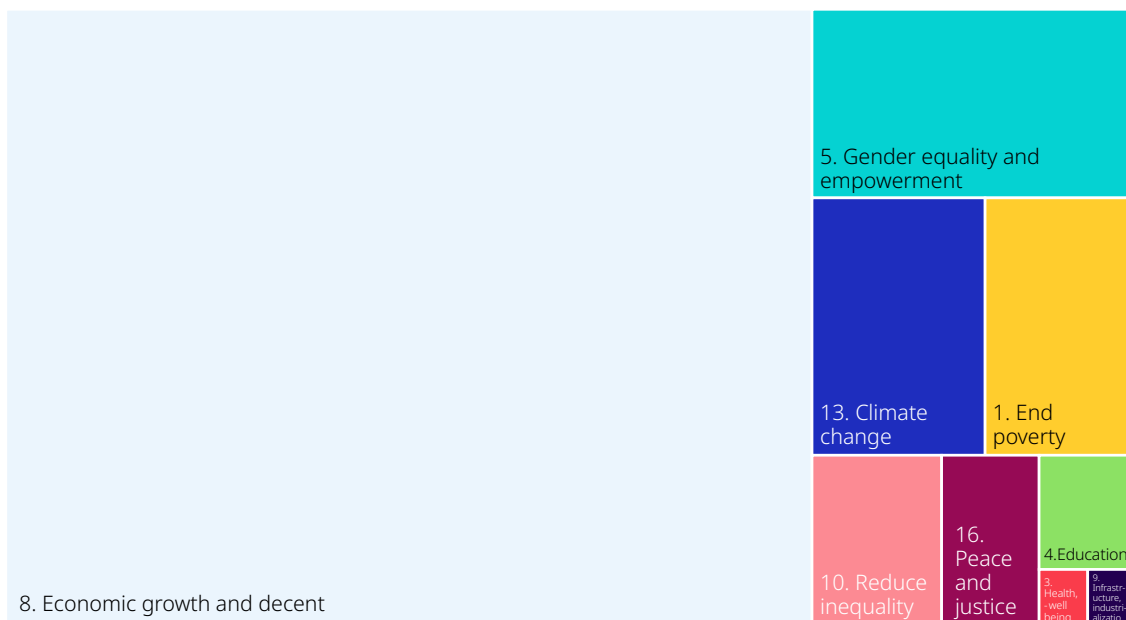
Additionally, the ILO contributes to other key SDGs, such as SDG 5 (Gender Equality), with 9% of CPO-reported Outcomes in the subregion, through initiatives aimed at closing wage gaps, promoting shared caregiving responsibilities, and eliminating workplace violence. Similar to SDG 8, Mexico (8 results, 36%) and Costa Rica (7 results, 32%), together with Honduras (4 results, 18%) report the highest number of CPO results for SDG 5, while Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, and Nicaragua report no outcomes.

Regarding SDG 13 (Climate Action), the outcomes reported under the CPO for this goal make up 6% of the total reported by Mexico (15 results, 94%) and Guatemala (1 result, 6%). These results mainly focus on just transition strategies that align environmental objectives with green job creation and worker protection.

Other contributions include SDG 1 (No Poverty), also at 6%, with results from Mexico (4 results, 29%), Costa Rica and El Salvador (3 results, 21% each), and Honduras and Panama (2 results, 14% each). SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) had reported outcomes in Mexico (5 results, 63%), the Dominican Republic (2 results, 5%), and El Salvador (1 result, 2%), representing 3% of the overall results. Lastly, SDG 16 (Inclusive Institutions) accounted for 2% of total results, with contributions from Costa Rica and Mexico (3 results, 50% each).

While the ILO's focus is strongly rooted in SDG 8, it has a lower alignment with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Health and Well-being), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), all of which are below 2%. Overall, this landscape reaffirms the relevance of decent work as a central pillar of sustainable development and underscores the need for more interconnected, inclusive, and coherent programming in line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

FIGURE 2. THE ILO'S WORK ALIGNMENT TO THE SDGS IN THE CENTRAL AMERICA SUBREGION (AS PER CPOS RESULTS ALIGNMENT IN 2020-2024)



Source: Evaluation Team

According to ILO staff perceptions, the level of **alignment between the Organization's work and international frameworks** is notably high. A total of 73% of responses indicate strong alignment – 49% describe it as “mostly aligned” and 24% as “fully aligned.” An additional 20% consider the alignment to be “moderate,” while only 7% see it as low or non-existent. These results show a clear consistency between the ILO's actions in the subregion and the global commitments made by the United Nations system and other international agendas. This strong alignment suggests that the ILO has been successful in translating global priorities into operational guidance, thereby boosting the legitimacy of its programmatic actions and improving coordination with other multilateral partners.

ALIGNMENT WITH SUBREGIONAL FRAMEWORKS (SICA)

The ILO's work in the Central American subregion is closely aligned with the frameworks established by SICA, particularly its Regional Strategic Agenda for Labour Affairs.¹⁸ This alignment is reflected both in the shared strategic objectives and in the coordinated implementation of labour policies and projects.

One of the main areas of alignment is the promotion of decent work and the creation of productive employment. Both entities (ILO and SICA) view these goals as fundamental to achieving sustainable development, strengthening democratic governance, and reducing poverty. SICA's agenda directly references the ILO's Hemispheric Decent Work Agenda,¹⁹ reinforcing the conceptual and programmatic convergence between the two institutions.

Tripartite social dialogue, involving governments, employers, and workers, is another central pillar. The ILO promotes the establishment and strengthening of social dialogue mechanisms, an approach that is also embedded in SICA's subregional frameworks. These frameworks support regional forums and councils that address key issues such as youth employment, labour migration, and the elimination of child labour, in coordination with the ILO.

In the area of social protection and labour rights, the ILO works to expand coverage, improve labour regulations, and ensure compliance with fundamental rights at work. These priorities are equally reflected in SICA's policies and agreements, demonstrating strong alignment in this field.

Gender equality and the fight against workplace discrimination are also shared priorities. Both the ILO and SICA frameworks incorporate these issues into their public agendas, reflecting a comprehensive approach to inclusion and equity.

Coordination mechanisms between the ILO and subregional frameworks are operationalized through various forms of technical cooperation. The ILO implements projects aligned with the priorities identified by SICA member countries, ensuring consistency with regional frameworks. Moreover, the ILO actively participates in subregional bodies such as the Council of Ministers of Labour of Central America and the Dominican Republic²⁰ and the Secretariat for Central American Social Integration, to which it provides technical and logistical support.

According to responses from ILO staff to the survey, the perception of the **Organization's alignment with subregional strategies** is relatively low: only 7% consider it to be fully aligned, 17% perceive it as mostly aligned, and 37% as only moderately aligned. Additionally, 27%²¹ of responses indicate some degree of misalignment (ranging from "somewhat", "slightly" to "not at all aligned"). These results indicate a weak perception of the level of articulation between subregional priorities and the ILO's programmatic actions, suggesting the need to strengthen consultation, planning, and integration mechanisms with subregional actors and platforms, however the documents reviewed indicated a higher level of subregional alignment.

ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Regarding the **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)**, the analysis conducted across the 10 countries in the subregion shows that Nicaragua did not have an UNSDCF in place for the period under review. The decent work pillar, which focuses on promoting employment, is the most supported pillar within the existing UNSDCF frameworks. Mexico and, to some extent, El Salvador address social issues dialogue. Only El Salvador, Mexico, and Panama include labour rights as part of human rights. Mexico is the only country that reflects a

18 Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana - SICA (2013): Agenda Estratégica Regional para Asuntos Laborales y de Trabajo del Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana. Available at: [Agenda Estratégica Regional para Asuntos Laborales y de Trabajo del Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana \(SICA\) International Labour Organization](#).

19 OIT (2006): Trabajo decente en las Américas: una agenda hemisférica, 2006-2015, Informe del Director. Available at: [wcms_081003.pdf](#)

20 Consejo de Ministros y Ministras de Trabajo de Centroamérica y República Dominicana (2015), Plan de Acción Regional relativo a la Declaración de San José. Available at: [www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@americas/@ro-lima/@sro-san_jose/documents/genericdocument/wcms_474652.pdf](#).

21 For this question, 12% of the responses were classified as "Not Available".

comprehensive approach to the DW Agenda, incorporating references to employment promotion, labour rights, social dialogue and social protection.

TABLE 10. ALIGNMENT OF UNSCDF WITH DW PILLARS

COUNTRY (UNSDCF)	DW AGENDA			
	RIGHTS AT WORK	EMPLOYMENT CREATION	SOCIAL PROTECTION	SOCIAL DIALOGUE
Costa Rica (2023-2027)	Partial	Yes	Partial	No
Cuba (2020-2024)	No	No	Yes	No
Dominican Republic (2023-2027)	No	Yes	No	No
El Salvador (2022-2026)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Guatemala (2020-2025)	No	Yes	Partial	Partial
Haiti (2022-2026)	No	Yes	No	No
Honduras (2022-2026)	Partial	Yes	No	No
Mexico (2022-2026)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nicaragua	No data	No data	No data	No data
Panama (2021-2025)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Source: Evaluation Team

This category shows the highest level of perceived alignment among ILO staff between the ILO's work in the subregion and national strategies, based on survey responses. A total of 61% of respondents said that the Organization's work is mostly or fully aligned with national development strategies, while an additional 37% considered it to be moderately aligned. Only 3% perceived a low or non-existent level of alignment. These results reflect a strong perception of integration of the ILO's actions with the priorities and planning frameworks of national governments. This coherence can be attributed to participatory joint planning processes, the Organization's flexibility to adapt to national contexts, and the direct influence of existing cooperation frameworks. Effective alignment with national plans not only promotes local ownership and the sustainability of interventions but also strategically positions the ILO as a key partner in development efforts. However, as Table 10 above indicates, there are areas to be addressed for a full alignment (i.e., labour rights and social dialogue).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE P&B OUTCOMES

The implementation of the P&B Outcomes remains flexible and adaptable, reflecting changing national circumstances and the Organization's strategic agility. Activities are modified based on available funding and the needs expressed by constituents, which are influenced by each country's unique situation. As a result, planned interventions under the P&B Outcomes are often revised, with factors such as government changes and shifts in national priorities directly affecting the scope and direction of ILO projects.

As an ILO Technical Focal Point interviewee observed, work aligns with the CPOs when opportunities arise, but resource mobilization and action planning are not always coordinated or as prompt as desired. Contributions to the CPOs are not necessarily systematic or planned beforehand; instead, they tend to be reactive or occur when circumstances permit.

The analysis of alignment with the P&B Outcomes is grounded in the contributions of 123 unique projects, representing a total of 221 reported results. ILO non-project-based interventions — including those related to technical assistance — were excluded from the scope of this analysis for the identification of clear trends in the ILO's programmatic priorities in the region.

TABLE 11. ALIGNMENT OF PROJECTS TO P&B OUTCOMES RESULTS

Countries	Outcome 1: Strong, modernized normative action for social justice	Outcome 2: Strong, representative & influential tripartite constituents & effective social dialogue	Outcome 3: Full and productive employment for just transitions	Outcome 4: Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work	Outcome 5: Gender equality and equality of treatment and opportunities for all	Outcome 6: Protection at work for all	Outcome 7: Universal social protection	Outcome 8: Integrated policy and institutional responses for social justice	Enabler A: Improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work	Total general
Costa Rica	1	1	4	5	2	7	1	1	1	23
Cuba	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Dominican Republic	1	2	2	2	1	5	1	1	1	16
El Salvador	1	3	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	15
Guatemala	7	3	1	1	4	5	1	1	1	24
Haiti	1	1	6	4	6	6	1	1	1	27
Honduras	4	2	1	2	3	5	3	1	1	22
Mexico	3	3	4	4	2	11	2	1	1	31
Nicaragua	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
Panama	1	2	1	3	3	4	1	1	1	17
Subregional	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Central America	1	1	1	1	1	8	1	1	1	16
Total general	23	24	27	26	26	55	16	12	12	221

Source: Evaluation Team

The results show the highest concentration of alignment in Outcome 6 (Protection at Work for All), with 55 project results linked, highlighting a strong focus on improving working conditions, occupational safety, and compliance with fundamental labour standards. This emphasis reflects a cross-cutting concern with ensuring basic rights in contexts of high labour vulnerability.

The next most frequently addressed outcomes are Outcome 3 (Full and Productive Employment for Just Transitions) (27 results linked), and Outcomes 4 (Sustainable Enterprises for Inclusive Growth and Decent Work) and 5 (Gender Equality and Equality of Treatment and Opportunities for All). 26 results are linked, which focus on the promotion of sustainable enterprises and gender equality, respectively. These areas represent key pillars of the Decent Work Agenda, confirming programming that is aligned with institutional and global priorities. However, there is comparatively less focus on Outcome 8 (Integrated Policy and Institutional Responses for Social Justice) and Enabler A (Improved Knowledge and Influence for Promoting Decent Work), each one with only 12 results linked. This limited attention may indicate a gap in institutional capacity-building and evidence generation –both essential components for the sustainability of interventions.

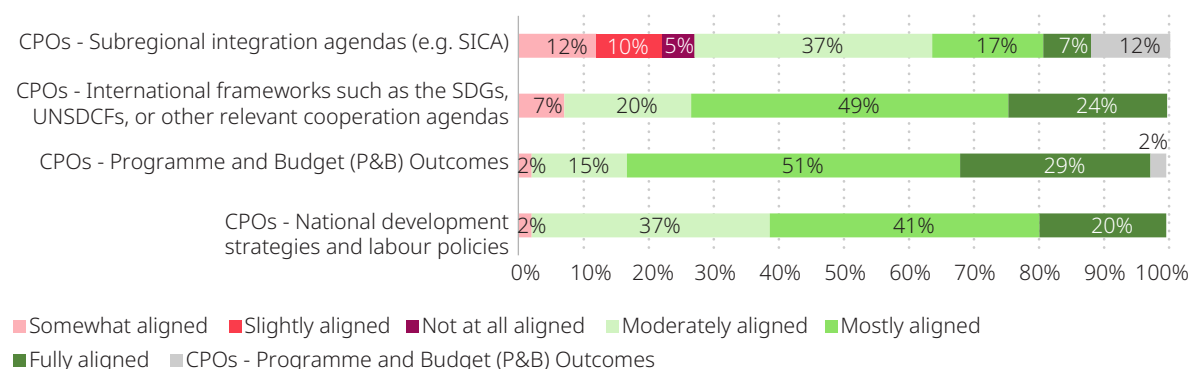
From a geographical perspective, Mexico stands out as the country with the highest number of results linked (31), with a significant focus on Outcome 6 (11 results linked), reaffirming its role as a priority country in the area of labour protection. Haiti, in turn, shows a balanced distribution across three key areas – Outcomes 3, 5, and 6 – with six contributions each, suggesting a multi-thematic intervention tailored to its structural complexity. In contrast, Cuba and the subregional level show the lowest figures, with only 9 contributions each, evenly distributed across all Outcomes. This low programmatic intensity may reflect limited targeting or a more generalist and constrained intervention.

Overall, the data reveal strong alignment with the operational priorities of the Decent Work Agenda – employment, equity, and social protection – while also suggesting opportunities for further work in strengthening institutional capacities and influencing public policy. Rebalancing programming towards these under-addressed outcomes could enhance the sustainability and long-term impact of the ILO's interventions in the region.

According to **ILO staff perceptions, alignment with the P&B Outcomes** is generally viewed as strong. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents indicated full alignment, while 51% perceived

partial alignment, and 15% rated it as moderately aligned. Only 5% reported some degree of misalignment. These results reflect an overall sense of coherence between central institutional planning and operational implementation. The combined 80% of full and partial alignment suggests that the expected Outcomes of the P&B are being used as a clear reference in executing work, although there is still room for improvement to achieve full alignment. This situation may be influenced by factors such as the need for operational adaptation to changing contexts and resource constraints, which can cause discrepancies between planned actions and those effectively carried out on the ground.

FIGURE 3. DEGREE OF ALIGNMENT OF THE ILO'S WORK



Source: Survey ILO's staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

The difference in ILO staff perceptions about how well the ILO's work in the subregion aligns with various strategic frameworks – international, subregional, and national – can be seen as a gap between theory and practice. While official programming documents clearly state a goal of strategic alignment, at the operational level, teams often notice differences between what is planned and what is implemented. This disconnect can partly be attributed to the heavy reliance on the priorities of national stakeholders and donors, whose agendas may shift significantly depending on the country's political and economic context. These contextual factors can temporarily weaken programmatic coherence, leading to a sense of operational misalignment that might not be reflected in institutional planning frameworks.

EQ3. To what extent do the ILO regional and subregional strategies integrate gender and non-discrimination (disability, labour migration, indigenous people, youth), international labour standards, social dialogue, and just transition?

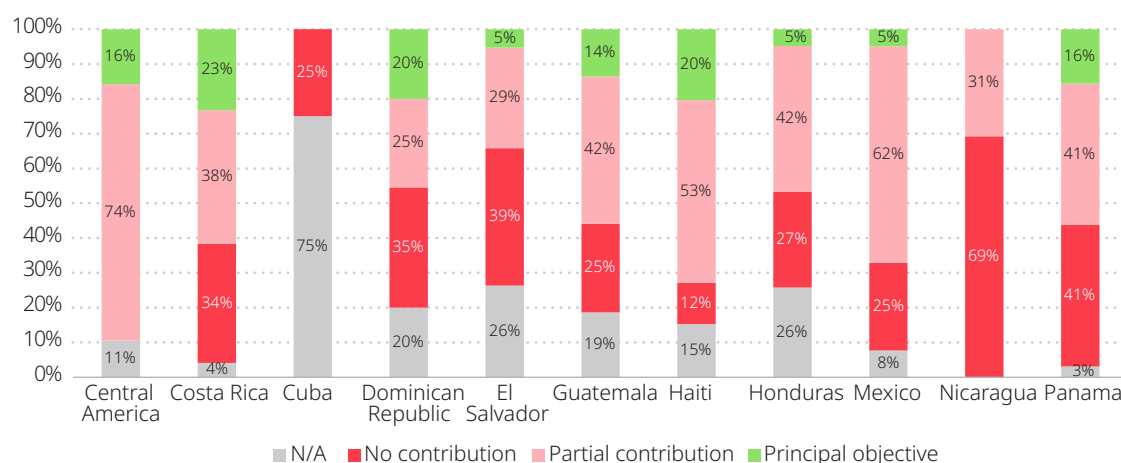
Overall, the ILO's capacity to mainstream gender equality and non-discrimination, international labour standards, social dialogue, and just transition has been recognized by various actors as a sustained effort, although it faces significant structural and contextual challenges. This analysis is based on three sources of information: interviews with ILO staff and constituents, analysis of the CPOs, surveys to ILO staff and key partners, and available information on the interventions and complementary actions developed in this period.

INTEGRATION OF CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Firstly, although the gender approach has played an important role in the ILO's agenda, its effectiveness has varied across countries. Strategic alliances with the employer sector and the promotion of Convention 190 have been notable strengths but are limited by institutional discontinuities and limited scalability in some efforts. The absence of stable gender technical experts on gender issues, due to the elimination of key positions in some offices, budget adjustments or high staff turnover (e.g. the DWT/CO San Jose Director position experienced several changes over a short period) has affected the continuity of some strategies and contributed significantly the loss of know-how.

Based on the available data and the experience of ILO staff, the integration of gender equality within ILO interventions in Central America is broadly aligned with the ILO Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and the Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022–2025. There is evidence of progress in mainstreaming gender-sensitive approaches across projects,²² with examples such as gender-responsive budgeting and the promotion of women's leadership, but the application of gender-transformative frameworks remains uneven, with gaps in gender analysis and limited resource allocation.

FIGURE 4. RESULTS INCLUDING GENDER-RELATED OUTCOMES



Source: Evaluation Team

As shown in the previous table and consistent with the overall analysis, there is a noticeable asymmetry among countries. While some, like Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama show significant percentage advances (also influenced by their project portfolios and the availability of information), others, such as Cuba, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, display a much lower level of integration. However, subregional initiatives reveal a greater and clearer alignment between the mapped interventions, their results, and the commitments related to gender inclusion.

- In several countries, concrete tools and activities have been developed to promote gender equality, particularly in collaboration with employers' organizations. Examples include guides created with CONCAMIN in Mexico (CPO Mexico 901), the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) in Honduras (CPO Honduras 102), and other initiatives in El Salvador and Guatemala that focus on preventing harassment and gender-based violence at work, as part of implementing Convention 190.
- In sectors with high female participation, such as maquilas, care, and fishing, the ILO has promoted relevant initiatives. In Honduras, as part of the HND/20/01/RBS project, there was collaboration with tobacco companies and COHEP to establish childcare centres within a care economy model. However, it was observed that these experiences have not always been able to expand or receive sustained follow-up for their institutionalization and scaling up.
- The positioning of women's leadership within the business sector also shows positive effects, with notable contributions from the ILO. The election of women to management roles, such as in Unión de Camaras de la Empresa Privada (UCCAEP) in Costa Rica, is connected to a broad, cross-cutting empowerment strategy promoted across various areas and projects. At the local level, this approach is complemented by additional strategies aimed at creating economic opportunities for women, whether through territorial alliances, cooperative models, or initiatives related to the care economy.

Secondly, the principle of **non-discrimination** has been reflected in the design and development of several programmes and frameworks,²³ including advancements in areas such as violence and harassment prevention, primarily through the adoption of the guidelines of Convention 190 and

²² As shows, for example, the publication "Making domestic work decent work: Investing in care. Roadmap and policy recommendations".

²³ For example, in the framework of the draft "Strategy of the ILO Office in Central America, Haiti, Panama and the Dominican Republic 2022-2025".

the promotion of safe, violence-free working environments. However, effective implementation remains uneven and largely depends on the institutional capacity of the different partner governments. On the other hand, although intersectional approaches have been considered when analysing the realities and needs of indigenous women, migrants, and groups vulnerable to discrimination due to sexual orientation and identify, these efforts are still fragmented and underdeveloped, lacking proper systematization. This emphasizes the need for greater methodological and programmatic depth, while also demonstrating that the design process is, overall, well aligned with the ILO's normative mandate and strategic frameworks, including the Centenary Declaration and the draft 2022–2025 Subregional Strategy for Central America.

Thirdly, the ILO's work on **disability** has made positive progress during the last programming period (2020–2024), although its scope remains limited, and it lacks structural integration and continuity. The ILO Disability Inclusion Strategy 2024–2027²⁴ offers a comprehensive institutional framework to mainstream disability inclusion across policies, programmes, and organizational culture. However, outdated regulatory frameworks and limited national resources have been significant obstacles, along with the internal capacities of ILO Country Offices, which sometimes lack specialized staff or dedicated resources for cross-cutting issues. The labour market inclusion of persons with disabilities has been incorporated into some ILO initiatives in various countries. In Costa Rica, where in 2021, thanks to ILO support, the country enacted the National Care Policy 2021–2031 to progressively establish a care system for older adults and persons with disabilities in dependency situations – coordinating existing services, expanding support, and promoting shared social responsibility for care – coverage remains limited due to legal and budgetary constraints faced by governments. These actions fully align with some commitments and objectives outlined in the draft “ILO Subregional Strategy for Central America, Haiti, Panama, and the Dominican Republic 2022–2025” and the “Panama Declaration for the Future of Work in the Americas”²⁵ which identify key barriers in workplaces. Following these guidelines, for example, the ILO has partnered with agencies like the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to establish basic inclusion conditions. Some of these efforts have yielded tangible results in recruitment and integration, such as the CREER project in Haiti (HTI/18/01/RBS), but overall, they remain fragile, with little follow-up and weak, complex institutionalization mechanisms. This finding aligns with the analysis of CPOs conducted during this evaluation, which shows that most results do not directly contribute to this dimension, with only 12 at the regional level, primarily concentrated in two countries: the Dominican Republic (2.1%) and Mexico (1.5%).

Fourth, in the field of **labour migration**, ILO has been recognized for its support of reintegration processes for returnees, in alignment with the commitments established under the “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)” and the strategic guidelines outlined in the SDGs. While IOM and UNHCR continue to play a more prominent role in these matters due to their greater financial capacity and clearer mandates in this area, the ILO has also made significant contributions to promote migration management that respects workers' rights.

Additionally, the subregional Labour Migration Strategy acknowledges the intra- and inter-country migration flows around the so-called “Northern Triangle” and the risks these dynamics pose for mobile populations to become victims of exploitation, such as forced labour or human trafficking. It also emphasizes the importance of the experiences of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Panama, and the potential of programmes to support regular migration and temporary employment for returnees in El Salvador and Guatemala. In this context, the ILO has shown a remarkable capacity to develop technical instruments²⁶ and partnerships. However, its role often remains overshadowed, as mentioned above, by other institutions and agencies that have greater investment and direct support capabilities. This reflects certain weaknesses in fulfilling its mandate and highlights significant limitations in transitioning from strategic and policy dialogue to tangible technical implementation and transformation on the ground.

24 Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/ILO%20Disability%20Inclusion%20Strategy%20%282024-2027%29%20_%2003%2012%2024_1.pdf.

25 Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_646373.pdf.

26 Available at: ILO regional strategy on labour migration and human mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023–2030. [available here](#).

- Multiple tools have been developed to promote safe and orderly labour migration. These include the Fair Recruitment Toolkit, training to prevent forced labour, and several sectoral guides in countries such as Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras, some of which were developed with the support of other agencies like UNHCR.

Fifth, the ILO has maintained a consistent presence in promoting **international labour standards** and strengthening **social dialogue** in Central America, two strategically interrelated dimensions, showing alignment with regional strategic frameworks such as the ILO Centenary Declaration and the Panama Declaration. The subregional strategy aims to improve Member States' capacities to ratify and apply ILS participate in policy discussions on ILS and implement sectoral recommendations and guidelines. Following this approach, the promotion of international standards and commitments has been a sustained line of intervention,²⁷ with a particular focus on sensitive issues like the protection of freedom of association, which remains a priority for local actors (e.g. trade unions, civil society, etc). Several relevant projects implemented in the region (such as GLO/18/63/SWE, HTI/20/01/NOR and RLA/18/05/EUR) demonstrate a clear alignment with DW principles and core labour priorities. However, other aspects, particularly those related to gender equality and the inclusion of vulnerable groups, have taken a back seat due to their marginal position in sectoral agendas.²⁸ Furthermore, the effectiveness of social dialogue has relied on the existence of autonomous structures and active partners. Even a frequent negative factor, such as high institutional turnover, has been partially mitigated by the ILO's ability to maintain channels of dialogue open and to sustain discussion spaces, even in unstable situations.

- In Guatemala, the ILO has supported efforts to defend trade union action amid ongoing complaints about labour rights violations. Through its technical assistance, the ILO has helped maintain dialogue spaces with decision-makers and social actors, promoting the implementation of international instruments such as Convention 190 and facilitating meetings and negotiations in particularly fragile and adverse scenarios.
- In countries like El Salvador and Nicaragua, where the weakness and co-optation of tripartite actors have undermined the effectiveness of dialogue mechanisms, the ILO has played a crucial role in creating opportunities for collaboration. Its presence has enabled the preservation of negotiation spaces and promoted participation among labour actors and employers, even in the face of widespread restrictions and political pressure.

Finally, the integration of other relevant approaches and vulnerable groups within ILO strategies in Central America, such as **indigenous peoples, youth, and just transition**, has been more limited and isolated.

- Regarding youth, the most tangible results of the ILO's work have focused on training and labour insertion programmes. One example is the actions developed within the framework of the CLEAR project, which promoted youth participation in local committees in the coffee sector and strategies for the prevention of child labour²⁹

However, participants have noted limitations concerning the intensity of the training, the brief duration of support, and the lack of additional funding and support mechanisms for local initiatives.

Although the concept of just transition has been incorporated into ILO discourse mainly since 2022, its implementation remains at the early stages, mostly emphasizing the promotion of green jobs. However, examples are still limited and developing. One of the most notable initiatives is "My Green Business," carried out in El Salvador and Honduras, which uses specific methodologies to promote sustainable enterprises that combine decent work with environmental protection.

These strategies, set out in the ILO Decent Work Agenda and the Subregional Strategy 2022–2025 face several common challenges, primarily related to the lack of systematization, the scarcity of specialized technical resources, and the absence of coherent and sustained strategies across projects and countries. Although these issues are acknowledged in the institutional discourse, their operationalization has been uneven, largely depending on specific and isolated initiatives driven by the national context and the willingness of national teams. This analysis is consistent with

27 In line with the "Regional Formalisation Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean 2024-2030".

28 Although there are also some good practices, such as the "Handbook and Guide for Gender-Sensitive Labour Inspection".

29 Also address through other policy frameworks and sectoral strategies, such as the "Child Labour Free Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Initiative".

available data on CPOs. Of the 562 CPOs that could be analysed in the framework of the evaluation, only 2% are directly oriented towards indigenous communities. The available information shows a concentration in three countries: Costa Rica (14% of the total number of its CPOs), Mexico (12%), and Guatemala (2%).

CHALLENGES TO THE INTEGRATION OF CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

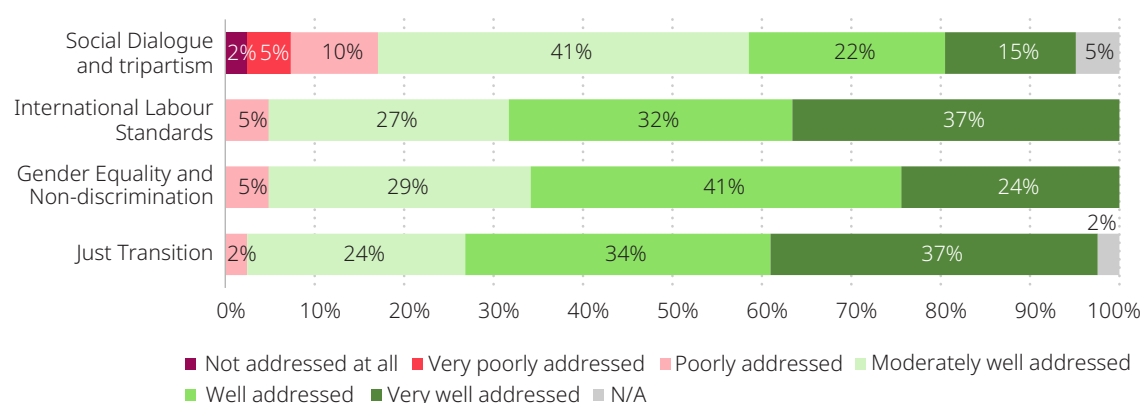
The following section outlines a series of challenges identified for the effective inclusion of cross-cutting approaches:

- ▶ **The inclusion of indigenous peoples in ILO action has been marginal**, despite the importance of this population in countries like Guatemala, where indigenous peoples make up about half of the population. Although positive experiences of dialogue surrounding Convention 169 have been reported, these instances have been sporadic and poorly interconnected. Some stakeholders perceive the ILO's weak strategic presence in this area as a significant oversight in contexts where indigenous representation should be prioritized more highly.
- ▶ Participants highlighted several limitations in the interventions targeting youth, including the limited intensity of the training, the short duration of support, and the absence of additional funding and mechanisms to sustain local initiatives. Despite these challenges, the most tangible results of the ILO's work in this area have been in training and labour insertion programmes (CLEAR project).
- ▶ Although the concept of just transition has been incorporated into ILO discourse mainly since 2022, its implementation remains at the early stages, mostly emphasizing the promotion of green jobs. Examples are still limited and developing.

In summary, although most of these principles are officially included in the programmatic narrative, their execution within operational frameworks and on the ground has been heavily influenced by the political will of governments, the strength of national institutions, and the stability and coordination of the ILO's own technical team. In countries with stronger institutions and receptive counterparts, integration has been more effective, as seen in Costa Rica and Mexico. Conversely, in countries with weak institutions or restrictive environments, such as, El Salvador, Haiti, and Nicaragua, actions have been more limited or experienced interruptions. Internally, the ILO's organizational fragmentation has been identified as a limiting factor, especially when different units or offices address overlapping issues without a shared strategy, common goals, or an integrated methodological framework. Despite these challenges, notable progress has been made in promoting Convention 190, developing tools for various partners, and supporting key sectors for women's inclusion, labour rights protection, and fostering social dialogue. However, approaches focused on disability, youth, indigenous peoples, and just transition show still developing or fragmented levels of progress.

The following table shows the results of the ILO staff survey in which they share their perception of the level of programmatic alignment:

FIGURE 5. ILO'S PERCEPTION OF THE LEVEL OF PROGRAMMATIC ALIGNMENT



Source: Survey ILO's staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

As shown, the criteria of 'Just transition' and 'International Labour Standards' are perceived as the most thoroughly integrated, with over 70% of respondents considering them to be well or very well incorporated. These are followed by 'Gender and non-discrimination' aspects, which received similar ratings from 65% of respondents. In contrast, the 'Social Dialogue and Tripartism' approach appears less embedded: only 15% see it as very well reflected, while 41% consider it moderately reflected and 22% believe it is insufficiently addressed. Although quantitative data are more limited for drawing firm conclusions in this regard, the survey results align with the perceptions of the key informants and the analysis of CPOs, showing that although some achievements are uneven on the ground – strongly influenced by institutional capacities and the political and social context of different countries – there is a positive trend in how many of these cross-cutting issues are included in the programming cycle and the intervention logics of various programmes and initiatives.

COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN

eQ4. To what extent is ILO work integrated and complementary to work by other UN agencies, IFIs, and continental and subregional bodies in the countries of intervention and at the subregional level?

Integrated and complementary collaboration with other actors is ingrained in the very core of the United Nations, manifesting through the "One UN" approach, which encourages synchronized, cohesive, and efficient action among its various agencies, funds, and programmes.³⁰ The ILO follows this approach, aiming to maximize collective impact through joint planning, coordinated implementation, and unified monitoring of results aligned with national priorities. From a value perspective, the added value of the UN system lies in its ability to operate as a cohesive entity, leveraging its diverse mandates, technical expertise, and resources in strategic partnership with governments, civil society, and other key stakeholders.³¹

REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL INTEGRATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY

At the regional and subregional levels, there is evidence of the ILO's involvement in strategies of both levels (regional and subregional), although some countries in the subregion are sometimes left out. Examples of **regional initiatives** involving countries within ILO's Central America subregion include:

- ▶ The Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean 2024-2030, which aims to strengthen the ILO's response to the transition to the formal economy in the LAC region. This strategy, in addition to the 10 countries of the subregion, also includes the other LAC countries.³²
- ▶ The ILO Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023-2030, which aims to strengthen labour migration governance and regulatory frameworks, focusing on decent work and human rights. It includes several LAC countries, notably Panama among the subregion's nations.³³
- ▶ Making Domestic Work Decent Work: Investing in Care, which promotes decent work in domestic work and the Care Economy. This strategy, in addition to the 10 countries of the subregion, also includes the other LAC countries.³⁴

30 United Nations (2006). Delivering as one: Report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/602746?ln=en&v=pdf>.

31 United Nations Sustainable Development Group. (2021). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF): Internal guidance. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unsdcf-guidance>.

32 ILO (2024). Estrategia de Formalización para América Latina y el Caribe FORLAC 2.0. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/strategy-promotion-formalization-latin-america-and-caribbean-2024-2030>

33 ILO (2022). Estrategia Regional de la OIT de Migración Laboral y Movilidad Humana en América Latina y El Caribe 2023-2030. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/OIT_estrategia_migracion_laboral_movilidad_humana_alc_2023-2030_0.pdf

34 ILO (2023). Hacer del trabajo doméstico un trabajo decente: invertir en cuidado. Una agenda común. Hoja de ruta y recomendaciones para políticas públicas. <https://www.ilo.org/es/publications/hacer-del-trabajo-domestico-un-trabajo-decente-invertir-en-cuidado-una>

- ▶ The Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Initiative, an alliance led by 31 Latin American and Caribbean countries, including the 10 countries in the subregion. This alliance seeks to realize the commitment to prevent and eradicate child labour in the region.³⁵
- ▶ Participation in Panorama Laboral reports (2021, 2022 and 2023). This initiative seeks to present a comprehensive overview of the labour market in the region by period. It includes all countries in the subregion, except Cuba.³⁶

These initiatives are regional in scope and bring together Latin American and Caribbean countries under shared action lines. The ILO's role has varied from leadership (e.g., FORLAC 2.0 or Making Domestic Work Decent Work) to providing technical and logistical support (e.g., The Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility) and assisting in data collection (e.g., Panorama Laboral). This work is carried out in collaboration with entities such as IOM, UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, the European Union, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of American States (OAS), Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, among others.

At the subregional level, efforts include the ILO Subregional Strategy 2022–2025, which aims to establish the strategic vision for Central America, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Panama. This strategy aims to align contributions from 8 out of 10 countries³⁷ in the subregion towards social justice and decent work³⁸. However, there has not been found evidence of its significant implementation. In fact, it was mentioned by ILO informants that the subregional DW actions were conducted more through P&B Outcomes lines than through the subregional strategy. Other initiatives include the Council of Ministers of Labour of Central America and the Dominican Republic, which brings together 7 of the 10³⁹ subregional countries to promote coordinated efforts in labour and, where applicable, social security policies⁴⁰. This effort was coordinated by the ILO and involves labour ministers and institutions such as CINTERFOR (the Inter-American Centre for the Development of Knowledge in Vocational Training). Despite this subregional initiative provided ongoing technical support to the Council in the implementation of its Action Plan, the development of roadmaps, and the strengthening of national capacities through exchanges and horizontal cooperation, these initiatives leave countries such as Mexico and Cuba outside the subregional scope.

INTEGRATION AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

During the period under review (2020–2024), the ILO's work was mostly aligned with that of the United Nations System (UNS) in terms of strategic coordination and collaboration with other UN agencies, primarily through systematic cooperation and guided integration. This was largely supported by the cooperation frameworks established for each country in the subregion. Except for a few years when formal frameworks were absent – usually during the design and implementation of new cycles (see Table 12) – ILO's work was guided by seven UNDAFs and eight UNSDCF's.⁴¹

Within these frameworks, the ILO was assigned roles and direct participation, especially in goals related to decent work and employment, social protection, gender equality and women's empowerment, environmental sustainability, institutional strengthening, and migration and

35 ILO (2023). Iniciativa Regional América Latina y El Caribe Libre de Trabajo Infantil 2024-2030. <https://www.ilo.org/es/iniciativa-regional-america-latina-y-el-caribe-libre-de-trabajo-infantil>

36 ILO (2021). Panorama Laboral 2021. América Latina y el Caribe; ILO (2022). Panorama Laboral 2022. América Latina y el Caribe; ILO (2023). Panorama Laboral 2023. América Latina y el Caribe.

37 Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

38 ILO (2022). Estrategia de la Oficina de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo en América Central, Haiti, Panama y República Dominicana (page 2).

39 Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

40 CMTCAR (2023). Reglamento del Consejo de Ministros y Ministras e Trabajo de Centroamérica y República Dominicana (page 1).

41 UNSDG Portal. Available at: <https://uninfo.org/>

human mobility.⁴² In addition, it was identified that the ILO's work within official cooperation frameworks also intersected with the actions of agencies such as FAO IFAD, IOM, ITC, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNV, UN Women WHO, and WFP, among others.⁴³

TABLE 12. UN FRAMEWORKS PER COUNTRY DURING THE PERIOD 2020-2024

COUNTRY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Costa Rica	UNDAF 2018-2022			UNSDCF 2023-2027	
Cuba	UNSDCF 2020-2024				
Dominican Republic	UNDAF 2018-2022			UNSDCF 2023-2027	
El Salvador	UNDAF 2016-2020	Not available	UNSDCF 2022-2026		
Guatemala	UNSDCF 2020-2025				
Haiti	UNDAF 2017-2021		Not available	UNSDCF 2023-2027	
Honduras	UNDAF 2017-2021		UNSDCF 2022-2026		
México	UNSDCF 2020-2025				
Nicaragua	UNDAF 2018-2022			Not available	
Panamá	UNSDCF 2016-2020	UNSDCF 2021-2025			

Source: Evaluation team

Interagency coordination mechanisms were also identified at the national level, such as:

- ▶ In Mexico, the Gender Interagency Group (GIG), chaired by ILO Mexico and UN Women; the Inter-agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V Platform), chaired by FAO, ILO, IOM, UNHCR, WFP and others; or the Interagency Migration Group in Mexico (GIMH), chaired by ILO Mexico, IOM Mexico, the National Migration Institute (INM), the R4V, and others.
- ▶ In Honduras, the UN Network on Migration (UNNM) in collaboration with ECLAC, IOM, and other agencies⁴⁴ and with Mexico, joint coordination on migration issues such as the ILO-UNHCR initiative Promoting employment and social protection under the comprehensive regional response to refugees in Central America and Mexico and the R4V Platform.
- ▶ In Costa Rica, the UN Network on Migration (UNNM), in collaboration with IOM, UNDP, WHO, and other agencies, the R4V Platform, and the Employability Strategy – a joint effort between MTSS and various agencies – with the ILO contributing to the development of policies for migrant labour integration.⁴⁵
- ▶ In Panama, initiatives promoting employment opportunities, such as the “Economic Activity Revitalization Project in Panama through a Focus on Productive Sectors”, involving FAO, IFAD, ILO, and UNDP.⁴⁶

Survey data show a predominantly positive internal perception regarding the ILO's alignment and coordination with other United Nations agencies. Among surveyed ILO staff, 34% rated this coordination as “well-coordinated,” while 27% considered it “very well coordinated.” From an external perspective, 32% of respondents rated coordination with the ILO as “well-coordinated” and 26% as “moderately well-coordinated.”

42 UN Costa Rica (2017). UNDAF 2017-2021; UN Costa Rica (2019). UNSDCF 2023-2027; UN Cuba (2019). UNSDCF 2020-2024; UN The Dominican Republic (2017). UNDAF 2018-2022; UN The Dominican Republic (2012). UNSDCF 2023-2027; UN El Salvador (2015). UNDAF 2016-2020; UN El Salvador (2021). UNSDCF 2022-2026; UN Guatemala (2019). UNDAF 2020-2025; UN Haiti (2014). UNDAF 2017-2021; UN Haiti (2022). UNSDCF 2023-2027; UN Honduras (2016). UNDAF 2016-2021; UN Honduras (2022). UNSDCF 2022-2026; UN Mexico (2019). UNSDCF 2020-2025; UN Nicaragua (2017). UNDAF 2018-2022; UN Panamá (2015). UNSDCF 2016-2020; UN Panamá (2020). UNSDCF 2021-2025.

43 Idem.

44 ILO (2024). Labor Migration in Honduras.

45 Estrategia de empleabilidad para personas migrantes en el marco del Sistema Nacional de Empleo (2023).

46 Idem.

In interviews with ILO staff, collaboration with other agencies was seen as effective, especially when there was thematic alignment. However, areas for improvement were also noted, including the need to move from ad hoc collaboration to more institutionalized cooperation models. Representatives of UN agencies and interviewed constituents positively assessed their collaboration with the ILO, highlighting its technical expertise, normative legitimacy, and coordination capacity through its tripartite structure. Nonetheless, they emphasized that the effectiveness of this collaboration largely depends on interagency coordination, the local context, and adequate early planning.



The deadlines set have been met, mainly because we have achieved effective communication and collaboration despite the daily needs and challenges faced by each organization. Working on joint agendas has not been easy, but we worked hard during that time, and we have managed to advance with initiatives and results. There is also a very capable technical staff with a high level of technical response, despite limited staffing available. (UN agency).

INTEGRATION AT THE PROJECT LEVEL

The Synthesis Review highlighted a strong commitment to collaboration, with notable accomplishments in joint programming with UN agencies and partnerships with IFIs. Effective working relationships were seen between ILO and agencies such as ECLAC, FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNHCR UN Women, UNICEF, and WHO. These collaborations demonstrated the benefits of integrated approaches, utilizing the unique resources and technical expertise of each organization. Although there were fewer partnerships with IFIs (e.g. HTI/20/01/NOR, RLA/98/03/PAN), those that existed contributed to more effective policymaking by combining the ILO's ILS expertise with IFIs' macroeconomic views. However, the analysis highlighted the limited collaboration with subregional bodies, such as SICA and CARICOM. Despite strategic alignment, many initiatives remained fragmented or largely symbolic. There is still an opportunity to strengthen engagement with both, IFIs and subregional institutions, beyond just financial contributions.⁴⁷

In the sample projects, a strong commitment to collaboration was also recognized. For example, in the project "Promoting Care Policies and Services to Improve Access to Decent Employment for Women in Two Rural Departments in Honduras" (HND/23/01/RBS) in the End of Intervention report⁴⁸, the local office highlighted as lesson learned the coordination and multi-stakeholder work with partners such as the System of Guarantees for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (SIGADENA), the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP), the National Union of Domestic Workers (SINTRAH), as well as coordinated actions with CONAMUCOP and WE EFFECT. In Mexico, the project "Improving workers' occupational safety and health in the chili pepper and tomato supply chains in Mexico - A Zero Fund Project" (MEX/20/05/USA) also worked together with various UN agencies such as FAO and allies such as IFAD, the University of Colorado (UoC), the US Embassy Labour Attaché, the Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER), among others, to achieve outputs in generating evidence and disseminating results regarding the "Profile of Women in Agriculture in Jalisco", to improve the social and mental health of workers.

47 Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024), pages 27-28.

48 ILO (2023). End of intervention report. Promoting Care Policies and Services to Improve Access to Decent Employment for Women in Two Rural Departments in Honduras.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION

Major barriers to effective integration during 2020-2024 were identified by surveyed ILO staff and other UN agencies personnel, with the most frequently mentioned including:

- ▶ **Institutional and methodological misalignment:** The ILO operates under a normative and tripartite model (requiring validation by governments, employers, and workers), whereas other agencies often work directly with governments. The ILO's model allows the Organization to have a greater influence in normative work and, therefore, a potential long-term impact; however, in operational terms, this leads to mismatched timelines and planning constraints.
- ▶ **Competition for resources and leadership:** Limited funding leads to inter-agency competition for visibility and funding, resulting in overlapping mandates and a focus on control rather than genuine technical cooperation. For example, work on labour or socioeconomic integration with migrant populations can often fall under the mandates of organizations like IOM, UNHCR, and even the WFP.
- ▶ **Lack of shared understanding of ILO's mandate and technical expertise:** The ILO's scope is sometimes poorly understood, causing other agencies to take responsibility for ILO-relevant areas (e.g., labour discrimination by UN Women, green jobs by UNEP). This results in mandate overlap and technical competition, rather than a true integration where ILO can leverage its technical and conceptual expertise to enhance efforts.
- ▶ **Structural and logistical limitations:** Differences in local presence and limited staffing in the subregion (compared to organizations like, FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, or WHO, due to their greater staffing and stronger presence in the field) prevent the ILO from fully participating in interagency mechanisms, leading to delays in implementation and staff overload.
- ▶ **Bureaucracy and operational slowness:** The ILO's normative focus, tripartite processes, and internal procedures make it slow, costly, and inflexible compared to more operational agencies, discouraging rapid or humanitarian collaboration. For instance, working from a regulatory perspective means the Organization's timescale is slow and its focus is on evidence-generating results, compared to some partners' interest in direct (and more reactive) actions with populations. Furthermore, approvals from tripartite stakeholders often require additional bureaucratic procedures.

EQ5. Has the ILO successfully adapted its strategies to respond to changes in the socio-political contexts of the Central America region while continuing to achieve its planned results?

The ILO's ability to adapt to changes in sociopolitical contexts is a critical component of its operational effectiveness, particularly in regions such as Central America, which are characterized by high political volatility, persistent structural challenges, and fragile labour markets. In settings where social, economic, and institutional conditions evolve rapidly, the relevance of ILO interventions depends on the Organization's capacity to adjust its strategies without losing sight of the intended Outcomes.

MEASURES AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

To detect and address changes in the context, the ILO in the Central American subregion developed a series of measures from 2020 to 2024. The **Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility (2023–2030)**, the **FORLAC 2.0 Formalization Strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean (2024–2030)** and the **Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour**, with the development and application of the **Child Labour Risk Identification Model (MIRTI)**, are tools to follow a territory-based approach.

Apart from these three strategies, it's important to mention three additional measures:

- ▶ During the pandemic, the ILO identified and promoted three key areas of action in Central America: the inclusion of migrant workers in national responses to the health crisis, bilateral cooperation between countries of origin and destination, and social dialogue with employers

and workers to design comprehensive responses. These actions remained relevant beyond the emergency phase, guiding the comprehensive protection of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons in the region.⁴⁹

- ▶ The ILO has documented and supported the implementation of bilateral agreements between Central American countries to promote regular labour migration. Recent examples include agreements signed in 2023 between Costa Rica and El Salvador, and between Costa Rica and Guatemala and, aimed at coordinating labour migration flows. These mechanisms aim to promote decent work for migrant workers, with the collaboration of labour and migration ministries, and build on previous regional experiences.⁵⁰
- ▶ During the period 2020-2024 ILO/CINTERFOR implemented various actions in Central America aimed at strengthening vocational training, skills certification, and socio-economic integration, adapting to the challenges of the pandemic and the recovery phase. Some concrete examples are the innovative response to the pandemic and digitalization of vocational training;⁵¹ strengthening transversal skills and innovative methodologies⁵²; promotion of dual training and regional partnerships;⁵³ and publications and resources for innovation in vocational training.⁵⁴

Key Finding 6 from the Synthesis Review indicates that most projects demonstrated an ability to adapt to changing sociopolitical contexts. This adaptability was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, through the reorientation of strategies, the use of virtual platforms, budget reallocations, and the engagement of key stakeholders – all while maintaining core labour priorities. However, some projects faced difficulties due to rigid planning structures, limited anticipation of political changes, and weak monitoring systems, which constrained their responsiveness. Despite efforts to reach vulnerable groups and address gender inequalities, structural gaps persisted, and limited documentation hindered a full assessment of the adjustments made.

In contrast to this overall adaptive capacity, the review of eight available PRODOCs from the sample of nine projects in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Mexico showed notable limitations in risk management. While five projects (CRI/19/50/UND, HND/21/02/HND, HND/22/50/EUR, HND/23/01/RBS, and MEX/23/01/RBS) included risk analysis during the design phase, only two (CRI/19/50/UND and MEX/23/01/RBS) developed mitigation plans, and none had contingency plans. This gap revealed a systemic weakness: the lack of strategic and operational mechanisms to turn risk analysis into specific actions. As a result, project resilience to unexpected events was weakened, reflecting a partial response that limited their ability to adapt effectively during implementation.

Nevertheless, interviewees observed that from 2020 to 2024, the ILO in Central America demonstrated its ability to adapt to evolving contexts. **The pandemic was the biggest challenge**, and the COs in the subregion successfully adjusted to new priorities, including the need for remote technical assistance, reworking its agenda, and addressing emerging national demands. At the same time, ILO staff mentioned that the **Organization's leadership transition also played a key** role in shaping work plans. The DWT/CO San Jose saw the appointment of three different directors between 2021 and 2024. Depending on who was in charge, different priorities were emphasized, such as the use of the Subregional Strategy or the promotion of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). This shifting focus affected programme priorities and their alignment with regional planning tools.

49 ILO Nota Política (2024) Movilidad humana y migración laboral en América Latina y el Caribe. Movimientos, tendencias y desafíos de gobernanza. Available at: www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/oit_tendencias_movilidad_humana_y_migracion_laboral_america_latina_caribe_2024.pdf.

50 One example of this can be found here: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/pub2024-080-r-buenas-practicas-gestion-migracion-centroamerica-mexico-es.pdf>.

51 More information is available at: <https://www.cinterfor.org/publicaciones/cinterfor/informe2020>.

52 More information is available at: <https://www.oitcinterfor.org/videoconferencia-dise%C3%B1o-pr%C3%A1ctica-did%C3%A1ctica-desarrollo-competencias-transversales>.

53 More information is available at: <https://www.oitcinterfor.org/conferencia-internacional-alianza-formaci%C3%B3n-dual-am%C3%A9rica-latina-caribe>.

54 More information is available at: <https://www.cinterfor.org/publicaciones-cinterfor?page=5>.

There is a widely shared perception among ILO staff, constituents, donors, and UN agencies that the Organization has adopted a gradual, contextualized, and flexible strategy, tailored to the political and institutional realities of each country, thereby avoiding the use of uniform approaches. While this adaptive capacity has been broadly acknowledged during interviews, it has also been noted that it often leads to operational adjustments rather than actions that enable more transformative structural changes as mindsets evolve and ways of proceeding with work programmes adapt.

Additionally, ILO staff and government counterparts highlighted the importance of personal and professional relationships, which strengthen the connection between ILO staff and constituents, positively influencing decision-making and tailoring interventions.

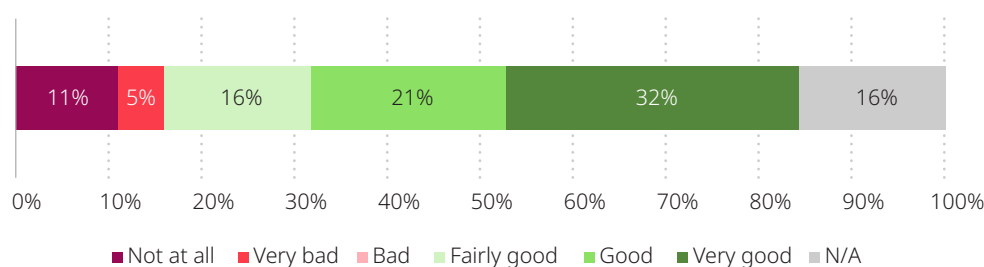
A series of mechanisms through which the ILO adapted its work during the review period were identified by interviewees:

- ▶ Thematic and technical adjustments in line with national demands and priorities, including those related to labour protection, labour administration, legislation, inspection, and institutional strengthening.
- ▶ Tripartite or governmental validation of work plans prior to implementation.
- ▶ Review and adaptation of interventions in response to shifts in national-level political or institutional dynamics.
- ▶ Integration of accumulated knowledge from the CO/DWT San José and CO Mexico, including the thematic specialists, who identify common patterns and transferable good practices tailored to national contexts.

The ILO aligns its actions with the priorities of the government, adapting its cooperation agenda to political, economic, and institutional circumstances. This process involves formal validation and ratification by national authorities, which brings not only institutional legitimacy but also constant operational flexibility in the face of changes in government or reprioritization. (DWT staff)

According to the **data collected from the survey**, there is a predominantly positive perception among constituents regarding the ILO's ability to adapt its interventions to the context's needs. Notably, 37% of respondents rated this adaptability as fairly good or good and 32% specifically described it as "very good." This reflects an explicit recognition of the relevance and flexibility of the design of the actions implemented. In contrast, negative opinions were limited, with only 11% rating the adaptability as "very bad" and 5% as "bad" resulting in a total of 16% unfavourable responses.

FIGURE 6. CONSTITUENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE ILO'S ABILITY TO ADAPT TO CONTEXTUAL NEEDS



Source: Survey Constituent HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

This divergence in perception may be influenced by the specific roles played by the various stakeholders involved. It is plausible that constituents who are not directly engaged in the internal planning processes and organizational adjustments tend to perceive the final outcomes more favourably. Unlike ILO technical staff, constituents do not encounter the administrative complexities or operational challenges that come with adapting interventions to a changing environment. Therefore, their assessments are primarily based on observable implementation and final outputs, overlooking the institutional constraints faced along the way.

The following are **examples of ILO's adaptability to challenging contexts**:

In Nicaragua, where institutional presence and avenues for dialogue were reduced due to the political crisis of 2018 and the structural reforms of the social security system, the ILO focused its efforts on the remaining available resources of actors. Following the political crisis, the ILO moved away from its traditional tripartite approach, as sustained collaboration with government and private sector actors became unfeasible. In response, the Organization adopted a more focused strategy centred on training, assessment, and support related to workplace sexual harassment – an area where concrete progress could still be made through direct engagement with workers and civil society. This shift enabled the ILO to maintain its relevance and impact despite the absence of a large-scale institutional commitment.

Another example drawn from interviews with ILO staff in Haiti, where the ongoing humanitarian and political crisis has made it impossible to carry out standard ILO operations. In recent years, the Organization has shifted from a reactive stance to a more strategic approach, emphasizing the integration of interdepartmental efforts and the development of conceptual and communication frameworks to justify engagement in crisis situations. This has involved employing peacebuilding approaches. As a result, the ILO's institutional flexibility and ability to adapt to changing environments have been enhanced. However, significant structural limitations still exist at a strategic level in the subregion evaluated; the type of engagement the ILO aims for in systemic crisis scenarios remains unclear, creating ambiguity in its leadership under the P&B framework.

LIMITATIONS ON THE APPROACH TO ADAPTABILITY

The following **key limitations** for adaptability to different contexts were identified by ILO staff during interviews:

- ▶ **Adverse conditions for labour rights advocacy:** The Central American subregion faces sudden political shifts, violence, repression, and serious situations such as the imprisonment of trade unionists and labour rights defenders, especially in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Trade union efforts and labour rights advocacy work in high-risk environments, under surveillance, and with restrictions on participation and free expression. As a result, ILO teams encounter significant operational challenges, needing to adapt to insecurity, the lack of guarantees for social dialogue, and restrictions on direct institutional action.
- ▶ **Internal and bureaucratic structural limitations:** The lack of a flexible adaptation strategy and staffing reductions hinder the Organization's ability to make timely adjustments in changing circumstances. Additionally, adaptive capacity is more effective when managed from national or regional offices but becomes more limited at the headquarters level, where internal bureaucracy can delay decision-making.
- ▶ **High staff turnover and weak institutional continuity:** Frequent staff departures (e.g., management, specialists and COs technical staff), combined with the lack of effective knowledge transfer mechanisms, make the response overly reliant on the personnel available in each country at any given time, thereby undermining operational continuity.
- ▶ **Lack of institutional presence in certain countries:** In contexts where the ILO lacks an institutional presence, such as in Cuba, its capacity to respond to crises or labour rights violations is very limited. The absence of key figures such as a "national coordinator" further exacerbates this limitation.

Because of the last three limitations, the ILO tends to deliver a slow and reactive response to crises and geopolitical changes. This is reportedly due to its tendency to operate 'one step behind,' reacting to events rather than anticipating them. As a result, its readiness in situations that require quick and coordinated responses is limited.

EQ6. To what extent and how were constituents actively involved at all stages of projects and UNSDCF design, planning, and implementation?

To assess the level of constituent participation throughout all project stages, including the design, planning, and implementation of the UNSDCF, this analysis investigates the coherence of formal consultation and social dialogue mechanisms used in the early phases. It assesses not only the reach and quality of these engagement channels but also participant satisfaction with their involvement in decision-making processes. By analysing how inclusive and responsive these mechanisms are, the analysis aims to provide a detailed understanding of how constituent voices were integrated, promoting shared ownership and improving the relevance and impact of the interventions under review.

INVOLVEMENT OF CONSTITUENTS IN UNSDCF DESIGN, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The UNSDCFs and other cooperation frameworks, such as the National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights (BHR/RBC), the FORLAC 2.0 (Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean); the Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility in LAC or the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), explicitly emphasize the importance of strategic partnerships and alliances with a wide range of actors, including national and local governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, IFIs, and other international partners.⁵⁵ These alliances are considered essential for mobilizing resources, achieving collective results, fostering dialogue, and ensuring the sustainability of interventions.⁵⁶ Methodologies such as the ILO's "Mesas Ejecutivas" (Executive Roundtables) are also utilized specifically to facilitate effective dialogue and co-creation of solutions involving diverse stakeholders, including those from the informal economy.⁵⁷

The design phase of UNSDCFs is characterized by broad and inclusive consultations aimed at aligning the cooperation framework with national development priorities and specific country contexts. These consultations are rooted in the mandate that UNSDCFs must be developed in full agreement with national governments and in collaboration with other strategic actors. This principle of systemic engagement is reflected in the Common Country Analysis (CCA), which provides an evidence-based foundation for identifying development challenges and opportunities through contributions from state, academic, international, and civil society actors.⁵⁸

In countries such as Cuba, El Salvador⁵⁹, Honduras⁶⁰, and Panama⁶¹ the CCA has facilitated the identification of vulnerable groups and pressing development issues, with the ILO playing a key role in advocating for labour rights and social protection within these processes, while also serving as a platform for dialogue and strategic alignment.⁶² Similarly, participatory consultations in the design of the UNSDCF, often co-led by national governments and UN Country Teams have ensured the inclusion of a wide range of voices. In El Salvador, for example, 14 workshops brought together over 200 representatives from government institutions, civil society, international organizations,

55 UNSDCF Honduras 2022-2026; UNSDCF Costa Rica 2023-2027; Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean FORLAC 2024-2030; Panama-UNSDCF-2021-2025; ONU RD - 2020 Results Report.

56 UNSDCF Guatemala 2020-2025; Informe de Resultados UNSDCF Panamá 2021-2025, UNSDCF Honduras 2022 – 2026, Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean FORLAC 2024-2030.

57 Strategy for the Promotion of Formalization in Latin America and the Caribbean (2024-2030) | International Labour Organization.

58 UNSDCF México 2020-2025.

59 UNSDCF EL Salvador 2022-2026- The UNSDCF design emphasized the participation, opinion, and involvement of different national and local actors and sectors at all stages, explicitly including unions as specialized organizations with significant influence and availability for the economic transformation priority

60 The Cooperation framework was developed through a highly inclusive and participatory process that explicitly involved unions and the private sector, among other societal groups

61 The UNSDCF 2021-2025 development included representatives from academia, the private sector, and unions, comprising 10% of over 150 participants

62 UNSDCF El Salvador 2022-2026; UNSDCF Honduras 2022 – 2026, Informe de Resultados UNSDCF Panamá 2021-2025 and Cuba Marco de Cooperación 2020-2024.

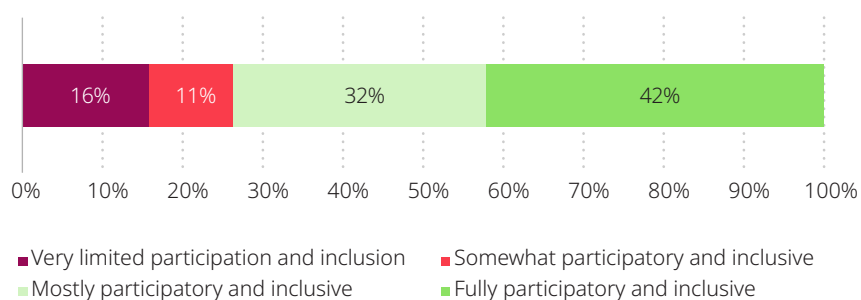
municipalities, employers' organizations, workers organizations, and vulnerable populations, with ILO actively engaging workers' organizations groups to promote decent work initiatives.⁶³ Comparable efforts were also undertaken in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama, where multi-stakeholder consultations prioritized local participation and ownership, supported by the ILO's expertise in labour market analysis and social dialogue.

In parallel, **multi-stakeholder consultations and workshops** were integral to the design of the UNSDCF. The ILO played a crucial role in these processes by facilitating dialogue between government, worker's organizations and vulnerable populations to ensure labour and social protection issues were adequately represented. These consultations involved numerous workshops and meetings with diverse groups including government (federal, state, local), civil society (including specific vulnerable populations like women, youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, people subjected to sexual orientation and identity discrimination), private sector, academia, and international partners. These inclusive processes, bolstered by the ILO's technical expertise and normative frameworks, helped tailor the UNSDCF to local needs, enhancing the relevance and legitimacy of interventions, as identified in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti and Mexico.⁶⁴

Innovative methods, such as social listening, were employed in countries like Costa Rica to assess public perceptions and themes related to sustainable development through social media analysis. The ILO contributed its expertise to interpret labour market and concerns regarding social protection and, in general, decent work that emerged from the analyzed data. Government ministries and local authorities also play a direct role in UNSDCF implementation, often with UN technical assistance and capacity building.⁶⁵ For instance, in Costa Rica, the Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MREC) coordinate all programmes at the national level.⁶⁶ In Cuba, the Ministry of External Business and Foreign Investment (MICEX) coordinates the implementation of the specific programmes of the UN agencies.

Survey data support this analysis. Seventy-four per cent of constituents expressed high satisfaction with the ILO's consultation processes, describing them as participatory and inclusive. Of these, 42% rated the processes as fully participatory, and 32% as mostly participatory. However, 27% felt there was room for improvement, rating the processes as only somewhat participatory or very limited.

FIGURE 7. CONSTITUENTS' RESPONSE TO THE LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSIVENESS IN ILO CONSULTATIONS



Source: Survey Constituents HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

63 UNSDCF El Salvador 2022-2026.

64 ILO, Midterm Evaluation of the VZF-Mexico Project (MEX/20/05/USA); UNSDCF Haiti 2023-2027; UNSDCF El Salvador 2022-2026; UNSDCF Honduras 2022 – 2026; UNSDCF México 2020-2025; Panama-UNSDCF-2021-2025.

65 UNSDCF Costa Rica 2023-2027, Marco de Cooperación NU 2023-2027.

66 UNSDCF Costa Rica 2023-2027.

Despite notable progress, **significant challenges persist** in ensuring that the design, planning, and implementation of the UNSDCF fully respond to the needs and priorities of the constituents. While consultations are often inclusive in compositions, their outcomes do not always translate into actionable and integrated contributions.⁶⁷

The documentation review confirmed that the planning phases of the UNSDCF effectively translate strategic vision into concrete priorities, results, and workplans. Most countries, including the Dominican Republic, El Salvador⁶⁸, Haiti, Honduras⁶⁹, Mexico⁷⁰, and Panama⁷¹), have established **joint steering committees**⁷². These committees bring together representatives from government, the UN, civil society, employers' organizations and workers' organizations, to provide oversight. It was also found that joint programmes and resource mobilization are aligned with national development plans to ensure ownership.⁷³

However, some criticisms identified in the document review suggest a need to decentralize resources and deepen engagement at the local level in capacity-building efforts.⁷⁴ For example, in Panama, civil society generally viewed the UNSDCF design process favourably, although some lacked information about it.

INVOLVEMENT OF CONSTITUENTS IN PROGRAMME AND PROJECT DESIGN, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

According to the document review and interviews, a strong positive correlation exists between structured tripartite dialogue and project success. ILO staff reported that tripartite social dialogue and consultations with key stakeholders are standard practice at both the programme and project levels. Constituents are also involved in needs assessments and problem identification, contributing to more context-specific and relevant project design.

Thus, the evaluation team confirmed that across the subregion, ILO-led initiatives have consistently anchored their design and implementation in tripartite dialogue and capacity building, reflecting a strong institutional commitment to participatory development. One of the most emblematic examples is **FORLAC 2.0**, which actively involves governments, employers, and workers in co-designing solutions. Central to its approach are the Mesas Ejecutivas, multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together public institutions, social partners, academia, and civil society. The strategy emphasizes inclusive methodologies that include the voices of informal workers and prioritize vulnerable groups. It also promotes capacity building within national institutions and supports the development of pilot interventions for potential scaling, guided by multidisciplinary ILO teams. Moreover, the **Regional Initiative for a Latin America and Caribbean Free of Child Labour** illustrates effective tripartite governance, led by Labour Ministers and social partners. Its implementation strategy emphasizes local alliances and evidence-based policymaking, supported by tools like the Model for Identification of Child Labour Risk (MIRTI).⁷⁵

During the interviews with ILO staff, it was mentioned that the use of formal consultation and social dialogue mechanisms was widespread across the subregion, playing a central role during the design and planning phases of programmes and projects. These mechanisms, such as tripartite and structured dialogue platforms, proved essential for identifying priorities and building consensus among stakeholders.

67 Informe de Resultados UNSDCF Panamá 2021-2025.

68 UNSDCF El Salvador 2022-2026.

69 UNSDCF Honduras 2022 – 2026.

70 UNSDCF Mexico 2020-2025.

71 UNSDCF Mexico 2020-2025.

72 Comprising representatives from UN agencies and government institutions and sometimes other partners like donors or technical experts.

73 UNSDCF Dominican Republic 2023-2027.

74 ILO, Midterm Evaluation of the VZF-Mexico Project (MEX/20/05/USA).

75 Plan Estratégico de Trabajo Infantil. [Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour | International Labour Organization](#).

The ILO actively employed **tripartite consultation mechanisms**, such as tripartite councils and committees, in alignment with its core mandate. The synthesis review conducted as part of this HLE showed that 54% (12 in total⁷⁶) of assessed projects achieved a satisfactory level of contribution to these mechanisms, five⁷⁷ partially met or failed to meet the established criteria. Notable examples of effective engagement include the regional projects RLA/16/03/ESP and MEX/20/05/USA, which established a “Comité Tripartito Pro Tempore” and a tripartite steering committee, respectively. These governance structures enhanced constituent ownership, promoted dialogue, and strengthened responsiveness to stakeholder priorities.

Support to national and local governments and institutions for integrated planning and management, decentralization, and citizen participation in development processes is crucial for ground-level impact, capacity building and ensuring local ownership. Steering and consultative committees were set up in projects to provide strategic guidance and oversight, although few projects only fully met participation criteria for these bodies, according to the Synthesis Review exercise.⁷⁸

Regarding constituents' satisfaction with participation in decision-making, the information gathered from different sources offers qualitative insights into constituent perceptions of their participation in decision-making. However, **it lacks systematic, quantitative data specifically measuring satisfaction across all evaluated projects**. Generally, satisfaction was closely tied to the perceived meaningful participation, structure, and responsiveness of consultation mechanisms. Based on interview findings and evaluation reports,⁷⁹ **governments** tend to report high satisfaction where dialogue was institutionalized and their inputs were visibly incorporated, such as in the VZF Mexico project (MEX/20/05/USA). Conversely, frustration was reported when strategic decisions were perceived as being imposed without sufficient consultation from agencies or headquarters. In the Panama UNSDCF evaluation, governmental counterparts consulted largely agreed (100%) that the UNSDCF priorities were relevant or very relevant to current challenges, suggesting satisfaction with the alignment achieved. **Employers' organisations** were less prominently featured in the reviewed materials, suggesting either limited engagement or an inadequate representation of their views regarding decision-making (i.e., MEX/20/05/USA). This could indicate less prominent involvement or less focus on this specific aspect in the data collection presented. Nonetheless, a thorough documentary review and some interviews reveal positive perceptions of the ILO's support and validation role for the private sector (i.e., MEX/19/50/UND; MEX/23/02/HCR; CRI/18/02/CRI).

Workers' organizations showed a mixed level of satisfaction. While involved in tripartite mechanisms and consultations, their satisfaction level appeared to depend on the extent to which their proposals and concerns were genuinely addressed and followed up on. Some workers' organizations representatives highlighted perceived limitations on social dialogue in their countries due to political contexts or specific legislation, impacting the effectiveness of their participation. However, others acknowledged the ILO's backing and assistance in various processes.



We need the support of the ILO because it is an entity that opens the way for us, they do not make decisions, but they do support us. In the meetings of the roundtable, in one of the axes, which is auditing, they were concerned that the ILO should stand up for us.” (Costa Rica, workers' organization official)

76 GLO/18/63/SWE; GTM/18/01/USA; HTI/18/01/RBS; HTI/20/01/NOR; MEX/20/01/NAA; MEX/20/05/USA; MEX/21/01/RBS; NO_DC_SYMBOL_70; NO_DC_SYMBOL_75; RLA/16/03/ESP; RLA/18/05/EUR and SLV/16/03/RBS.

77 DOM/17/01/USA; GTM/18/52/SWE; MEX/19/50/UND; PER/20/01/RBS and RLA/21/09/SWE.

78 Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024). pages 31-33.

79 ILO, Midterm Evaluation of the VZF-Mexico Project (MEX/20/05/USA) i-eval Discovery . Informe de Resultados UNSDCF Panamá 2021-2025.

While the ILO maintains a **strong institutional commitment to tripartite participation**, data from desk review and interviews showed that **several factors continue to limit** the meaningful and sustained involvement of constituents across project cycles:

- ▶ **Internal operational barriers:** Key informants and desk review⁸⁰ confirmed that bureaucratic procedures and prolonged inception phases, often due to administrative hurdles or the need for detailed planning tools, delay engagement with constituents and limit their influence in early project design.
- ▶ **Political instability and government staff turnover:** Projects often face challenges due to frequent changes in government and ministerial staff, which undermine continuity in development priorities and public policy. In *Mexico*, the high turnover rate of government officials, particularly due to elections, posed a significant challenge for the VZF project (MEX/20/05/USA), requiring the establishment of strong relationships at local levels. Additionally, in some contexts, constituents, particularly local governments or employers' organisations and workers' organisations are not fully engaged, which undermines ownership and long-term sustainability. Furthermore, resource and staffing constraints, particularly at the local level, limit constituents' ability to co-design and implement activities effectively.
- ▶ **Underrepresentation of informal and vulnerable groups.** The FORLAC 2.0 strategy identified sectors in the informal economy, including small economic units, migrant and refugee populations, and rural communities that often have limited or no participation in the development and implementation of Formalization Strategies. As a result, the needs of ILO root-based constituents, rather than the national representation level, are not necessary considered.

In summary, the active and structured participation of employers, often in conjunction with governments and workers, is consistently emphasized as a cornerstone for achieving successful, relevant, and sustainable project outcomes in the sources provided. While significant progress has been made in institutionalizing participatory approaches, continuous efforts are needed to ensure consistent, root-based engagement across all project phases and to mitigate operational, political and structural challenges.

EQ7. To what extent is the ILO Theory of Change – explicit or implicit – at the country and subregional levels realistic, evaluable and useful to promote the effectiveness of ILO work, including cross cutting themes (gender equity and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, international labour standards and just transition to environment)?

A clearly articulated ToC, whether explicit or implicit, is fundamental for strategically guiding the ILO's interventions at national and subregional levels. It provides a structured framework to clarify how activities lead to desired outcomes, identifying causal pathways, assumptions, risks, and contextual factors. A well-formulated ToC also aligns interventions with national priorities and the ILO's mandates, supports integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and social dialogue, and strengthens accountability and adaptive management. In regions like Central America – facing informality, inequality, institutional fragility, and climate vulnerability – a robust, context-sensitive ToC is essential to ensuring coherence, relevance, and the effectiveness of the ILO's engagement, while fostering shared understanding, ownership, and sustainable results.

The in-depth **review of nine projects** revealed that, among the eight PRODOCs available at the time of analysis (excluding MEX/23/02/HCR, which was not accessible), three applied a Logical Framework approach, while the other four were structured around a Results Framework. This analysis confirms that none of the interventions were developed using a Theory of Change.

Despite the absence of an explicit ToC, the analysis found that two projects – CRI/18/02/CRI and RLA/22/07/EUR – integrated assumptions into their project logic. In particular, RLA/22/07/EUR articulated assumptions at both the outcome and output levels. This practice proves valuable, as it enhances the assessment of project feasibility and sustainability. By acknowledging external

80 ILO (2023) *Hacer del trabajo doméstico un trabajo decente*; ILO *Hoja de ruta de trabajo doméstico y economía del cuidado*.

factors that may influence success, teams can improve strategic planning, anticipate potential risks, and develop appropriate mitigation strategies. Incorporating assumptions also promotes a more flexible and context-aware management approach, better equipped to respond to changing conditions.

Incorporating assumptions into the project logic also contributes to more balanced and precise performance assessments. By clearly distinguishing between factors within the project's control and those influenced by the external environment, it becomes easier to ensure accountability and to interpret results more accurately – whether expected outcomes are achieved or not. Additionally, this practice fosters institutional learning by making the intervention's underlying assumptions visible and subject to reflection and adjustment over the course of implementation.

At subregional level the evaluation has reconstructed a ToC to guide the evaluation process. This ToC may guide further planning of ILO work, adapting the subregional level to the countries' needs. A detail narrative and graphic description of this ToC can be found in Annex 2.

EFFECTIVENESS

eQ8. To what extent and how effectively is the ILO advancing the DW Agenda in key areas and priority topics in the Central America subregion (transition to formal economy; lifelong learning and improving labour skills; safety and health, and social protection systems; workers' rights), and what are the key success factors and those that hinder the DW Agenda results?

The assessment considered Outcome and Output-level reported results across all CPOs and projects and reporting cycles available from 2020 to 2023. It was complemented by a project-level analysis (at a sample of projects) to identify contributing and hindering factors that contributed to or limited its achievement.

EFFECTIVENESS IN ADVANCING P&B OUTCOMES

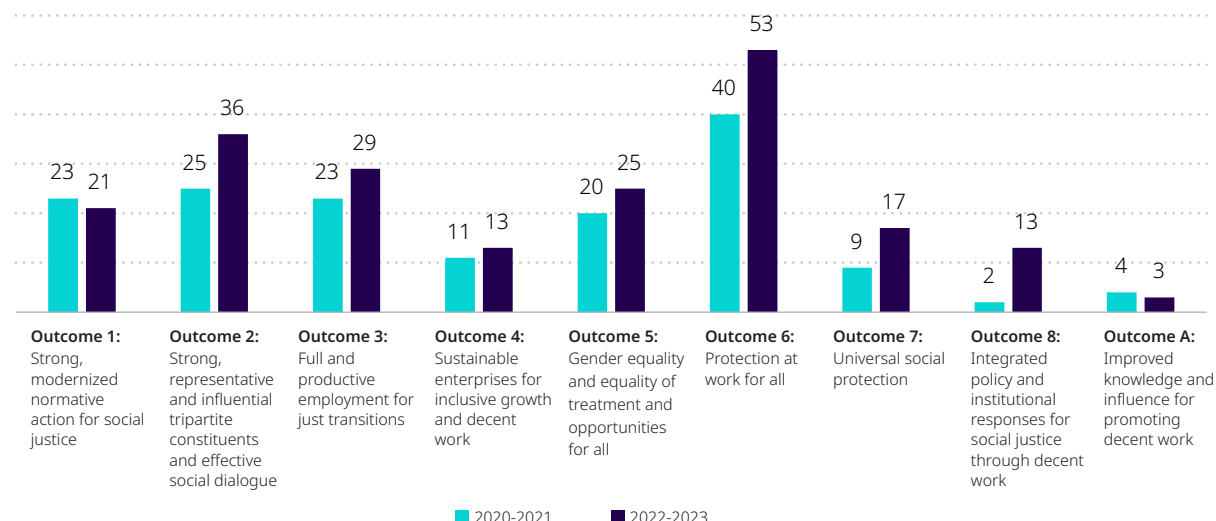
Overall, there has been an **increase in the number of results contributing to P&B Outcomes** and DW key areas reported for the Central America subregion during the period under analysis.⁸¹

More than half of the results reported in both biennia (2020-2021 and 2022-2023) were related to work throughout efforts in Protection at Work for All (Outcome 6) (93 results - 25%); Strong, Representative and Influential Tripartite Constituents and Effective Social Dialogue (61 results - Outcome 2) (17%) and Full and Productive Employment for Just Transitions (Outcome 3) (52 results - 14%), (Figure 8).

Regarding results achieved on Protection at Work (Outcome 6), numerous results reported are related to the Increased Capacity of Member States to Develop Fair and Effective Labour Migration Frameworks (Output 6.4). This addresses one of the most intense phenomena during the analysis period in the subregion. Moreover, Gender Equality and Equal Treatment and Opportunities (Outcome 5), along with Strong, Modernized Normative Actions for Social Justice (Outcome 1), were also priority action areas with significant contributions to advancing the DW. A total of nine (out of 10) countries reported progress in this key area.

⁸¹ ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard; ILO Decent Work Results dashboard.

FIGURE 8. DECENT WORK RESULTS (REPORTED THROUGH P&B OUTCOMES 2020-2023) PER BIENNIUM



Source: ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard; ILO Decent Work Results dashboard

Key areas such as employment creation and social dialogue showed similar progress in the subregion, reflected in reported results. Full and productive employment for just transitions (Outcome 3) was a key factor in advancing employment creation, especially with results indicating an increased capacity of Member States to develop effective and efficient labour market programmes and services to support transitions (Output 3.4). On the other hand, advancing social dialogue was demonstrated through the strengthening of tripartite constituents that are strong, representative, and influential, and through effective social dialogue (Outcome 2). This was particularly evident in the results, which showed an increased institutional capacity of labour administrations (Output 2.4) and an enhanced institutional capacity of employer and business membership organizations to remain strong, independent, and representative (Output 2.1).

Progress on social protection had the fewest reported results in both biennia (7%) and was linked to just six out of ten countries. Efforts toward universal social protection (Outcome 7) were notably supported by results indicating increased capacity of Member States to strengthen social protection systems, ensure sustainable and adequate financing, and promote sound governance (Output 7.2). Regarding advances in improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work (Enabler A), a modest progress was recorded during the period analysed. It remains unclear whether this absence is due to limited progress in these areas overall or specifically in relation to the expected results under these Outcomes.

At the **country level, progress through P&B Outcomes** varied in the period 2020-2023 as follows:

- Mexico showed the highest contribution (17% of total outcomes), particularly related to advances in Protection at work for all (Outcome 6), and actions in increasing the capacity of Member States to develop fair and effective labour migration frameworks (Output 6.4), for instance, with projects like “Promoting sustainable integration solutions for people on the move in Mexico”(MEX/23/02/HCR)⁸².
- The register was followed by Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras, with progress in protecting workers’ rights, as well as advances in gender equality and equal treatment and opportunities (Outcome 5), along with initiatives such as “Actuarial valuation of the three insurance systems of the Honduran Social Security Institute (IHSS)” (HND/21/02/HND) and “Promoting care policies and services to improve access to decent employment for women in two rural departments in Honduras” (HND/23/01/RBS).⁸³

⁸² ILO. Promoting sustainable integration solutions for people on the move in Mexico (2023-2024).

⁸³ ILO (2023). Promoting care policies and services to improve access to decent employment for women in two rural departments in Honduras.

- Cuba (2%), Nicaragua (3%), and Panama (4%) contributed less overall, but made notable advances in areas such as strong, representative, and influential tripartite constituents, effective social dialogue (Outcome 2), and employment for just transitions (Outcome 3).
- Overall, Guatemala led progress in rights at work, Haiti and Mexico in employment creation, Honduras and Mexico in social protection, and the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in social dialogue (Table 13).

TABLE 13. CPO RESULTS BY P&B OUTCOMES PER COUNTRY

Country	Outcome 1: Normative action for social justice	Outcome 2: Tripartite constituents and effective social dialogue	Outcome 3: Employment for just transitions	Outcome 4: Sustainable enterprises	Outcome 5: Gender equality and equality of treatment	Outcome 6: Protection at work for all	Outcome 7: Universal social protection	Outcome 8: Social justice through decent work	Enabler A: Promoting decent work	TOTAL (NUMBER)	TOTAL (%)
Mexico	6	6	11	4	2	19	6	3	6	63	17%
Guatemala	15	7	3	1	10	11	-	2	-	49	13%
Honduras	9	8	2	2	8	11	6	2	-	48	13%
Costa Rica	5	5	6	4	5	15	2	1	-	43	12%
Haiti	-	1	8	7	13	9	4	2	-	44	12%
Dominican Republic	6	10	5	2	3	9	-	1	-	36	10%
El Salvador	2	8	11	1	-	-	5	2	1	30	8%
Panama	1	6	2	3	4	3	3	-	-	22	6%
Nicaragua	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	3%
Cuba	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	-	6	2%
Central America Subregional	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	16	4%
Total	197	76	26	61	7	76	26	61	7	367	100%

Source: ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard; ILO Decent Work Results dashboard

EFFECTIVENESS IN ADVANCING P&B OUTPUTS AND RELATED PROJECTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

Between 2020 and 2023, the **most frequently reported Output** in the subregion was related to “Efforts on Labour Migration Frameworks” (Output 6.4), accounting for 11% of all outputs. These results align with the context of increased mixed migratory flows in the region, as well as the Organization's involvement in migration strategies such as the ILO Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023-2030.⁸⁴ Other frequently reported outputs included “Increasing the Institutional Capacity of Labour Administrations” (Output 2.4) and “Increasing the Institutional Capacity of Employer and Business Membership Organizations to be Strong, Independent, and Representative” (Output 2.1), with 5% and 4% respectively. Notably, 32% of results not tied to specific outputs (particularly reported by Guatemala (20%), Haiti (15%), and Mexico (20%)), reflecting the broader scope of ILO action beyond programmed results.

On the contrary, certain outputs such as “Increasing the Capacity Of Constituents to Create Enabling Environments for Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Enterprises, Decent Work, and Productivity Growth” (Output 4.1), and “Increasing the Capacity of Member States to Harness Social Protection for Inclusive Life and Work Transitions and Structural Transformations”, registered **the lowest levels of results achieved**, with only one result each throughout the period under review. Other outputs, such as “Increasing the Capacity of Member States to make Social Dialogue more Influential and Labour Relations Institutions and Processes More Effective” (Output 2.3); “Increasing the Capacity of Constituents to drive the Effective Application of International Labour Standards” (Output 1.3); and “Increasing the Capacity of Constituents to Facilitate the Transition of Enterprises to the Formal Economy” (Output 4.4), also recorded limited progress in terms of P&B Outputs in the subregion, with only 1 to 2 results each.

⁸⁴ ILO (2022). Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023–2030.

At the **project level**, the Synthesis Review⁸⁵ identified tangible DW results across all analysed projects that successfully contributed to progress in various achievement areas:

- ▶ **Social dialogue**, with the strengthening of social dialogue across countries and the promotion of tripartism.
- ▶ **Employment and income** across training and certification programmes, improving financial capacity, entrepreneurs' initiatives, support for specific sectors, etc., focusing on young people, migrants, women, farmers, and other vulnerable populations.
- ▶ **Policy development**, contributing generally to the creation of regulations, policies, plans, and instruments related to decent work.
- ▶ **Social protection**, advancing comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems.
- ▶ **Awareness and capacity building** activities showed that employers' organizations and companies gained a better understanding of decent work, and several projects successfully helped government officials, employers' organizations, and workers' organizations improve their knowledge on various topics.

Among the sample projects with available results data, the project "Promoviendo empleos cada vez + verdes" (MEX/23/01/RBS) demonstrated results aligned with "Increased Capacity of Member States to Develop and Implement Comprehensive Employment Policy Frameworks" (Output 3.1), as well as "Enhanced Coherence in Support and Measures to Facilitate Just Transitions towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies" (Output 8.3), with a particularly strong contribution to Outcome 3 on full and productive employment for just transitions. Additionally, the project reported an initially unforeseen contribution to the outputs on increasing support for enterprises, especially MSMEs, to "Achieve decent work and improve productivity" (Output 4.3), and "Increasing the Capacity of Member States to Design and Implement a Transformative Agenda on Gender Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Inclusion" (Output 5.1).⁸⁶

Another **example of effectiveness** in advancing Decent Work Agenda Outcomes **from the sampled projects** was observed in the "Fair Recruitment in Central America: Strengthening Institutional Capacities for the Socioeconomic Integration of Migrants and Refugees" (CRI/19/50/UND) project. It reported results under Outcome 1, where Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama implemented fair recruitment practices that prevent refugees and migrants from becoming victims of trafficking and forced labour; under Outcome 2, where Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama effectively included refugees and migrants in public employment services; and under Outcome 5, by improving the socioeconomic integration of migrant and refugee women through enhanced access to childcare services for their children.⁸⁷

KEY SUCCESS AND HINDERING FACTORS

Among the **factors that have contributed to the successful** implementation and achievement of the DW Agenda results in the subregion, as identified repeatedly by interviewed ILO staff and constituents, and present in the desk review, can be mentioned:

- ▶ **Strategic alliances and tripartite collaboration**, especially with UN agencies, enable synergies, provide funding opportunities, and increase impact, while also enhancing visibility and institutional integration (as also discussed in EQs 4 and 14). Generally, alliances and interagency cooperation are viewed as effective in addressing complex issues, such as decent work. For example, collaboration with UNDP in Costa Rica expanded the Organization's efforts in the country and strengthened engagement with additional partners.
- ▶ **The ILO's institutional recognition** strengthens its legitimacy with governments, employers, and workers, enhancing its ability to convene. In the subregion, the ILO is seen as highly credible and has a strong reputation, which helps it to play a leading role in bringing people together. For example, in Honduras, the ILO is viewed, at least within the world of work, as a

⁸⁵ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024), pages 36-37.

⁸⁶ ILO (2024). Final informe RBSA Promover: Promoviendo empleos cada vez + verdes.

⁸⁷ ILO (2025). IV Report. Fair Recruitment in Central America: strengthening institutional capacities for the socioeconomic integration of migrants and refugees.

key player in maintaining positive relationships among governments, employers, and workers, thanks to its solid institutional presence and the technical trust it earns among stakeholders.

- ▶ **The technical quality of teams** ensures responsiveness to constituents. According to various informants, especially external ones such as constituents and donors, the Organization is seen as having highly capable teams with strong skills for engagement. For example, in both Honduras and Mexico, external informants highlighted clear communication, consistent contact, and prompt responses from ILO local teams.
- ▶ **Tripartite policy frameworks** enhance relevance, engagement, and ownership. It was recognized by ILO staff and constituents that institutionalizing dialogue spaces has been vital for effectively advancing commitments made by stakeholders (e.g., the Tripartite Council for Labour Relations of the State of Coahuila de Zaragoza (CTRL-C) in the project MEX/21/01/RBS⁸⁸).
- ▶ **Contextual adaptability**, which enables operational flexibility and timely interventions by adjusting approaches, helps overcome operational barriers and seize opportunities – crucial actions for achieving DW results in local settings. For example, in Honduras, the ILO was recognized by ILO staff and constituents for its strong ability to adapt to and meet the needs of employers, including expanding its interventions beyond formal enterprises to also support informal businesses and entrepreneurs.



The ILO has a very strong convening capacity, the organization has credibility, and the reputation it has built globally has been invaluable.” (Employers, Honduras).

On the other hand, regarding the **key factors that hindered subregional efforts to achieve the DW Agenda results** identified by interviewed ILO staff and constituents, as per frequency of mention, include:

- ▶ **Financial and human resource limitations**, including perceptions of budget constraints (what they have for Latin America is not aligned with the realities of the subregional labour market and sufficient to cover local needs), small teams (especially the DWT specialists to cover all subregional thematic necessities), heavy workloads, and short-term funding (e.g., projects of 3 - 4 years) that is not enough timeframe to achieve impact in many DW subjects. The perception of financial and human limitations directly responds to the resources with which the organization works to achieve the level of desired results in a high-needs subregion. For example, ILO staff mentioned that regional specialists often face excessive regional workloads (e.g., in labour standards and labour inspections), which hampers their ability to provide focused and sustained support to subregional offices and counterparts.
- ▶ **Sociopolitical instability**, mainly caused by frequent government changes, workers' organization not taking into account, and institutional weakness in countries like El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua. This hampers not only the achievement of results, but also the sustainability of processes.
- ▶ **ILO internal bureaucracy**. Informants highlighted that slow procedures and rigid processes hinder the smooth progress of actions and the completion of strategic processes. This obstacle was primarily linked to limited personnel resources. For example, it was mentioned that some efforts to implement DWCPs have lost momentum due to the dilated interest of the parties, given the extensive timeframes that must be managed within the Organization. In some cases, this is a direct response to the limited personnel and infrastructure required to maintain the pace required by these high-level agendas. (see EQ15)
- ▶ **ILO and constituents' institutions high staff turnover** was highlighted by ILO staff as an issue that affects institutional capacity. Frequent staff changes at both the ILO and the national counterparts impact the strategies used and disrupt the flow of actions within individual organizational structures. For instance, the high turnover of Directors at the DWT/CO San

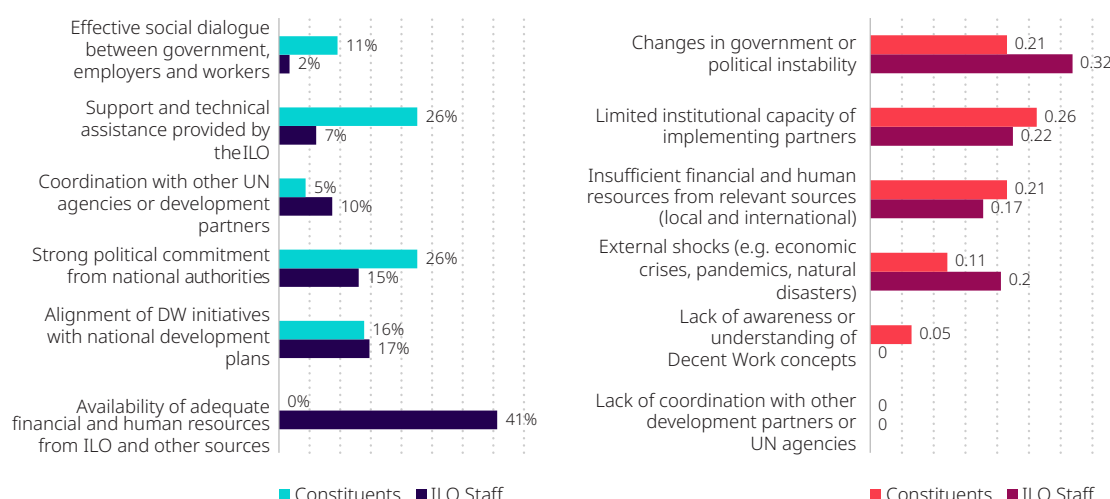
88 ILO (2023). Employment Recovery Strategy and Plan to Promote Green Jobs and Entrepreneurship for the State of Coahuila de Zaragoza.

José has been linked to disruptions in local operations. Conversely, high turnover among government staff in Honduras has slowed the progress of work in that country.

- **The COVID-19 pandemic** was a major factor that caused delays and required adjustments in project activities, including the shift to virtual systems⁸⁹ (e.g. mentioned in the evaluation of the RLA/17/03/EUR project).

According to the evaluation survey, these general factors remain part of overall perceptions among informants, but **the relevance of their contribution (both positive and negative) varies across different groups**. Specifically, both constituents and staff members identified the main factors that have most positively contributed to or hindered the successful implementation of DW initiatives (Figure 12). Most ILO staff informants ranked the availability of adequate financial and human resources from the ILO and other sources as the primary factor that positively influences DW initiatives (41%), while most constituents identified the support and technical assistance provided by the ILO and the strong political commitment of national authorities as the main factors (26% each of them). Conversely, among ILO staff, government changes or political instability were seen as the main factors hindering DW initiatives. Both groups agree that the limited institutional capacity of implementing partners is also an important factor.

FIGURE 9. MAIN FACTORS THAT HAVE MOST POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTED TO AND HINDERED THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENT WORK INITIATIVES



Source: Survey Constituent and ILO staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

EQ9. What progress has been made in the Central America subregion in achieving results on cross-cutting issues (gender and non-discrimination; ILS; social dialogue; just transition) and what are the key success factors and those that hinder them (e.g. extent to which not having DWCP has affected or facilitated achievements to DW related results)?

The analysis under this question is subject to significant limitations stemming from the availability and quality of information on most cross-cutting themes, per se, in the documents reviewed. Although there is qualitative information and examples of the incorporation of these themes in various ILO projects and actions, quantitative information in terms of indicators, resources and support is, in many cases, limited. For this reason, many of the key findings and conclusions come from interviews and desk review. The evaluation team tried to triangulate and complement them with available figures and data. The evaluation team has assessed particularly ILO interventions in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, and Mexico, as well as global and regional programmes and initiatives. The findings presented rely primarily on qualitative evidence collected through bilateral interviews with key informants and triangulation with the available strategies and vproject documents.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

The evaluation team has been able to identify relevant examples of applying gender equality principles through promoting women's leadership and care economy policies, mainstreaming non-discrimination in actions aimed at migrant workers and vulnerable groups, and incorporating international labour standards into national discussions on formalization and workplace safety.

The following table shows an overview of the alignment of CPOs results with relevant crosscutting issues by country:

TABLE 14. PERCENTAGE OF CPOS-RELATED RESULTS BY CROSS-CUTTING APPROACH

	Gender equality	Disability	Just transition	Non-discrimination	Indigenous people	Youth	Labour migrants	ILS
Costa Rica	6%	1%	0%	0%	1%	4%	7%	10%
Cuba	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Dominican Republic	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%
El Salvador	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Guatemala	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	4%	1%
Haiti	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Honduras	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	1%	1%
Mexico	7%	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%	6%	12%
Nicaragua	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Panama	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Subregional	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Total	21%	4%	1%	1%	5%	13%	22%	33%

Source: Evaluation Team

The data reveals a significant imbalance in the integration of cross-cutting approaches across the countries analyzed, highlighting both geographic and thematic disparities in the ILO's subregional engagement. While Costa Rica and Mexico consistently show higher levels of incorporation—particularly in gender, youth, labour migration, and International Labour Standards (ILS)—several countries, including Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Panama, report no results in key areas such as labour migration, disability, or indigenous peoples. Notably, the emerging approaches—namely just transition, non-discrimination, and disability inclusion—are either absent or only minimally addressed, with only Mexico reporting limited engagement (1% for each, just transition and non-discrimination) and a few countries, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico, showing some results on disability. The near-total lack of attention to indigenous peoples, with only Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico reporting minimal progress, further underscores the limited scope of inclusive action. These patterns suggest that, despite some targeted efforts, the ILO's subregional implementation lacks coherence and depth in mainstreaming inclusion and rights-based dimensions that are central to its normative and strategic mandate.

The effective implementation of cross-cutting themes promoted by the ILO has been significantly influenced by political will, institutional stability, and cultural openness. Interviewees emphasize these elements as key enablers, while noting a lack of clarity regarding the allocation of responsibilities, institutional resistance, and restrictive socio-political contexts as the main barriers to their development. It is also noted that the inclusion of cross-cutting themes often responds more to donor demands or programme frameworks than to genuine demand, which can sometimes reduce their actual and sustainable impact. Internally, the lack of coordination between departments, and the limited availability of specialized human resources, continue to be persistent challenges. Despite these constraints, notable progress has been made in promoting gender equality and creating supportive environments in the public and private sectors, which enable the introduction of reforms and policy changes in priority areas for ILO, such as child labour.

A) GENDER EQUALITY

Regarding **gender equality**, progress can be seen in some countries, particularly where supportive public policies and a strong commitment from the government are present such as in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Mexico. However, its practical application still encounters structural limitations in sectors such as agriculture and trade unions, where gender stereotypes continue to dominate. One relevant aspect highlighted during the interviews is that persistent structural and cultural barriers in the subregion continue to limit the effective participation of women in key economic sectors, where their roles remain concentrated in lower added-value and less visible activities, while access to leadership and decision-making spaces is still predominantly reserved for men. The following cases illustrate how targeted ILO interventions can promote care services, women's leadership, and formalization in traditionally undervalued sectors.

- ▶ In Jalisco, Mexico, the establishment of a Secretariat for Equality advanced gender mainstreaming in ILO initiatives, fostering strategic partnerships with other stakeholders and promoting awareness and dissemination efforts.
- ▶ In Guatemala, a partnership was established between the ILO and the Federation of Domestic Workers and Tradeswomen (FETRADOMOV) to strengthen the recognition and protection of the rights of domestic workers. This alliance helped to raise awareness of domestic workers' demands in public policy debates and bolstered national advocacy efforts for the ratification and implementation of Convention 189, among other relevant legislation.
- ▶ In the Dominican Republic, the ILO served as an observer and technical contributor to the development of the Inter-Institutional Agenda on Domestic Work (2023–2026), led by the National Institute for Women (INAMU) and the Ministry of Labour. The agenda is organized around five priority areas (formalization, labour inspection, employability, compliance with labour rights, and social dialogue) and includes measurable targets and institutional responsibilities to enhance employment standards for domestic workers, many of whom are migrant women. One of the key expected mid-term results, which is already underway, is the establishment of a cooperative for domestic workers, designed to formalize and professionalize care-related services.

B) NON-DISCRIMINATION

As noted by ILO staff and constituents during interviews, the principle of non-discrimination has been consistently promoted through various ILO initiatives and programmes; however, progress and outcomes remain inconsistent across different contexts. Although some national institutions have incorporated equity principles into their policy frameworks, limited awareness of the importance of practical implementation continues to hinder more meaningful progress.

- ▶ Some enterprises in the subregion have implemented codes of ethics and inclusion initiatives, showcasing the efforts of human resources to foster more equitable working environments. A clear example is the “Equidad 360” certification, developed in coordination with Mexico's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, which promotes structured self-assessments and inclusive workplace practices to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- ▶ Also in Mexico, the National Employment Service (SNE) has adopted the “Training Guide for Gender Mainstreaming” as the primary tool to promote gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory employment practices in line with Convention 111 on the elimination of all forms of discrimination. To that end, a letter of commitment was signed on 15 March 2023, between the institution and the ILO.

The **disability approach**⁹⁰ has encountered some opportunities in countries with stronger institutions, but limitations remain concerning both policy and implementation. The lack of specific policies and reliance on external resources hinder broader and more sustainable integration. For example, until 2022, Costa Rica served as the subregional benchmark due to favourable institutional conditions, with specialized disability units in several organizations; however, governmental changes and budget reductions impacted continuity. Another relevant experience is the Programme for the training of personal assistants for people with disabilities, conducted by the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Training (INFOTEP) of the Dominican Republic in

90 The analysis is based on information gathered through interviews, as no significant examples were found in the database of reported results for the period under review.

coordination with the ILO (which is being developed within the design of the National Care System). It contributes to the professionalization of care workers and generates conditions to improve access to rights for paid caregivers.

Concerning work with **indigenous peoples and the effective inclusion of youth**, these issues have also been part of the ILO's project portfolio, although the results in these areas seem more marginal in comparison to other cross-cutting issues that are better integrated into ILO's country portfolios. According to some of the key informants consulted, in the case of indigenous peoples, the lack of inclusivity during some tripartite consultation dynamics in the targeted countries, have restricted their effective integration into social dialogue processes and public policies. While Convention 169⁹¹ provides a useful framework for promoting inclusive policies and practices, the level of adoption of this norm varies significantly across countries in the region. Meanwhile, the youth approach has primarily focused on efforts to combat child labour.

- ▶ In Honduras, the efforts to promote and train on labour rights for indigenous peoples, in collaboration with other UN system agencies, are noteworthy. These activities have included awareness-raising workshops on core labour standards and ILO Convention 169 and training of trade union leaders.
- ▶ With ILO support, the National Employment Council (CNE) of Costa Rica approved the adoption of the "National Employability and Human Talent Strategy", which establishes specific provisions to increase the employability of people in conditions of exclusion from the labour market, prioritising young people between 15 and 24 years of age and women between 15 and 35 years of age. Among its six pillars, the components of technical training, intermediation and entrepreneurship stand out.

In the area of **labour migration**, the ILO has also undertaken various actions, which include the development of health protection protocols, the promotion of policy tools on internal labour migration and the establishment of local innovation labs to enhance migrant inclusion in local labour markets. Some initiatives have also addressed reintegration efforts for returnees, although its influence remains constrained by broader institutional and political dynamics. For instance:

- ▶ During the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico, the ILO collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture to develop a health protection protocol for migrant workers in the agricultural sector.⁹² This protocol was translated into multiple languages for improved accessibility. It served as a model for other communities with high labour mobility, facilitating its replicability.
- ▶ Similarly, in Honduras, the ILO supported the revision of a draft labour law for foreigners, promoting a legislative process that involved the government, employers, and workers.

However, it is important to emphasize that in several countries in the subregion, the ILO has had to rely on indirect alliances with civil society organizations and other international agencies (especially IOM and UNHCR, which have direct mandates on the issue) to influence the migration agenda, due to a lack of direct access to the relevant institutions. This situation has diminished the advocacy capacity and promotion of the ILO approach and agenda.

Regarding the promotion of **international labour standards**, this has been another fundamental pillar of the ILO's strategy. Although actions aimed at promoting ILS is present in a significant part of the intervention logics, their effective integration has been heavily influenced by the existing national policy frameworks, the level of cooperation between the parties, and the degree of commitment from the tripartite actors. In this context, social dialogue has served as a key facilitating mechanism, enabling policy reforms and labour modernization processes with greater inclusiveness and legitimacy, as the ILO ensures representatives of the different sectors and more

91 https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169.

92 <https://www.ilo.org/es/publications/guia-practica-para-la-prevencion-y-mitigacion-del-covid-19-en-la>.

transparent and fair negotiation conditions among them. Some key activities developed in the subregion have focused on strengthening freedom of association and collective bargaining, whose success largely depends on the quality and stability of existing social dialogue structures.

- ▶ In Mexico, the ILO contributed to drafting the secondary law on telework, strengthening labour regulatory frameworks in response to the new dynamics created by the pandemic. This effort was supported by extensive social consultations involving tripartite actors, which facilitated a more consensual approval process. Specifically, in San Luis Potosí, the operation of a tripartite council comprising representatives from the government, business chambers, trade unions, and universities stands out. Although current participation remains bipartite in many instances, this platform has established a formal space for negotiation and a mechanism to monitor the implementation of international agreements.
- ▶ In September 2023, eight Costa Rica public institutions adopted the “Inter-institutional Agenda on Paid Domestic Work 2023 – 2026”. Among other advances, the introduction of this strategy allows for the creation of a protocol to guarantee inspection in this area, the development of training processes for employers and workers, the creation of a system for the registration of contracts and the development of a model of payment receipt and the creation of spaces for tripartite dialogue. These commitments and goals have also been reflected in the Action Plan of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity (2023-2026).

Finally, regarding the integration of the **just transition** approach into ILO interventions, ILO staff indicated that this has been a gradual process, primarily focused on promoting green jobs and sustainable economic agendas. Although it is an emerging priority and the structured implementation is still in its early stages, progress focuses on strengthening institutional capacities for climate-responsive policies and incorporating environmental sustainability elements through some targeted projects. For example, in line with the work being promoted by ILO in the subregion, the Government of the State of Coahuila (Mexico), through the Tripartite Council for Labour Relations, validated a Plan for the Promotion of Green Jobs and Entrepreneurship (PIE) that integrates the just transition approach into the public policy framework and seeks to generate an enabling environment for the transition towards more sustainable economies and enterprises. The target groups of this plan are small and medium-sized enterprises with high potential for upgrading and scaling up, as well as the youth and the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

During 2024, several countries initiated structured national processes—supported by the ILO—that aimed to integrate just transition and related cross-cutting priorities into public policy frameworks. In Costa Rica, a national Just Transition Roadmap was developed in coordination with MINAE, MTSS, INA and others, and aligned with both the National Employment Policy and the National Decarbonization Plan. Additionally, Just Transition principles were incorporated into the revision of Costa Rica's Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership (NDC), with the ILO providing technical support to MINAE and tripartite actors. In Mexico, similar work was undertaken in the context of the NDC 3.0 update, based on a diagnostic and dialogue with the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), the Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare (STPS), CONCAMIN and others. In Panama, the ILO supported the inclusion of a just transition annex in the NDC.

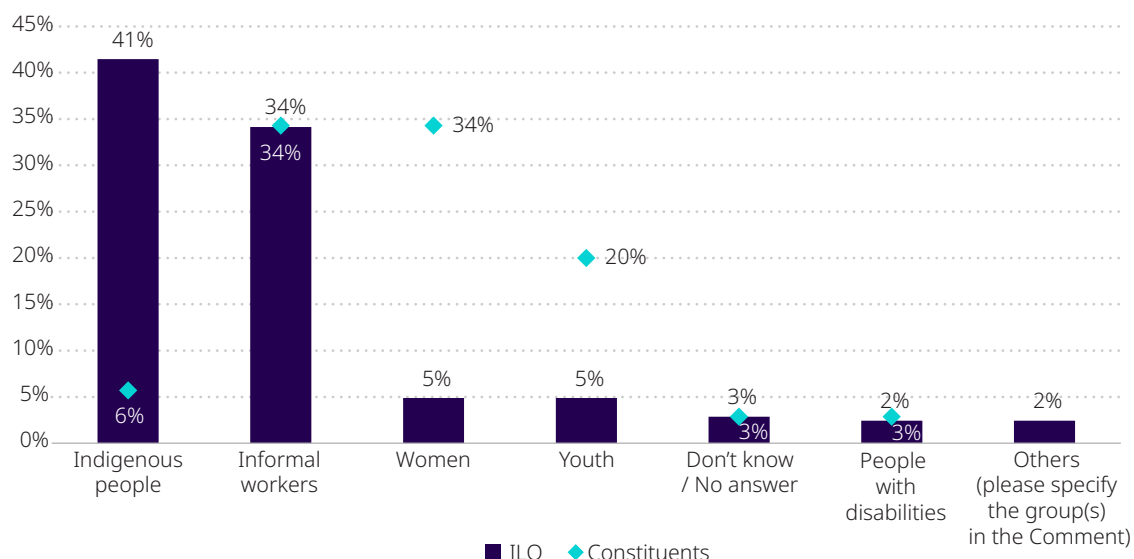
In addition, at the subregional level, some initiatives have been developed aimed at promoting green entrepreneurship programmes and establishing university degrees in fields such as environmental engineering and electromobility, which are noteworthy, aligning professional profiles with the needs of an economy and labour market in transition. However, this process still faces significant barriers, primarily due to the lack of fiscal incentives and government support needed to encourage enterprise involvement. These restrict its dissemination and scalability.

THE MAIN VULNERABLE GROUPS THAT HAVE BENEFITED MOST FROM ILO ACTIONS

Regarding the main vulnerable groups that have benefited most from ILO actions, the **survey** results from ILO staff and constituents show varying perceptions of which vulnerable groups have gained from efforts to improve decent work conditions in Central America. These perspectives should be understood within the context of the ILO's strategic priorities for the subregion. The alignment between ILO staff and constituents in identifying informal workers as a key beneficiary

group (both with 34% of the responses) shows that ILO efforts have made a noticeable impact on initiatives to formalize employment, which remains a core strategic focus in the subregion. This indicates that programmes, regulatory frameworks, and technical support aimed at reducing informality are achieving results recognized by various stakeholders.

FIGURE 10. PERCEPTIONS ON WHICH GROUPS HAVE SEEN IMPROVED DECENT WORK CONDITIONS DUE TO ILO INTERVENTIONS



Source: Survey ILO's staff and Constituents HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

ILO staff identify indigenous peoples as the most benefited group (41%), possibly reflecting a strong institutional commitment to inclusive employment. This aligns with the regional priority of the FORLAC 2.0 Initiative⁹³ to promote decent work among indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. However, the limited recognition from constituents indicates a gap in visibility or recognition, possibly due to limitations in local coordination or in the communication and monitoring of results.

Constituents rank women as one of the top beneficiaries together with informal workers (34% each), while only 5% of ILO staff share this view regarding women. This disparity may reflect different assessments of progress on gender equality, a cross-cutting ILO priority. The lower rating by staff may indicate that progress has been more normative or institutional (e.g., legal or policy reforms), but less visible in terms of structural or sustained improvements in female employment.

Youth, a key group for sustainable development and labour market inclusion, shows a significant gap: only 5% of ILO staff see them as beneficiaries compared to 20% of constituents. This may reflect the visibility of programmes at the national level (e.g., internships, dual training) that are not seen internally as strategic or transformative. The data indicates a need to better align institutional perceptions with national stakeholder expectations and to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for youth-related initiatives.

Both groups rank persons with disabilities at the bottom (2% of ILO staff and 3% of constituents), highlighting a critical area for improvement. Although they are a priority group, their low recognition as beneficiaries indicates challenges in effective inclusion and suggests a need to increase resources, partnerships, and intersectional strategies in this area.

⁹³ ILO, Strategy for the Promotion of Formalization in Latin America and the Caribbean 2024-2030, page 31.

EQ10. Has the ILO obtained positive and negative unintended results from its work in Central America? What could have been done differently to improve the ILO results?

Several **unintended positive effects** of the ILO's work in Central America – going beyond the initial scope of the interventions – were identified, using information from the Synthesis Review (i.e., Key Finding 11) and interviews with ILO staff. The following effects were observed:

- ▶ **Creation of networks and expansion of partnerships beyond the initial scope of projects:** New networks of agricultural service providers were established to offer technical assistance to local producers, along with solidarity networks comprising 1,157 members in Haiti (HTI/20/01/NOR) to facilitate access to credit for beneficiaries. In the Dominican Republic (DOM/17/01/USA), professional networks were formed through the recruitment of inspectors to strengthen labour inspections in the agricultural sector. In Mexico, knowledge-sharing and collaboration networks were also developed, going beyond the projects' original thematic objectives. Tools developed under the Regional Initiative against Child Labour – such as the risk identification model co-developed with ECLAC – were replicated in several countries, generating additional requests for technical assistance.
- ▶ **Improvements in infrastructure and productive systems:** In Haiti (HTI/20/01/NOR), technical studies on market opportunities and the rehabilitation of municipal markets were carried out, alongside the construction of modern production centres and the improvement of roads to facilitate transportation, as part of the joint ILO–UNCTAD programme.
- ▶ **Expanded coverage, specialized training, and impact on perceptions:** Several projects exceeded their initial targets, reaching more beneficiaries – particularly through training activities and specialized capacity-building sessions, as in HTI/18/01/RBS. These efforts also helped influence stakeholders' perceptions of women's economic roles (RLA/17/03/EUR).
- ▶ **Institutional, social, and regulatory transformations:** In Mexico, institutional reforms were promoted through the inclusion of new issues in the agendas of government and social actors, the creation of dialogue spaces, and the encouragement of active participation. The Central American Work Plan on Child Labour was also adopted, and a workplace sexual harassment protocol was developed. Collaborations between universities and government institutions were strengthened to promote technical training and labour market inclusion.
- ▶ **Visibility of Emerging Issues and Progress in Gender Equality and Sustainability:** In Mexico, progress was made in advancing the green transition, gender equality, and empowerment – particularly through the integration of a gender perspective into child labour initiatives, which had initially been absent from the national strategic plan. In Cuba, the informal economy was incorporated into the national agenda through collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and the National Statistics Office, resulting in improved measurement methodologies.

These Outcomes demonstrate that the ILO's approach has yielded lasting transformative effects, broadening its expected impact through sustained technical assistance, social dialogue, and coordinated multi-stakeholder engagement.

Regarding **unintended negative effects**, although interviewees were explicitly asked about them, their responses primarily focused on the barriers and obstacles encountered during the implementation of technical assistance and projects. Therefore, the point is discussed only based on findings in the Synthesis Review (Key Finding 11). Particularly in Mexico, the Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare (STPS) rejected the proposed indicators aimed at tracking progress on labour reform, claiming they did not adequately address the country's monitoring needs. The indicators relied on different methodological approaches, needed complex data-sharing agreements, and failed to meet the information requirements of the Liaison Unit (MEX/20/01/NAA).

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

eQ11. How have ILO management arrangements contributed to or hindered the DW Agenda results in Central America?

EQ12. How effectively have ILO country offices, regional office, Decent Work Teams, and concerned HQ Departments coordinated to provide integrated and strategic technical support and policy dialogue at country level?

The analysis in this section focuses on the management structure, coordination mechanisms, and operational arrangements as key elements shaping both the Outcomes achieved and the quality of technical support and policy dialogue provided at the country level. Subsequently, particular attention is given to the functioning of the monitoring system, as a critical component for assessing the effectiveness and strategic alignment of these interventions.

ILO'S MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The ILO's management arrangements form a multi-layered structure in which governance is anchored in a tripartite oversight model, operations are driven by a robust global-secretariat-field apparatus, and technical cooperation is supported by strategic frameworks and an expert network.⁹⁴ This system is designed to align ILS and national needs, foster inclusive social dialogue, and ensure accountability. The ILO's management arrangements are outlined in several official documents that detail how the Organization governs, operates, and delivers results.⁹⁵ Below is a summary table of these arrangements.

TABLE 15. ILO MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Governance	Tripartite oversight through International Labour Conference (ILC) and Governing Body, ensuring broad stakeholder representation.
Secretariat & field Offices	Geneva-based HQ and ~40 regional/country offices implement policies and programmes on the ground.
Strategic tools	Programme & Budget, Internal Governance Manual, and RBM practices like IRIS ensure aligned planning and accountability
Technical & coordination mechanism	Tripartite committees, Global Technical Teams, and RBSA funding support targeted interventions.
Monitoring & evaluation	Virtual platforms, guidelines and mechanisms, such as guidance documentation, policy guidelines, strategies, templates, SharePoint workspaces; independent evaluations, and MOPAN reviews strengthen learning and impact assessment

Source: ILO web page

A) MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The subregional management structure for Central America functions through a multi-level framework designed to ensure regional coherence and address local priorities. This structure includes regional leadership, subregional coordination, technical networks, and tripartite governance, supported by specialized mechanisms for labour market analysis and programme implementation.⁹⁶ Their contribution and effectiveness in achieving DW results in the subregion varied and were identified at different levels as follows:

⁹⁴ [About the ILO | International Labour Organization](#).

⁹⁵ <https://normlex.ilo.org/mopan-ilo-assessment-report-2021.pdf>.

⁹⁶ ILO Web. Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at <https://www.ilo.org/regions-and-countries/latin-america-and-caribbean>.

- **Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC):** Located in Lima, Peru, the Regional Office provides strategic leadership, technical guidance, and coordination for 34 countries, including subregional countries in Central America. It establishes regional priorities such as formalization, social protection, and gender equality, while ensuring alignment with global ILO mandates. The office also manages partnerships and dialogues with regional organizations and coordinates knowledge management across the continent.⁹⁷

During the period 2020-24, it was recognized that this level of management made a significant contribution to coordination with thematic offices, field actors, and headquarters. A notable example of effective internal functioning and coordination mentioned during interviews with ILO staff was in the area of child labour through its Regional Initiative.⁹⁸ The internal operations of the ILO in this area were marked by effective coordination between levels, facilitated by staff's simultaneous affiliation with a country office (such as San José) and the Technical Secretariat of the Regional Initiative, which depended directly on the Regional Office in Lima.

- **CO/DWT Office for Central America (Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama), and the DWT providing support also to Cuba and Mexico).** Based in San José, Costa Rica, oversees ILO operations in eight of the ten subregional countries.⁹⁹ It plays a key role in adapting regional strategies to subregional realities and ensuring that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is implemented in alignment with national needs.¹⁰⁰

For example, during 2020–24, the Fair Recruitment project (CRI/19/50/UND) showed that CO San Jose played a key role in adapting fair recruitment tools originally created for the Mexican agricultural sector to specific industries in Costa Rica, such as the sugar and pineapple sectors, in partnership with national employers' organizations and RBCLAC project.¹⁰¹

- **Country Office Mexico for Mexico and Cuba.** Located in Mexico City, this CO provides technical assistance to its constituents in Mexico and Cuba, focusing on priority action areas for them.¹⁰²

During the period 2020–24, it was found that the VZF project (MEX/20/05/USA) and the RLA/22/07/EUR project placed a strong focus on providing capacity building to Mexican workers, employers, and government officials. The latter offered technical assistance for the drafting and discussion of a National Policy on Business and Human Rights with the Secretariat of the Interior Affairs (SEGOB).¹⁰³

- **In-country work:** The ILO also ensures country-specific engagement through ILO officers (e.g., projects staff) and consultants based in each country. These in-country teams work closely with national governments, employers' organizations, and workers' organizations to align subregional expertise with national priorities.

However, the **ILO's multi-level management structure** – comprising headquarter, regional, subregional, and country offices – **was perceived by several informants and reported in the Synthesis Review as a potential barrier to achieving decent work results.**¹⁰⁴ ILO staff and constituents described the structure as complex and bureaucratic, which can impede timely and effective support. Internal procedures and approval mechanisms were seen as occasionally

⁹⁷ Idem.

⁹⁸ [Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour | International Labour Organization](#).

⁹⁹ Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic.

¹⁰⁰ ILO Web. ILO Office for Central America, Haiti, Panama and Dominican Republic. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/regions-and-countries/latin-america-and-caribbean/ilo-office-central-america-haiti-panama-and-dominican-republic>.

¹⁰¹ Extracted from Report IV Fair Recruitment in Central America (CRI/19/50/UND).

¹⁰² ILO Web. Mexico and Cuba Office. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/es/la-oficina-en-mexico-y-cuba>.

¹⁰³ Extracted from ILO Final Narrative Report RBCLAC Transition Phase 2023 (RLA/22/07/EUR) and the Final Evaluation of the VZF Project (MEX/20/05/USA).

¹⁰⁴ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024), page 47.

lengthy and slow, causing delays and potentially straining stakeholder engagement. Specifically, informants mentioned that obtaining cooperation funds involved cumbersome processes, and fund disbursement could take up to 18 months depending on the responsible office. This significantly complicates project implementation and timely delivery. Administrative procedures were often viewed as misaligned with operational needs, leading to inefficiencies, delays, and increased workload. The Organization was frequently described by interviewees as “armed with mechanisms and bureaucracy,” which, while intended to ensure oversight and alignment with strategic objectives, often restricts agility. Although thorough, this structure risks undermining responsiveness and the efficient use of time and resources.

B) COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Between 2020 and 2024, coordination in the subregion relied on a combination of institutional structures and functional mechanisms. These included the subregional management structure, tripartite governance, technical and analytical units, and project/programme management.

- ▶ **Tripartite governance:** In the subregion, the evaluation team found that most ILO activities were based on tripartite social dialogue involving governments, employers, and workers. This model was embedded in regional and subregional strategies. For example, the Formalization Strategy FORLAC 2020-2024 is managed by a Tripartite Advisory Committee, which guarantees inclusive policy making, coordinated execution, and monitoring across the region.¹⁰⁵
- ▶ **Technical and analytical units:** It was identified that these units acted as coordination mechanisms through technical arms to provide various types of support. For example, in the subregion, the ILO managed Labour Information and Analysis System (SIALC), based in Panama, delivers harmonized labour market data to support evidence-based policies. It produces annual reports like the Labour Overview, which monitors employment trends across Central America¹⁰⁶.
- ▶ **Project and programme management:** Each project PRODOC includes a section on project management modalities, which generally outlines how the implementation team will be formed (comprising ILO staff and national counterparts). It also typically explains how the national and international staff assigned to the project, ILO specialists, and constituents will collaborate.¹⁰⁷ Each project has its own particularities. Interviews confirmed that in the subregion ILO projects were managed by designated Project Managers, who operate under the direct supervision of the relevant CO director, with technical guidance from DWT San Jose or regional specialists and headquarters.

This structure presents **several coordination challenges** as follows:

Communication across regional, subregional, and HQ levels was often ineffective, leading to fragmented responses. Interviewees and findings from the survey and the Synthesis Review¹⁰⁸ noted a lack of effective coordination and internal communication between regional, subregional, and headquarters levels, and the articulation between leadership levels does not always translate into coordinated action on the ground, weakening the ILO's institutional presence and hindering a coherent response in multi-agency settings.

Specifically, interviews and questionnaire responses have indicated that the two COs, San Jose and Mexico, operate under very different realities and dynamics, and that there is a lack of communication and structured planning between the CO/DWT in San José and CO Mexico. Although the available information is based primarily on interviews and informal conversations with staff from both COs — and no concrete evidence was found in the provided sources that explicitly addresses or critiques systemic coordination between the two offices — the exclusion of Mexico and Cuba from the Subregional Strategy for Central America 2022–2025 might be interpreted as a sign of such disconnect.

¹⁰⁵ ILO (2024). Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean FORLAC 2.0.

¹⁰⁶ ILO (2021). Labor Overview 2021. Latin America and the Caribbean; ILO (2022). Labor Overview 2022. Latin America and the Caribbean; ILO (2023). Labor Overview 2023. Latin America and the Caribbean.

¹⁰⁷ ILO PRODOCs CRI/18/02/CRI; CRI/19/50/UND; RLA/22/02/EUR.

¹⁰⁸ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024). page 49.

 **There is a lack of a systemic approach to coordinate geographically close offices, such as in San José and Mexico, which has led to conflicting agendas with national and international stakeholders, weakening institutional coherence and the ability to deliver a unified response (ILO staff at CO).**

Reliance on the knowledge and expertise of long-serving staff has restricted the ILO's capacity to anticipate scenarios, plan for the long term, and develop coherent interventions. Coordination often relied on the personal experience and institutional memory of specific specialists, rather than on formalized mechanisms or shared knowledge systems — creating vulnerabilities when those individuals left or were reassigned. This reliance on tacit knowledge, rather than codified processes, was compounded by the absence of structured workflows and clearly defined coordination points, further weakening internal coherence.

 **Often, teams do not know who they should contact to resolve specific issues, leading to operational confusion. Dependence on specific individuals. The effectiveness of articulation between levels has depended more on the experience and personal trajectory of certain officials than on clear institutional mechanisms. In the absence of these individuals, coordination suffers significantly. (ILO staff CO).**

High turnover of CO/DWT director and, in some cases, limited experience with ILO's thematic priorities were consistently highlighted by key informants during the interviews and in the survey as factors that undermine continuity and the depth of processes. Leadership changes often caused delays and increased dependence on the approach of newly appointed directors.

An informant from the Government of Costa Rica emphasized the importance of in-country focal points, recalling that communication and coordination were more fluid and effective when a long-standing ILO specialist was based in Costa Rica. Since that specialist moved to Mexico, they noticed decreased follow-up and support continuity, which impacted ongoing engagement and progress in their collaboration with the ILO.

Additionally, key informants noted that **centralizing political and operational decision-making** in the CO/DWT San José may lead to delays and reduce adaptability to country-specific contexts, as actions and authorizations must be routed through this office, thereby limiting operational flexibility in each of the 10 countries of the subregion.

OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Operational arrangements supporting Decent work outcomes combined **strong governance structures, flexible resource use, and expert-led project execution**. ILO specialists with deep thematic expertise played a key role in ensuring technical quality and logistical coordination. Projects benefited from strategic realignment and the onboarding of new staff, which sustained momentum during challenges. Project-level mechanisms were found to be solid in planning, budgeting, and reporting (MEX/20/05/USA; RLA/22/07/EUR; and the ACT/EMP activities). COs' Programming units ensured strategic alignment and equitable resource allocation, while officials in countries led multi-level coordination to support sustainability.

RBSA funding has been key in establishing and supporting the effective functioning of tripartite committees¹⁰⁹ in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the evaluated subregion. It enabled the creation and operation of advisory committees within strategies like FORLAC 2.0, promoting inclusive social dialogue and direct participation of governments, employers, and workers in programme design and monitoring. Flexible funding also enhanced constituent

¹⁰⁹ Further details are available at: <https://www.ilo.org/media/36616/download>.

engagement in initiatives such as the Regional Initiative for the Eradication of Child Labour and the Innovative Solutions for Formalization project, both of which use tripartite governance structures. The Evaluation of the ILO's Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA)¹¹⁰ shows how RBSA funding allows the ILO to mobilize resources quickly and flexibly to meet constituent needs, supporting the formation of tripartite committees and enhanced engagement.

Thematic coordination, such as on child labour and formalization, was generally seen effective by ILO staff. During the interviews, coordinators stressed the importance of regular communication and partnership-building as key to positioning and expanding ILO efforts. Evaluation reports from projects like CRI/18/02/CRI and HND/22/50/EUR supported this, showing how intentional inter-institutional coordination strengthened pilot initiatives and helped with collaborative planning on technical assistance and resource mobilization. Regional and national officials shared coordination duties, adjusting interventions based on local priorities, which proved successful in areas such as the rural economy and formalization (MEX/23/01/RBS; HND/22/05/EUR).

The HLE Synthesis Review also identified several key management challenges that hindered progress towards DW outcomes, which were also confirmed through document review and the triangulation of interviews. These included: 1) insufficient financial and human resources; 2) the ill-suited ILO administrative procedures to the rapid demands of short-term interventions; 3) fragmented efforts among specialists, implementing agencies and stakeholders due to a lack of holistic oversight; 4) limited field expertise and significant challenges in harmonizing data collection methods and tools across countries, which limited the ability to generate consistent, actionable insights critical to advancing the DW Agenda.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

The ILO's monitoring and evaluation system is a multi-layered framework that combines **real-time financial resources tracking tools**, reporting protocols, **independent evaluations**, which in the subregion helped the operation and the achievement of the DW results as follows.

Internal monitoring and evaluation reporting tools: according to document review and ILO staff specific interviews, the uses of real-time tracking tools were used to allocate resources based on national development priorities, including alignment with UNSDCF, particularly for thematic areas of the DW Agenda like employment creation, social protection, and labour rights. On the other hand, it was mentioned that Offices and national coordinators used IRIS (Integrated Resource Information System) to monitor technical cooperation projects, track milestones, and generate data for performance reports, essential to advancing in the DW Agenda results¹¹¹. However, ILO staff informants criticized the limited follow-up from headquarters to the implementation processes, leaving them, in most cases, exclusively at the reporting stages.

For monitoring and operational reporting, the ILO provides guidelines and mechanisms, such as guidance documentation, policy guidelines, strategies, templates, and SharePoint workspaces, to assist its staff in this process. These include progress reports on the achievement of outputs (submitted at least quarterly) and reports on the attainment of outcomes (submitted at least annually); project narrative reports; donor reports; among others¹¹². The evaluation found that these reporting processes in the subregion were carried out by technical units, field offices, unit heads, and even office directors, but not by dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) units, nor through standardized monitoring systems across offices.

Independent evaluations: The ILO Evaluation Office conducts independent project and thematic evaluations. These evaluations generate recommendations, lessons learned, highlight good practices, and identify capacity gaps, informing future programming cycles¹¹³. MOPAN highlights that management response systems are essential for translating evaluation findings into organizational learning and actionable change within multilateral institutions¹¹⁴. However, in the subregion, interviewees confirmed that most of those evaluation results that are supposed to feed

¹¹⁰ ILO, "Evaluation of the ILO's Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA)," 2015, page 10.

¹¹¹ ILO. (2022). *Results-Based Management Handbook*.

¹¹² ILO Internal Dashboard. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Available in <https://iloprod.sharepoint.com/sites/partnerships/SitePages/Monitoring,%20reporting,%20evaluation%20and%20learning.aspx>

¹¹³ ILO Note 5.4: Management follow-up to recommendations from independent project evaluations.

¹¹⁴ More information available in: <https://www.mopan.org/en/our-work/performance-evidence/ilo.html>

into organizational learning and management response systems remain in the documents, rarely leading to concrete follow-up actions. This indicates that, despite robust evaluation frameworks, the implementation of recommendations and continuous learning mechanisms often falls short in practice.

UN monitoring systems: Additionally, the ILO in the subregion aligned its monitoring with the UN INFO and UNSDCF results frameworks, ensuring coherence with broader UN country teamwork and the SDGs.

These mechanisms worked together to inform and facilitate progress to DW in the subregion. However, interviewed ILO staff pointed out some challenges, such as despite findings shared in workshops and learning sessions with ILO staff and national counterparts to promote adaptive management, there is no effective information management structure that allows for the use of this information beyond the result feedback spaces.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, it was mentioned by different ILO staff from Costa Rica and Mexico that the Information Access System is limited to specific topics that could make daily work more efficient without duplicating tasks between areas and country offices. For example, it was noted that if access to documents by topic is needed, as is often the case when designing new interventions, it is not as straightforward unless the exact code for the required information is available, and the same setup must be redone from scratch. For example, interviewees with CO Mexico ILO staff mentioned that dealing with the formalization of platform workers required interacting with four or five different ILO specialists, demonstrating a lack of an integrated information system that could prevent such redundancies.

EFFICIENCY

eQ13. How cost efficient was the ILO's work in terms of resource expenditure and allocation of financial resources to deliver planned results in Central America?

This assessment uses data from 2020–2024; however, comparisons between resource use and reported P&B Outcomes were made for 2020–2023, which defines the actual timeframe of analysis. Additionally, the efficiency analysis is based on the number of results reported per P&B Outcome in relation to associated budgets and expenditures. Nevertheless, this level of analysis does not consider the impact or relative importance of each result.

EFFICIENCY IN DELIVERING P&B OUTCOMES

During the 2020–23 period, the **subregion reported an average fund utilization rate of 76%, with heterogeneous efficiency across its P&B Outcomes**. According to the financial ILO records,¹¹⁶ over US\$112.8 million was allocated to the Central America subregion, with expenses over US\$85.4 million through 367 P&B Outcomes results achieved. As expected, efforts in Protection at work for all (Outcome 6), the Outcome with the most related results for the subregion, comprise the highest use of financial resources, accounting for 25 per cent of the total expenses (Figure 14), especially in achieving the results of “Increased Capacity of Members for the Realization of a Safe and Healthy Working Environment” (Output 6.1) and “Increased Capacity of Member States to Develop Fair and Effective Labour Migration Frameworks” (Output 6.4).

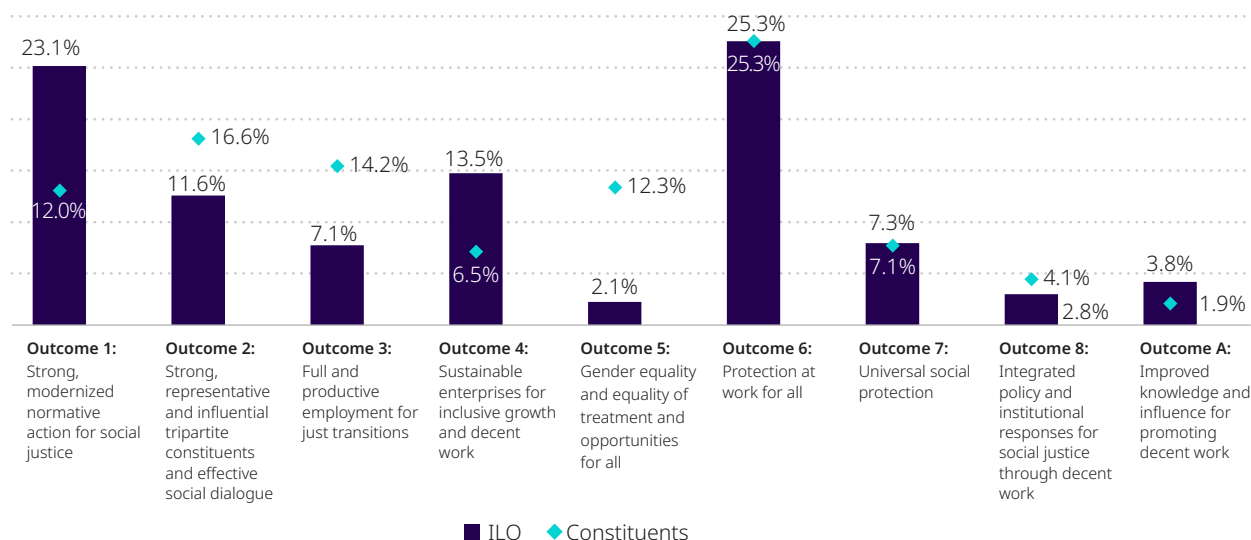
However, efforts in Strong, Modernized Normative Action for Social Justice (Outcome 1) were the costliest Outcome, consuming over 23% of the subregion's total expenditures to achieve only 12% of its overall decent work results. This level of financial effort was due to spending on increasing the capacity of constituents, partners, and stakeholders to respect, promote, and realize fundamental principles and rights at work (Output 1.4), which accounted for more than 85% of the total Outcome expenses. Conversely, progress on gender equity (Outcome 5) demonstrated greater efficiency in results relative to the financial resources used, as this area accounted for 12% of the overall results with only 2% of the financial resources. Employment for Just Transitions (Outcome 3) and Social

¹¹⁵ Further information is available in the Final Evaluation of the IHSS Project (HND/21/02/HND) [i-eval Discovery](#)

¹¹⁶ ILO Finance Department 2020-2024; ILO Outcome-Base Work Planning Dashboard database.

Dialogue (Outcome 2) were other areas where resource use was efficient, considering the results achieved¹¹⁷.

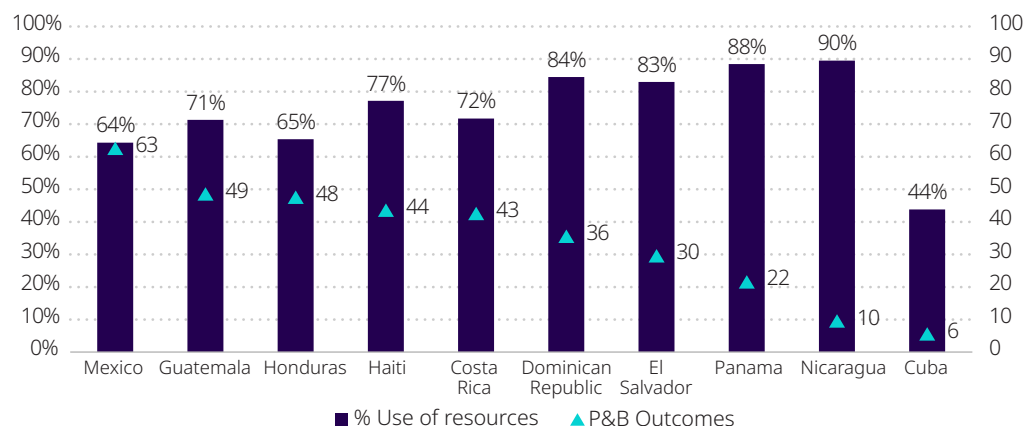
FIGURE 11. RATIO OF EXPENSES AND P&B OUTCOME RESULTS 2020-2023



Source: Finance Department 2020-2024; ILO Outcome-Base Work Planning Dashboard database; ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard

All ten countries in the subregion reported fund utilization rates below their allocation budget, with financial execution for the 2020–2023 period ranging from 44% (Cuba) to 90% (Nicaragua), and, as mentioned earlier, an average utilization rate of 76% across all countries. As shown in Figure 12, when comparing budget execution rates (budgeted amounts relative to executed amounts) against reported Decent Work Outcomes, Mexico managed the use of financial resources more efficiently with its reported levels of results, since the use of its resources was below the subregional average (64% and 63 results); while other countries, such as Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras recorded a high level of resources use with lower number of results, compared to the subregional average, even with a great proportion of results in Outcomes 1 and 6 (the costliest ones). On the contrary, countries such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama registered a high fund utilization rate, but a reported level of CPO results below the subregional average (30, 10, and 22 results).

FIGURE 12. FUND UTILIZATION RATES AND P&B OUTCOME RESULTS PER COUNTRY 2020-2024 (USD MM)



Source: Finance Department 2020-2024; ILO Outcome-Base Work Planning Dashboard database; ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard

¹¹⁷ It is important to note that, according to information provided by ILO staff, normative outcome (O1) tend to be more costly, multi-year in nature, and with fewer results (e.g., legal reforms, promotion of standards). This implies that it requires greater resources compared to other outcomes.

EFFICIENCY IN DELIVERING PROJECT RESULTS

At the project level, the HLE Synthesis Review identified that two out of every five evaluated projects fall within a negative spectrum of efficiency assessment. The projects shared some common limitations, including resource constraints, insufficient financial and human resources, especially in the Dominican Republic and Haiti (e.g., overloaded human resources which lacked administrative support), insufficient planning timelines for projects execution (with extensions requested), as well as lack of gender-responsive budgeting, strategies, results, products, or budgets that addressed the vulnerability of girls, young women and child labour.¹¹⁸

Among the sample projects with available results data, the “Promoviendo empleos cada vez mas verdes” project in Mexico (MEX/23/01/RBS) reported a fund utilization rate of 99.6% with an allocation budget of US\$300,000 and a final expenditure of US\$298,754.74. The level of compliance with the results reported in the final report of this intervention was 75%, with no record of additional resource use, indicating a moderate level of cost-effectiveness (unlike the high level of cost-efficiency reported).¹¹⁹ The final evaluation of the project “Actuarial Valuation of the Three Insurance Regimes of the Honduran Social Security Institute (IHSS): Social Security Insurance Regime; Health Care Insurance Regime; and Occupational Risk Insurance Regime” in Honduras (HND/21/02/HND) concluded that the project was highly efficient, what was planned was sufficient, it extended the time, it made the most of the resources, it obtained other important resources (€300,000 from the European Union), it efficiently managed the additional resources, and it developed new studies and recommendations.¹²⁰ The project “Promoting care policies and services to improve access to decent employment for women in two rural departments in Honduras” (HND/23/01/RBS) in Honduras had an allocated budget of US\$300,000, but the end-of-intervention report does not provide information regarding expenditures. However, a delay of five months was reported, affecting the temporal-efficiency of the resources.¹²¹

In this regard, the evaluation identified that efficiency levels varied across the projects reviewed, with records of moderate overall efficiency, both in the use of financial resources to achieve results and in the use of time records, with the extension of the initially planned deadlines. This finding is in line with the results of moderate overall efficiency for the higher levels.

PERCEPTION OF THE ADEQUACY OF FINANCIAL RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Several internal (ILO specialists and CO staff) and external informants (government officials) expressed concerns about the adequacy of financial resources to carry out the organization's actions. Some informants interviewed mentioned financial constraints from technical areas, as well as a lack of budget allocations for support functions (such as those dedicated to interagency work), beyond the resources allocated to project implementation. Overall, although informants appreciate efforts to adapt resources to emerging needs and recognize technical capacity, the perception is that resource allocation is not always sufficient or properly structured to achieve the desired results, especially due to a lack of strategic planning, stable funding, and enough personnel. This same perception was identified as a key factor hindering the DW progress (Q8), as well as a major issue for human resource adequacy (Q15).

Among the ILO officials the survey shows a more positive perception than constituents on the adequacy and efficiency of the available resources. The survey indicates broad agreement on the adequacy of financial resources across the ILO staff (44% ranked as “Very Adequate” and 39% as “Adequate”). However, rankings diverged on the adequacy and efficiency of half of the constituents that indicated their perception of the adequacy and efficiency of the Organization's financial resources was “somewhat adequate” (21%), “somewhat inadequate” (5%) and “inadequate” (11%).

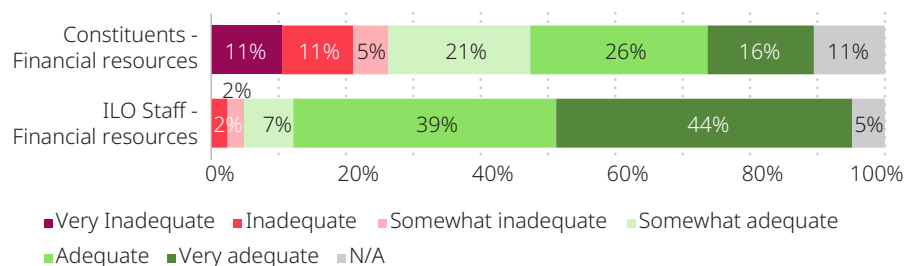
118 Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024). pages 50-51.

119 ILO (2024). Final report of the RBSA funded project Promover: Promoviendo empleos cada vez mas verdes.

120 ILO (2025). Independent Final Evaluation Project Actuarial Valuation of the Three Insurance Regimes of the Honduran Social Security Institute (IHSS): Social Security Insurance Regime; Health Care Insurance Regime; and Occupational Risk Insurance Regime [i-eval Discovery](#).

121 ILO (2025). End of intervention Report. Promoting care policies and services to improve access to decent employment for women in two rural departments in Honduras.

FIGURE 13. PERCEPTION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES' ADEQUACY AND EFFICIENCY IN ADVANCING THE DW AGENDA



Source: Survey Constituent and ILO staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

EQ14. To what extent has ILO leveraged partnerships (with constituents, national and regional institutions, including IFIs, UN agencies, development agencies, and regional bodies) to optimize efficiencies?

The ILO's ability to establish and leverage strategic partnerships is a key factor in the effectiveness of its work. In a complex and dynamic international environment, collaboration with its constituents, national and regional institutions, IFIs, UN system agencies, development partners, and regional entities is essential to maximizing the impact of its interventions. This evaluation question seeks to assess the extent to which the ILO has succeeded in mobilizing and coordinating such collaborative efforts to enhance implementation efficiency, capitalize on synergies, avoid duplication, and leverage complementary resources and capacities.

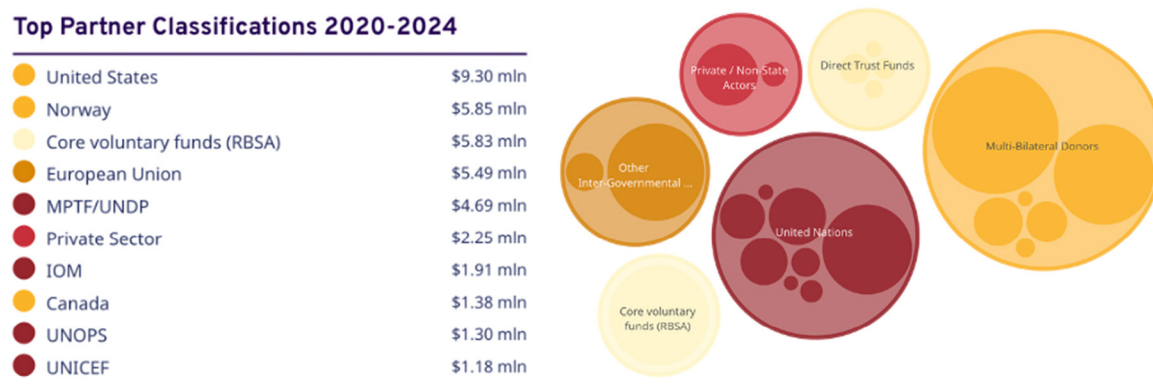
LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS AT THE SUBREGIONAL LEVEL

At the subregional level, leveraging partnerships and collaborating with counterparts was identified as a key factor for achieving results (as noted in the findings for Question 8). During the analysis period (2020–2024), the ILO implemented a wide range of international cooperation initiatives by building on alliances with various actors at different levels, from securing funding to developing joint strategies. This was especially important in response to regional, subregional, and national agreements (as referenced in Question 4).

From a **financial perspective**, it was found that a significant portion of allied resources during this period came from **multi-bilateral donors** (41%), with the United States (21%) and Norway (13%) standing out as the primary funders in the subregion. Specifically, in the case of the U.S., this partner largely financed the initiatives of the Dominican Republic (70% of that country's partner budget) and Haiti (18% of that country's partner budget); Canada funded 24% of Panama's initiatives. These donors focused on supporting efforts to Normative Action for Social Justice (Outcome 1), especially strengthening the capacities of constituents, partners, and other stakeholders on rights at work (Output 1.4), and to employment creation, through Sustainable Enterprises (Outcome 4), by increasing support for enterprises to achieve decent work and improve productivity (Output 4.3).¹²² Other key partners in the subregion included Canada, Sweden, Luxembourg, and Spain, with support for Protection at Work (Outcome 6), especially via the development of fair and effective labour migration frameworks (Output 6.4) and efforts in Gender Equality (Outcome 5).

¹²² ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard. Available at: <https://webapps.ilo.org/DevelopmentCooperationDashboard/#a66czv>

FIGURE 14. TOP PARTNERS CLASSIFICATIONS FOR THE SUBREGION 2020-2024



Source: ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard

The **United Nations system** was also a key partner during this period, accounting for 23% of cooperation, mainly supported by IOM UNDP, UNOPS, and UNICEF to Promote Workplace Protection for All (Outcome 7) and to boost Member States' capacities to develop inclusive, sustainable, and resilient skills and lifelong learning systems (Output 3.2).

Other intergovernmental organizations, such as the **European Union** (14%) and the **Core Voluntary Funds, RBSA** (13%), provided strategic resources for progress in the subregion, especially for efforts in labour migration initiatives (Output 6.4), Workplace Protection (Outcome 7), Employment for Just Transitions (Outcome 3), and Social Justice (Outcome 1).

The **private sector** (5%) and Direct Trust Funds (3%) from countries within the subregion (such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama) also contributed to funding regional initiatives during 2020–2024. The private sector contributed especially in efforts towards effective Social Dialogue (Outcome 2) and Protection for All (Outcome 6) by enhancing the institutional capacity of labour administrations (Outcome 2.4) and increasing Members' capacity to ensure a safe and healthy working environment (Outcome 6.1). Meanwhile, Direct Trust Funds mainly supported results related to Protection for all (Outcome 6).

At the **operational level**, the interventions analysed in the Synthesis Review showed that ILO partnerships significantly contributed to advancing the Decent Work Agenda more effectively. Tripartite governance had a positive impact on the agenda in 54% of evaluated projects by fostering dialogue, building capacity, strengthening normative frameworks, and increasing stakeholder ownership. Moreover, alliances with public and private actors facilitated implementation at the local level in 82% of projects, mainly through coordinated, context-specific, and comprehensive approaches. Additionally, 82% of projects engaged in partial collaboration with international and UN actors, which greatly enhanced outcomes by mobilizing the technical expertise and resources of multiple institutions.¹²³

In the projects observed in the case-study countries (Costa Rica, Honduras, and Mexico), partner contributions were also evident in various ways. For example, in the project "Fair Recruitment in Central America: strengthening institutional capacities for the socioeconomic integration of migrants and refugees" (CRI/19/59/UND) a proposal for developing a Labour Market Information System (LMIS) was prepared in collaboration with institutions such as the Ministry of Labour, Migration Institute, Vocational Training Institute (VTI), the National Institute of Statistics, and the University of Costa Rica. The results reflected the competencies and roles of each institution in generating statistical data and producing administrative records related to the labour market and migration.¹²⁴

The inclusion of strategic actors such as universities was also observed in the project "Promover: Promoting Greener Jobs" in Mexico (MEX23/01/RBS). Institutions such as the Autonomous

¹²³ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024). page 43.

¹²⁴ ILO (2025). IRCC Migration Cooperation and Engagement Team (MCET). Narrative report.

University of San Luis Potosí, the University of Central Mexico (San Luis Potosí campus), the Metropolitan Technological University of San Luis Potosí, and the TecMilenio University (San Luis Potosí campus) were identified during the project's implementation as strategic partners in ensuring the local presence of the initiative, the formalization of training processes, and access to the beneficiary population.¹²⁵

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

At the **country level**, some partners played a more critical role in financing ILO activities,¹²⁶ and the areas to which these resources were directed varied by country and Outcome.¹²⁷

- ▶ In Mexico, for example, most support from partners came from the European Union (49%) and UN agencies (21%), such as UNDP and UNHCR. This support was especially important for results related to a fair and effective labour migration framework (Output 6.4) and Protection for All (Outcome 8). In this period (2020–2024), support from the U.S. accounted for 5% of the total partner contributions to Mexico.
- ▶ In Costa Rica, as in Mexico, most allied resources came from UN agencies (40%) and the European Union (3%) but were mainly directed toward efforts on Sustainable Enterprises (Outcome 4) and effective labour migration frameworks (Output 6.4). Costa Rica did not report a budget from the U.S. for the period.
- ▶ In Honduras, financial support was mainly provided by the European Union, focusing on outputs such as increasing the capacity of constituents, partners, and stakeholders to respect, promote, and realize fundamental principles and rights at work (Output 1.4), engaging in normative action (Output 1.3), and ratifying international labour standards (Output 1.1). The support was funded by the U.S., which accounted for 8% of the total budget from its partners for Costa Rica.

Among various stakeholders interviewed (including ILO staff, constituents, UN agencies, and donors), **partnerships were generally perceived as relevant and potentially effective**, particularly due to technical complementarity and synergy. For example, in Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama, the combination of capacities, particularly with partners such as other UN agencies, governments and technical institutions (e.g., universities), contributed to more effective and far-reaching actions. This was the case, for instance, with a comprehensive approach to improving job security for rural workers in agricultural production chains, in collaboration with FAO and government institutions such as the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) and the Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER) in Mexico (MEX/20/05/USA).

Effective coordination, commitment of ILO technical staff, and inclusive, formal, and sustained mechanisms for partner participation were also valued. Particularly in Honduras and Mexico, constituents highly valued the technical teams' responsiveness, the quality of their involvement, their commitment to accurate and fluid communication, as well as respect for thematic lines and the roles of each stakeholder.



The strategic alliances formed by the ILO have proven to be effective tools for speeding up implementation and fostering mutual learning. These partnerships have allowed us to tackle challenges that would have been more complicated or impossible to solve alone – especially in the area of decent work. However, in many cases, these partnerships have been sporadic and lacked a consistent strategy. For example, opportunities for collaboration with the European Union have not developed into structured cooperation, reflecting a lack of more stable integration mechanisms... (ILO staff, CO).

¹²⁵ ILO (2024) Informe Final del proyecto RBSA Promover: Promoviendo empleos cada vez + verdes 109049 – MEX23/01/RBS

¹²⁶ ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard.

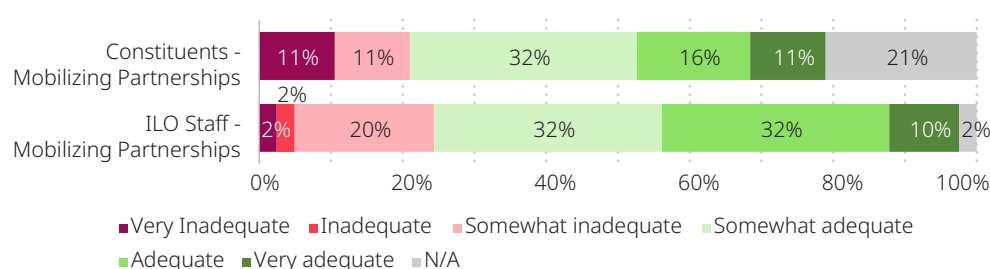
¹²⁷ ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard.

Informants (e.g., ILO staff, UN agencies, Constituents) also identified **areas for improvement** regarding leveraging partnerships. One such area involves establishing the institutionalization of joint efforts to support sustained partnerships over time and the development of long-term strategies (particularly with non-UN partners such as universities, NGOs, local actors). Partnerships during the 2020–2024 period (and even currently) were often project-specific and not integrated into a broader long-term collaboration strategy (for instance, with the European Union). Such a strategy would ideally include more structured arrangements, such as joint planning frameworks, shared goals, and true agenda alignment among partners.

ILO staff and other UN agencies' informants also identified **limited monitoring systems and mechanisms for capturing and organizing lessons learned** as factors that restrict the reach and effectiveness of joint initiatives, especially in collaborations with other UN agencies and stakeholders. A lack of understanding about what worked or didn't work in each collaboration, combined with the absence of follow-up after a project ends to replicate and expand successful experiences and partnership models, were seen as challenges by ILO staff and other UN agencies informants that hinder the transformative potential of these partnerships.

Finally, survey respondents confirmed the **general perception that strategic partnerships** are "somewhat adequate", "adequate" and "very adequate" for achieving results, both among constituents and ILO staff. However, some informants, especially constituents, expressed negative views and pointed out areas where this strategy could be improved.

FIGURE 15. PERCEPTION OF MOBILIZING PARTNERS' ADEQUACY TO ADVANCE THE DW AGENDA



Source: Survey Constituent and ILO staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

EQ15. Were the allocations of human resources realistic and sufficient to deliver planned results and to integrate a decent work agenda in the subregion?

The analysis of the allocation and use of human resources to achieve results and to integrate a decent work agenda in the subregion was carried out with the information available in the ILO Outcome-based Workplan (OBW) dashboard for available biennia (2022–2023 and 2024–2025),¹²⁸ which logs time allocations of ILO Regular Budget specialists to active CPOs and Global Products (GLOs).¹²⁹ As mentioned in the OBW Dashboard User Manual, Regular Budget resources are not typically linked to the results/outputs of the CPOs and P&B Outcomes; therefore, this information serves only as a proxy for Regular Budget allocation. They provide only a partial view of the reality within the Organization and for the period 2020–2024 Regular Budget (Regular Budget Technical Cooperation -RBTC- and Regular Budget Supplementary Account -RBSA) represented around 20 per cent of the total expenses for the subregion.¹³⁰

ALLOCATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES TOWARDS P&B OUTCOMES

Based on the records previously mentioned, it was possible to approximately identify that, regarding the relationship between human resource allocation and P&B Outcomes, a weak correlation was identified between reported working hours and the results achieved in terms of P&B Outcomes. In other words, higher results under P&B Outcomes were not necessarily linked

¹²⁸ ILO Outcome Work Planning Dashboard. Available in <https://webapps.ilo.org/obwdashboard/#home>

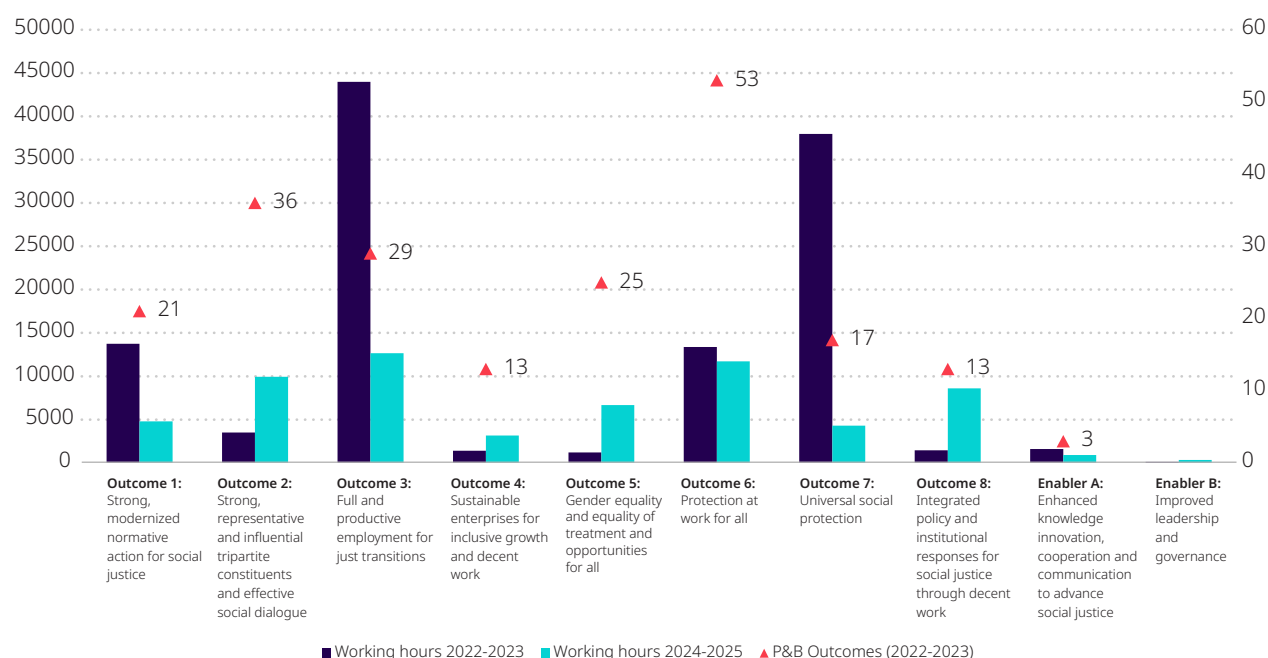
¹²⁹ ILO (2024). The OBW dashboard at a glance: Information note for users. Available in https://webapps.ilo.org/obwdashboard/user_manual.pdf.

¹³⁰ Ibidem.

to a greater number of working hours invested to achieve them. To confirm this relationship, a Pearson correlation was conducted, yielding a coefficient of 0.18. This result indicates a weak positive correlation between the number of results reported under P&B Outcomes and working hours, with a slight upward trend that was not statistically significant.¹³¹

For example, certain outputs like those reported under Protection for all (Outcome 6), which had the highest number of reported results, did not match the highest number of working hours (Figure 16). A similar trend was seen in outputs related to Employment for Just Transition (Outcome 2), Gender Equality (Outcome 5), and Social Dialogue (Outcome 2). On the other hand, efforts under Employment for Just Transitions (Outcome 3) and Universal Social Protection (Outcome 7). These outcomes used a big share of human resources funded by Regular Budget but showed only moderate results compared to other thematic areas.

FIGURE 16. WORKING HOURS AND P&B OUTCOMES, 2022-2024



Source: Evaluation team with data from Outcome Work Planning Dashboard (OWP) and ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard.

ALLOCATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES TOWARDS P&B OUTCOMES

When analysing the deployment of human resources financed by Regular Budget, specifically in relation to **P&B Outcomes achieved**, the 2022–2024 period highlights strong specialist support for the following Outputs:

- ▶ **Output 1.1** (2024–2025 biennium): Increasing Institutional Capacity of Employer and Business Membership Organizations to be Strong, Independent, and Representative (7% over the total working hours reported);
- ▶ **Output 1.2** (2024–2025 biennium): Increasing Institutional, Technical, Representational, and Policy Impact Capacities of Workers' Organizations (6% over the total working hours reported); and
- ▶ **Output 7.5** (2022–2023 biennium): Increased Capacity of Member States to Strengthen Social Protection Systems and Ensure Sustainable and Adequate Financing and Sound Governance (7% over the total working hours reported).

¹³¹ The magnitude of a Person coefficient can be interpreted as follows: between 0.00 and ± 0.10 indicates an insignificant or very weak correlation; ± 0.10 to ± 0.30 is considered weak; ± 0.30 to ± 0.50 , moderate; ± 0.50 to ± 0.70 , high; and ± 0.70 to ± 1.00 , very high.

According to these records, these outputs were identified as requiring higher Regular Budget human resources input than others, as shown by the staff time allocation. In each biennium, these outputs logged more hours than the average for each output during that period (6-7% over an average of 2%). The other Outputs, while utilizing a significant number of work hours, did not record as many hours as the three previous mentioned. For instance, the combined records of all the outputs for Employment for Just Transitions efforts (Outcome 3) ranked it as one of the outcomes with the highest use of personnel funded by regular budget (21% over the total). However, within its outputs, no individual actions exceeded the average working hours recorded (with a range of 0 to 3%).

However, despite the technical capacity of the staff and actual deployments, human resources constraints hampered the effective implementation of many projects and DW initiatives in the subregion. Specifically, the Synthesis Review identified that many of the sampled evaluated projects in the subregion demonstrated low levels of efficiency, partly due to inadequate staffing and overburdened personnel operating without sufficient administrative support, which led to perceptions of high bureaucracy and system overload.¹³²

The results of the desk review show that in Mexico, within the sampled project titled “Improving workers’ occupational safety and health in the chili pepper and tomato supply chains, with a focus in Jalisco” (MEX/20/05/USA), the absence of a regional OSH specialist, along with limited support from the VZF Secretariat, LABADMIN/OSH, and specialists from the ILO Bureau for Employers’ Activities (ACT/EMP) and Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV), severely restricted the project’s access to timely and comprehensive technical assistance.¹³³

ADEQUACY OF HUMAN RESOURCES AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

Throughout interviews with ILO staff and constituents, a common perception of insufficient human resources was consistently noted. Most frequently cited issues included:

- ▶ **Insufficient staffing levels and work overload:** In several cases, a single specialist was responsible for providing assistance to as many as ten countries, significantly limiting the capacity to effectively address critical areas such as gender and formalization. Furthermore, it was reported that in some instances, staff with insufficient technical expertise were assigned to highly specialized roles, reducing the quality of project implementation. This situation was compounded by duplicated functions and limited staff availability, leading to system saturation at both national and subregional levels. As a result, roles such as project coordinators frequently had to assume specialist responsibilities to fill existing gaps.
- ▶ **Budget cuts and high staff turnover, including in leadership, technical specialists, and national officer roles.** For instance, some offices experienced long vacancies in key technical positions, such as norms specialist, which affected continuity and responsiveness, or some skilled positions that remained unfilled for extended periods, likely hindering the efficient use of human and technical resources.
- ▶ **Absence of a regional or subregional human resources talent strategy:** The current system does not enable efficient team management or strategic staff allocation according to subregional needs. This perception is linked to the fact that the allocation of additional human resources did not respond to a regional or subregional human resources talent strategy. Furthermore, funding for technical positions depends largely on projects rather than on regular budget, which has generated perceptions of instability.

¹³² Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024)

¹³³ ILO (2024). Mid-Term Evaluation. Improving workers’ occupational safety and health in the chili pepper and tomato supply chains, with a focus in Jalisco – A Vision Zero Fund Project.

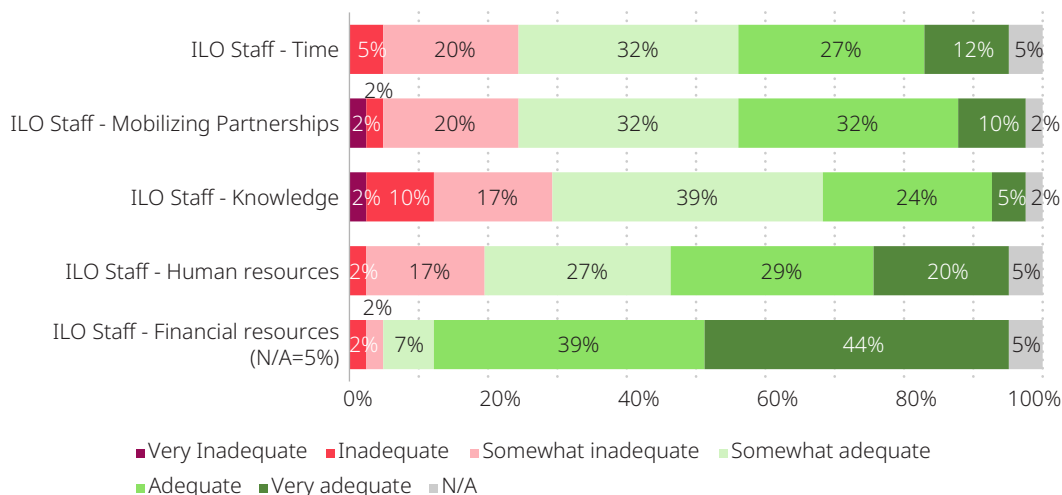
“Managing ILO specialists in Central America is complicated due to their geographical spread. Specialists are based in Mexico, San Jose, Lima (for gender), and Geneva, which makes communication and coordination more difficult. The subregion covers 10 countries, and although the need for technical support is high, resources are limited, requiring a balance between centralization and decentralization. For example, countries like Mexico and Cuba have high demand but limited specialist coverage. There isn’t always a dedicated regional specialist for each topic, and sometimes one specialist covers the entire region, as is the case for gender”. (ILO staff, ROLAC).

This assessment also includes the DWCP initiatives, as it is believed that although there is willingness at the country level to implement them, doing so requires resources (including human resources) that are not guaranteed, and current capacities in all countries of the subregion to provide these resources are lacking, since existing personnel is already overburdened.

...much is already being done in this direction without this programme (DWCP), and implementing it requires additional resources for which there is no guarantee that they will be provided – neither financial resources, nor time and most importantly, nor personnel. Furthermore, they are highly political tools that require a lot of time... (ILO staff, CO).

Despite challenges related to staff availability and sufficiency, **external informants acknowledged the high quality of ILO human resources**, and **internal staff emphasized efforts to prioritize and adapt their work based on available resources**. In addition to the interviews, these perceptions were reflected in survey responses: most constituents rated the adequacy and knowledge of ILO teams as “very adequate” or “adequate,” while ILO staff generally viewed adequacy and technical knowledge as “somewhat adequate,” acknowledging room for further improvement in staff quality.

FIGURE 17. PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE ADEQUACY AND KNOWLEDGE TO ADVANCE THE DECENT WORK AGENDA



Source: Survey Constituent and ILO's staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

Interviews and survey findings reveal mixed perceptions regarding the adequacy of human resources, with noticeable differences across organizational levels. While the **survey reflects a generally positive view of staffing sufficiency to achieve Decent Work Outcomes, ILO staff expressed more critical views, particularly concerning staff knowledge.** Most interviewees perceived a shortage of specialized personnel. Furthermore, the reported working hours of ILO specialists funded through regular budgets indicate a high demand for human resources, particularly in areas such as social protection and employment for just transitions. This suggests that the higher number of reported results in certain thematic areas may not reflect lower demand in others, but rather a lack of specialized staff available to report on those areas.

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

eQ16. To what extent has the ILO's work in Central America contributed to measurable and perceived improvements in decent work conditions for employers and workers, particularly among vulnerable groups such as youth, women, labour migrants, ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples?

To address the question of the extent to which the ILO's work in Central America has contributed to measurable and perceived improvements in decent work conditions – particularly among vulnerable groups such as youth, women, migrant workers, ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples – the evaluation relied on multiple sources of information. First, the team examined the database of reported results under the CPOs for the 2020–2023 period. This timeframe was selected because, as of 2024, data is only available on planned actions, not on results achieved. From this dataset, the evaluation identified Outcomes linked to policy, legal, and institutional reform measures (normative work), classified according to the P&B Outcomes. Second, qualitative interviews were analysed using the Outcome Harvesting methodology, which enabled the team to assess the ILO's contributions beyond the normative framework. This analysis was structured by country and by area of technical specialization across the region, providing a broader perspective on the Organization's influence. Finally, responses from the questionnaire administered to ILO staff and constituents were incorporated. This helped complement and cross-validate the findings with the perceptions of key stakeholders directly involved in implementing and monitoring ILO initiatives in the region.

The analysis is based on actions adopted and implemented by each P&B Outcome from 2020 to 2023, using the ILO's classification of normative work as a reference. It is structured in two sections, corresponding to different points along the ILO's normative continuum¹³⁴.

The first section focuses on the “central” end of the continuum, where ILS developed, integrated, and implemented within legal and institutional frameworks, are explicitly fundamental to the intervention. At this level, standards related to fundamental rights, such as non-discrimination and freedom of association, are essential and directly applied.

The second section addresses the “mid-range” or “peripheral” levels, where ILS remain present, although their link to the intervention may not be explicitly articulated. Nevertheless, these continue to shape the design and implementation of the intervention.

¹³⁴ According to the ILO's Guidance Note 3.2: Adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate (2020), “the original – and an ongoing – purpose of the ILO is developing, promoting the integration and implementation of labour standards.” The development of standards entails creating international labour standards – legally binding conventions and non-binding recommendations – focused on fundamental rights such as freedom from forced and child labour, non-discrimination, freedom of association, and collective bargaining. The integration of standards refers to the incorporation of these norms into national legal and institutional frameworks, recognizing that many ILO standards allow for flexible interpretation based on context. Finally, implementation of standards involves translating these integrated norms into actual practice, ensuring their application in everyday working conditions and labour relations. This work operates along what is known as a “normative continuum,” recognizing that normative elements are present to varying degrees across all its interventions. At the central end of the spectrum, norms are explicitly fundamental to the intervention. In the mid-range, norms support the initiative but may not be explicitly mentioned. Peripheral cases involve weaker but still evident normative connections. Finally, in extreme cases, normative links are not clearly stated, yet they remain implicitly involved in the design or impact of the intervention

This normative orientation is further reinforced in the ILO P&B 2024–2025, which highlights that “in supporting the design and implementation of comprehensive policy frameworks, particular attention will be given to pursuing a whole-of-government approach with the close involvement of social partners, and to promoting policies and programmes that address inequalities and target groups in vulnerable situations, including those living in rural areas and fragile settings.”¹³⁵

CONTRIBUTION TO NORMATIVE WORK

The analysis of the normative work results achieved between 2020 and 2023 for each of P&B Outcome shows the development, integration and implementation of norms, policies, conventions, reforms, roadmaps, protocols, strategies, and plans. The results are analysed by P&B Outcome and by country for those countries with relevant data¹³⁶ to assess the likelihood of impact of each, as presented in the table below.

TABLE 16. NUMBER OF NORMATIVE WORK ACTIONS BY P&B OUTCOMES FOR EACH COUNTRY

Countries	Outcome 1: Strong, modernized normative action for social justice	Outcome 2: Strong, representative & influential tripartite constituents & effective social dialogue	Outcome 3: Full and productive employment for just transitions	Outcome 4: Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work	Outcome 5: Gender equality and equality of treatment and opportunities for all	Outcome 6: Protection at work for all	Outcome 7: Universal social protection	Outcome 8: Integrated policy and institutional responses for social justice	Total
Costa Rica	2	1	4	1	3	4	1	1	17
Cuba	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dominican Republic	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	4
El Salvador	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Guatemala	1	1	1	0	1	4	0	0	8
Haiti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Honduras	1	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	6
Mexico	3	0	1	2	1	4	1	2	14
Nicaragua	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Panama	1	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	8
Subregional	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total general	11	6	8	6	8	16	3	3	61

Source: Evaluation Team

The number of normative work actions by P&B Outcome is presented below, starting with those Outcomes that have reported the highest number of actions in this area.

Outcome 6 (Protection at Work for All) has reported the highest number of normative work actions, with 16 out of 61 for the subregion. Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico are the countries with the highest number of actions (4 each), accounting for 75% of the total.

In the area of domestic work, an inter-institutional Domestic Work Commission was implemented in Costa Rica in 2021 (comprising INAMU, MTSS, CCSS, and Association of Domestic Workers of Costa Rica -ASTRADOMES), and in 2023, the Inter-institutional Agenda on Paid Domestic Work 2023–2026¹³⁷ was adopted. This agenda commits eight public institutions to guarantee labour rights, ensure inspections, develop contractual tools, and promote tripartite dialogue. It also includes an employability strategy for migrants and refugees, developed in collaboration with UCCAEP, which has published a guide to support their labour market inclusion. Also, in September 2021, a tripartite impact assessment of COVID-19 on informal employment and enterprises was confirmed. The findings guided the updated implementation plans of the National Strategy for the Transition to the Formal Economy (ENTEF). These plans now include specific short- and medium-term actions to

¹³⁵ P&B Outcomes 2024–2025, page 37.

¹³⁶ The absence of information for **Haiti** and **Nicaragua** is due to the lack of reported actions with a normative component, while in the cases of **Cuba**, **El Salvador**, and at the **subregional level**, only a very limited number of measures have been reported. As a result, these countries were excluded when selecting those with a higher number of illustrative examples.

¹³⁷ Available at: www.mtss.go.cr/temas-laborales/trabajo%20domestico/agenda_td_costarica.pdf.

address formalization challenges and improve the resilience of informal employment in a post-pandemic economic recovery.

Guatemala strengthened normative and institutional frameworks for labour migration through multiple initiatives. In 2021, the Ministry of Labour adopted the “Labour Mobility Program (Programa de Trabajo Temporal en el Extranjero)”, aligned with ILS and focused on regular, orderly, and safe migration. This was followed in 2022 by a renewed labour mobility strategy, embedded in national planning and budget. The 2023 National Migration Policy, developed through multi-stakeholder consultations, emphasized migrant rights, reintegration, and decent work. CAMAGRO and Grepalma advanced business due diligence on human rights and fair recruitment. Meanwhile, the Movimiento de Trabajadores Campesinos (MTC) of San Marcos implemented training and legal support programs for indigenous and rural migrant workers along the Guatemala–Mexico corridor, promoting equitable labour practices and social inclusion.

In Mexico, legislative reforms and legal instruments have led to the enactment of a new law on the rights of migrant workers in Baja California in 2020, under the GLO/15/69/EUR Project. This legislation aligned with ILO Conventions 97 (Migration for Employment) and 143 (Migrant Workers – Supplementary Provisions). In the area of technical planning for occupational safety and health, in 2022, a tripartite committee in the state of Jalisco validated a plan to improve working conditions in the chili and tomato supply chains. This plan was developed using methodologies from the Vision Zero Fund, reinforcing efforts to enhance labour conditions in specific agricultural sectors.

The OH analysis highlights the Dominican Republic for its experience of the Communities of Care Project. This initiative – funded by the SDG Fund and carried out by the ILO in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA, and UN Women – helped organize and leverage a key opportunity to support vulnerable populations, especially persons with disabilities, older adults, and young children. As a result, the country made a significant advancement in its national care agenda by implementing and establishing a coordinated and sustainable system that exceeded the project’s original goals and provided real benefits to these groups.

Regarding **Outcome 1** (Norms), Mexico (3), followed by Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic (each 2), are the countries that reported the highest number of results, accounting for 63% of all reported results. Under this Outcome, Mexico strengthened normative action for social justice through municipal and national level measures. In 2021, the municipalities of Villa Victoria (State of Mexico) and Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Chiapas) approved mandatory public policies within the framework of their local Intersecretarial Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Working Adolescents of Permitted Age (CITI) to address child labour¹³⁸, with institutional backing from state authorities. At national level, Mexico ratified ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in July 2022, and Protocol P029 on forced labour during the 103rd International Labour Conference in June 2023.

Between 2020 and 2021, Costa Rica developed the 2021–2025 Roadmap for the Elimination of Child Labour, incorporating the Child Labour Risk Identification Model (MIRTI).

In 2023, the Dominican Republic updated and officially launched its national protocol to prevent and eliminate child labour and adopted annual operational plans for national and local committees addressing child labour in 2022 and 2023.

Outcome 5, (Gender equality), has seen the highest number of reported results in Costa Rica (3), followed by Panama (2), together accounting for 63% of all actions. No results were reported in other countries of the subregion.

Between 2020 and 2021, Costa Rica, within the framework of projects CRI/19/50/UND and CRI/18/02/CRI, implemented significant regulatory and institutional reforms aimed at improving job quality, labour rights, and social protection, particularly for caregivers, domestic workers, and vulnerable populations. In March 2021, the National Care Policy 2021–2031¹³⁹ was implemented through Presidential Decree 42878-MP-MDHIS. This policy establishes a progressive care system for older adults and persons with disabilities in situations of dependency. It formally recognizes

138 Within the framework of the projects RLA/18/12/ESP, RLA/18/11/ESP, RLA/19/06/ESP, RLA/19/04/ESP, and GLO/18/29/USA.

139 Available at: www.imas.go.cr/sites/default/files/custom/Politica%20Nacional%20de%20Cuidados%202021-2031_0.pdf.

and dignifies the role of caregivers by improving their working conditions through professional certification, inclusion in public employment platforms, and dissemination of labour rights.

Panama has taken key steps to promote substantive gender equality in the workplace. In August 2023, the Ministry of Labour's National Directorate of Labour Inspection adopted a Gender Inspection Plan to implement the Gender-Sensitive Labour Inspection Manual and Guide, setting concrete targets for inspections in this area. Earlier, in April 2022, the government launched the National Plan for Pay Equity 2022–2025, developed through consultations with social partners, including trade unions, employers, and civil society organizations. The plan outlines 28 specific and cross-cutting measures and supports the enforcement of Executive Decree No. 242 (2021), which amends regulations stemming from the national law on equal opportunities for women and includes mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

For **Outcome 3** (Full and productive employment for just transition), of the 8 reported results, 4 are from Costa Rica, which is leading work in this area. Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico have each reported one result, being the ones of Cuba and Mexico being the most noteworthy.

Costa Rica has advanced inclusive employment policies through institutional reforms and strategic initiatives. In January 2021, the INA's Organic Law was reformed to expand access to training for marginalized groups, enabling scholarships for vulnerable populations attending certified programs from alternative providers. The INA launched a scholarship program in 2021 to fund 20,000 beneficiaries, fostering employability and private sector training offerings. In 2023, the National Employment Council implemented the National Strategy for Employability and Human Talent (ENETH), as one of the Outcomes defined under the RLA/22/03/CAN project. The strategy focuses on several key intervention areas: labour market intelligence, aimed at generating and utilizing data for informed decision-making; population prioritization, which identifies and targets groups facing greater barriers to employment; employment training, designed to develop skills aligned with labour market demands; job placement services, to improve access to decent work opportunities; entrepreneurship, promoting self-employment and business development; and cross-cutting components that integrate gender, youth, and territorial approaches across all areas of intervention.

In 2020, Cuba restructured its Ministry of Labour and Social Security to include the Social and Labour Observatory, aimed at improving data collection and analysis at national and provincial levels. The Observatory supports diagnosing social gaps, vulnerable groups, and employment conditions, informing targeted public and social policies. It established key labour market indicators based on international good practices and the DW agenda.

In October 2021, the Government of Mexico, through the National Institute of Social Economy (INAES), launched a digital extension model aimed at promoting decent work and productivity in the coffee value chain in Chiapas. Implemented via mobile phones, this innovative initiative was developed within a social innovation platform involving key social partners, including CONCAMIN, COPARMEX, AMECAFE, CTM, SADER, INCAFECH, and COOPCAFE. The model enhances the capacity of institutions to provide technical assistance and training to producers and producer groups, even amid challenges posed by COVID-19. It delivers targeted support on topics such as production and quality, decent work and labour conditions, social economy, cooperativism, market access, and financing. Active in Yajalón, Chiapas, the initiative serves coffee producers, cooperatives, and associations, with a focus on addressing the specific needs of women and youth. This approach contributes to inclusive rural development by leveraging digital tools to bridge knowledge gaps, enhance access, and foster capacity building.

Outcome 2 (Strong, representative, and influential tripartite constituents and effective social dialogue) has yielded a total of six reported results in normative work, with Panama reporting three of them, and Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras each reporting one, while the remaining countries reported none.

In October 2022, Panama established a Tripartite Commission with government, union, and employer representatives to create the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (CNSST), replacing the 1997 Technical Committee. After 15 working sessions, a consensus was

reached in May 2023 on an executive decree, which was approved in August and officially established the CNSST in September 2023. In March 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Workforce Development (MITRADEL) also promoted the creation of another Tripartite Commission to draft a bill for establishing the Higher Labour Council, conceived as a consultative body with technical and administrative autonomy. The proposal was finalized in April 2023 and submitted to the Cabinet Council for potential presentation to the National Assembly. Since March 2022, within the PAN/21/50/UND Project, MITRADEL and the Ministry of Health (MINSa) have implemented improvements in the procedures for registering, forming, and operating joint occupational safety and health (OSH) committees, as well as in the digital submission of occupational risk prevention plans through the PANAMA DIGITAL platform. These efforts were supported by a prior qualitative study. Finally, in June 2022, the National Council of Organized Workers (CONATO) updated its strategic union plan on OSH to strengthen union participation in joint committees, promote collective bargaining with an OSH focus, and foster tripartite social dialogue, with an emphasis on key sectors such as agribusiness.

Since 2022, Costa Rican trade union organizations have advanced strategies to strengthen labour organization and inclusion. The CTRN implemented an annual strategic plan to improve internal coordination and support affiliated organizations, including union unity meetings and training on labour rights and ILO monitoring systems. It also published a parliamentary advocacy guide for union training. The Central del Movimiento de Trabajadores/Central Workers' Movement (CMTc) launched a strategy to promote employment formalization and unionization of new labour groups, based on a national diagnosis of informality and international best practices. Additionally, the Inter-Union Migrant Committee adopted a gender-sensitive action plan to organize and represent migrant workers.

Since 2023, Global Unions and Autonomous Trade Union Centres in Guatemala have implemented a union roadmap to support the government's roadmap through the CNTRLs, following a 2022 training process that strengthened their capacity on ILO supervisory mechanisms and tripartite dialogue.

In Honduras in 2022, within the framework of the HND/20/01/RBS Project, the Secretariat of Labour and Social Security (STSS) updated and implemented the National Labour Inspection Strategy (ENIT), integrating the planning of inspection activities and targets across the country's 20 Regional Offices for 2022 and 2023. The process was led by the General Directorate of Labour Inspection, with the participation of labour inspectors and consultations with workers' and employers' organizations. The strategy was based on a socio-labour diagnosis and an assessment of regional capacities to define priorities and office-specific targets.

As of January 2023, within the GTM/21/01/RBS Project, the Global Unions and Autonomous Trade Union Federations in Guatemala developed a Union Roadmap to support the implementation of the Government of Guatemala's Roadmap, promoted by the National Tripartite Commission on Labour Relations and Freedom of Association (CNTRLs) and its subcommittees. From April to December 2022, these organizations participated in capacity-building activities, increasing their knowledge of ILO supervisory bodies, the progress of the Government's Roadmap, and the functions of the CNTRLs. This information was also validated through the OH analysis.

Outcome 4 (Sustainable Enterprises) reported a total of six results out of the 61, with two achieved in Mexico and one in each of the following countries: Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Panama.

In this sense, Mexico, has advanced the promotion of decent work, business, and human rights through public-private collaboration and cooperative development. Since 2020, the SDG 8 Working Group, created under a cooperation agreement between the private sector and the Presidency, has implemented a plan to raise awareness on business and human rights, aligned with the ILO Tripartite Declaration. In 2021, a Business and Human Rights Community of Practice was established, engaging multinational companies from various sectors to exchange good practices and promote due diligence. Simultaneously, INAES strengthened its cooperative promotion programs using ILO's Think COOP and Start COOP methodologies, integrating DW, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. Between May and October 2023, these methodologies were

replicated in 19 states, reaching over 100 young rural entrepreneurs and 300 small producers through initiatives like “Jovenes Construyendo el Futuro y Sembrando Vida” (Youth building the future and seeding life). INAES also became Mexico’s national focal point for the continued development and use of these tools.

Outcome 7 (Universal Social Protection) and **Outcome 8** (Integrated Policy and Institutional Responses for Social Justice through Decent Work) have reported three results each of them. In the case of Outcome 7, a result per country has been reported for Costa Rica, Mexico, and Panama. For Outcome 8, results were reported in Mexico and Costa Rica.

Regarding **Universal social protection**, between 2020 and 2021, Costa Rica’s NGO Bridge to Development Strategy strengthened institutional coordination, especially within the “Bridge to Well-being” axis, by redesigning administrative processes across 18 programs from 10 institutions, leading to better management of social programs. Additionally, this NGO improved alignment between social protection programs and active labour market policies through the National Employment System (SNE), with specific guidelines, procedures, and tools to prioritize and effectively serve people in poverty and social vulnerability. In 2023, Panama strengthened its financial and actuarial governance of social security through joint actions by the Ministry of Labour and Workforce Development (MITRADEL) and the Social Security Fund (CSS), as part of the CSS Social Dialogue. The CSS Board of Directors approved the actuarial valuation of the Disability, Old Age, and Survivors Pension Scheme (IVM), allowing the government to take measures to address the pension system’s financial deficit in the short and medium term. As part of this process, a tripartite dialogue table was established to discuss and advance pension system reform. Additionally, the CSS Board of Directors endorsed the adoption of the ILO Pension Actuarial Model (ILO/PENSION), a tool that offers improved technical input for developing public policies on financial sustainability. This institutional strengthening was further solidified through specialized training on standardized ILO actuarial methodologies, specifically designed for the CSS Actuarial Directorate.

Finally, concerning the **integrated policy and institutional responses**, in Mexico, in 2023, the Government of the State of Coahuila, through the Tripartite Council for Labour Relations (CTRL-C), approved and implemented an Employment Recovery Strategy (ERdE) that includes normative elements promoting gender equality and non-discrimination. The strategy features a plan to encourage the shift to green jobs and emphasizes the formalization of economic units as a key regulatory measure. It also aims to improve the legal and institutional environment to increase women’s participation in the labour market, aligning with principles of DW.

Analysis of reported actions related to normative frameworks shows that, in accordance with the ILO’s analytical framework as outlined in EVAL Guidance Note 3.2, most actions fall into the implementation category. This involves translating integrated norms into practical application, ensuring they are used in daily working conditions and labour relations. Additionally, according to the concept of the normative continuum, these actions are positioned at the core of the spectrum, where norms are explicitly central to the intervention.

CONTRIBUTION TO INITIATIVES AT THE MID-RANGE OR PERIPHERAL OF THE NORMATIVE CONTINUUM

Based on the results of the Outcome Harvesting approach, which drew from interviews and focus group discussions, here are examples of improvements in decent work conditions for vulnerable groups, organized by **type of action** and **sector of intervention**.

Technical assistance: The technical support provided by the ILO helped strengthen key institutional structures in several countries. In the Dominican Republic, this support was crucial in organizing the National Care System, enabling significant progress in service delivery despite a changing political environment. In Guatemala, a digital model was adopted to identify risk areas in coffee plantations, resulting in the creation of community childcare centres during harvest seasons. This effort was coordinated with Anacafé and addressed a specific local need, demonstrating how technical assistance can deliver solutions tailored to the context.

Capacity building: Enhancing technical and institutional skills was another essential element. In Mexico, from March to April 2022, 74 professionals received training in labour conciliation as part of the launch of the new Conciliation Centre in Jalisco. At the national level, under the Bridge to Development Strategy, operational tools and a procedures manual were created for the National Employment System (SNE) to improve services for people living in poverty and vulnerability. In Haiti, project HTI/18/01/RBS surpassed its initial goals through specialized training sessions that reached a larger audience than originally planned.

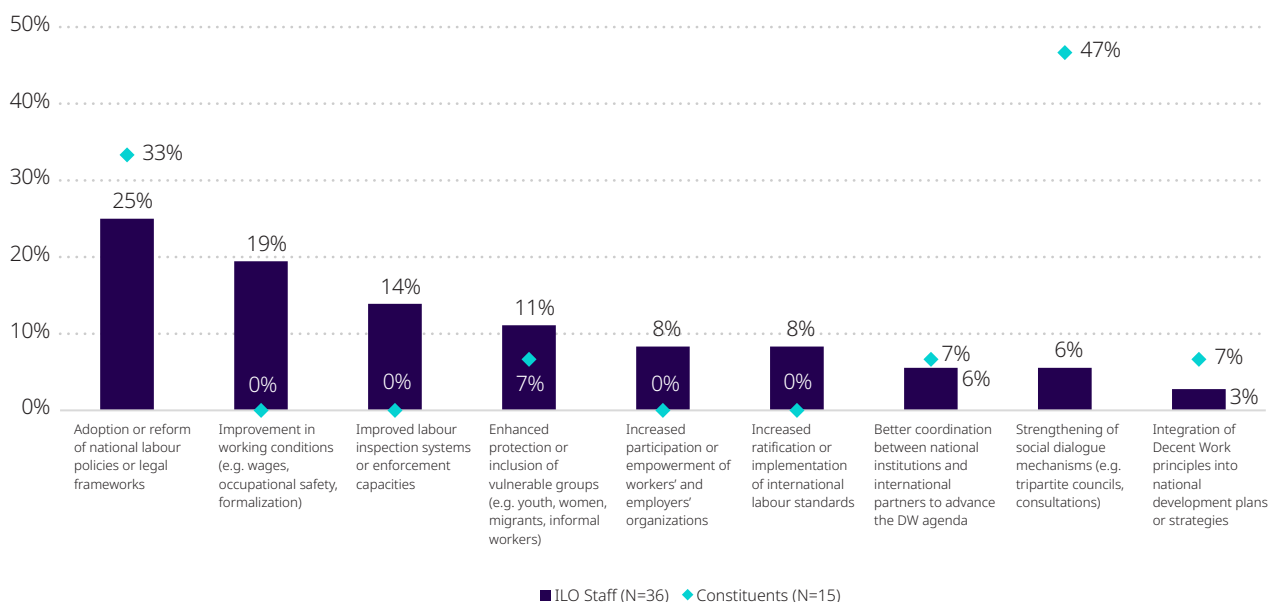
Labour migration: In 2020 and 2021, during the provisional presidencies of Costa Rica and Mexico respectively, the eleven member countries of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) adopted regional action plans on labour migration. These initiatives promoted the application of fair recruitment principles and facilitated dialogue among Ministries of Labour, Foreign Affairs, migration authorities, and business organizations.

Child labour: Between 2020 and 2023, the ILO's efforts on child labour in Central America resulted in both policy advances and tangible improvements for children and their families, supported by strong technical cooperation and regional coordination. A major achievement was the development and implementation of the Child Labour Risk Identification Model (MIRTI), created with ECLAC as part of the Regional Initiative against Child Labour. MIRTI was put into practice in countries like Costa Rica and Guatemala, where its use in coffee-growing regions helped establish childcare services during harvest seasons – demonstrating how evidence-based tools can reduce child labour risks in rural areas. These tools also led to new requests for technical assistance across the region. Meanwhile, child labour gained greater visibility on national policy agendas through actions such as Mexico ratifying ILO Protocol 29 on forced labour, developing national roadmaps under the Alliance 8.7, and sector-specific efforts to combat trafficking in the tourism industry. Additionally, the approval of the Central American Work Plan on Child Labour and the creation of a workplace sexual harassment protocol in Mexico show effective coordination between national efforts and regional technical support. Throughout these initiatives, the ILO played a crucial role as a technical advisor and facilitator of social dialogue, promoting coordinated and ongoing responses to child labour.

Gender component: The ILO has played a vital role in promoting gender equality across the region through various strategies. It has supported care economy policies, fair recruitment practices, and the empowerment of women in leadership roles – such as its partnership with UCCAEP in Costa Rica. In Honduras, the ILO has worked closely with the COHEP Gender Committee and helped develop gender-sensitive materials and knowledge repositories used by member organizations and public agencies. A major breakthrough was incorporating a gender component into national surveys, which identified unpaid child domestic work – especially among girls – as documented in Honduras. This evidence prompted the government to seek ILO technical assistance to develop more targeted policies. Although resource constraints limited further analysis, this milestone marked significant progress in institutional assessments and raising awareness. At the same time, the ILO promoted the formal recognition of domestic workers. In Costa Rica, policies acknowledging this workforce were introduced, while in the Dominican Republic, efforts related to care policies advanced with ILO support. Notably, in Honduras, a Union of Domestic Workers was formed under the Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores de Honduras (CUTH), representing 110,000 workers. The union gained legal recognition and affiliated with the Domestic Workers' Federation – demonstrating tangible progress in gender-sensitive labour inclusion.

This analysis is complemented by the **survey responses** that highlight the most significant progress, as shown in the figure below.

FIGURE 18. CHANGES REFLECTING THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS



Source: Survey Constituents and ILO's staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

The analysis of perceptions among ILO staff and national constituents regarding the most significant advances in promoting the DW Agenda in Central America shows areas of agreement and notable differences. Both groups identified the adoption or reform of national policies and legal frameworks as a key change. According to the survey results, 25% of ILO staff and 33% of constituents consider the adoption or reform of national labour policies or legal frameworks to be highly relevant.

The most noticeable change in perception involves the strengthening of social dialogue mechanisms, which 47% of constituents see as the top achievement, compared to only 6% of ILO staff. This 41-percentage-point gap highlights a major disconnect between what national actors view as key accomplishments and how technical staff assess them. It shows that, for constituents, social dialogue is not just seen as a significant result but also as an essential tool for building consensus, resolving labour conflicts, and legitimizing reforms.

Additionally, different patterns emerge in how each group values other elements of the agenda. ILO staff tend to prioritize technical and institutional achievements, such as improving working conditions (19%) and strengthening of labour inspection capacities (14%). In contrast, constituents adopt a more comprehensive view, emphasizing the inclusion of vulnerable groups, inter-institutional coordination, and the integration of DW principles into national development plans.

In the specific context of Central America – a region characterized by structural weaknesses in labour institutions, high levels of informality, and exclusion – constituents understandably prioritize mechanisms that promote social cohesion and democratic participation. In contrast, ILO staff tend to focus more on technical compliance and normative progress. This divergence highlights the need to better align the technical assistance provided by the ILO with the locally expressed priorities of its counterparts. Therefore, future interventions should more clearly incorporate social dialogue mechanisms as a core component, recognizing their strategic importance for the sustainability of the decent work agenda in the region.

SUSTAINABILITY

eQ17. What is the likelihood that results achieved through ILO interventions in Central America will be sustained, scaled up or replicated by constituents and partners after the phase-out of ILO support, while ensuring that governments, employers and workers maintain their commitment to decent work in the context of economic, social and climate-related challenges?

The ILO places significant emphasis on the long-term sustainability and replicability of its interventions. It embeds this as a core principle throughout its strategic and operational frameworks, especially through the DW Agenda and the Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–2025.¹⁴⁰ This approach prioritizes national ownership, alignment with development priorities, strengthening institutional capacity, and meaningful tripartite engagement. Sustainability is further reinforced in the ILO's P&B and Strategic Policy Frameworks,¹⁴¹ which call for results-based management, inclusive design, and exit strategies that allow for long-term impact. Through capacity development, social dialogue, and partnerships such as South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the ILO promotes interventions that are locally embedded and resilient beyond project cycles.

However, despite these strategic commitments, practical implementation and the achievement of long-term sustainability remain challenging. Although exit strategies are often articulated at the policy level, their concrete design, operationalisation, and systematic follow-up are frequently insufficient. A significant number of projects either lack a clear exit strategy (59%) or only have a partial one (14%), leaving no structured plan to sustain outcomes once project funding ends (as per projects sampled by the evaluation). This gap risks turning promising interventions into isolated efforts, rather than catalysts for lasting systemic change.

Similarly, the institutionalization of project-developed tools and methodologies has often been limited. Even when national partners demonstrate willingness to sustain results, actual continuity is undermined by external factors such as political shifts, high turnover in key government institutions, and constrained national financial resources. This also impacts the ability to mobilize consistent national financial resources, as institutions may possess the technical capacity but lack the necessary funding to continue initiatives independently. As a result, even well-planned interventions risk losing momentum, and long-term transformations in legal frameworks, institutional practices, or the livelihoods of vulnerable populations may not fully materialize without sustained engagement.

In essence, while the ILO lays a robust foundation through policy guidance and capacity-building aimed at lasting impact, the transition to full national ownership and mobilization of domestic resources often faces uneven conditions. Achieving sustainable results requires not only initial planning and capacity development but also ongoing support, dedicated follow-up, and a steadfast commitment of political will.

¹⁴⁰ ILO (2021). Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–2025.

¹⁴¹ ILO (2019). Strategic Policy Framework 2022–2025.

KEY ACHIEVEMENT TOWARD SECURING SUSTAINABILITY

a) Institutionalization of mechanisms¹⁴²

During the period studied (2020–23), a large part of the results in the subregion classified as having a “very high” or “high” likelihood of sustainability were related to **Protection at work for all** Outcome 6 (26%); **Social justice** Outcome 1 (18%) and **Gender equality** Outcome 5 (13%). These involved highly institutionalized results such as the development and formalization of public policies, ratification of conventions, implementation of protocols, and support for reforms at the national level. For example, a policy on the rights of indigenous peoples in Guatemala, promoted by the ILO, was developed, incorporating aspects of Convention 169. Other instruments with high sustainability potential under this pillar included support for approving plans, launching strategies, developing roadmaps, designing systems, and creating institutional methodologies, such as the Labour Migration Information System (SIMLA) in Costa Rica.

Another outcome, with numerous results indicating “very high” or “high” sustainability potential, was **Employment Creation** Outcome 3 (13%), **Sustainable enterprises** Outcome 4 (10%) and **Social Dialogue** Outcome 2 (10%). Structural Outcomes with strong sustainability potential included changes to the organizational structure of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS) in Cuba to establish the Directorate of the Social and Labour Observatory. High-probability Outcomes also involved support for creating a follow-up unit for socio-economic development and labour reintegration of vulnerable women in Costa Rica, along with the programmes and systems developed around this initiative.

To a lesser extent, outcomes with “very high” or “high” probability of sustainability were also identified under **Social Protection** Outcome 7 (5%) and **Social Justice** Outcome 8 (5%). This proportion of results is consistent with the lower levels of progress identified in these Outcomes to the DW agenda (See EQ8). Some examples included providing strategic inputs for pension reform in the context of social dialogue in Panama, as well as updating and adopting the National Labour Inspection Strategy (ENIT) in Honduras.

¹⁴² To evaluate the likelihood of sustainability of results from ILO interventions in Central America, the evaluation team identified a total of 61 results from the overall database covering the period 2021–2023 that reflected a certain level of institutionalization. A three-level tier – 1 = “very high,” 2 = “high,” and 3 = “moderate” – was then used to classify the results for analysis, as follows:

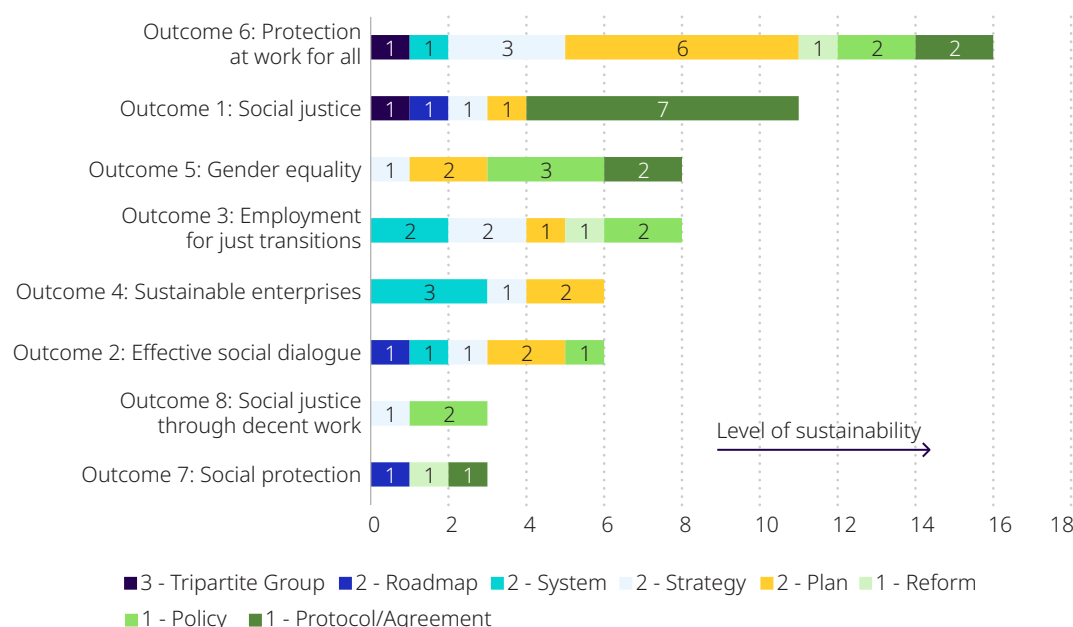
Results labelled as “very high” include structural Outcomes involving direct impacts on public policies, protocols, conventions, and reforms – highly institutionalized achievements that tend to be more formal and enduring, making them more sustainable.

Results classified as “high” included strategic and operational achievements with direct effects through strategies, plans, systems development, and roadmaps/toolkits. These results demonstrate a clear strategic focus, but their sustainability depends on effective implementation and ongoing support.

Lastly, the “moderate” level included Outcomes related to creating structures like the establishment of working groups, commissions, or dialogue/work centres, without direct evidence of progress at the “high” or “very high” levels. These tools reflect efforts toward dialogue and collaboration but do not guarantee permanence or effectiveness in their actions.

It is important to note that the information available was not enough to set clear benchmarks for viability—such as realistic timeframes, secured funding, strong institutions, or monitoring systems. The indicator should therefore be seen only as a proxy, giving an idea of how likely the results are to be sustained, or the establishment of monitoring bodies. The indicator therefore functions only as a proxy to observe the probability of sustainability based on the type of results reported.

FIGURE 19. KEY POTENTIAL SUSTAINABLE RESULTS IDENTIFIED BY P&B OUTCOME (2020 – 2023)



See footnote 141 for the methodology applied for the identification of potential sustainable results.

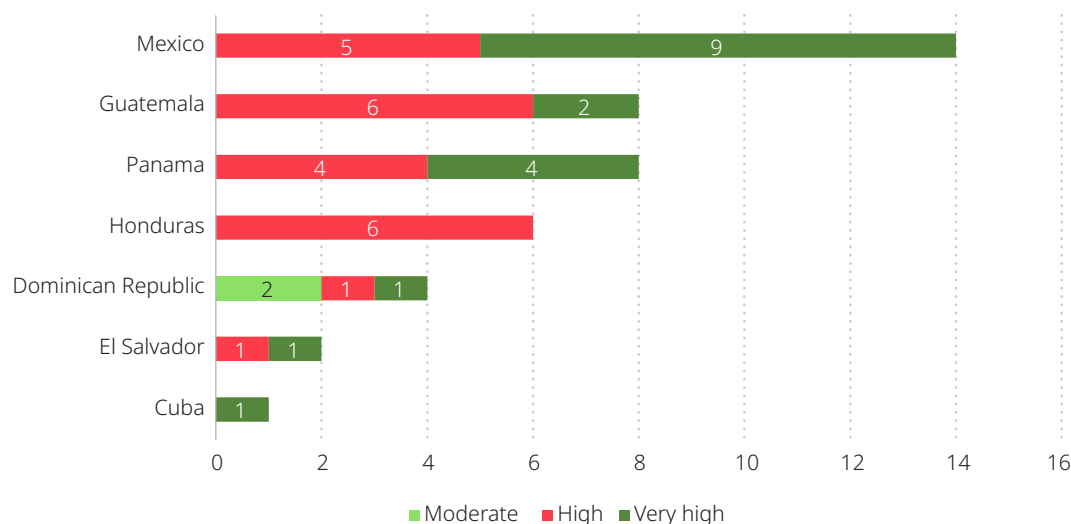
Source: ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard - ILO Decent Work Results

Regarding results reported by country (see Figure 20) with a “very high” and “high” potential for sustainability probability, Mexico stood out as the nation with the highest number of potentially sustainable outcomes. It has a very high likelihood of being sustainable, such as the approval of the “Law for the Care, Protection of Rights, and Support for Migrants” in Baja California, which incorporates ILO recommendations in line with Conventions 97 and 143.

Meanwhile, Guatemala and Panama also achieved significant results in the subregion with high sustainability potential. For instance, in Panama ILO supported the National Council of Organized Workers (CONATO) to update its strategic union plan on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), or in Guatemala with the approval of the National Migration Policy by the National Migration Authority in October 2023.

Other countries, such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador reported fewer results with very high or high sustainability potential such as the incorporation of the management of the Social and Labour Observatory of Cuba, the update of the inter-institutional protocol for the prevention and eradication of child labour within the framework of the National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour (the Dominican Republic) or the ratification of the conventions 102, 148, 154, 183 and 190 (El Salvador). However, they still maintained comparable levels of high sustainability potential, as seen in other countries in the subregion.

FIGURE 20. KEY POTENTIAL SUSTAINABLE RESULTS IDENTIFIED PER COUNTRY (2020-2024)



Source: ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard - ILO Decent Work Results

KEY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS

Evidence from the desk review and interviews with ILO staff and constituents show that among the factors that support sustainability are:

- 1. Institutional appropriation:** When public institutions adopt and utilize processes, it helps ensure continuity. Programmes and methodologies that are internalized by institutions can be sustained, such as the entrepreneurship methodology adopted by IMESU (Municipal Institute of Statistics and Urban Information) through CCIT (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa) in Honduras.
- 2. Political will:** Consistent commitment from governments, employers, and workers at national and local levels is viewed as essential for supporting and sustaining initiatives. In Mexico, there is high political will at national and local levels, with governments supporting and evidencing understanding of ILO strategies and initiatives and seeking necessary structures for continuity.¹⁴³ The focus on workers' issues by the current government is noted.¹⁴⁴ In Honduras, there is political will, particularly from the current president, to advance initiatives like the DWCP. The country successfully formulated a new DWCP for 2024–2027 with full participation from national governments and social partners, reinforcing the ILO's role in national development planning. In addition, interviews with constituents confirmed that both employers and government authorities in Honduras have demonstrated clear support for decent work initiatives and improving working conditions. Additionally, the Labour and Social Security Secretariat from the government began to establish a department to continue training inspectors.
- 3. Tripartite dialogue and social dialogue:** Effective engagement with governments, employers, and workers is a core strength of the ILO's approach, providing a unique entry point and legitimacy, even in difficult political contexts. This approach is evident across various initiatives, including those on occupational safety and health (OSH) in Mexico's agricultural supply chains (MEX/20/05/USA) and combating child labour and advancing care policies in Honduras by reactivating national committees and promoting local dialogue via the CLEAR Supply Chain project (HND/23/50/EUR). In Costa Rica, tripartite efforts have notably led to the design of employability and formalization strategies, including gender-sensitive inspection guides and pilot programmes for vulnerable populations under the INAMU project (CR/18/02/CRI), and fostering responsible business conduct (RBS) throughout Latin America and the Caribbean through multi-stakeholder engagement and

¹⁴³ ILO, Informe final RBSA Promover: Promoviendo empleos verdes cada vez + verdes (MEX23/01/RBS).

¹⁴⁴ ILO, Midterm Evaluation of the VZF-Mexico Project (MEX/20/05/USA). <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#b5u7jee>

policy formulation (RLA/22/07/EUR). Tripartite committees and consultation spaces, as the one of the VZF project in Mexico (MEX/20/05/USA), facilitated the discussion and implementation of initiatives in decent work,¹⁴⁵ enabling consensus-building and the development of national policies.

4. Social partners participation: The active involvement of employers' and workers' organizations in policy design, implementation, and monitoring is consistently highlighted by constituents during the interviews as essential for sustainability.¹⁴⁶ Representatives, such as those from the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) in Mexico, report regular participation in ILO processes and acknowledged that sustainability depends on context, with political will varying by sector and region. In Costa Rica, employers' organizations emphasized during the interviews that the participation of employer and union organizations in the elaboration, execution, and follow-up of government policies is crucial for their sustainability, especially since government policies in Costa Rica are often not state policies and can change with administrations.

5. Tools and methodologies: The use of concrete, adaptable tools and methodologies greatly contributes to sustainability. These tools not only enhance institutional processes but also provide long-term benefits for citizens and workers. Various tools and methodologies supported by the ILO are focused on strengthening institutional sustainability and enhancing services for citizens and workers. These initiatives are divided into three main categories:

- ▶ **Labour information systems: Costa Rica's** Comprehensive Support and Capacity-Building System for Transformation (SACIT System), used for labour inspection in the INAMU project (CRI/18/02/CRI), includes gender-sensitive indicators and is complemented by a gender-focused inspection guide and didactic manual to address discrimination in labour relations. Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS) and Labour Market Observatories (LMO) in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama have received ILO technical support to improve data collection and analysis on labour markets, skills gaps, and services for migrants and refugees (CRI/18/02/CRI).
- ▶ **Practical methodologies and operational models:** In Honduras, the IMESU entrepreneurship methodology has been internalized by organizations, particularly in their work with migrants as expressed during the interviews with ILO staff. Also in Honduras, IHCAFE officially adopted the Social Compliance System (SCS) and, with ILO support, developed its Institutional Human Rights and Due Diligence Policy (HND/23/50/EUR).
- ▶ **Tools for improving working conditions:** In Mexico, the WIND (Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development) methodology has been used to promote low-cost OSH solutions and was integrated into Farmer Field School curricula in Honduras (MEX/20/05/USA). Mexico also developed a Psychosocial Risks Toolkit, based on national and international regulations, supported by Training of Trainers sessions to ensure sustainability (MEX/20/05/USA). In Panama, a Labour Inspection Manual and Guide with a gender approach, developed in 2022, was officially launched in 2023, along with inspector training and an implementation plan.

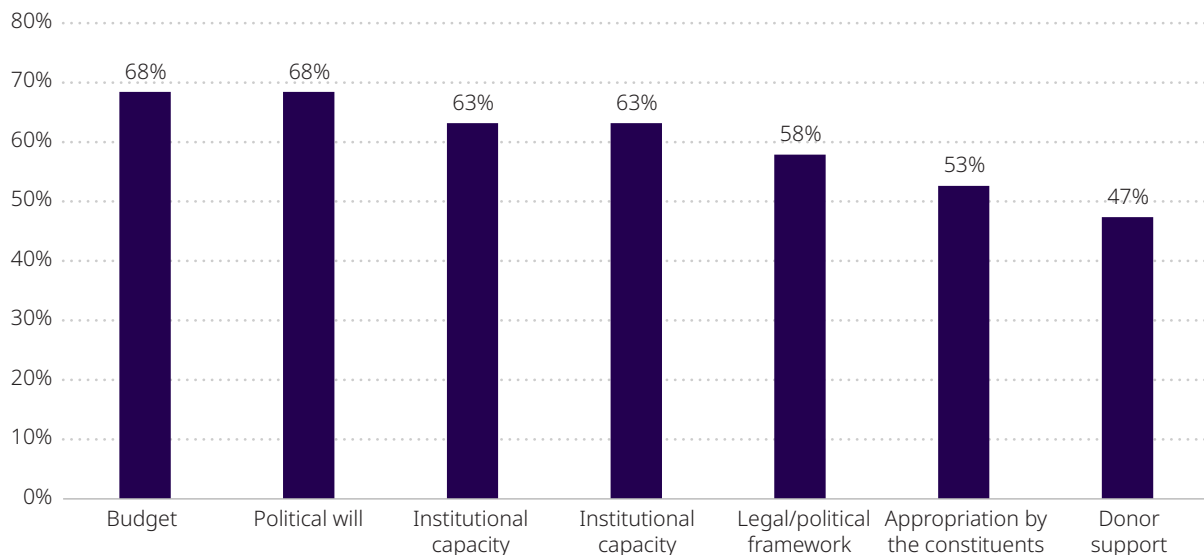
6. Capacity building and effective knowledge management: During interviews with ILO staff and donors, it was noted that capacity building and knowledge management have become as critical to both sustainability and scale-up. The ILO recognizes this by integrating communication strategies to inform stakeholders of project progress and impact, and to disseminate research studies and tools to encourage replication. For example, the VZF Mexico project utilizes email marketing automation software to share updates with stakeholders, fostering continuous engagement. Another example is in Honduras, where training IHSS personnel to achieve autonomy in actuarial studies serves as a direct example of building sustainable capacity.

¹⁴⁵ Idem

¹⁴⁶ Idem

Survey responses support these findings. Most constituents (68%) identified political will and budget availability as crucial for maintaining DW results. Institutional capacity (63%), a strong legal and policy framework (58%), national ownership (53%), and donor support (47%) were also identified as key enablers.

FIGURE 21. CONSTITUENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON WHAT CONDITIONS ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY



Source: Survey Constituents HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

Among ILO staff, views were more nuanced: 27% considered it very likely and 34% likely that ILO interventions would lead to sustained improvements in labour conditions. However, a smaller share (15%) expressed scepticism, doubting that political will would translate into institutional change. An additional 10% believed sustainability would be achieved only to a limited or very high degree, while 10% were unsure or did not respond. This divergence illustrates a mix of optimism and uncertainty, likely linked to limited information, inconsistent institutional commitment, or volatile political dynamics.

The survey also revealed that collaboration with other UN agencies often leads to joint initiatives, potential synergies and greater sustainability. For example, collaborations on child labour (CLEAR project with FAO, UNICEF, ITC),¹⁴⁷ gender equality (Spotlight initiative),¹⁴⁸ and care economy (SDG Fund programme in [Costa Rica](#) with other UN agencies).¹⁴⁹ Strategic coordination with agencies like UNHCR has extended tripartite engagement to new groups.¹⁵⁰ ILO staff and constituents from [Honduras](#) and [Costa Rica](#) also confirmed during the interviews that there is an identified opportunity for collaboration with partners like the European Union, potentially leveraging spaces left by other donors like USAID.

KEY FACTORS LIMITING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS

The following are a series of factors that limit the sustainability of the results, based on findings from the document review and interviews with ILO staff and constituents:

¹⁴⁷ [CLEAR Supply Chains | Decent Rural Employment | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#); Technical Progress Report CLEAR Supply Chains January-December 2024I.

¹⁴⁸ Information available at [Spotlight Initiative](#).

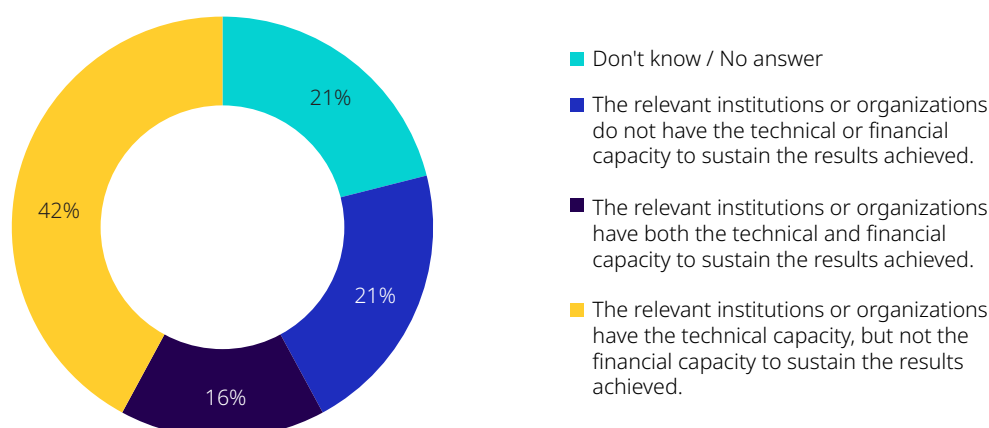
¹⁴⁹ [Joint SDG Fund](#).

¹⁵⁰ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024).

1. Political and governance instability and lack of political will. While some authorities publicly support DW principles, including tripartite social dialogue and freedom of association, as mentioned during interviews with ILO staff and constituents, their commitment is often limited to rhetoric and not matched by concrete actions. These dynamics underscore the importance of durable institutional agreements and partnerships that can endure beyond the span of political cycles. Triangulation of data reveals that frequent changes in government and ministerial staff (e.g., due to elections) significantly undermine the continuity of efforts and the institutionalization of results.¹⁵¹ Even if frameworks are institutionalized, a lack of political will or budgetary commitment can cause progress to be lost, as it was mentioned during the interviews with constituents in the case of Costa Rica.

2. Lack of financial capacity among constituents to continue implementing DW-related initiatives independently. Most interviewees also confirmed that the overall capacity of relevant institutions or organizations to sustain results after the conclusion of ILO support is often constrained by insufficient financial resources, even when technical capacity is present. This financial dependency represents a key vulnerability: without sustained funding or dedicated national budget allocations, the continuity and scaling of DW achievements remain at risk. Survey findings reinforce this idea: 42% of constituents stated that while technical capacity was present, financial capacity was lacking. Another 21% believed neither capacity existed, and only 16% felt that both were in place.

FIGURE 22. SUSTAINABILITY OF DECENT WORK OUTCOMES ACHIEVED WITH ILO SUPPORT AFTER ITS COMPLETION



Source: Survey to constituents HLE ILO DWCP Central America 2020-2024

3. Inter-agency collaboration challenges. This challenge often arises from the inherent complexities of working across multiple organizations and in dynamic local contexts. A primary challenge is the lack of coherence that can emerge when various agencies, despite shared overarching goals, operate with distinct mandates, internal methodologies, and differing priorities. This can lead to fragmented efforts and undermine true integration and long-term sustainability. The “Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean (RBCLAC) Project,” a multi-agency initiative involving the ILO, OECD, and OHCHR, explicitly recognizes that “inter-agency coordination is imperative for the effective governance of labour migration”, highlighting the ongoing effort required to align diverse approaches. The landscape often involves competition for limited donor funds among agencies, which can create barriers to genuinely integrated work and sustained engagement. This competition, along with potential delays in fund allocation, can disrupt the continuity necessary for sustainable outcomes across collaborative projects. The VZF Project in Mexico experienced a “somewhat ‘siloed’ approach to project management within the ILO CO” due to differing thematic focuses and geographical scopes of other ILO projects.¹⁵² Additionally, ILO staff also mentioned during the interviews that there is a call to increase partnerships with UN agencies and create synergies more intentionally.

¹⁵¹ Extracted from KII ILO staff, and reports from CRI/19/50/UND and MEX/20/05/USA.

¹⁵² ILO, Midterm Evaluation of the VZF-Mexico Project (MEX/20/05/USA). <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#b5u7jee>

4. Complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors. Economic instability, worsened by global crises like COVID-19 and volatile commodity prices (i.e., unstable coffee prices, non-profitability of small farms), has increased informality and strained efforts to protect vulnerable populations, particularly women and youth.¹⁵³ In response, projects such as the RBSA-funded initiative in Honduras (HND/23/01/RBS) have prioritized high-impact actions including digital transformation, green jobs, productivity enhancement, and the development of the care economy.

Social challenges, including persistent informal employment and migration pressures, further complicate the sustainability landscape. As mentioned during an interview with the Organization's staff, the ILO addresses these issues through targeted strategies, such as support for formalization policies and fair recruitment mechanisms. The Fair Recruitment in Central America project (CRI/19/50/UND) specifically works on fair recruitment and socio-economic integration of migrants and refugees, strengthening institutional capacities and promoting skills recognition. Addressing the specific needs of vulnerable populations, including women, migrants, and young workers, remains a cross-cutting priority across ILO interventions.

5. Environmental risks. Environmental factors, particularly climate change, have a severe impact on agricultural livelihoods, which can directly increase the incidence of worker's health and child labour. For instance, the VZF Mexico project incorporated a climate change component to address the effects of heat stress on greenhouse workers, demonstrating an acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of environmental factors and worker health. Ongoing research on heat exposure is underway, with findings expected to inform new legislation.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, the Clear Supply Chains project from Honduras is promoting labour-saving technologies and climate-smart practices to improve resilience among small-scale farmers and reduce child labour risks.¹⁵⁵

6. Project-based nature of ILO initiatives. The project-based nature of many ILO interventions, while valuable for targeted impact, can inadvertently lead to fragmentation and diminished continuity once funding ends. This underscores the urgent need for more programmatic interventions with long-term vision and integrated sustainability plans. The ILO's efforts to build institutional capacity, promote national ownership, and support institutionalized social dialogue are essential in addressing these systemic challenges and ensuring the durability of its results.

POTENTIAL FOR SCALING UP AND/REPLICATING ILO INITIATIVES

In addition to sustainability, the potential for scaling up or replicating ILO interventions is another critical factor examined during this HLE. According to the documentation,¹⁵⁶ this potential largely depends on whether initiatives are designed with future phases in mind, whether knowledge is effectively captured and shared and the extent to which institutionalization, capacity building, and strategic engagement with national partners and resources are pursued.

Yet, some projects provide models for wider replication. The VZF project in Mexico combined workplace, industry, institutional, and policy interventions to support institutional learning and increase capacity, which are key elements for replication and scale-up. The project explicitly considered the possibility of replicating its actions beyond its supply chain focus.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the Clear Supply Chains project in Honduras, which addresses child labour in coffee production, aims to share knowledge globally and build regional capacity.

Mexico's "Promover" project (MEX/23/01/RBS) that promotes green jobs and entrepreneurship, is explicitly designed as a pilot with replication potential through the National Employment Service. Meanwhile, the RBCLAC project (RLA/22/07/EUR) leveraged digital learning through a MOOC on Business and Decent Work, reaching over 7,000 professionals and laying the groundwork for capacity-building at scale. The upcoming Phase II intends to deepen this impact, focusing on strategic commodities and broader supply chain engagement.

153 HND135_RBSA final approved proposal Ayuda Memoria Tercera Reunión-Comité Seguimiento Tripartito 7.11.24.

154 ILO PRODOC VZF Project (MEX/20/05/USA).

155 ILO Technical Progress Report CLEAR Supply Chains project (HND/22/50/EUR).

156 PRODOC - Proyecto OIT-INAMU-Final; ILO, Midterm Evaluation of the VZF-Mexico Project (MEX/20/05/USA).

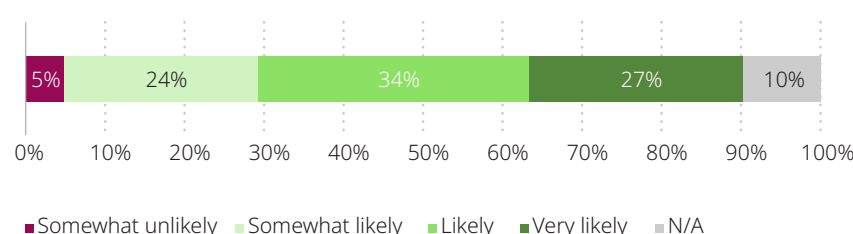
157 ILO PRODOC Proyecto PROMOVER (MEX/23/01/RBS).

The MCET project (CRI/19/50/UND) also exemplifies replication, particularly through the adaptation of training tools for different countries. Its Fair Recruitment course, initially developed in Honduras, was later requested by Guatemala, while its Migrant Worker Resource Centre model, pioneered in Tijuana Mexico, has generated regional interest.

What connects these examples is a robust approach to knowledge management, one that systematically captures lessons learned and creates tools that facilitate institutional learning and replication across geographies.

According to the survey, 27% of ILO staff respondents believe that sustained improvements in labour conditions are very likely because of the ILO's work, and 34% believe such improvements are likely. Only 5% viewed this outcome as unlikely, reflecting a general sense of confidence in the lasting impact of ILO interventions in the region.

FIGURE 23. LIKELIHOOD OF SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENTS IN LABOUR CONDITIONS BY ILO STAFF



Source: Survey ILO's staff HLE ILO DW Central America 2020-2024

EQ18. To what extent have ILO activities and projects in Central America incorporated clear and effective exit strategies to promote the sustainability of results and impact, and what aspects could be strengthened to enhance future interventions?

Exit strategies are a key component in ensuring the sustainability of development interventions' results and impact. Their proper integration helps guarantee that project benefits endure beyond the implementation period by strengthening local capacities, consolidating institutional partnerships, and promoting national ownership of achieved Outcomes. In the case of ILO activities and projects in Central America, analysing the extent to which effective exit strategies have been incorporated is essential to assess the sustainability of interventions and extract lessons to improve future initiatives. The following evaluation question focuses on identifying how and to what extent these strategies have been considered, implemented, and adapted to local contexts, as well as highlighting opportunities to enhance their design and execution moving forward.

MAIN APPROACHES FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING EXIT STRATEGIES

Data obtained from desk reviews and interviews showed that **explicit and documented exit strategies are generally not a standard requirement or practice in the initial design or implementation plans of its projects**, as shown in projects HND/23/50/EUR and CRI/18/02/CRI. During the interviews, ILO staff in Costa Rica explicitly stated that such strategies are not usual and, based on their experience, have never existed in any project. Similarly, in Mexico, ILO personnel noted that formally, exit strategies were not formulated. While there has been acknowledgment that creating exit strategies from the beginning, including dedicated resources, is changing and programming is assisting in this regard, it has not been a typical consideration. Interviewees from ILO Costa Rica and Mexico confirmed that instead of formal exit strategies, efforts often focus on promoting sustainability through other means, such as capacity building, institutional linkages, alignment with national strategies, and informal follow-up.

 In our experience, no project has an exit strategy, but we try to keep them linked to other processes and projects, so we work together with specialists to ensure they can be followed up on. (ILO staff CO).

 The approach with the Labour Migration Strategy has been to structure the initiatives in a way that ensures continuity. This way, when one stage is completed, the next can be aligned within the same strategy, allowing for ongoing progress either through the same organization or via other agencies' initiatives. This promotes sustainability processes. (ILO staff CO).

Despite the absence of systematic, formalized exit strategies, the evaluation team found that the concept of project sustainability is pursued through two primary, interconnected approaches:

The primary approach emphasizes developing and enhancing national institutional capacity and ownership, as outlined in the project CRI/18/02/CRI, RLA/22/07/EUR, HND/23/50/EUR and HNC/21/02/HND. This is achieved through various means: 1) improving the skills and knowledge of personnel within partner institutions, such as in Honduras where the Actuarial Valuation project aimed for IHSS staff to independently update studies using ILO models (HND/21/02/HND), and in Costa Rica, in the Fair Recruitment project, which trains vocational training institution (VTI) staff (CRI/19/50/UND), 2) embedding project outcomes within national policies and legal frameworks, which is essential for sustainability; and 3) securing political will and direct financial support from high-level authorities, exemplified by the Honduran Social Security Institute (IHSS) and the Costa Rican government directly funding projects to ensure continuity (HND/21/02/HND, CRI/18/02/CRI).

The second approach emphasizes fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration and implementing strategic programmatic and financial management for continuity, as demonstrated in projects RLA/22/07/EUR and CRI/18/02/CRI. Key elements of this approach include: 1) establishing and strengthening tripartite and multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms, which promote ongoing collaboration among governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society actors, as done in projects HND/20/02/HND, CRI/18/02/CRI and CR/19/50/UND; 2) designing projects with built-in flexibility for multiple phases or extensions, allowing initiatives to build on early successes and adapt over time, as demonstrated by the Fair Recruitment project (CR/19/05/UND), which was explicitly conceived with a second phase in mind; and 3) prioritizing knowledge management and strategic communication to share good practices, boost visibility of achievements, and encourage ongoing stakeholder engagement and advocacy. This also includes ensuring that technical staff has the capacity to independently update studies and technical outputs, reinforcing long-term institutional learning and sustainability (HND/23/50/EUR, RLA/22/07/EUR and CRI/18/02/CRI).

MAIN BARRIERS TOWARDS INCLUDING AND EXECUTING EXIT STRATEGIES

1. Lack of planning and foresight: A significant and recurring challenge across ILO projects highlighted by ILO staff is a widespread lack of formalized, explicit, and comprehensive planning, particularly concerning project sustainability and exit strategies. This deficiency manifests in several key areas:

a) **Absence of formal exit strategies in project design.** During interviews with ILO staff, it was mentioned that the idea of developing exit strategies from the start, including resource allocation and a dedicated approach, "is not typically considered" even though it is acknowledged as something that "is changing" with programmatic assistance. The Synthesis Review also showed that 59% of projects lacked clear exit strategies, meaning there was no structured plan to sustain project outcomes beyond implementation, 14% had partial exit strategies, where some sustainability measures were in place but not fully developed and only 27% fully incorporated well-defined exit strategies, ensuring a focus on decent work principles such as employment creation,

rights at work, and social protection.¹⁵⁸ Exit strategies were often found in projects like HND/17/01/USA; HTI/20/01/NOR; MEX/20/01/NAA, MEX/21/01/RBS, and PAN/22/01/UNO to be weak, lacking clearly defined follow-up phases or planned extensions. Influence on public policy yielded mixed results, and stakeholder dialogue varied in both effectiveness and sustainability. Exit strategies often involve encouraging ownership of activities by key stakeholders such as governments, other entities, and organizations. Sustainability was also reflected in institutional changes and policy adoption (HND/17/01/USA; MEX/21/01/RBS and RLA/21/09/SWE). The existence of new phases or follow-up versions of similar projects was considered essential for sustainability.

b) Insufficient planning for long-term sustainability and institutionalization. Beyond just closing the project, there is a lack of detailed plans for how results will be maintained and institutionalized within partner institutions. In Honduras, the final evaluation of the Actuarial Valuation project assessed its sustainability as “low”. While the report mentions capabilities built in IHSS officials and that products were used as bases for new strategies, it critically notes there are no documents showing the integration of the Project’s products into IHSS strategic plans or regulations, indicating a lack of formal integration of results into the partner institution’s plans, which is essential for sustainability after the project end. The project’s evaluation recommends formulating operational plans with the beneficiaries that include short, medium, and long-term changes to achieve greater sustainability, implying that this level of detailed, collaboratively developed planning for post-project continuity was absent in the initial design and implementation. The CLEAR Supply Chains project for Honduras discusses linking to existing country-level institutions and programmes for sustainability and integrating activities into national structures. These are sustainability approaches but are not categorized as a formal exit strategy.

2. Lack of funding: Document review and interviews with ILO staff and partners in Costa Rica and Mexico revealed that, although sustainability and exit strategies were studied in some cases, as in the Project CLEAR Supply Chains (HND/23/50/EUR), they were not always formally developed or implemented, often due to lack of funding.

In Mexico, in 2023, a study was conducted to develop a sustainability and exit strategy aimed at enabling the replication and adaptation of technical tools within the framework of the Project VZF (MEX/20/05/USA); however, it was not implemented due to frozen funds.¹⁵⁹

3. Institutional turnover and capacity gaps: Government staff turnover was identified by ILO staff as a barrier to institutionalization, although they also acknowledged the existence of political will and opportunities for regulatory reform. Informants highlighted the need to strengthen exit strategies, broaden the involvement of organizations in financing and follow-up, and enhance government capacities in impact evaluation. As one constituent informant noted, “sustainability depends on the will and priorities of each organization”.

4. Narrow stakeholder engagement: The involvement of actors beyond traditional tripartite constituents, such as universities and NGOs, was seen by ILO staff in Mexico as key to generating interest and building networks. However, in Honduras, the CLEAR Supply Chains Project emphasizes linking its efforts to existing country-level institutions and programmes for sustainability.¹⁶⁰ This broader engagement helps to create a more robust ecosystem around the project’s themes, fostering continuity even when direct ILO support or initial funding phases conclude.

¹⁵⁸ Central America HLE Synthesis Review of project evaluations in the subregion (2020-2024), pages 56-57.

¹⁵⁹ Extracted from ILO, Midterm Evaluation of the VZF-Mexico Project (MEX/20/05/USA).

¹⁶⁰ Extracted from the CLEAR Supply Chains Project PRODOC.



6

► Conclusions

► CONCLUSIONS

RELEVANCE

The ILO's CPOs and projects in Central America (2020–2024) were aligned with national priorities and global frameworks, reflecting strategic focus and stakeholder responsiveness. The tripartite structure enhanced national ownership in areas like formalization and workplace safety. However, perception gaps among ILO staff and constituents in addressing vulnerable groups, and sustainability is undermined by donor-driven planning, and political instability, challenging consistent implementation. (EQ1).

The ILO's work in Central America shows strong alignment with national and regional priorities, particularly through SDG 8 and the UNSDCFs. This has enhanced its credibility and fostered collaboration with governments, especially in countries like Costa Rica, Honduras, and Mexico. In contrast, weaker engagement in Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua reflects institutional and coordination gaps. While protection at work is broadly addressed, areas like social justice and social protection show fewer results, possibly due to contextual or prioritization issues. Despite strategic alignment with the P&B Outcomes, translating it into sustained, locally responsive action remains difficult in contexts with institutional fragility and limited technical capacity. (EQ2)

The ILO's strategic frameworks in Central America address broad priorities, including gender equality, non-discrimination, and social dialogue; however, implementation is uneven across countries and themes. Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of vulnerable groups remain limited due to weak institutional capacity and project-dependent approaches. Cross-cutting themes often lose momentum without sufficient resources or accountability. While ILS and social dialogue are central, their impact is diminished in restrictive legal and institutional contexts. Emerging priorities like youth engagement and just transition show early progress but highlight a persistent gap between normative commitments and effective, inclusive implementation. (EQ3)

COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN

The ILO has consistently engaged in institutional integration within the UN system and with multilateral actors in Central America, especially through regional strategies and UN frameworks on decent work and related themes. This has enabled coordinated responses and technical collaboration, particularly at the project level through joint efforts with both UN and non-UN stakeholders. However, effectiveness is limited by structural barriers such as resource competition, weak internal coordination, limited human resources, insufficient understanding of the ILO's mandate and the non-institutionalization of partnerships beyond projects (particularly with non-UN actors). These constraints hinder strategic coherence and reduce the transformative potential of integration, which remains largely dependent on effective coordination mechanisms both within the ILO and with external partners. (EQ4)

The ILO's adaptation to socio-political changes in Central America has been largely reactive, revealing structural limitations that hinder proactive and transformative responses. While some context-sensitive adjustments occurred, especially in fragile settings like Haiti and Nicaragua, these were mostly short-term. Flexibility in emergencies has not been effectively translated into strategic repositioning due to institutional rigidity, staff turnover, and a limited presence in sensitive contexts. As a result, the ILO's ability to lead effectively in volatile environments remains constrained by internal weaknesses and its cautious approach to engagement with political risks. (EQ5)

Although the ILO promotes participatory processes, constituent engagement in Central America remains only partially institutionalized. While some countries demonstrate strong consultation practices, these are not consistently applied or deeply enough to influence decisions beyond the

early stages. Local engagement is limited, and the absence of structured follow-up mechanisms undermines ownership. Donor priorities, political constraints, and uneven capacities further affect participation quality. As a result, engagement risks being procedural rather than substantive, highlighting the need for more systematic, context-sensitive mechanisms and a sustained, negotiated approach to participation. (EQ6)

EFFECTIVENESS

The ILO has been most effective in advancing the Decent Work Agenda in Central America in areas aligned with its normative mandate, such as workplace protection and social dialogue. However, progress has been limited in areas requiring broader coordination, like social protection, sustainable enterprises, and knowledge generation, which is crucial for generating evidence, technical knowledge, and tools that support, guide, and amplify the effectiveness of other results. Weaknesses in this area compromise the programme's ability to influence policy through evidence and may weaken its political and technical leverage in the region. Effectiveness varied by country: in Costa Rica and Mexico there was a stronger performance; in El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama, there was a mixed performance with gains in specific P&B outcomes; and Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua were structurally constrained. Despite strong technical capacity, challenges such as resource constraints, bureaucratic rigidity, and political instability hinder result consolidation. Therefore, while the ILO achieves impact, maintaining it across the region requires addressing structural and contextual barriers. (EQ8)

Despite relevant interventions, progress on cross-cutting themes like gender equality, non-discrimination, and just transition in Central America has not led to systemic change. While pilot initiatives have produced localized results, these remain project-dependent and susceptible to political and financial instability. Structural barriers, including limited financing and weak autonomy of social partners, hinder sustainability. Without integrating these priorities into institutional agendas, the ILO's capacity to move from pilot projects to lasting impact remains limited. (EQ9)

ILO interventions in Central America have produced unintended positive outcomes beyond their original goals, such as strengthened technical networks, increased training, and institutional reforms, especially in Mexico and Haiti. These results demonstrate the Organization's ability to drive systemic change through technical assistance and stakeholder engagement. They also highlight the broad influence of its normative and convening roles, reinforcing the ILO's added value in complex regional contexts. (EQ10)

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

While the ILO's coordination structures in Central America promote thematic consistency and political alignment, their complexity and bureaucratic inertia hinder operational flexibility and coherence. Multi-level arrangements support local adaptation, but fragmented communication and inconsistent use of monitoring tools. The limited of unified monitoring systems and incentives for coordination constrains adaptive management and organizational learning. Without addressing these internal gaps, current arrangements risk reinforcing fragmentation rather than enabling coherent implementation of the Decent Work Agenda. (EQ11-EQ12)

EFFICIENCY

Although the ILO maintains overall cost-efficiency in Central America, its resource allocation model limits the strategic precision and flexibility needed to maximize impact across different contexts. Important normative areas, such as social justice integration, remain underfunded, while less complex areas often deliver higher returns, indicating a focus on short-term results. Gender-responsive budgeting and coherent financial planning are limited, which weakens alignment with transformative goals. The difference between internal and external perceptions of financial sufficiency supports this conclusion: efficiency depends not only on tracking expenditures but also on the ability to anticipate needs and connect spending to strategic outcomes. Without reforming

its planning and resource allocation approach, the ILO risks underperforming in programmatic efficiency and sustainability. (EQ13)

While ILO partnerships in Central America have boosted short-term efficiency by expanding outreach and mobilizing resources, their limited strategic integration has restricted long-term institutional value. Additionally, some donors' conditions have changed, so the resource mobilization portfolio will need review. Most alliances remain project-based and ad hoc (especially with non-UN partners like universities, NGOs, and local actors), which limits the development of stable coordination platforms and mechanisms for joint learning. Without integrating partnerships into a broader strategic framework, their contribution to efficiency will remain fragmented and specific to context, rather than creating systemic, sustainable impacts. (EQ14)

The ILO's human resource allocation in Central America under the Regular Budget reflects a structural imbalance. Staffing is focused on historically strong areas like employment and social protection, while less-resourced themes such as sustainable enterprises and gender equality receive less attention. This distribution, combined with high turnover and the absence of a regional/subregional HR strategy, weakens continuity and technical capacity. The disconnect between external recognition and internal concerns highlights a split in operational strength. Without strategic, priority-driven workforce planning, HR will remain a constraint rather than a driver of Decent Work outcomes. (EQ15)

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

ILO interventions in Central America have supported institutional reforms and provided targeted benefits, especially in areas like childcare, migration, and gender equality. These advances, although often tied to short-term initiatives, demonstrate meaningful progress in translating norms into practice. In line with the implementation stage of the ILO's framework, they show the Organization's ability to improve working conditions. However, limited integration into long-term policies and perception gaps with national stakeholders pose a threat to sustainability. For lasting impact, efforts should shift from issue-specific actions to politically grounded strategies owned by national institutions. (EQ16)

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of ILO-supported results in Central America remains limited, heavily dependent on institutional ownership and political commitment. While some reforms, especially in labour rights and information systems, have been institutionalized, challenges such as leadership turnover, short project durations, and weak coordination hinder long-term impact. Without strategies to embed change, retain capacity, and coordinate efforts across sectors, many outcomes risk stagnation. Sustainability, therefore, depends less on technical quality and more on the ILO's ability to build resilient systems and facilitate lasting transformation. (EQ17)

The absence of clear, well-funded exit strategies in ILO initiatives throughout Central America exposes a significant weakness in sustainability planning. Efforts often depend on indirect methods, such as capacity building, without establishing formal transition plans or institutionalization pathways. This results in assumptions about sustainability rather than deliberate planning. In fragile contexts, these oversights are especially harmful. Without incorporating exit strategies into program design, the long-term success of ILO interventions remains uncertain, regardless of their effectiveness during implementation. (EQ18)



7

► Overall assessment

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Drawing from the findings and conclusions outlined above, the evaluation team presents the overall rating of the ILO's performance in the Central America subregion using EVAL's standardized 6-point scale (ranging from highly satisfactory to highly unsatisfactory), as follows:



6 = highly satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 4 = somewhat satisfactory
3 = somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 1 = highly unsatisfactory



8

► **Lessons learned and
good practices**



LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

This section summarizes key lessons learned and good practices from the ILO's interventions in Central America from 2020 to 2024. Based on implementation experiences across multiple countries, it highlights the conditions, strategies, and organizational behaviors that have contributed to both successful results and challenges. These practices demonstrate how strategic planning, adaptive governance, and understanding the local context can improve the impact and sustainability of the ILO's efforts.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Flexibility and contextual adaptation drive relevance and results. Countries such as [Cuba](#), [El Salvador](#), and [Haiti](#), shows the capacity of the ILO to adapt program strategies to institutional challenged environments and high staff turnover. Projects encountered challenges such as approval delays, weak institutional memory, and bureaucratic constraints worsened by limited in-country presence. Despite these obstacles, the ILO delivered results by collaborating with local technical institutions and maintaining flexibility in its programs. Real-time adjustments helped strengthen national employment observatories, improve labour market data systems, and make employment services more responsive. However, the lack of a permanent ILO staff presence in some countries limited responsiveness and increased dependence on regional offices, causing delays in decision-making and adaptation.

2. Cross-cutting issues require political sensitivity and technical depth. Efforts to integrate gender equality, disability inclusion, and Indigenous people rights into ILO programs achieved varying success levels, especially in complex institutional contexts such as [Honduras](#) and [Nicaragua](#). In these situations, resistance to ideas like gender equality required a clever political approach. For example, terms like “women’s empowerment” were used instead of “gender equality” while keeping the essence. Working with key ministries and gaining support from local champions helped reach meaningful results, such as gender mainstreaming in employment policies and creating care cooperatives in [Honduras](#). However, ILO staff often lacked enough training in intersectionality and political skills, which limited the depth and consistency of these efforts.

3. Internal coordination, staff availability and communication are critical. Within the ILO itself, internal coordination across departments, especially employment, formalization, and gender, proved inconsistent. This caused overlapping mandates, fragmented messaging to national partners, and inefficiencies in delivery. To fix this, successful initiatives introduced regular coordination meetings and shared planning tools, along with mentoring systems that promoted coherence. These mechanisms were particularly effective in aligning formalization strategies and employment diagnostics. However, ongoing high staff turnover and weak onboarding processes continued to challenge institutional continuity and knowledge retention. ILO staff recognized that the organization's institutional framework is fragile due to technical gaps and staff turnover. The lack of specialists disrupts key processes and hinders sustained progress.

GOOD PRACTICES

1. Joint Programme with shared leadership and a strong One UN approach. An excellent example of successful joint programming was seen in **Costa Rica**, where the ILO worked with UNDP, FAO, and UN Women under the SDG Fund. Unlike many joint UN efforts, which often face fragmentation due to competition over visibility and resources, this project succeeded by setting clear governance structures and shared technical leadership. Its success was based on a results-focused approach, a conscious avoidance of agency branding (for example, no logos on activities), and the appointment of regional technical leads based on expertise rather than institutional mandates. By avoiding potential disputes over budgets and visibility, the initiative promoted a unified effort that empowered over 700 women, especially from Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and coastal communities, through economically and environmentally sustainable actions. Internally, the project's success was achieved through strong facilitation by ILO staff, supported by trust, interpersonal collaboration, and a shared vision among the agencies. The model enhanced national systems like National Information System and Single Registry of State Beneficiaries (SINIRUBE/ SINEDUE) and established a precedent for joint programming under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator. Its focus on democratic leadership and collaborative decision-making makes it highly replicable in similar multi-agency settings.

2. Evidence-based planning through diagnostic studies. In **Mexico**, mandatory diagnostic studies before project implementation proved essential for relevance and impact. For example, in Jalisco, these studies revealed the need to revise the Theory of Change to better reach rural and indigenous workers. This adaptive planning process improved alignment with local needs and institutions, reinforcing the value of embedding diagnostics into project design.

3. Leveraging political window for strategic impact. In **El Salvador**, the ILO capitalized on policy moments, such as minimum wage debates, to strengthen social dialogue and influence labour reforms. These interventions, carried out amid fragile tripartite structures, demonstrated how timely engagement and socio-political awareness can lead to important policy gains. The approach highlights the importance of agility and informed scenario planning in navigating complex political environments.

4. Designing care economy interventions using market-based approaches. In **Honduras**, the ILO supported the development of a care cooperative through market analysis and business planning. This method helped formalize and professionalize informal care work, benefiting women who previously lacked recognition and protection.



09

► Recommendations

► RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

Strengthen strategic alignment, coordination, communication, and learning across the ILO countries offices and the DWT in Central America.

Develop and implement a DWT action plan for the Central America subregion countries to coordinate the DW Agenda. It should support regional strategies such as the those for domestic work, formalization, and labour migration, guide DWCP development where relevant, and align with DW national priorities. The plan must include annual strategic reviews and mapping of needs and capacities to tailor approaches per country. A subregional Theory of Change should guide the plan and be adapted locally.

Establish thematic subregional coordination mechanisms for the DWT to provide sustained structural support, beyond isolated actions. This should include SOPs to improve planning, coordination, and communication between San Jose and Mexico Offices, reducing fragmentation and ensuring coherent messaging and delivery of DW efforts.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
DWT/CO San Jose, CO Mexico, ROLAC (and relevant HQ Departments).		Long-Term	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 2

Reinforce the ILO's work in thematic areas where limited progress has been reported.

► Outcome 4 – Sustainable Enterprises:

Consider replicable models for countries with limited progress (e.g., Haiti's enterprise clusters, "My Green Business" in El Salvador/Honduras, green jobs in Mexico) and develop partnerships with associations, cooperatives, and agencies to adapt positive models.

► Outcome 7 – Social Protection:

Lead a regional diagnostic towards actions regarding coverage, financing, and governance of social protection for vulnerable groups, considering the experiences of Mexico's migrant health protocol and the Dominican Republic's "Care Communities."

► Outcome 8 – Social Justice:

Systematize and analyse successful initiatives for replication (e.g., gender equality, social protection, and youth employment).

Consider for Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and Panama, co-developing diagnostics on institutional gaps, regulatory reviews, and national policy roadmaps.

► **Enabler A – Evidence for Advocacy:**

Strengthen evidence-based research and country-based political intelligence on labour statistics and market dynamics to inform programming and advocacy.

Integrate advocacy in reporting and develop accessible products that turn data into persuasive narratives.

► **Cross-cutting issues:**

Prioritize disability, Indigenous Peoples, just transition, and non-discrimination, while continuing work on gender equality, ILS, labour migration and youth (e.g., projects in Guatemala).

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
DWT/CO San Jose, CO Mexico, ROLAC (and relevant HQ Departments).		Medium-Term	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 3

Foster an adaptive approach that responds to evolving contextual challenges, while strengthening national ownership. This approach should be anchored in long-term sustainability and explicitly address the needs and priorities of vulnerable groups.

- Design solutions considering local absorption capacity, using needs assessments, context analysis, scenario planning, and risk management tools integrated into project templates with adaptive triggers (e.g., budget shifts and political change) to ensure context sensitivity and alignment with the ILO's mandate.

Maximize constituents' participation at all levels during project design to ensure relevance and ownership, using a 'Participatory Design Checklist' for engagement and validation, supporting long-term sustainability.

Ensure sustainability from the start by integrating exit strategies and follow-up mechanisms co-developed with constituents and local actors. Focus on monitoring implementation beyond formal agreements, anchoring results locally and nationally. Use sustainability workshops and designate focal points to maintain continuity amid staff turn-over.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
DWT/CO San Jose, CO México, ROLAC/RPU		Long-Term	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 4

Revise financial management, human resources, and strategic partnership frameworks to ensure more flexible, results-oriented, and tactical resource allocation.

- ▶ Diversify extra budgetary financing by prioritizing multi-year strategic partnerships with donors (e.g., Canada, EU and Japan) to reduce dependency on limited number of donors and secure sustainable, nationally relevant funding. Engage the private sector for long-term financing (e.g., Ford Foundation for social justice and Mastercard Foundation for youth employment). Identify donors and match engagement to emerging subregional and national needs.
- ▶ Strengthen structured coordination with the UN system and establish multi-year cooperation with key partners, focusing on underdeveloped cross-cutting areas (e.g., UNFPA for indigenous and youth, IOM/UNDP for labour migration, FAO for rural populations). Define clear roles to avoid duplication, ensure complementarity, and build long-term alliances using the tripartite ILO structure.
- ▶ Map the ILO human resource capacities in Central America by P&B Outcomes, identify gaps and imbalances, and promote realistic staff allocations and rotations to under-addressed areas. Consider South-South exchanges to fill thematic gaps.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
DWT/CO San Jose, CO Mexico, ROLAC RPU, (and relevant HQ departments).		Medium-Term	Low

RECOMMENDATION 5

Strengthen the systematic monitoring tools, streamlined decision-making processes, and continuous learning mechanisms to reinforce operational aspects.

- ▶ Develop a regional or subregional knowledge management strategy with clear principles for documentation, information sharing, and learning. Assign focal points, include collaborative platforms like joint monitoring dashboards, and foster Communities of Practice. Incorporate exit, handover, and onboarding processes to preserve knowledge and ensure continuity.
- ▶ Promote consistent use of design, monitoring, and review tools across offices. Organize cross-review sessions to share progress and challenges, standardize monitoring adapted to country contexts, and ensure real-time access to joint monitoring dashboards. Set minimum communication standards with regular discussions and systematic sharing of lessons and good practices.
- ▶ Ensure monitoring and reporting reflect the ILO cross-cutting priorities using suitable indicators and disaggregated data.
- ▶ Create institutional mechanisms to identify, document, and scale successful initiatives, especially pilots, through a shared internal registry maintained by the DW Team or the Regional Office.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
DWT/CO San Jose, CO México, ROLAC /RPU.		Medium-Term	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 6

Establish a capacity-building action plan for ILO staff to ensure shared standards in the design, M&E, and reporting of project results and technical assistance, while allowing for adaptation to contextual challenges.

- ▶ Develop a regional or subregional capacity-building plan defining core competencies and learning outcomes for staff in project design, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, ensuring consistency with flexibility for local contexts.
- ▶ Strengthen institutional and staff capacities for strategic risk management and adaptation by creating simple protocols for political economy analysis, scenario planning, and adaptive decision-making. Provide targeted training on operational management, early warning, risk assessment, context analysis, and mitigation for staff in fragile contexts.
- ▶ Offer ongoing training on gender-responsive approaches, including Gender Responsive Budgeting.
- ▶ Continue technical capacity-building on monitoring and evaluation and results reporting.

RESPONSIBLE UNITS	PRIORITY	TIME IMPLICATION	RESOURCE IMPLICATION
DWT/CO San Jose, CO México, ROLAC /RPU.		Medium-Term	Medium



10

► Office response

► OFFICE RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION 1

ROLAC supports the call for a subregional action plan and Theory of Change to improve alignment. However, Mexico and the Central American countries differ in institutional scale and mandate, so the Theory of Change must be flexible and adapted to national contexts. We will therefore task the San José and Mexico offices with leading the development of a concise, tailored ToC and using it to guide existing annual planning and review processes, ensuring alignment with regional strategies such as the one for formalization (FORLAC 2.0), labour migration, social dialogue and labour relations, care economy and others to be developed. ROLAC will provide strategic oversight and facilitate exchanges between offices to reduce fragmentation. Any new coordination mechanisms will build on current structures, remain light touch and avoid duplicating bureaucratic layers.

RECOMMENDATION 2

We fully support accelerating progress on Outcomes 4 (enterprises), 7 (social protection) and 8 (social justice - action programmes) and Enabler A (evidence for advocacy). San José and Mexico will lead diagnostics on social protection and policy coherence and adapt relevant good practices. Replication will be selective and context specific. ROLAC will strengthen evidence-based advocacy and integrate disability, just transition and indigenous issues.

RECOMMENDATION 3

We accept this recommendation. Project templates will integrate risk management (new global platform to be launched), needs assessments and participatory design. Country offices will lead engagement and develop exit strategies, with ROLAC and the RPU providing guidance and training (tools developed by EVAL and ROLAC are already available for this purpose). This aims to enhance sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION 4

We agree on the need to diversify funding and strengthen partnerships. Recognising this need, in 2024 a regional position of Officer of partnerships for policy coherence was created, and as part of the ILO review, we expect similar positions can be also considered to be decentralised to DWTs and COs from Headquarters. The recently launched Central American subregional office's resource mobilisation committee will pursue multiyear donor agreements and carefully explore private sector partnerships that align with the ILO's mandate; we will not engage with partners whose priorities conflict with decent work principles. Mapping of human resources and rotations will be coordinated with HQ. South-South exchanges will help fill thematic gaps.

RECOMMENDATION 5

We endorse improving knowledge management and monitoring but caution that comprehensive dashboards and new tools require significant investment and constant updates. Instead, we will build on existing platforms and revitalise the Regional Evaluation Committee to track implementation and promote continuous learning. Importantly, our planned evaluation of the impact of knowledge in the Americas (2026), for which we hope to leverage RBSA funds, will inform this strategy. This will inform a Regional Knowledge Strategy and help prioritise realistic improvements to monitoring and learning.

RECOMMENDATION 6

We fully endorse developing a regional capacity building plan. San José and Mexico will identify skills gaps and organise targeted training in project design, M&E, gender budgeting and risk management, drawing on support from ROLAC, the RPU, and HQ. The plan will build on existing programmes and be sensitive to national contexts.



Annexes

▶ ANNEXES

ANNEX 1	Evaluation Matrix
ANNEX 2	Theory of Change
ANNEX 3	Key findings
ANNEX 4	Interview Protocols
ANNEX 5	Survey Protocols
ANNEX 6	List of people interviewed
ANNEX 7	P&B Outcomes per countries
ANNEX 8	P&B Outcomes consolidation (mapping)
ANNEX 9	Terms of Reference

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION MATRIX

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND SOURCE OF INFORMATION
RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT		
EQ1. To what extent and how are the objectives of the ILO CPOs and related projects for the selected countries relevant to the needs of the constituents and final beneficiaries , including the vulnerable groups?	1.1 Perceptions of ILO staff and other key stakeholders (national constituencies -governments, employers, workers' organizations-, NGOs, UN and other agencies) on the appropriateness of ILO CPOs and related projects to the national and subregional contexts. 1.2 Documented examples of ILO engagements in consultative processes with constituencies/implementing partners during programme planning and implementation of CPOs and related projects, specifically in defining objectives, activities, and follow-up mechanisms. 1.3 Documented examples of ILO consultations with final beneficiaries and /or established mechanisms to regularly collect and incorporate feedback from beneficiaries for CPOs and related projects.	Desk review: Normative frameworks; National Development Plans, ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; Synthesis Review, etc. KII with ILO staff and constituents Survey to ILO staff Focus group discussions with beneficiaries Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica
EQ2. To what extent is ILO's work in Central America relevant to, and aligned with national, sub and regional, and international development frameworks (including UNSDCFs, SDGs) as well as ILO's P&B Outcomes?	2.1 Documented examples where ILO work in Central America explicitly reference and align with national, subnational, regional or international development frameworks (e.g. national development plans, SICA strategies, UNSDCFs, SDGs) 2.2 Documented examples where ILO work in Central America explicitly reference and align with P&B Outcomes, including alignment of XBTC-funded projects to the P&B Outcomes. 2.3 ILO staff's perceptions on the level of adequacy of ILO work in Central America with national, sub and regional, and international development frameworks (including UNSDCFs, SDGs) 2.4 ILO staff's perceptions on the level of adequacy of ILO work in Central America with the ILO's P&B Outcomes, including alignment of the XBTC-funded projects to the P&B Outcomes. 2.5 Perceptions of key stakeholders on the strategic focus and comprehensiveness of ILO work in Central America.	Desk review: Normative frameworks; National Development Plans; UNSDCFs; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; Synthesis Review, etc. KII with ILO staff and constituents Survey to ILO staff Case studies: Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica

EQ3. To what extent do the strategies frameworks integrate gender and non-discrimination (disability, labour migration, Indigenous people, youth), International Labour Standards, Social dialogue, just transition?	3.1 Percentage of strategic frameworks (CPOs) that include specific objectives related to gender equality and/or non-discrimination. 3.2 Number and percentage of projects/programmes that include a gender and non-discrimination related Outcome. 3.3 Perceptions of key stakeholders on the ILO's capacity to integrate gender equality and non-discrimination in the Central America region work	Desk review: Normative frameworks; National Development Plans; UNSDCF's; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; Synthesis Review, etc. Survey to ILO staff
COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN		
EQ4. To what extent is ILO work integrated and complementary to work by other UN agencies, IFIs, and continental and subregional bodies in the countries of intervention and at the subregional level?	4.1 Number of joint planning instruments (e.g., UN Cooperation Frameworks, subregional strategies, interagency programmes) developed with active ILO participation in Central American countries during the 2020–2024 period, disaggregated by country and partner type (UN Agency, IFI, SICA, etc.) 4.2 Number of relevant interagency national and subregional coordination mechanisms (e.g., UN theme groups, regional employment or labour migration platforms) in which the ILO actively participates at least biannually. 4.3 Degree to which ILO technical and managerial staff in Central America perceive their work as strategically aligned with that of other UN agencies and regional actors. 4.4 Main obstacles identified by ILO staff that hinder effective integration with the work of other agencies (e.g., duplication, divergent priorities, weak regional articulation).	Desk review: UNSDCF's, meeting reports, evaluations, Synthesis Review, etc. KII with ILO staff, constituents, other UN agencies, IFIs. Survey to constituents Case studies: Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica
EQ5. Has the ILO successfully adapted its strategies to respond to changes in the socio-political contexts of the Central America region while continuing to achieve its planned results?	5.1 % of ILO country strategies or project documents that include updated risk analyses and mitigation plans specifically related to political or contextual volatility. 5.2 % of government, workers' and employers' representatives who perceive the ILO as responsive and adaptive to changes in the national, sub regional and regional context 5.3 Reported measures, adaptive management strategies and contingency plans designed to ensure the relevance and adaptability of ILO work to different and changing contexts within the Central America sub-region. 5.4 Views and experience of ILO staff at global, regional and country levels, and constituents, and multilateral/bilateral partners regarding the adequacy of the ILO's work's approach and design to adapt and innovate to achieve expected goals in a diversity of contexts.	Desk review: National Development Plans; Country programme reviews; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; Synthesis Review, etc. KII with ILO staff, constituents, stakeholders Survey to ILO staff and constituents Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica
EQ6. To what extent and how were constituents actively involved at all stages of projects and UNSDCF design, planning, and implementation?	6.1 Number and quality of formal consultation or social dialogue mechanisms used during the design and planning phases. 6.2 Level of satisfaction among constituents regarding their participation in decision-making (disaggregated by type of actor)	Desk review: National Development Plans; Country programme reviews; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; Synthesis Review, etc. KII with ILO staff and constituents Survey to ILO staff and constituents Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica

EQ7. To what extent is the ILO **Theory of Change** -explicit or implicit- **at the country and sub-regional levels realistic, valuable and useful** to promote the effectiveness of ILO work, including cross cutting themes (gender equity and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, international labour standards and just transition to environment)?

- 7.1 Evidence of TOCs in case study countries
- 7.2 Extent to which the developed sub-regional ToC designed is tested and proved relevant, including relevant assumptions.

Desk review: National Development Plans; UNSDCF; Country programme reviews; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; Synthesis Review, etc.

KII with ILO staff and constituents.

Case studies: Costa Rica, Honduras, México and

EFFECTIVENESS

EQ8. To what extent and how effectively is the ILO advancing the DW agenda in key areas and priority topics in the Central America subregion (transition to formal economy; lifelong learning and improving labour skills; safety and health, and social protection systems; workers' rights), and what are the key success factors and those that hindrance the DW agenda results?

- 8.1 Documented evidence of delivery of programme and project Outputs and Outcomes, and their contribution to ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B) Outcomes, key enablers and the four Decent Work pillars.
- 8.2 Documented factors contributing to or hindering successful implementation of DW-related initiatives (e.g., political will, institutional capacity, social dialogue, lack of funding, resistance to reform, limited tripartite engagement).

Desk review: Normative frameworks; National Development Plans; Country programme reviews; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; M&E reports; Synthesis Review, etc.

Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica

EQ9. What **progress has been made** in the Central America subregion in **achieving results on cross-cutting issues** (gender and non-discrimination; ILS; Social dialogue; just transition) and **what are the key success factors and those that hinder them** (e.g. extent to which not having DWCP has affected or facilitated achievements to DW related results)?

- 9.1 Number of policy, legal or institutional changes supported by the ILO that promote gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, or climate-resilient work.
- 9.2 Documented evidence and stakeholder perceptions regarding the extent to which institutional, political, and cultural conditions enable or constrain the effective integration of cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender and non-discrimination, ILS, social dialogue, just transition) in ILO-supported interventions, including identification of key enabling factors and barriers.
- 9.3 Proportion of ILO-supported agreements, programmes and activities that explicitly incorporate measures to advance the normative mandate and promote social dialogue, while also addressing at least one cross-cutting priority: gender equality, inclusion of disadvantaged groups, just transition, and/or green jobs.

Desk review: Normative frameworks; National Development Plans; Country programme reviews; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; M&E reports; Synthesis Review, etc.

KII with ILO staff at country level, constituents, stakeholders (CSOs, women)

Survey to constituents

Case studies: Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica

EQ10. Has ILO obtained **positive and negative unexpected results** from its work in Central America? What could have been done differently to improve the ILO results?

- 10.1 Number and type of unintended effects (positive or negative) identified as a result of ILO interventions in Central America.
- 10.2 Stakeholders' perception of unintended changes generated by ILO's work (e.g. increased demand for dialogue in non-targeted sectors, or tensions arising from exclusion of certain groups).

KII with ILO staff at country level and constituents

Survey to ILO staff and constituents

Case studies: Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

EQ11. How have ILO management arrangements contributed to or hindered the DW Agenda results in Central America?	11.1 Extent to which internal ILO management arrangements (decentralization, monitoring systems) enabled timely and effective support to national and subregional priorities. 11.2 ILO staff perception on the adequacy of management arrangements in place toward contributing to DW Agenda results	Desk review: ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; M&E reports, etc. KII with ILO staff at country level and key stakeholders Survey to ILO staff and key stakeholders Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica
EQ12. How effectively have ILO country offices, regional office, Decent Work Teams, and concerned HQ Departments coordinated to provide integrated and strategic technical support and policy dialogue at country level?	12.1 Existence and use of coordination mechanisms across ILO levels (e.g. joint planning meetings, task teams, strategies with shared responsibilities) from country offices to HQ and regional offices 12.2 Stakeholder perception (internal and external) of the effectiveness of ILO technical and policy support delivered at country level.	Desk review: ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; M&E reports, etc. KII with ILO staff and stakeholders Survey to ILO staff and key stakeholders Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica
EFFICIENCY		
EQ13. How cost efficient was the ILO's work in terms of resource expenditure and allocation of financial resources to deliver planned results in Central America?	13.1 Ratio of financial resources spent to Outputs or Outcomes achieved, disaggregated by country and thematic area. 13.2 Extent to which financial resource allocations were adequate, timely, and explicitly budgeted to support the achievement of planned results	Desk review: ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; Financial data, etc. Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica
EQ14. To what extent has ILO leveraged partnerships (with constituents, national and regional institutions, including IFIs, UN agencies, development agencies, and regional bodies) to optimize efficiencies?	14.1 Perception of key stakeholders on the relevance and effectiveness of ILO partnerships and responsiveness mechanisms (e.g., regularity of engagement, clarity of roles, inclusive planning) in advancing Decent Work Outcomes. 14.2 Documented evidence and proportion of interventions implemented through joint delivery mechanisms or co-financing arrangements with constituents, UN agencies, or development partners. 14.3 Number of joint initiatives or programmes co-designed and co-implemented by the ILO and at least one partner (e.g., UN agency, government institution, financial institution, employers' or workers' organization) that include explicit objectives, activities and/or budget lines dedicated to gender equality and/or non-discrimination.	Desk review: Normative frameworks; National Development Plans; Country programme reviews; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; Synthesis Review, etc. KII with ILO staff, constituents, other UN agencies, IFIs. Survey to ILO staff and stakeholders Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica
EQ15. Were the allocations of human resources realistic and sufficient to deliver planned results and to integrate a decent work agenda in the subregion?	15.1 Extent to which human resource allocations (staffing profiles, roles, and time allocation) were adequate and explicitly designated to support delivery of planned DW results. 15.2 Perception of ILO staff on the effectiveness of ILO's partnership and resource use to address DW priorities.	Desk review: ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; Financial data, etc. Survey to ILO staff and stakeholders Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

EQ16. To what extent has the **ILO's work in Central America contributed to measurable and perceived improvements in Decent Work conditions** for employers and workers, particularly among vulnerable groups such as youth, women, labour migrants, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous Peoples?

- 16.1 Number of policy, legal, or institutional reforms adopted with ILO support that improve employment quality, rights at work, social protection, or social dialogue, especially for vulnerable groups.
- 16.2 Stakeholders' perception of improved Decent Work conditions in targeted sectors and per countries, for vulnerable groups.
- 16.3 Documented and perceived evidence of improvements in Decent Work conditions experienced by final beneficiaries —particularly vulnerable groups— as a result of ILO-supported interventions.

Desk review: Country programme reviews; ILO Subregional Strategy; ILO P&B documents and implementation reports; Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products; PRODOC and validation reports; M&E reports; legislative or policy reforms, national labour force survey data, etc.

KII with ILO staff, constituents and stakeholders

Survey to constituents

Contribution Analysis and Outcome Harvesting

Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica

SUSTAINABILITY

EQ17. What is the **likelihood that results achieved through ILO interventions in Central America will be sustained, scaled up or replicated** by constituents and partners after the phase-out of ILO support, while ensuring that governments, employers and workers maintain their commitment to Decent Work in the context of economic, social and climate-related challenges?

- 17.1 Extent to which social dialogue mechanisms are institutionalized and used to design and implement strategies, policies or contingency plans to address Decent Work in the context of economic downturns, climate stress, or social unrest (Commitment)
- 17.2 Level of technical and financial capacity among constituents to continue implementing Decent Work-related initiatives independently. (Sustained)
- 17.3 Stakeholder perception of national ownership and political will to sustain Decent Work Outcomes. (Sustained)
- 17.4 Evidence of new arrangements, partnerships and funding being put in place to support the scaling up or replication of work implemented. (Scaled up or replicated)

Desk review: Normative frameworks; Legislative or policy frameworks; ILO Conventions; M&E reports, etc.

KII with ILO staff, constituents and stakeholders

Survey to ILO staff and stakeholders

Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica

EQ18. To what extent have ILO activities and projects in Central America incorporated **clear and effective exit strategies** to promote the sustainability of results and impact, and what aspects could be strengthened to enhance future interventions?"

- 18.1 % of ILO projects or programmes per country case study with an explicit and documented exit strategy integrated into their design or implementation plans and validated with tripartite constituents and/or key partners.
- 18.2 Stakeholder perception of readiness to sustain and institutionalize results after ILO support ends per country.

Desk review: PRODOC and validation reports; M&E reports; Synthesis Review, etc.

KII with ILO staff and constituents

Survey to ILO staff and constituents

Case studies: Honduras, México and Costa Rica

EQ19. What **lessons and recommendations** could be offered to improve the sustainability of ILO work in the countries of focus and the subregion and to foster ownership?

- 19.1 Extent to which key stakeholders identify areas of success and missed opportunities that affect the sustainability and national/subregional ownership of ILO-supported interventions in the subregion.
- 19.2 Identified internal and external factors that contributed to the success or limited the effectiveness of ILO work in the subregion.
- 19.3 Perception of staff, constituents and stakeholders on how ILO work in the subregion could be improved.

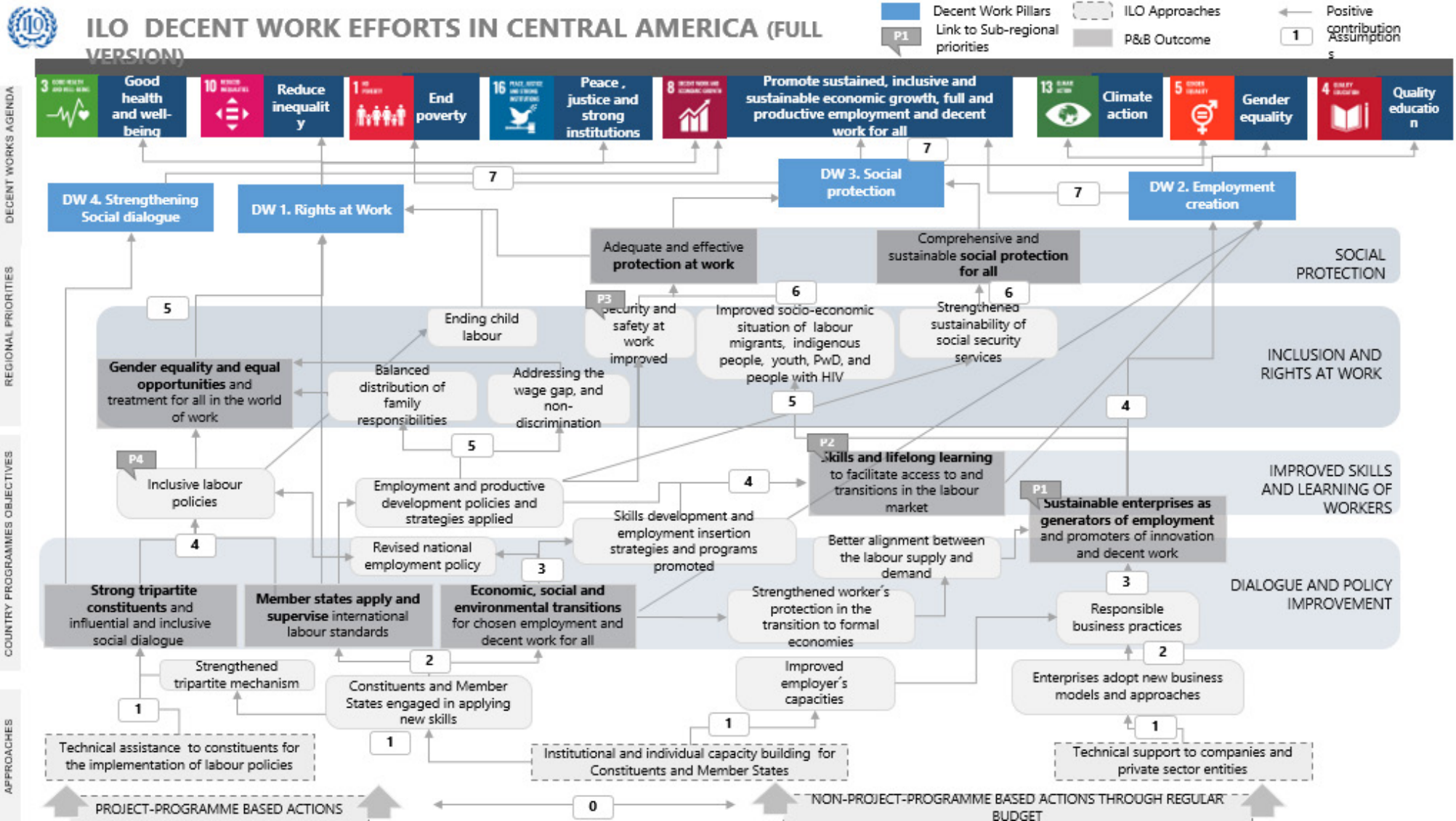
Desk review: M&E reports; Synthesis Review, etc.
KII with ILO staff, constituents and stakeholders
Case studies: Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica

ANNEX 2: THEORY OF CHANGE

How to read the reconstructed ToC.

The reconstructed ToC captures the overall framework with a dual purpose:

- ▶ The ToC explains the functioning and contribution of the ILO work in Central America toward its expected goals (P&B Outcomes, DW pillars and SDGs). The ToC incorporates a systems approach that transcends specific actions and individual Outputs to reflect the interdependence and linkages between different levels and global priorities.
- ▶ It includes what ILO does (ILO approaches), simplified as programmed and non-programme-based actions. These approaches are based on the effective achievement of key internal enablers (operational results), as described in assumption 0.
- ▶ The ToC also reflects CPOs as the intermediate results needed to contribute to achieving P&B goals.
- ▶ P&B goals are linked to DW pillars and the sub-regional priorities included in the strategic plan 2022-2025 for Central America. All these are linked to relevant SDGs. Connections have been made based on the documented results as per the official ILO Dashboard information.
- ▶ The ToC also reflects key causal assumptions (i.e., the necessary conditions for change to happen at all levels, from inputs to expected goals).
- ▶ The logic of the model flows bottom-up to illustrate the causal relationship between what is to be done, and the expected contribution made at different levels in the chain of effects.





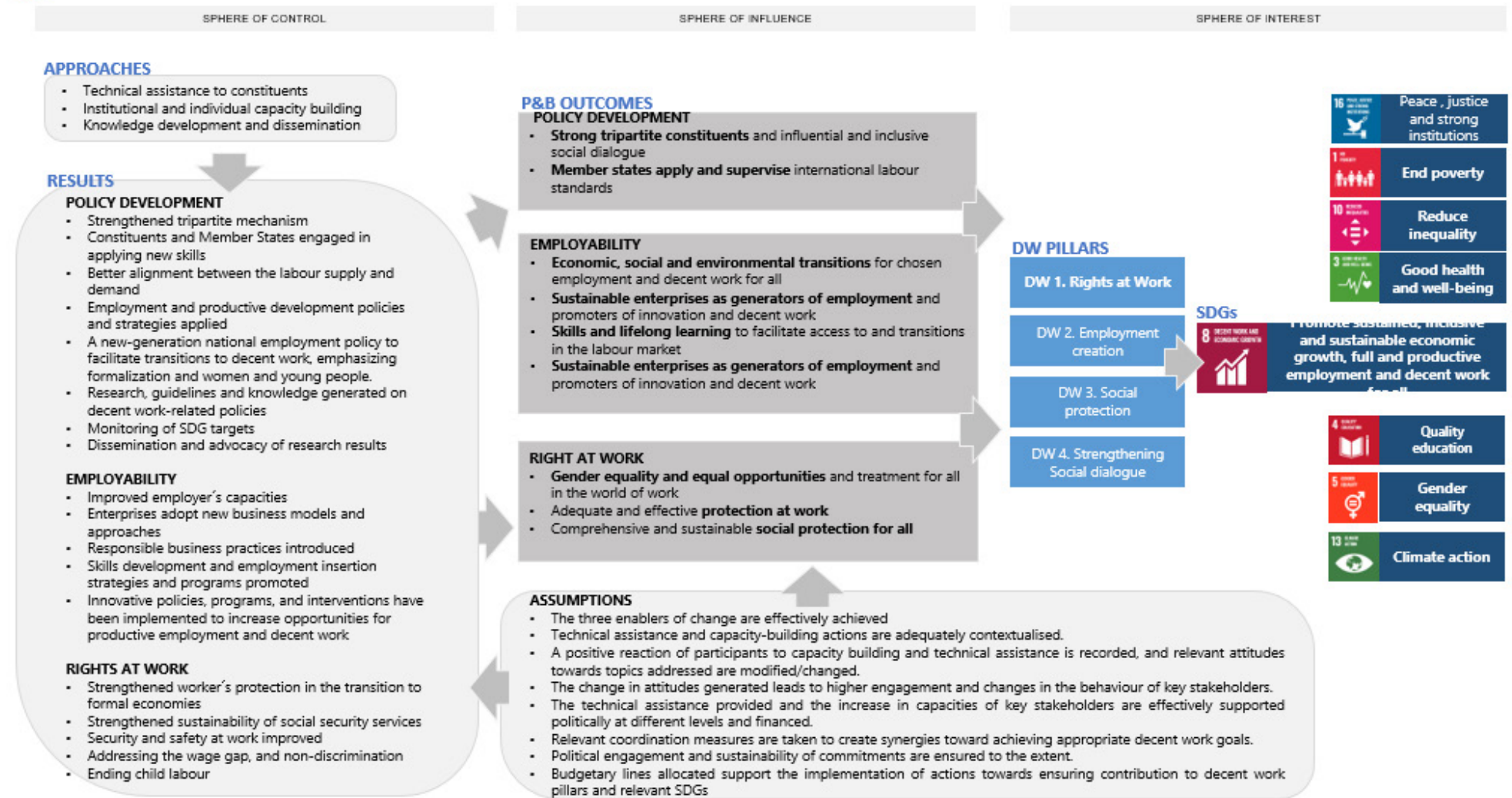
ILO DECENT WORK EFFORTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA (FULL VERSION)

ASSUMPTIONS

0. The three enablers of change are effectively achieved: improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work, improved leadership and governance, and the efficient use of resources.
1. Technical assistance and capacity-building actions are adequately contextualised to the realities (sub-region, national, state, districts, etc.) where they are implemented. The agenda, materials, trainers and approaches are relevant and well-received by participants. Key cross-cutting are clearly integrated into the curricula. Interest in issues addressed through capacity building and technical assistance is activated.
2. A positive reaction of participants to capacity building and technical assistance is recorded, and relevant attitudes towards topics addressed are modified/changed. Participants/constituents and enterprises effectively increase their skills and capacities in relevant areas (e.g., applying international standards, responsible business practices, etc.). Partnerships are adequately selected to create synergies and complementarities and effectively learn from each other's experience.
3. The change in attitudes generated leads to higher engagement and changes in the behaviour of key stakeholders (constituents, workers, and other key stakeholders).
4. The technical assistance provided and the increase in capacities of key stakeholders are effectively supported politically at different levels and financed, leading to better services (e.g. updated policies and decent work oriented programmes and initiatives.) and strengthened systems for better services (e.g., promotion of innovation). Policy and plan influence are key to ensuring this effective support to systems and services.
5. Relevant coordination measures are taken to ensure the different approaches carried out under other outputs/thematic areas work together efficiently and create synergies toward achieving appropriate decent work goals. Accelerators effectively support implementation and maximise results achieved by cross-fertilisation and linking efforts through thematic areas (e.g., South-South cooperation). Clear roles and responsibilities are established. The Theories of Change are revised periodically to ensure their relevance and contribution to designated outputs. Alliances are nurtured and sustained, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders share a common vision and strategy and meaningfully contribute to achieving expected goals. Engagement across sectors is promoted for systemic change. Knowledge-sharing systems are maximised for cross-fertilisation of collective learning and experience sharing.
6. Political engagement and sustainability of commitments are ensured to the extent possible (not affected by elections and/or changing political priorities). The result can either consider the positive adoption of new/revised policies/strategies or the prevention of negative policy proposals. The secured commitments are the basis for prioritising budgetary lines to maintain or increase them. At the national/subnational level, capacity is strengthened through technical assistance with key partners to implement the necessary policies and strategies (e.g., gender-related policies). Policy changes include relevant budgetary commitments and specific budgetary lines covering the focus areas while ensuring these commitments are secured mid-term. Relevant policies are funded and implemented as anticipated. Budget allocation translates into effective spending, improving data systems and producing data
7. Budgetary lines allocated support the implementation of actions towards ensuring contribution to decent work pillars and relevant SDGs



ILO DECENT WORK EFFORTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA (SIMPLIFIED VERSION)



Analysis of the extent to which the reconstructed subregional ILO Theory of Change is useful to promote DW

The reconstructed subregional ToC was developed by the evaluation team during the Inception Phase and validated and tested throughout the evaluation process. Accordingly, each of the identified assumptions is analysed to assess their impact on the achievement of results.

Regarding **Assumption 0**¹⁶¹, which pertains to the effective achievement of **the three Enablers (A, B, C), existing** information up to 2023 indicates that results have only been reported under Enabler A: Improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work. Specifically, one result has been reported in El Salvador and seven in Mexico. The limited information available on results for the three enablers represents a clear limitation of the model, as these enablers are considered essential to play a catalytic role in result achievement.

Regarding **Assumption 1**¹⁶² (Adequacy of Technical Assistance and Capacity Building) and the **adequacy of technical assistance** to specific national contexts, the ILO's work in the subregion has been aligned with national priorities identified through tripartite social dialogue processes and the needs of vulnerable populations – particularly youth and migrants (EQ1). This alignment has been further strengthened by the ILO's proven ability to adapt to evolving socio-political contexts (EQ5), as demonstrated by the adoption of three regional strategies: the Regional Strategy on Labour Migration and Human Mobility, FORLAC 2.0 for Formalization, and the Regional Initiative against Child Labour.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ILO promoted the inclusion of migrants in national health responses across Central America, supported bilateral cooperation between countries of origin and destination, and facilitated social dialogue to inform integrated responses. These actions went beyond the emergency phase, helping to protect migrants and displaced populations. The ILO also supported the signing of bilateral agreements on labour migration, including those established in 2023 between Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala. These efforts demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive and participatory approaches, with broad engagement from constituents throughout both the design and implementation phases, thereby strengthening national ownership and alignment (EQ6).

In terms of the **adequacy of capacity building**, as previously mentioned in the technical brief for this evaluation question, the evaluation team lacked access to specific documentation on standalone capacity development activities. However, capacity-building efforts were identified within the project implementation framework. Eight of the nine² case study projects included initiatives aimed at strengthening technical and professional skills. These encompassed thematic areas such as gender equality promotion (CRI/18/02/CRI), fair recruitment for migrants and refugees (CRI/19/50/UND), the application of Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) principles (RLA/22/07/EUR), risk management (HND/21/02/HND), and occupational safety and health (MEX/20/05/USA).

While no specific data on participant satisfaction with capacity development activities was available, the initiatives reviewed were found to incorporate key cross-cutting issues aligned with organizational priorities and were adapted to the contextual realities of implementation.

To assess **Assumption 2**¹⁶³ regarding participants' **perceptions of technical assistance** and capacity-building activities, it is important to highlight that, in the case of technical assistance, survey results reveal a predominantly positive perception among participants regarding the technical assistance activities implemented by the ILO. Specifically, 69% of respondents rated the ILO's ability to adapt its interventions to contextual needs positively, with 32% describing it as "very good." This favourable assessment suggests that participants recognize the relevance and flexibility of the interventions' design and implementation, both key components of effective technical assistance and capacity development. Moreover, the low proportion

¹⁶¹ The three enablers of change are effectively achieved: improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work, improved leadership and governance, and the efficient use of resources.

¹⁶² Technical assistance and capacity-building actions are adequately contextualised to the realities (sub-region, national, state, districts, etc.) where they are implemented. The agenda, materials, trainers and approaches are relevant and well-received by participants. Key cross-cutting are clearly integrated into the curricula. Interest in issues addressed through capacity building and technical assistance is activated.

¹⁶³ A positive reaction of participants to capacity building and technical assistance is recorded, and relevant attitudes towards topics addressed are modified/changed. Participants/constituents and enterprises effectively increase their skills and capacities in relevant areas (e.g., applying international standards, responsible business practices, etc.). Partnerships are adequately selected to create synergies and complementarities and effectively learn from each other's experience.

of negative responses (16%) reflects broad acceptance of the intervention strategy, reinforcing the view that the activities are both appropriate and effective. Positive perceptions appear to be primarily driven by the focus on observable Outcomes and concrete implementation, elements that are especially valued in this type of intervention, beyond the internal planning and operational challenges identified by ILO staff. Overall, these findings indicate that participants highly value the ILO's adaptive capacity in delivering technical assistance and capacity-building activities, recognizing their relevance, flexibility, and results-oriented approach (EQ5).

However, regarding the **assessment of capacity-building activities**, no data were available on participants' feedback about the training they received, such as satisfaction surveys. What could be verified is that, within the framework of the impact-oriented analysis aimed at determining how much the ILO's work in Central America contributed to measurable and perceived improvements in decent work conditions for employers and workers – especially among vulnerable groups – some of the most significant changes included in EQ16.

At the Output level, notable achievements were identified during the period 2020-2023 related to **increasing the skills and capacities of constituents and companies** in relevant areas, such as enhancing the ability of constituents, partners, and stakeholders to respect, promote, and realize fundamental principles and rights at work (Output 1.4). Additionally, there was an increase in the institutional capacity of employer and business membership organizations to be strong, independent, and representative (Output 2.1). The capacity of constituents to promote investments and decent work in the care economy (5.2), as well as to develop more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable enterprises in supply chains and responsible business conduct for decent work (Output 4.2), was also strengthened (EQ8).

Regarding the **selection of partnerships to create synergies and complementarities** and to effectively learn from each other's experience, it was found that the subregion leveraged partnerships from a financial perspective – securing contributions from various partners such as multi-bilateral donors, the UN system, the EU, countries within the subregion, the private sector, and others. From an operational perspective, many projects benefited from partnerships with other UN agencies, governments, IFIs, universities, and others through localized implementation and joint technical work, which enhanced outreach and effectiveness. Overall, partnerships were generally perceived as relevant and potentially effective, especially due to technical complementarity and synergy (EQ14).

Concerning **Assumption 3**¹⁶⁴, related to **changes in attitudes** that lead to greater engagement and behavioural shifts among key stakeholders (constituents, workers, and others), the most significant change observed is the **inclusion of the needs of vulnerable populations** and the mainstreaming of cross-cutting approaches. One of the attitude shifts identified through interviews and contributing to the Outcome Harvesting analysis is the **strengthened promotion of gender equality**. Notable examples include initiatives related to the care economy in Costa Rica and the promotion of domestic workers' rights in the Dominican Republic. These results have been driven by changes in mindset and the recognition of gender roles within societal functioning. However, these efforts often face discontinuity when political transitions or resource constraints affect national counterparts (EQ9). In addition, as part of the ILO's work in Mexico, one beneficiary reported a shift in mindset, recognizing that green initiatives can also generate employment opportunities and contribute to the promotion of decent work (EQ16). Finally, although **green jobs promotion, youth employability, and indigenous peoples' inclusion** have been **integrated into selected projects**, no significant shift in mindset has been observed regarding these themes. This is largely due to a limited systemic impact, stemming from weak articulation between pilot initiatives, national policy frameworks, and long-term resource commitments (EQ9).

Regarding **Assumption 4**¹⁶⁵, it was found that from 2020 to 2023, significant progress was made in the subregion in strengthening national and regional services and systems, with policies and

¹⁶⁴ The change in attitudes generated leads to higher engagement and changes in the behaviour of key stakeholders (constituents, workers, and other key stakeholders).

¹⁶⁵ The technical assistance provided and the increase in capacities of key stakeholders are effectively supported politically at different levels and financed, leading to better services (e.g. updated policies and decent work-oriented programmes and initiatives.) and strengthened systems for better services (e.g., promotion of innovation). Policy and plan influence are key to ensuring this effective support to systems and services.

institutions technically supported by the ILO playing a key role. Examples include LMIS/LMO systems in Costa Rica, the WIND methodology in Mexico, and IHCAFE's compliance model in Honduras, where political will and institutional capacity, reinforced by ILO interventions, served as important enablers. Additionally, many of these achievements were directly connected to decent work through Pillar 1 (rights at work), especially through institutionalized frameworks like SIMLA in Costa Rica; and Pillar 2 (employment creation), which also facilitated structural reforms such as the labour observatories in the subregion (EQ17). Furthermore, the technical assistance provided, and the strengthening of key stakeholders' capacities are effectively supported at the political level, as confirmed by the fact that both groups identified the adoption or reform of national policies and legal frameworks as a key change. According to the survey results, 25% of ILO staff and 33% of constituent informants view the adoption or reform of national labour policies or legal frameworks as highly relevant (EQ16).

In addition, it was found that in the subregion, the ILO is **leading efforts to improve services** by updating policies and decent work-oriented programmes and initiatives, as well as strengthening systems for better services in several of its countries. (EQ17).

Regarding **Assumption 5**¹⁶⁶, concerning the **coordination efforts** to ensure that the various approaches implemented across different Outputs and thematic areas work together effectively and generate synergies toward reaching suitable decent work objectives. However, through interviewed informants, it was also identified that weak communication across regional, subregional, and HQ levels led to fragmented actions, inconsistent agendas, and reduced visibility in multi-agency environments (EQ11, EQ12).

Concerning the periodic **revision of the Theories of Change** to ensure their relevance and contribution to designed Outputs, it was mentioned by ILO staff that, at the subregional level, there was no periodic review at the strategic level with all the countries in the subregion, since the disconnection and low level of coordination between countries (especially between Costa Rica and Mexico) hindered planning between offices and the creation of conditions for monitoring the Theory of Change, the optimal use of resources between country offices, as well as the strategy of truly thinking of the area as a subregion.

It was also found that **alliances were nurtured and sustained**, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders share a common vision and strategy and meaningfully contribute to achieving expected goals, as well as engagement across sectors for systemic change. Concretely, ILO's work was incorporated into most UNDAFs and UNSDCFs, enabling coordinated action with agencies such as UNDP, UNHCR, and FAO in areas like decent work, social protection, and gender equality; and at the project level, joint initiatives demonstrated strong collaboration with UN and non-UN stakeholders, enhancing technical reach and local impact (EQ4). Nevertheless, **knowledge-sharing systems** was identified as a challenge. ILO staff and informants from other UN agencies identified limited monitoring systems and mechanisms for capturing and organizing lessons learned as factors that restrict the reach and effectiveness of joint initiatives, especially in collaborations with other UN agencies and stakeholders (EQ14).

Regarding **Assumption 6**¹⁶⁷ on **political engagement and sustainability of commitments**, it was identified that political participation, and the sustainability of commitments were guaranteed at various levels in the subregion during the period analysed. In terms of **positive adoption of**

¹⁶⁶ Relevant coordination measures are taken to ensure the different approaches carried out under other outputs/thematic areas work together efficiently and create synergies toward achieving appropriate decent work goals. Clear roles and responsibilities are established. The Theories of Change are revised periodically to ensure their relevance and contribution to designated outputs. Alliances are nurtured and sustained, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders share a common vision and strategy and meaningfully contribute to achieving expected goals. Engagement across sectors is promoted for systemic change. Knowledge-sharing systems are maximised for cross-fertilisation of collective learning and experience sharing.

¹⁶⁷ Political engagement and sustainability of commitments are ensured to the extent possible (not affected by elections and/or changing political priorities). The result can either consider the positive adoption of new/revised policies/strategies or the prevention of negative policy proposals. The secured commitments are the basis for prioritising budgetary lines to maintain or increase them. At the national/subnational level, capacity is strengthened through technical assistance with key partners to implement the necessary policies and strategies (e.g., gender-related policies). Policy changes include relevant budgetary commitments and specific budgetary lines covering the focus areas while ensuring these commitments are secured mid-term. Relevant policies are funded and implemented as anticipated. Budget allocation translates into effective spending, improving data systems and producing data.

new/revised policies/strategies or the prevention of negative policy proposals, around 41% of the results achieved by the subregion included structural Outcomes with direct impacts on public policies, protocols, conventions, and reforms (achievements that are highly institutionalized, formal, and lasting, making them more sustainable). For example, a policy on the rights of indigenous peoples in Guatemala was developed, incorporating aspects of Convention No. 169 promoted by the ILO (EQ17).

Concerning the **secured commitments for prioritizing budgetary lines to maintain or increase the results**, it was identified that around 56% of the subregion results included strategic and operational achievements with direct effects through strategies, plans, systems development, and roadmaps/toolkits, the sustainability of which depends on effective implementation, the continued support of governments and key stakeholders, and the manifested commitment to continued external funding (EQ17).

About the **national/subnational level, capacity strengthened through technical assistance with key partners to implement the necessary policies** and strategies (e.g., gender-related policies), it was found that several CPO results included Outcomes related to the creation of structures such as the establishment of working groups, commissions, or dialogue/work centres through technical assistance with key partners such as other UN agencies, universities, constituents, among others. For example, the reactivation of the Roundtable for the Treatment of Issues Related to International Labour Standards through a Tripartite Agreement by the Government of the Dominican Republic, in consensus with the constituents.

Regarding **Assumption 7¹⁶⁸, budget allocation that translates into effective spending for improving data systems and producing data**, several related results were identified in the subregion. For example, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS) and the General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs (DGME) designed, adopted, and implemented the Labour Migration Information System (SIMLA) in Costa Rica (EQ17).

Finally, **Assumption 7**, related to the support allocated through **budgetary lines** to the implementation of actions towards **ensuring contribution to the decent work pillars and relevant SDGs**, a subregional financial execution rate was identified that was primarily directed toward Decent Work Pillar 1: Rights at Work, particularly through funding for efforts on Workplace Protection for All (P&B Outcome 6) and Regulatory Action for Social Justice (P&B Outcome 1), with a total execution of 48% of reported expenditures for the period analysed. Pillar 2: Job Creation also had a significant budget allocation and execution (20% of expenditure across decent work pillars), especially through support for the implementation of employment-related actions for just transitions (P&B Outcome 3) and sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work (P&B Outcome 4) (EQ13).

Regarding the budget lines allocated to the implementation of the relevant SDGs, a majority allocation was identified to advance efforts toward Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. In addition, financial support was provided for efforts toward Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; and Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

¹⁶⁸ Budgetary lines allocated support the implementation of actions towards ensuring contribution to decent work pillars and relevant SDGs. Budgetary lines allocated support the implementation of actions towards ensuring contribution to decent work pillars and relevant SDGs.

ANNEX 3: KEY FINDINGS

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT

EQ1. To what extent and how are the objectives of the **ILO CPOs and related projects** for the selected countries **relevant to the needs of the constituents and final beneficiaries**, including the vulnerable groups?

- 1.1 The importance of the **ILO's CPOs and related projects in Central America is generally significant, based on national priorities and well aligned** with the ILO's P&B Outcomes and global frameworks, such as the SDGs.
- 1.2 The ILO's **tripartite structure strengthens national ownership**, and the strategic coherence of CPOs is clear, with high alignment reported by ILO staff and strong support from constituents, especially for initiatives aimed at transitioning from the informal to the formal economy, skills development, labour inspection, and occupational safety and health.
- 1.3 The effectiveness and long-term relevance of interventions are undermined by **ongoing structural and operational challenges**. These include inconsistent involvement of stakeholders in project design, especially in places like Haiti and Nicaragua; limited participation in designing donor-funded projects; and systemic issues like frequent political changes, limited technical capacity, and bureaucratic delays. These problems undermine continuity, ownership, and the depth of engagement.

EQ2. To what extent is ILO's work in Central America relevant to, and **aligned with national, sub and regional, and international development frameworks** (including UNSDCF, SDGs) as well as ILO's P&B Outcomes?

- 2.1 **The ILO's work in Central America closely aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 8 on decent work**, which makes up 71% of reported results. Mexico and Costa Rica are leading in implementation, while countries like Nicaragua, Haiti, and Cuba show lower levels, reflecting differences in institutions and cooperation. The ILO also supports SDGs 5, 13, 1, and 10, though less frequently. staff perceptions emphasize strong alignment with international frameworks, strengthening the legitimacy of ILO efforts and partnerships with multilateral actors.
- 2.2 **The ILO demonstrates strong integration with national cooperation frameworks in Central America, particularly through the decent work pillars**, which appear in nearly all UNSDCF. While social protection is well addressed, social dialogue and labour rights are less frequently covered, with Mexico being the only country to incorporate all four pillars fully. This alignment is reinforced by joint planning, adaptation to national contexts, and the use of existing cooperation frameworks, which enhance local ownership and ensure the sustainability of interventions.
- 2.3 **Alignment with the P&B highlights a strong focus on labour protection (Outcome 6), demonstrating its importance across vulnerable contexts**. Outcomes 3, 4, and 5 also stand out, while limited attention to Outcomes 8 and A points to institutional and evidence gaps. Mexico leads in contributions, with a more balanced approach in Haiti. Despite adaptability to different contexts, a gap remains between strategic planning and implementation, emphasizing the need to improve coherence.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

EQ3. To what extent do the strategies frameworks **integrate gender and non-discrimination** (disability, labour migration, Indigenous people, youth), **International Labour Standards, Social dialogue, just transition?**

- 3.1. **ILO action in Central America reflects a sustained institutional effort to integrate cross-cutting priorities** such as equality, non-discrimination, social dialogue, and just transition, yet their practical relevance often diminishes when sectoral agendas give limited visibility to inclusion and rights-based approaches.
- 3.2. **Notable advances in gender mainstreaming, including work with employers and initiatives in strategic sectors** like care and manufacturing, contrast with persistent limitations in applying gender-transformative frameworks, due to institutional gaps, insufficient technical resources, and uneven follow-up across countries.
- 3.3. **The inclusion of vulnerable groups** – migrants, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples – **shows fragmented progress**, with isolated results concentrated in specific projects or countries, and strong dependence on external partnerships, national political will, and ILO's internal coordination capacity.
- 3.4. **The promotion of international labour standards and social dialogue remains a consistent area of ILO engagement**, though its effectiveness is constrained in contexts of weak institutions or limited autonomy of social actors, while emerging agendas such as youth participation and just transition are still at an early operational stage.

COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESING

EQ4. To what extent is **ILO work integrated and complementary to work by other UN agencies, IFIs, and continental and subregional bodies** in the countries of intervention and at the subregional level?

- 4.1 **At the regional and subregional levels, the ILO effectively integrated into multi-country strategies** on labour migration, formalization, child labour, and care work, aligning **with major UN and multilateral frameworks**.
- 4.2 **At the country level, the ILO's work was incorporated into most United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and UNSDCFs**, enabling coordinated action with agencies such as UNDP, UNHCR, and FAO in areas like decent work, social protection, and gender equality. **At the project level**, joint initiatives demonstrated **strong collaboration with UN and non-UN stakeholders**, enhancing technical reach and local impact.
- 4.3 However, **across all levels, challenges and limitations to effective integration** were identified, such as **structural and institutional barriers, including competition for resources, lack of shared understanding of ILO's normative mandate, limited staffing, and procedural complexities** that restricted the effectiveness and depth of joint efforts.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

EQ5. Has the ILO successfully adapted its strategies to **respond to changes in the socio-political contexts** of the Central America region while continuing to achieve its planned results?

5.1. Between 2020 and 2024, **the ILO in Central America implemented key strategies noted for their tripartite, territorial, and preventive approaches**. While the ILO demonstrated adaptability to sociopolitical shifts and emergencies like the pandemic, gaps remained in risk planning and monitoring. Its flexible, context-sensitive approach was valued, although it tended to prioritize operational adjustments over structural change.

5.2. **The ILO has shown adaptability in challenging contexts**, shifting towards more focused and coordinated interventions amid institutional and humanitarian crises. Despite improved institutional flexibility, **structural constraints and unclear expectations regarding ILO's leadership in systemic crises remain**. External perceptions are largely positive, though technical staff are more aware of operational and administrative challenges than external partners.

5.3. ILO staff identified **several constraints affecting the Organization's adaptability** in Central America, including adverse conditions for labour rights advocacy; bureaucratic rigidity and lack of flexible strategies; high staff turnover and limited institutional continuity; weak presence in countries like Cuba; and a predominantly reactive approach to crises and geopolitical shifts. These challenges hinder the ILO's ability to anticipate and respond effectively in volatile settings.

EQ6. To what extent and how were **constituents actively involved at all stages of projects** and UNSDCF design, planning, and implementation?

6.1 **The ILO has demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive and participatory approaches**, with broad constituent engagement integrated into both the design and implementation stages. The UNSDCF design phase was characterized by wide-ranging consultations aligned with national priorities. Countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico held extensive workshops involving diverse stakeholders, including marginalized groups. These efforts fostered national ownership and alignment, though challenges remain in translating inputs into concrete actions. While many stakeholders valued the participatory nature of the process, others pointed to inconsistencies in the quality of dialogue and limited engagement at the local level. Additional concerns were raised regarding donor-driven designs and the insufficient integration of constituent feedback.

6.2 **At the project level, tripartite consultations** with governments, employers, and workers **helped strengthen legitimacy, although their quality and consistency varied**. Despite notable progress, ensuring that UNSDCF processes and ILO interventions fully reflect constituent priorities still requires better integration of inputs, stronger local-level engagement, and targeted efforts to address operational, political, and structural barriers to inclusive and sustained participation. These gaps underscore the need for more systematic, context-sensitive, and actionable participation mechanisms that ensure constituent input is meaningfully incorporated across all phases.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

EQ7. To what extent is the ILO **Theory of Change** -explicit or implicit- **at the country and sub-regional levels realistic, evaluable and useful** to promote the effectiveness of ILO work, including cross cutting themes (gender equity and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, international labour standards and just transition to environment)?

- 7.1 **None of the projects analysed were developed using an explicit Theory of Change model.** However, some incorporated assumptions within their intervention logic, which contributed to strengthening strategic planning and the identification of contextual risks.
- 7.2 **Concrete progress was only recorded under Enabler A (“Improved knowledge and influence”),** with results limited to El Salvador and Mexico. This suggests a partial implementation of the strategic enablers defined in the regional Theory of Change, limiting their overall contribution to expected outcomes.
- 7.3 **The ILO’s technical assistance was perceived as adequate and aligned with national priorities and the needs of vulnerable populations.** The Organization demonstrated adaptability through targeted regional strategies addressing issues such as labour migration, formalization, and child labour. Capacity-building efforts were embedded in most projects, although documentation on standalone training activities was lacking.
- 7.4 Sixty-nine per cent of respondents rated the **ILO’s adaptability to national contexts positively, highlighting its flexibility and results-oriented approach.** However, no direct data on participant satisfaction regarding training activities was available. Nonetheless, the initiatives were found to address relevant needs, including labour rights, just transition, and gender equality.
- 7.5 **Shifts in attitudes related to gender equality and green economy were identified, driven by specific interventions.** However, in areas such as youth employability and indigenous inclusion, progress was limited due to a lack of systemic integration and continuity between pilot initiatives and national policy frameworks.
- 7.6 **Significant institutional strengthening was achieved in the subregion, with improvements in services, policies, and labour systems.** ILO interventions supported technical and structural reforms in key areas such as labour observatories and migration information systems. These results were closely linked to the decent work pillars and showed strong national ownership.
- 7.7 **Coordination mechanisms facilitated technical alignment and social dialogue** through platforms like FORLAC (Formalization Strategy in Latin American and the Caribbean), SIALC (Labour Information and Analysis System for Latin America and the Caribbean), and CINTERFOR. However, poor communication across regional, subregional, and HQ levels led to fragmented actions and inconsistent agendas. **Despite strong partnerships, knowledge-sharing systems remain a critical weakness.**
- 7.8 Approximately **41% of results had a structural impact on public policies and regulatory frameworks,** while 56% represented strategic and operational achievements. Sustainability will depend on ongoing institutional support and continued external funding. Participatory structures also helped strengthen governance and implementation at national and subnational levels.
- 7.9 Forty-eight per cent of **the budget** was allocated to Decent Work Pillar 1, and 20% to Pillar 2, **prioritizing labour rights and employment generation.** Financial resources were also aligned with the SDGs – primarily SDG 8, but also SDGs 5, 13, and 1. **This budget allocation reflects a commitment to sustainable and transformative results.**

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

EFFECTIVENESS

EQ8. To what extent and how effectively is the ILO advancing the DW agenda in key areas and priority topics in the Central America subregion (transition to formal economy; lifelong learning and improving labour skills; safety and health, and social protection systems; workers' rights), and what are the key success factors and those that hindrance the DW agenda results?

- 8.1 In effectiveness in advancing DW agenda and P&B Outcomes, **the analysis identified significant achievements, particularly in the key area of rights at work**, which accounted for over half of the reported outcomes, with notable progress in Protection at work for all (Outcome 6), Social dialogue (Outcome 2), Employment for just transitions (Outcome 3), and Normative action (Outcome 1). Social justice through decent work (Outcome 8) and sustainable enterprises (Outcome 4) showed the least advancement.
- 8.2 Regarding country contributions, **Mexico led overall contributions (17%), followed by Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica**. Nicaragua and Cuba reported minimal progress, mainly in social dialogue and employment for just transitions.
- 8.3 At P&B Outputs and Projects levels, **most reported outputs were linked to migration (Output 6.4), labour administration (2.4), and employers' organizations (2.1)**; however, significant gaps remained in outputs related to entrepreneurship, formalization, and effective labour standards.
- 8.4 **Key enabling factors** included strategic tripartite alliances and partnerships with UN agencies, the ILO's recognized institutional legitimacy, and the technical quality and adaptability of its teams. However, **challenges** such as limited financial and human resources, political instability in certain countries, the Covid-19 pandemic, and bureaucratic constraints were identified as persistent barriers to the successful implementation and achievement of the DW Agenda results in the subregion.

EQ9. What progress has been made in the Central America subregion in **achieving results on cross-cutting issues** (gender and non-discrimination; ILS; Social dialogue; just transition) and **what are the key success factors and those that hinder them** (e.g. extent to which not having DWCP has affected or facilitated achievements to DW related results)?

- 9.1 ILO-supported **initiatives have strengthened gender equality** on the ground through concrete actions such as care economy pilots, women's leadership promotion, and tools for labour inspection with a gender lens; **however, these efforts often face discontinuity when political transitions or resource constraints affect national counterparts**.
- 9.2 In several countries, **ILO contributions have enabled practical advances in non-discrimination**, including inclusive employment practices, certifications for diversity and health protection protocols for migrants; yet **these outcomes tend to be isolated and dependent on project-specific partnerships** rather than institutionalized responses.
- 9.3 Field-level experiences show that **social dialogue and labour standards are most effectively advanced through localized tripartite platforms and policy innovations**, as seen in Costa Rica and Mexico, while structural limitations persist where social actors lack autonomy or formal negotiation spaces.
- 9.4 Although **green jobs promotion, youth employability, and indigenous peoples' inclusion** have been integrated into selected projects, progress **remains fragmented**, with limited systemic impact due to weak articulation between pilot initiatives, national policy frameworks and long-term resource commitments.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

EQ10. Has ILO obtained **positive and negative unexpected results** from its work in Central America? What could have been done differently to improve the ILO results?

- 10.1 The ILO's interventions in Central America produced **positive unintended effects, extending their influence beyond initial objectives**. Major results included the development of technical and collaborative networks (notably in Haiti, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic), upgrades in productive infrastructure in Haiti, and the expansion of specialized training that changed perceptions of women's economic roles. In Mexico, institutional changes were noted, such as legal reforms and the establishment of dialogue mechanisms. Furthermore, awareness of emerging issues like gender equality, the informal economy, and sustainability grew. These effects reflect the ILO's ongoing transformative impact, supported by technical assistance and multi-stakeholder engagement.
- 10.2 **Unintended negative effects mainly stemmed from obstacles faced during project implementation**. Some of these unintended results include technical disagreements (Mexico), insecurity (Honduras), budget constraints (Panama and Haiti), and regional disruptions such as natural disasters, the pandemic, and political instability. These challenges highlight the importance of stronger risk management and contingency planning.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

EQ11. How have **ILO management arrangements** contributed to or hindered the DW Agenda results in Central America? / **EQ12.** How effectively have **ILO country offices, regional office, Decent Work Teams, and concerned HQ Departments coordinated** to provide integrated and strategic technical support and policy dialogue at country level?

- 11.1 The **ILO's multi-level structure** in Central America, with regional, subregional, and national offices, **enabled strategic coherence and adaptation to national priorities** in advancing the Decent Work Agenda. While the Regional Office ensured thematic leadership, and subregional and national offices promoted local engagement, the structure's complexity and bureaucratic processes often caused delays in funding and decision-making, limiting operational agility.
- 11.2 From 2020 to 2023, **coordination mechanisms**, including tripartite governance, technical units, and platforms such as FORLAC, SIALC, and CINTERFOR, **supported inclusive dialogue and evidence-based planning**. However, weak communication across regional, subregional, and HQ levels led to fragmented actions, inconsistent agendas, and reduced visibility in multi-agency environments. **Operational management combined strong governance, expert-led implementation, and flexible funding** (notably RBSA), enabling strategic alignment and stakeholder engagement.
- 11.3 **Despite resource monitoring tools**, operational monitoring tools and external evaluations, **challenges such as fragmented coordination, inconsistent use of tools and the absence of a homogeneous M&E system, limited field expertise, and poor knowledge management** reduced institutional continuity and limited the conversion of monitoring insights into actionable improvements.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

EFFICIENCY

EQ13. How **cost efficient** was the **ILO's work** in terms of resource expenditure and allocation of financial resources to deliver planned results in Central America?

- 13.1 In terms of delivering efficiency P&B Outcomes, **an overall cost-effective and moderately efficient fund utilization rate was identified**, with a regional execution rate of 76% and a generally proportional relationship between expenditures and reported P&B Outcomes results. While certain areas such as gender equality and employment promotion showed high efficiency, others like normative action needed more investment.
- 13.2 At the country level, **all countries under-executed their budgets**; Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Haiti demonstrated higher efficiency in result generation relative to financial inputs, whereas Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador showed low outcome returns despite high expenditures.
- 13.3 Regarding Project-level efficiency, **two out of five evaluated projects reported low efficiency** due to limited planning, resource constraints, and lack of gender-responsive budgeting, contrasting with positive financial metrics at the outcome level.
- 13.4 **Perception of financial adequacy and efficiency varied across informants and levels.** ILO staff reported a more favourable perception than external ones, but both highlighted the need for improved strategic planning and resource allocation to optimize effectiveness.

EQ14. To what extent has **ILO leveraged partnerships** (with constituents, national and regional institutions, including IFIs, UN agencies, development agencies, and regional bodies) to optimize efficiencies?

- 14.1 At the regional level, the evaluation found that, from a financial perspective, **the ILO leveraged partnerships to get financial contributions from multi-bilateral donors (41%), the UN system (23%), and the EU (14%)**, which were the principal sources of funding, supporting key outcomes such as labour rights (Outcome 1), labour migration (Outcome 6), and employment creation (Outcome 4). Regarding operational effectiveness, **82% of projects benefited from partnerships through localized implementation and joint technical work, enhancing outreach and effectiveness.**
- 14.2 Concerning **country-level engagement, in Mexico and Costa Rica, the EU and UN agencies supported labour migration and enterprise development.** In Honduras, EU funds were focused on labour rights and normative frameworks. About **adequacy of partnerships at the country level, some areas for improvement were identified.** Despite perceived relevance, partnerships were often project-based rather than part of long-term strategies. Weak institutionalization, limited coordination mechanisms, and the lack of systems to capture and replicate successful practices were identified as barriers to sustained impact.

EQ15. Were the **allocations of human resources** realistic and sufficient to deliver planned results and to integrate a decent work agenda in the subregion?

- 15.1 Concerning the allocation of human resources to achieve P&B Outcomes, a weak positive correlation was identified between working hours and achieved outcomes, indicating that **increased staff time did not consistently lead to higher performance.**
- 15.2 Regarding P&B Output levels, Outputs 2.1, 1.2, and 7.5 received the highest staff time investment, reflecting **strategic prioritization despite overall limited alignment between resource input and output volume.**
- 15.3 **At the country level, structural limitations, including insufficient staffing, high turnover, and the absence of a regional human resources strategy,** significantly hindered effective implementation and continuity.
- 15.4 **Perceptions of human resources sufficiency were mixed.** While external stakeholders generally rated ILO staff positively, internal feedback revealed critical concerns about adequacy and technical depth, especially among specialists.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

EQ16. To what extent has the **ILO's work in Central America contributed to measurable and perceived improvements in Decent Work conditions** for employers and workers, particularly among vulnerable groups such as youth, women, labour migrants, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous Peoples?

- 16.1 Between 2020 and 2023, **Costa Rica, Mexico, and Guatemala made notable progress in decent work, especially in adopting and implementing labour standards.** Costa Rica advanced reforms in care, domestic work, and child labour, while Mexico focused on migrant rights, occupational safety, and child labour. Both developed national employability and labour recovery strategies. Social protection systems were strengthened, particularly in institutional frameworks and pension sustainability. Panama led the way in social dialogue through tripartite bodies and improved governance, with notable progress also seen in Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico.
- 16.2 **Regarding labour conditions for vulnerable groups, improvements were made through technical assistance, capacity building, and regional coordination.** Notable ILO support included developing the National Care System in the Dominican Republic and establishing childcare centres in Guatemala's coffee-growing regions. In labour migration, regional plans were adopted under the pro tempore presidencies of Costa Rica and Mexico. Progress was achieved in eradicating child labour (e.g., MIRTI model) and promoting gender equality by recognizing unpaid domestic work and formalizing jobs in sectors dominated by women. Surveys revealed perception gaps between technical staff and national stakeholders, highlighting the need to better align technical cooperation with local realities priorities.

SUSTAINABILITY

EQ17. What is the **likelihood that results achieved through ILO interventions in Central America will be sustained, scaled up or replicated** by constituents and partners after the phase-out of ILO support, while ensuring that governments, employers and workers maintain their commitment to Decent Work in the context of economic, social and climate-related challenges?

- 17.1 Between 2020 and 2023, **ILO interventions in Central America were relevant and aligned with decent work priorities, though their long-term sustainability remains moderate.** The most enduring results were linked to Protection at work for all (Outcomes 6), Social justice (Outcome 1) and Gender equality (Outcome 5), particularly through institutionalized frameworks such as SIMLA in Costa Rica. Employment creation (Outcome 3), Sustainable enterprises (Outcome 4) and Social dialogue (Outcome 2) also enabled structural reforms, such as labour observatories. The less proportion of outcomes with high probability of sustainability were Social Protection (Outcome 7) and Social justice (Outcome 8). Mexico achieved the highest number of sustainable outcomes, including a migrant rights law aligned with ILO standards.
- 17.2 **Sustainability was driven by six main factors:** institutional ownership, political will, tripartite dialogue, practical tools and methodologies, capacity development, and collaboration with UN agencies. Notable examples include LMIS/LMO systems in Costa Rica, the WIND methodology in Mexico, and IHCAFE's compliance model in Honduras. Political will and institutional capacity were the most frequently cited enablers.
- 17.3 However, **several challenges persist**, including inconsistent political commitment, leadership turnover, and limited financial resources. Many initiatives lacked clear exit strategies and relied on short-term funding, limiting long-term impact. Inter-agency coordination and the fragmented nature of project-based interventions also constrained sustainability.
- 17.4 **Scaling up ILO-supported initiatives will depend on strategic design, institutionalization, and knowledge dissemination.** Projects such as VZF (Mexico) and CLEAR (Honduras) show strong replication potential. Pilots like PROMOVER (Mexico) and RBCLAC (Costa Rica) are also promising. Survey results show that 61% of ILO staff view sustained improvements in labour outcomes as likely or very likely.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

EQ18. To what extent have ILO activities and projects in Central America incorporated **clear and effective exit strategies** to promote the sustainability of results and impact, and what aspects could be strengthened to enhance future interventions?"

KEY FINDINGS

- 18.1 Across Central America, **ILO projects often lack formal exit strategies** during their design and implementation phases. In practice, **two main approaches have been used to promote sustainability** and support de facto exit strategies: (1) **strengthening national institutional capacity and ownership** through training, policy integration, and financial commitment; and (2) **fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, project flexibility, and knowledge management** to ensure sustainability and continuity beyond project cycles.
- 18.2 Four **key barriers** continue to hinder the integration and execution of exit strategies: (1) **insufficient planning and foresight** during project design, with most projects failing to define long-term sustainability measures or institutionalization mechanisms; (2) **lack of dedicated funding**, which hinders the implementation of developed strategies; (3) institutional instability, including frequent **staff turnover** and weak capacity within partner institutions; and (4) **limited stakeholder engagement** beyond the tripartite structure, which restricts the development of broad, resilient networks to sustain project outcomes.

ANNEX 4: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ILO STAFF (GLOBAL, REGIONAL, AND COUNTRY OFFICES)

Estimated duration: 45 minutes

Interview type: Semi-structured, open-ended questions

Language: Spanish

Purpose: Gather internal perceptions about ILO interventions in Central America.

Introduction for the Interviewer

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. This interview is part of an independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Strategy in Central America. The purpose is to gather your views and reflections on key aspects of ILO's work in the region.

Your answers will remain confidential and will be used only for evaluation purposes. Participation is voluntary and you may choose to skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT

Relevance to Constituents and Final Beneficiaries

1. How well do the ILO's Country Programme Outcomes (CPOs) and related projects respond to the needs of national constituents and final beneficiaries, particularly vulnerable groups such as informal workers, youth, and women in your country(ies) of focus?

Alignment with Development Frameworks

2. How well aligned is the ILO's work with national development plans or labour policies? Does it reflect regional or international frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals or regional integration efforts?

Cross-Cutting Themes and Strategic Focus

3. How cross-cutting themes such as gender equality, non-discrimination, international labour standards, and social dialogue are integrated in the DW agenda in your country(ies) of focus?
4. How useful or impactful have the ILO's strategies been in addressing emerging challenges such as labour migration or just transition in your national or sectoral context?
5. Are there areas where you feel the ILO's strategic focus could be strengthened or made more relevant to the current realities?

COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN

Strategic Coherence and Alignment

6. To what extent do you perceive the ILO's work in Central America to be strategically aligned with that of other UN agencies operating in the region?
7. How well is the ILO's work coordinated or aligned with other regional actors or cooperation initiatives beyond the UN system?
8. Can you provide examples of effective collaboration or alignment with other agencies or regional mechanisms?

Barriers to Integration and Coordination

9. What are the main challenges or barriers that hinder effective integration of ILO work with the efforts of other agencies or partners in the region?
10. Are these challenges primarily institutional, operational, thematic, or resource-related?
11. What mechanisms (if any) have been effective in overcoming these coordination challenges?

Responsiveness, Adaptability and Innovation

12. How would you assess the ILO's capacity to adapt its programming and strategy to changes in national or regional contexts in Central America?
13. Can you recall a situation where the ILO had to significantly adjust its work due to external or contextual changes? How was that handled?
14. To what extent do you feel the ILO fosters innovation in its regional design and implementation approaches?

Design Adequacy and Participation

15. How adequate is the overall design of ILO interventions to achieve results in the diverse contexts of Central America?
16. How would you describe the level of constituent participation in strategic decision-making at the country or subregional level? Are there good practices or areas for improvement regarding participatory mechanisms?

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

17. How adequate are the current management arrangements in place to contribute effectively to Decent Work Agenda results in the region?
18. Are there specific management practices or structures that have particularly facilitated—or hindered—progress toward expected results?
19. How would you describe the coordination between technical and policy support provided by different levels of the ILO (HQ, regional, national)?

EFFICIENCY

20. How effective have ILO's partnerships (with UN agencies, regional bodies, national stakeholders, etc.) been in supporting Decent Work Outcomes? Could you please provide any examples or good practice?
21. How well are financial and human resources allocated and used in the subregion to address key priorities?
22. What mechanisms exist to ensure responsiveness and adaptability of ILO programming to emerging needs?

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

23. To what extent have ILO interventions in Central America contributed to tangible improvements in Decent Work conditions for specific sectors or vulnerable groups (e.g. women, youth, migrants, informal workers)? Could you provide concrete examples of observed changes or early signs of impact?

SUSTAINABILITY

24. How do you assess the level of national ownership and political will to sustain Decent Work Outcomes in the countries where you work?
25. What are the main factors that influence whether results are institutionalized after ILO support ends?

26. From your point of view, how could the ILO improve its contribution to long-term change in the subregion?
27. What lessons learned or good practices can be drawn from the ILO's work in Central America that could inform future initiatives in the region or elsewhere?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

28. Do you have any final observations or recommendations for how the ILO can improve its contribution to Decent Work in the region?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CONSTITUENTS (EMPLOYERS, WORKERS, GOVERNMENT)

Estimated duration: 45 minutes

Interview type: Semi-structured, open-ended questions

Language: Spanish

Purpose: Gather internal perceptions about ILO interventions in Central America.

Introduction for the Interviewer

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. This interview is part of an independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Strategy in Central America. The purpose is to gather your views and reflections on the relevance and strategic alignment of ILO's work in the region.

Your answers will remain confidential and will be used only for evaluation purposes. Participation is voluntary and you may choose to skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT

Alignment with National and Regional Agendas

1. How well aligned is the ILO's work with national development plans or labour policies?

Relevance to Constituents' Needs

2. How relevant have the ILO's interventions been to the priorities and needs of your organization and its members?
3. To what extent has the ILO involved your organization in identifying priorities or designing initiatives under the Country Programme Outcomes (CPOs)?
4. Do you feel that the needs of vulnerable groups—such as women, youth, Indigenous peoples, migrants, or persons with disabilities—are adequately considered in ILO-supported programmes?

Strategic Themes and Value Added

5. How useful or impactful have the ILO's strategies been in addressing emerging challenges such as labour migration or just transition in your national or sectoral context?
6. Are there areas where you feel the ILO's strategic focus could be strengthened or made more relevant to the current realities?

COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN

Alignment and Responsiveness

7. How well is the ILO's work aligned with the actions or strategies of other international agencies operating in your country or region?
8. Has the ILO been responsive to changes in your national or regional context over recent years? Can you share any specific examples?

Adequacy of the ILO's Strategic Design

9. How adequate is the overall approach of ILO's programmes and initiatives to the context of your country?
10. Do you feel that the ILO's way of working allows for flexibility and adaptation in case of unforeseen challenges or contextual shifts?
11. Have you observed innovative or new approaches in the way ILO operates or collaborates with your organization? Could you please provide any example?

Participation and Influence in Decision-Making

12. How would you rate the level of your organization's participation in ILO decision-making at the country or subregional level?
13. Do you feel that your voice—and that of your constituency—is genuinely considered in shaping ILO priorities and actions?
14. What could improve the quality or impact of constituent participation in strategic planning and programme design?

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

15. How would you assess the effectiveness of the ILO's technical and policy support in your organization/sector?
16. How responsive has the ILO been to your organization's or country's changing needs over time?
17. What are the strengths or limitations of the ILO's presence or coordination mechanisms in your country?

EFFICIENCY

18. To what extent have ILO partnerships with your organization, other UN agencies, or regional actors helped to advance Decent Work goals?
19. Have collaboration mechanisms been efficient and well-coordinated? Can you share an example?
20. Do you believe resources have been used effectively to generate value and results?

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

21. Would you say that Decent Work conditions have improved in your sector or among vulnerable groups as a result of ILO-supported interventions?
22. In which areas or populations have you seen the most visible changes or progress?

SUSTAINABILITY

23. How strong is the political will and national ownership in your country to sustain the progress achieved with ILO support?
24. Are the results and changes supported by the ILO likely to be institutionalized after its support ends? Why or why not?
25. What could the ILO do differently to strengthen the sustainability of its work in the future?
26. What lessons learned or good practices can be drawn from your work with ILO that could inform future initiatives in the region or elsewhere?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

27. Do you have any final observations or recommendations for how the ILO can improve its contribution to Decent Work in the region?

ANNEX 5: SURVEY PROTOCOL FOR ILO AND CONSTITUENTS

SURVEY FOR ILO STAFF

Estimated duration: 10-15 minutes

Audience: ILO staff

Language: Spanish, English, French

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your insights are essential for the independent High Evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Strategy in Central America that is conducted by ARTIVAL on behalf of EVAL/ILO.

This High-Level Evaluation (HLE) serves two main purposes: promoting institutional accountability and fostering organizational learning. It aims to assess the extent to which the ILO has achieved its planned Outcomes at both country and subregional levels, examining not only the results but also the methods and conditions that contributed to those achievements.

Beyond assessing progress, the evaluation seeks to generate insights that will guide the future development of ILO strategies. Identifying lessons learned and emerging good practices will be essential for strengthening the Organization's work, with particular emphasis on the Latin America and Caribbean region.

The scope of the evaluation covers the ILO's programmatic activities and Outcomes from 2020 to 2024 across the entire Central America subregion. To support a deeper analysis, three countries have been selected as case studies—Costa Rica, Honduras, and Mexico—each offering distinct contexts and experiences. It should be noted that the Central America subregion covers the following 10 countries: Cuba, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and República Dominicana

Your responses are confidential and anonymous and will be used for evaluation purposes only.

We kindly ask you to complete the survey by 27 May 2025. You can answer open-ended questions in English or Spanish. The survey will take around 15-20 minutes to finish.

If you have any questions or concerns about the evaluation or this survey, please contact Ricardo Furman at EVAL (furman@ilo.org) and Carolina del Campo at ARTIVAL (carolina.delcampo@mail.artival.es)

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC AND CONTROL QUESTIONS

1. Gender

▶ Female

▶ Male

▶ Other

2. Years working at ILO

▶ Less than 1 year

▶ 1 to 3 years

▶ 4 to 6 years

▶ 7 to 9 years

▶ 10 and more years

3. Category of your current position in ILO

- ▶ G
- ▶ NO
- ▶ P
4. Location of post:
- ▶ Cuba
- ▶ Costa Rica
- ▶ El Salvador
- ▶ Guatemala
- ▶ Haiti
- ▶ Honduras
- ▶ Mexico
- ▶ D
- ▶ Other (specify) _____
- ▶ Nicaragua
- ▶ Panama
- ▶ República Dominicana
- ▶ Headquarters - Geneva
- ▶ Regional Office – Lima
- ▶ Other: (specify) _____

SECTION 2: RELEVANCE

5. In your opinion, to what extent was the ILO's work in the subregion (Country Programme Outcomes (CPOs) and projects from 2020 to 2024 aligned with:

	NOT AT ALL ALIGNED	SLIGHTLY ALIGNED	SOMEWHAT ALIGNED	MODERATELY ALIGNED	MOSTLY ALIGNED	FULLY ALIGNED	N/A	COMMENT (OPTIONAL)
The specific needs and priorities of constituents								
National development strategies and labour policies								
Subregional integration agendas (e.g. SICA)								
International frameworks such as the SDGs, UNSDCFs, or other relevant cooperation agendas								
ILO Programme and Budget (P&B) Outcomes								

6. To what extent do you agree that the ILO's work responded to the needs of vulnerable groups in the Central American subregion in the period 2020-2024?

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	N/A	COMMENT (OPTIONAL)
Indigenous peoples								
Labour migrants								
People with disabilities								
Women								
Youth								
Others (please specify the group(s) in the Comment)								

7. How well were the following cross-cutting themes addressed in the ILO's strategic frameworks in Central America in the period 2020-2024?

	NOT ADDRESSED AT ALL	VERY POORLY ADDRESSED	POORLY ADDRESSED	MODERATELY WELL ADDRESSED	WELL ADDRESSED	VERY WELL ADDRESSED	N/A	COMMENT (OPTIONAL)
Just transition								
Gender Equality and Non-discrimination								
International Labour Standards								
Social Dialogue and tripartism								

SECTION 3: COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN

8. To what extent was your work regarding the Central America subregion coordinated with other UN agencies in Central America subregion in the period 2020-2024?

- ▶ Not coordinated at all
- ▶ Very poorly coordinated
- ▶ Poorly coordinated
- ▶ Moderately well-coordinated
- ▶ Well-coordinated
- ▶ Very well coordinated
- ▶ Don't know / No answer /Not applicable
- ▶ Comment (optional):

9. To what extent was constituent participation in strategic decision-making of ILO work at the country or subregional level considered in the period 2020-2024?

- ▶ Not considered at all
- ▶ Rarely considered
- ▶ Occasionally considered
- ▶ Moderately considered
- ▶ Mostly considered
- ▶ Fully considered
- ▶ Don't know / No answer
- ▶ Comment (optional): -----

SECTION 4: EFFECTIVENESS

10. Were the roles and responsibilities of each level (ILO staff and constituents) clearly defined and functioning well in implementing ILO strategies in the Central America subregion during the period 2020–2024?

	YES	NO	PARTIALLY	N/A
Government				
Employers' Organizations				
Workers' Organizations				
ILO staff - Global (HQ)				
ILO staff - Regional Office				
ILO staff - DWT				
ILO staff - CO				

11. Which factors have most positively contributed to the successful implementation of Decent Work initiatives in your country in the period 2020-2024? Please rank the options in the list below, with 1 being the most important and 6 the least important.

- ▶ Alignment of DW initiatives with national development plans
- ▶ Availability of adequate financial and human resources from the ILO and other sources

- ▶ Coordination with other UN agencies or development partners

▶ Effective social dialogue between the government, employers and workers
- ▶ Strong political commitment from national authorities

▶ Support and technical assistance provided by the ILO

▶ Other (please specify): _____

12. You may elaborate on your responses above.

13. Which factors have most hindered the successful implementation of Decent Work initiatives in your country in the period 2020-2024? Please select up to three options from the list below and rank them from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most limiting factor.

- ▶ Changes in government or political instability

▶ External shocks (e.g. economic crises, pandemics, natural disasters)

▶ Insufficient financial and human resources from relevant sources (local and international)
- ▶ Lack of awareness or understanding of Decent Work concepts

▶ Lack of coordination with other development partners or UN agencies

▶ Limited institutional capacity of implementing partners

▶ Other (please specify): _____

14. You may elaborate on your responses above).

SECTION 5: EFFICIENCY

15. How adequate were the following ILO items to advance the DW agenda in the Central America subregion during the 2020-2024 period?

	VERY ADEQUATE	ADEQUATE	SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE	SOMEWHAT INADEQUATE	INADEQUATE	VERY INADEQUATE	N/A	COMMENTS (OPTIONAL)
Financial resources								
Human resources								
Knowledge								
Mobilizing Partnerships								
Time								

SECTION 6: LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

16. In your experience, which vulnerable groups have seen improved Decent Work conditions due to ILO interventions in Central America subregion in the period 2020-2024? *(Select all that apply)*

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▶ Indigenous people | ▶ Others (specify) |
| ▶ Informal workers | ▶ None |
| ▶ Labour Migrants | ▶ Don't know / No answer |
| ▶ People with disabilities | ▶ Comment (optional): _____ |
| ▶ Women | _____ |
| ▶ Youth | |

17. In your view, which of the following changes best reflects the most significant progress made in advancing the Decent Work agenda in Central America from 2020 to 2024? Please select up to three changes and rank them from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most significant.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▶ Adoption or reform of national labour policies or legal frameworks | ▶ Increased participation or empowerment of workers' and employers' organizations |
| ▶ Better coordination between national institutions and international partners to advance the DW agenda | ▶ Increased ratification or implementation of international labour standards |
| ▶ Enhanced protection or inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g. youth, women, migrants, informal workers) | ▶ Integration of Decent Work principles into national development plans or strategies |
| ▶ Improved labour inspection systems or enforcement capacities | ▶ Strengthening of social dialogue mechanisms (e.g. tripartite councils, consultations) |
| ▶ Improvement in working conditions (e.g. wages, occupational safety, formalization) | ▶ Other (please specify): _____ |

18. Please explain briefly how the ILO contributed to the selected three changes (optional):

19. Which ILO actions or contributions have most significantly supported the changes you mentioned? Please select all that apply.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▶ Advocacy and policy influence (e.g. public campaigns, private influencing) | ▶ Financial support (e.g. grants, seed funding) |
| ▶ Capacity building (e.g. training, workshops, peer learning) | ▶ Knowledge sharing and dissemination of lessons learned and good practices |
| ▶ Development or provision of tools, guidelines or methodologies | ▶ Support in aligning national policies with international labour standards |
| ▶ Evidence generation (case studies, research, etc.) | ▶ Technical assistance (e.g. expert advice) |
| ▶ Facilitation of dialogue between stakeholders (e.g. tripartite consultations) | ▶ Other (please specify): _____ |

20. Please briefly explain how these contributions helped enable the changes (optional):

SECTION 7: SUSTAINABILITY

21. To what extent is the ILO's work likely to result in sustained improvements in labour conditions in the Central America subregion?"

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| ▶ Very likely | ▶ Unlikely |
| ▶ Likely | ▶ Very unlikely |
| ▶ Somewhat likely | ▶ Don't know / No answer (non-numeric, separate option if needed) |
| ▶ Somewhat unlikely | |

22. To what extent do you perceive political will translated into actions to institutionalize Decent Work progress in Central America subregion?

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| ▶ Not at all | ▶ To a very great extent |
| ▶ To a very limited extent | ▶ Don't know / No answer (separate, if needed) |
| ▶ To a limited extent | ▶ Comment (optional): _____ |
| ▶ To a moderate extent | _____ |
| ▶ To a great extent | |

23. What could the ILO do to improve long-term sustainability of its work in the Central America subregion? (*Open-ended*)

SECTION 8: FINAL COMMENTS (OPTIONAL)

24. Please share any additional comments or suggestions you may have regarding the ILO's strategic work in Central America:

SURVEY FOR CONSTITUENTS

Estimated duration: 10–15 minutes

Audience: Constituents (employers, workers, government)

Language: Spanish

Introduction

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Beyond assessing progress, the evaluation seeks to generate insights that will guide the future development of ILO strategies. Identifying lessons learned and emerging good practices will be essential for strengthening the Organization's work, with particular emphasis on the Latin America and Caribbean region.

The scope of the evaluation covers the ILO's programmatic activities and Outcomes from 2020 to 2024 across the entire Central America subregion. To support a deeper analysis, three countries have been selected as case studies—Costa Rica, Honduras, and Mexico—each offering distinct contexts and experiences. It should be noted that the Central America subregion covers the following 10 countries: Cuba, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and República Dominicana

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SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC AND CONTROL QUESTIONS

1. Gender

▶ Female

▶ Other

▶ Male

2. Years working at your organization

▶ Less than 1 year

▶ 7 to 9 years

▶ 1 to 3 years

▶ 10 and more years

▶ 4 to 6 years

3. Could you please specify which type of organization you represent:

▶ Government

▶ workers' organization

▶ Employers

▶ Other: _____

4. Location of post:
- ▶ Cuba

▶ Costa Rica

▶ El Salvador

▶ Guatemala

▶ Haiti

▶ Honduras

▶ Mexico

▶ Nicaragua

▶ Panama

▶ República Dominicana

▶ Other: _____

SECTION 2: RELEVANCE

5. How relevant was the ILO's support to your country's Decent Work priorities during the 2020-2024 period?
- ▶ Not relevant at all

▶ Slightly relevant

▶ Somewhat relevant

▶ Moderately relevant

▶ Highly relevant

▶ Extremely relevant

▶ Don't know / No answer

▶ Comment (optional): _____

6. Which areas of ILO's work are most important for your sector? *(Select up to three)*
- ▶ Gender equality and inclusion

▶ Informal to formal transition

▶ Labour inspection

▶ Migration and mobility

▶ Other (specify): _____

▶ Skills development

▶ Social protection
7. How well did the ILO addressed inclusion of vulnerable groups in its work during the 2020-2024 period?

	NOT ADDRESSED AT ALL	VERY POORLY ADDRESSED	POORLY ADDRESSED	MODERATELY WELL ADDRESSED	WELL ADDRESSED	VERY WELL ADDRESSED	N/A	COMMENT (OPTIONAL)
Indigenous people								
Informal workers								
Labour migrants								
People with disabilities								
Women								
Youth								
Others (please specify in comments)								

SECTION 3: COHERENCE AND VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN

8. How coordinated was the ILO's work with other international actors (UN agencies, Bilaterals, INGOs, etc.) in your country during the 2020-2024 period?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▶ Not coordinated at all | ▶ Very well coordinated |
| ▶ Very poorly coordinated | ▶ Don't know / No answer |
| ▶ Poorly coordinated | ▶ Comment (optional): |
| ▶ Moderately well-coordinated | ----- |
| ▶ Well-coordinated | |

9. How well did the design of ILO interventions enable adaptation and innovation in diverse country contexts within the Central America subregion during the 2020-2024 period?

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| ▶ Not at all | ▶ Well |
| ▶ Very poorly | ▶ Very well Don't know / No answer |
| ▶ Poorly | ▶ Comment (optional):- |
| ▶ Moderately well | ----- |

10. Have ILO consultations been participatory and inclusive during the 2020-2024 period?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| ▶ Not at all participatory or inclusive | ▶ Mostly participatory and inclusive |
| ▶ Very limited participation and inclusion | ▶ Fully participatory and inclusive |
| ▶ Somewhat participatory and inclusive | ▶ Don't know / No answer |
| ▶ Moderately participatory and inclusive | |

SECTION 4: EFFECTIVENESS

11. How well did ILO adapted its programmes to national or sectoral changes during the 2020-2024 period?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▶ Does not adapt at all | ▶ Adapts very well |
| ▶ Adapts very poorly | ▶ Don't know / No answer |
| ▶ Adapts poorly | ▶ Comment (optional): |
| ▶ Adapts moderately well | ----- |
| ▶ Adapts well | |

12. Which factors have most positively contributed to the successful implementation of Decent Work initiatives in your country in the period 2020-2024? Please select up to three options from the list below and rank them from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most important.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▶ Alignment of DW initiatives with national development plans | ▶ Effective social dialogue between the government, employers and workers |
| ▶ Availability of adequate financial and human resources from the ILO and other sources | ▶ Strong political commitment from national authorities |
| ▶ Coordination with other UN agencies or development partners | ▶ Support and technical assistance provided by the ILO |
| | ▶ Other (please specify): ----- |

13. You may elaborate on your responses above.

14. Which factors have most hindered the successful implementation of Decent Work initiatives in your country in the period 2020-2024? Please select up to three options from the list below and rank them from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most limiting factor.

- ▶ Changes in government or political instability
- ▶ External shocks (e.g. economic crises, pandemics, natural disasters)
- ▶ Insufficient financial and human resources from relevant sources (local and international)
- ▶ Lack of awareness or understanding of Decent Work concepts
- ▶ Lack of coordination with other development partners or UN agencies
- ▶ Limited institutional capacity of implementing partners
- ▶ Other (please specify):

15. You may elaborate on your responses above

SECTION 5: EFFICIENCY

16. How efficient do you consider that has ILO been in your country during the 2020-2024 period to advance the Decent work agendas?

	VERY ADEQUATE	ADEQUATE	SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE	SOMEWHAT INADEQUATE	INADEQUATE	VERY INADEQUATE	N/A	COMMENTS (OPTIONAL)
Financial resources								
Human resources								
Knowledge								
Mobilizing Partnerships								
Time								

SECTION 6: LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

17. Which vulnerable groups have significantly improved their DW conditions due to ILO support during the 2020-2024 period? *(Select all that apply)*

- ▶ Indigenous people
- ▶ Informal workers
- ▶ Labour Migrants
- ▶ People with disabilities
- ▶ Women
- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Others (please specify the group(s) in the Comment)
- ▶ None
- ▶ Don't know / No answer

18. Which of the following changes best reflects the most significant progress made in advancing the Decent Work agenda in Central America from 2020 to 2024? Please rank the options in the list below, with 1 being the most important and 9 the least important

- ▶ Adoption or reform of national labour policies or legal frameworks
- ▶ Better coordination between national institutions and international partners to advance the DW agenda
- ▶ Enhanced protection or inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g. youth, women, migrants, informal workers)
- ▶ Improved labour inspection systems or enforcement capacities

- ▶ Improvement in working conditions (e.g. wages, occupational safety, formalization)
- ▶ Increased participation or empowerment of workers' and employers' organizations
- ▶ Increased ratification or implementation of international labour standards
- ▶ Integration of Decent Work principles into national development plans or strategies
- ▶ Strengthening of social dialogue mechanisms (e.g. tripartite councils, consultations)
- ▶ Other (please specify):

19. Please explain briefly how the ILO contributed to one or more of these changes:

20. Which ILO actions or contributions have most significantly supported the changes you mentioned? Please select all that apply.

- ▶ Advocacy and policy influence (e.g. public campaigns, private influencing)
- ▶ Capacity building (e.g. training, workshops, peer learning)
- ▶ Development or provision of tools, guidelines or methodologies
- ▶ Evidence generation (case studies, research, etc.)
- ▶ Facilitation of dialogue between stakeholders (e.g. tripartite consultations)
- ▶ Financial support (e.g. grants, seed funding)
- ▶ Knowledge sharing and dissemination of good practices
- ▶ Support in aligning national policies with international labour standards
- ▶ Technical assistance (e.g. expert advice)
- ▶ Other (please specify):

21. Please briefly explain how these contributions helped enable the changes :

SECTION 7: SUSTAINABILITY

22. The Decent work results achieved jointly with ILO can continue to exist beyond the ILO support? Please select the option that best describes your situation.

- ▶ The relevant institutions/organizations are technically capable, but not financially capable, of sustaining the results achieved.
- ▶ The relevant institutions/organizations are both technically and financially capable of sustaining the results achieved
- ▶ The relevant institutions/organizations are neither technically nor financially capable of sustaining the results achieved.
- ▶ Don't know / No response.

23. How likely is it that the results achieved jointly with the ILO will be maintained without further ILO support?

- ▶ Very likely
- ▶ Likely
- ▶ Somewhat likely
- ▶ Somewhat unlikely
- ▶ Unlikely
- ▶ Very unlikely
- ▶ Don't know / No answer (non-numeric, separate option if needed)
- ▶ Comment (optional): -----

24. What conditions are needed to ensure sustainability of DW results achieved jointly with ILO in your country? (*Select all that apply*)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▶ Political will | ▶ Donor support |
| ▶ Budget | ▶ Don't know / No answer |
| ▶ Institutional capacity | ▶ Other (specify): _____ |
| ▶ Legal/policy framework | _____ |
| ▶ Constituents' ownership | |

25. What would you recommend to strengthen the ILO's strategy in your country? (*Open-ended question*)

ANNEX 6: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

N°	STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	DEPARTMENT/BRANCH	ROLE	NAME
Global				
1	ILO HQ Staff (Technical Units)	PROGRAM	Programme Analyst LAC focal point	Yoshie Ichinohe
2			Programme Analyst	Francesca Fantoni
3		ENTERPRISES	Global Coordinator	Rie Vejs-Keldgaard
4			Technical Officer	Ramin Behzad
5			Global Coordinator, value chain development and entrepreneurship	Merten Sievers
6			Social Finance Expert	Valerie Breda
7			Social and Solidarity Economy Specialist	Waltteri Katajamaki
		AP / FORMALIZATION	Director	Frédéric Lapeyre
9		WORKQUALITY	Director	Sukti Dasgupta
10		SOCIAL PROTECTION	Director	Shahrashoub Razavi
			Head of Unit PFACTS	Helmut Schwarzer
11		MIGRATION	Chief of Labour migration	Gladys Cisneros
12		GEDI	Chief of Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion branch	Chidi King
13			Specialist on Domestic and other Vulnerable Work	Claire Hobden
14		INWORK	Senior Economist	Patrick Belser
15		FUNDAMENTALS	Technical Officer	Cristina Maldonado
16		NORMES	Chief Application for standards	Horacio Guido
17			Head, Collective Bargaining Unit	Xavier Beaudonnet
18		ACT/EMP	Principal officer, Relations	Andres Yuren
19		EMPLOYMENT	Head, DMCU & Advisor	Jean François Klein
20			Chief of the Employment labour markets and Youth branch	Dorothea Schmidt Klau
21			Chief of Skills and employability branch	Ashwani Aggarwal
Regional				
22	ILO Regional Office staff (Management and RPUs)	Evaluation	Regional Evaluation Specialist	Cybele Burga
23		Programming	Head of the Regional Programming Unit	Claudia Ruiz
24		Management	Regional Director	Ana Virginia Moreira
25		CINTEFOR	Director	Elena Montobbio
26	ILO Regional DWT	Gender and non-discrimination	Specialist	Paz Arancibia
27		Decent Work in the Rural Economy and Formalization	Specialist	Efraín Quicaña
28		Employment	Specialist	Noemi Feix
29		Employment	Specialist	Gerson Martinez
Subregional				
30	ILO CO San Jose	Management	Director	Eliel Hasson
31		Management	Deputy director	Leonardo Ferreira
32		Programme	Program official	Maria Dolores Edeso

Nº	STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	DEPARTMENT/BRANCH	ROLE	NAME
33	ILO CO Mexico (Management and finance)	Management	Director	Pedro Oliveira
34		Management	Program official	Erika Flores
35		Finance	Finance assistant	Perla Telésforo
36		Programme	Program official	Mónica Reyes
37	ILO DWT (San Jose and México)	ACTEMP	Specialist	Randall Arias
38		ACTRAV	Specialist	Maribel Batista
39		Standards	Specialist	Blanca Peralta
40		Social Dialogue and Legal Administration	Specialist	Fernando Garcia
41		Social Protection	Specialist	Fabio Duran
42		Migration	Specialist	Juan Ignacio Castillo
43			Specialist	Mariana Pineda
44		Child Labour	Specialist	Lourdes Xirinachs
45			National manager	Jose Pablo Vega
46		Sustainable Business, Just Transition and Skills Development - ENTREPRISES	Specialist	Rodrigo Mogrovejo
Country (CO)				
47	ILO CO Project manager/Sub-regional Program Officer	Cuba	Technical Focal Point	Noemi Feix
48		Dominican Republic	Technical Focal Point	Katherine Martinez
49		El Salvador	Technical Focal Point	Ana Ruth Cevallos
50		Guatemala	Technical Focal Point	Carlos Linares
51		Haiti	Technical Focal Point	Ariel Pino
52		Nicaragua	Technical Focal Point	Karem Lopez
53			Technical Focal Point	Maria Lucía Peña
54		Panama	Technical Focal Point	Juan José Urbina
Case study Mexico				
55	ILO Project/Local staff (teams)	OIT México	Project Coordinator	Edith Zabala
56		OIT México	Project Coordinator	Vanessa Pocasangre
37		OIT México	National Project Coordinator	Yessica Calvario
58	Government representatives	Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social	Official	Gabriel Alejandro Tamariz
59		Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social SLP Encargado del Despacho de la STPS	Official	Luis Cervantes Salgado
60		Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social SLP Encargado del Despacho de la STPS	Official	Areli Aguilar
61		Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social SLP Encargado del Despacho de la STPS	Official	María Teresa Galicia Saldaña
62		SIFIDE	Official	Ivonne Leos
63		Directora de Normalizacion en Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo.	Official	Dra Cointa Lagunes.

Nº	STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	DEPARTMENT/BRANCH	ROLE	NAME
64	Employers' representatives	CONCAMIN	Official	Luis Monsalvo
65		CONCAMIN	Official	Maria del Rosario Lombera
66		Secretario General de SUMATE CROC	Official	Gabriel Trujillo
67	Workers' Representatives	Confederación de Trabajadores de México	Official	Salvador Medina Torres/ Patricia Hernández
68		CTM Secretario General	Official	Emilio de Jesús Ramírez Guerrero
69		Consejo de Cámaras Industriales de Jalisco	Official	Antonio Lancaster
70		CROC Tijuana	Official	Sol Merino
71	Final beneficiaries (workers, women, youth, etc.)	Mujer joven certificada MNV	Official	Guadalupe de la Cruz González
72		Enlace en la Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Industrial (DGETI) y tomo el curso MNV	Official	Orlando Arechar
73		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Laura Roxana Santiago Álvarez
74		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Gabriela Solis González
75		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Alma Delia Jiménez Hernández
76		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Cecilia Colchado Muñiz
77		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Coral Abigail Castillo García
78		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Mónica Edith García Juárez
79		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Edith Evelin Hernández
80		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Tamara Luevano Yañez
81		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Lizzete Anahi López Torres
82		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Azul Daniela Rangel Armendariz
63		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Rosa Argelia Maldonado Lozano
84		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Irma Denisse Olvera González
85		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Diana Paola Vásquez Mendoza
86		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Hanna Daniela Castillo Reyes
87		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Ilse Noemi Vázquez Álvarez
88		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Karla Rocío Castillo Sánchez
89		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	María Teresa Nájera Chua

Nº	STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	DEPARTMENT/BRANCH	ROLE	NAME
90		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Lorena Lizbeth Sustaita Herrera
91		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Naomi Montserrat Guillón Cisneros
92		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Adriana Moreno Gerardo
93		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Guisella Judith Rocha Suárez
94		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Jazmin Guadalupe Bustos Donjuan
95		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Marleth Nataly Jalomo Zumaya
96		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Claudia Jazmín Guerrero Rodríguez
97		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Itzayana Moreno Cruz
98		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Fabiola Ramírez Ramírez
99		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Martha Edith Martínez Rete
100		Universidad Tecnológica de San Luis Potosí (UTSLP)	Beneficiary	Vicenta Guadalupe Velázquez Chávez
101	UN Partners (RCO, UNDP, IOM, etc.)	FAO	Official	Eduardo García
102		FAO	Official	Isaias Gomez Sanchez
Case study Costa Rica				
103	ILO Project/Local staff	OIT Costa Rica	National Project Coordinator (CRI/18/02/ CRI)	Juan Ignacio Castillo
104		OIT Costa Rica	National Project Coordinator (CRI/19/50/ UND y HND/21/02/HND)	José Francisco Ortiz
105		OIT Costa Rica	National Project Coordinator 8RLA/22/07/EUR)	Mariana Pineda
106	Government representatives	MTSS	Deputy minister Child labour	Jose Manuel Cobos
107		MTSS	Internacional Cooperation official	Marisol Bolaños
108		MTSS	Deputy minister	Alexander Astorga
109	Government representatives	INA	Chief of the certification unit	Elenieth Alfaro
110	Government representatives	MTSS	DNSS-DPET	Yamileth Jimenez
111		MTSS RLA/22/03/CAN	Employment Director	Pablo Acuña
112		MTSS RLA/22/03/CAN	Coordinator of Labour Migration Department	Jonatan Monge
113		OML	Analyst OML	Carlos Fdez Alvarez
114		MTSS CRI/18/02/CRI	Gender department	Gretel Largaespada
115	Government representatives	MTSS	Legal advisor	Gretel Solano
116		MTSS	Advisor and projects coordinator	Amanda
117		IMAS	Ex Minister	Francisco Delgado
118	Employers' representatives	Unión Costarricense de Cámaras y Asociaciones de la Empresa Privada (UCCAEP)	Executive Director	Jorge Araya

N°	STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	DEPARTMENT/BRANCH	ROLE	NAME
119	Workers' Representatives	CMTC - Central del Movimiento de Trabajadores Costarricenses	President	Olman Chinchilla
120	Workers' Representatives	CTRN - Confederación de Trabajadores Rerum Novarum	General Secretariat	Fanny Sequeira Mata
121		CGT - Central General de Trabajadores - SITRAA	General Secretariat	Carlos Adrian Cruz
122		CCTD - Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores Democráticos	General Secretariat	Pedro Silva Yopez
123		UNDICA	Official	Martha Rodriguez
124		UNTTRASA	Official	Lorraine Vargas
125		CGT - Central General de Trabajadores -	Official	Mario Rodriguez Bonilla
126		FENTRAGH - Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Agroindustria y Afines	General Secretariat	Dania Obando Castillo
127		UNDECA - Unión Nacional de Empleados de la Caja y la Seguridad Social	General Secretariat	Luis Chavarria Vega
128	ONG - Beneficiarias proyecto / Contraparte / Cooperativa	COOPESOLIDAR CRI/18/02/CRI	Manager	Ivannia Ayales
129			Associated	Vivian Solis
130	Civil Society / Cooperativa	ASTRADOMES	President	Maria del Carmen Cruz
131			Vice-president	Sharon Vargas
132	UN Partners (RCO, UNDP, IOM, etc.)	OIM (y ex Vice Ministra MTSS)	Labour Migration Unit	Natalia Alvarez
133		ACNUR	Economist	Valeria Lentini
134		PNUD CRI/20/50/UND	Official	Randall Brenes
Case study Honduras				
135	ILO Project/Local staff	OIT Honduras	Official for interinstitutional coordination	Rosibel Garay
136		OIT Honduras	Manager Project HND/23/01/RBS	Karla Matamoros

N°	STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	DEPARTMENT/BRANCH	ROLE	NAME
137	Government representatives	SETRASS	Director general previsión social	Nelson Gutierrez
138		SETRASS (Trabajo y Seguridad Social)	Director general de prevision y trabajo	Jorge Coca
139			Advisor of the minister	Jimmy Bermudez
140			Official	Jenny Mendoza
141			Official external cooperation	Tatiana Matamoros
142			Director general of employment	Sra Amador
143			Ministerial advisor. Focal point for ILO	Nidio Bermudez
144		SEDESOL (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social)	Director on gender and care policy	Lidice Ortega
145			Deputy minister Public policy and social sector	Mirta Gutierrez
146			Official on external cooperation	Rosa Galvés
147			Director Public policy	Vivian Paradona
148			Official	Hector Nuñez
149			Official on social policy	Elisa Rivera
150			Director of Social Protection	Katerina Espinosa
151		Gobierno municipal	Municipal councillor	Kenia Zeron Rodriguez
152	Employers	COHEP	Executive Director	Armando Urtecho
153			Legal advisor	Alejandra Banegas
154			Enterprise	Lourdes Cardona
155		CCIT (Camara de Comercio e Industria Tegucigalpa)	Projects manager of care projects	Karla Ruiz
156			Development and talent manager	Blanca Salgado
157	Workers' Representatives	CGT - Central General de Trabajadores -	Official Project HND/22/50/EUR	Noe Flores
158	Workers' Representatives	CGT	FASH Secretary and CGT Treasurer	Humberto Lara
159			Adjunt Secretary General of organization department	Benjamin Vazquez
160			Secretary General of CGT and CTH (Confederación de Trabajadores de Honduras)	Daniel Duron
161	Donor	CUT (Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores)	Women Secretary	Jasmin Lopez
162			Financial official	Armando Villatoros
163		EU	Operational Manager HND/21/02/HND	Melba Hernandez
164	UN Partners (RCO)	AECID Guatemala	General coordinator	Cristina Aldama
165		AECID Honduras	Projects Coordinator	Fancisco Javier Ausin
166		OCR -UNDP	OCR Chief	Sergio Aguinada
167	Project Beneficiaries	UNICEF	Children protection official (CLEAR project)	Leonardo Mier
168		Tabacalera Plasencia	Board member	Erick Fernandez

ANNEX 7: P&B OUTCOMES IN THE SUBREGION

Countries	Outcome 1: Strong, modernized normative action for social justice	Outcome 2: Strong, representative & influential tripartite constituents & effective social dialogue	Outcome 3: Full and productive employment for just transitions	Outcome 4: Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work	Outcome 5: Gender equality and equality of treatment and opportunities for all	Outcome 6: Protection at work for all	Outcome 7: Universal social protection	Outcome 8: Integrated policy and institutional responses for social justice	Enabler A: Improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work	Total general
Costa Rica	5	5	6	4	5	15	2	1	-	43
Cuba	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	-	6
Dominican Republic	6	10	5	2	3	9	-	1	-	36
El Salvador	2	8	11	1	-	-	5	2	1	30
Guatemala	15	7	3	1	10	11		2	-	49
Haiti	-	1	8	7	13	9	4	2	-	44
Honduras	9	8	2	2	8	11	6	2	-	48
Mexico	6	6	11	4	2	19	6	3	6	63
Nicaragua	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Panama	1	6	2	3	4	3	3	-	-	22
Central America Subregional	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	1
Total	44	61	52	24	45	93	26	15	7	367

ANNEX 8: P&B OUTCOMES CONSOLIDATION (MAPPING)

Considering changes to outcome nomenclature over the review period, a harmonization (or mapping) of outcome titles within the results framework was carried out, based on the outcome titles defined in the 2024–2025 Programme and Budget (P&B).

The mapping was performed at the output level, with outputs subsequently re-aggregated at the outcome level to facilitate analysis and enable cross-tabulation of variables for graphical presentation. Outcomes then served as the basis for data triangulation with a broad range of variables, including DW Pillars, Country, Period, SDG, and Cross-cutting Themes. This process ensures analytical consistency and comparability of reported outcomes across different years.

It should be noted that the outputs remain the same for the 2020–2021 and 2022–2023 biennia, except for Outputs 2.4 and 5.4, which were newly introduced in the 2022–2023 period.

P&B 2020-2021	P&B 2022-2023	P&B 2024-2025	GUIDANCE FOR CONSOLIDATION
1. Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue	1. Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue	1. Strong, modernized normative action for social justice	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Outcome 2 (Outputs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4) and Outcome 7 (Output 7.1)
2. International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision	2. International labour standards and authoritative and effective supervision	2. Strong, representative and influential tripartite constituents and effective social dialogue	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Outcome 1 (Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4)
3. Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all	3. Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all	3. Full and productive employment for just transitions	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Outcome 3 (Outputs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.5) and Outcome 5 (Outputs 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4)
4. Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work	4. Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work	4. Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Outcome 4 (Outputs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4)
5. Skills and lifelong learning to facilitate access to and transitions in the labour market	5. Skills and lifelong learning to facilitate access to and transitions in the labour market	5. Gender equality and equality of treatment and opportunities for all	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Outcome 6 (Outputs 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4)
6. Gender equality and equal opportunities and treatment for all in the world of work	6. Gender equality and equal opportunities and treatment for all in the world of work	6. Protection at work for all	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Outcome 7 (Outputs 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5)
7. Adequate and effective protection at work for all	7. Adequate and effective protection at work for all	7. Universal social protection	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Outcome 8 (Outputs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3)

8. Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all	8. Comprehensive and sustainable social protection for all	8. Integrated policy and institutional responses for social justice through decent work	P&B 2022-2023 Enabler A (Output A.4), Outcome 3 (Outputs 3.3, 3.4 and 8.3)
EA. Authoritative knowledge and high-impact partnerships for promoting decent work	EA. Improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work	EA. Enhanced knowledge, innovation, cooperation and communication to advance social justice	P&B 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Enabler A (Output A.1, A.2 and A.3) and Enabler C (Output C.4)
EB. N/A	EB. Improved leadership and governance	EB. Improved leadership and governance	P&B 2022-2023 Enabler B (Output B.1, B.2 and B.3)
EC. N/A	EC. Optimized use of resources	EC. Effective, efficient, results-oriented and transparent management	P&B 2022-2023 Enabler C (Output C.1, C.2 and C.3)

ANNEX 9: RELEVANT SECTION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE, CLIENTS, AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Purpose of the evaluation

This High-level evaluation has a dual purpose: accountability and organizational learning. The evaluation will seek to determine how well the ILO achieved the outcomes planned at country and subregional levels (ILO Subregional and Country Programme Outcomes/CPOs), how they were achieved and under what conditions. The evaluation will also attempt to contribute to organizational learning by identifying lessons that have been learned and emerging good practices. This information can inform future ILO strategies with particular emphasis on the Latin America and Caribbean context.

Scope

The evaluation will cover ILO's programme activities and results between 2020 and 2024 in the whole Central America subregion, with an emphasis on three countries as case studies. The three countries are Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico. For details on the selection process regarding the subregion and the three countries, see section 1.3 above.

An overview of the main dimensions that will be included in the HLE will be presented through a reconstructed ToC and corresponding evaluation framework.

Clients of the evaluation

The main client for the evaluation is the ILO's Governing Body, which is responsible for governance-level decisions on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. Other key stakeholders include the Director-General and members of the Senior Management Team at Headquarters and Regional Management in LAC, who are involved in promoting decent work in the region. The HLE should also serve as a source of information for ILO partners and policy makers.

The evaluation report, together with the Office's response to its findings and recommendations, will be discussed in the GB session of October-November 2025 with a follow-up plan prepared by the Regional Office and monitored during implementation through the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC).

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Evaluation approach

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with [Protocol 2.2: High-level evaluation protocol for DWCP evaluation](#). The HLEs in ILO take a summative as well as formative approach. They provide insights into the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the ILO's strategy, programme approach, and interventions (summative). They are also looking forward and are providing findings and lessons learned and emerging good practices for improved decision-making within the context of the next strategic framework (formative).

EVAL proposes a Theory of Change and results framework-based outcome evaluation approach, which determines whether an initiative has achieved the intended outcomes based on a relevant

and coherent approach and in effective and efficient ways to achieve or contribute to changes that can be sustained. The Theory of Change will be (re)constructed at the inception phase based on existing elements of Theories of Change in the ILO results framework and within policy areas (i.e., P&Bs, 2020-2021, 2022-2023 and 2024-2025) and preliminary interviews with ILO key stakeholders in LAC (Regional Office, COs Directors and DWTs) and will serve as the analytical framework against which processes and results will be assessed.

The evaluation will be participatory. Consultations with member States, representatives of workers' and employers' organizations, ILO staff at headquarters and in the field, United Nations partners, development and funding partners and other stakeholders, including final beneficiaries, will be done through interviews, meetings, focus groups, and electronic communication.

There will be three key phases in the evaluation:

1. Inception phase: a detailed scoping will be undertaken based on desk research, a synthesis review of ILO project evaluations in the subregion between 2020-2024 (a total of 39 country/ subregional or regional evaluations related to the subregion have been conducted and are available at [i-eval Discovery](#)), individual and group interviews with members of the reference group such as ILO staff, and other key stakeholders as necessary. Inputs gathered during this phase will already serve as primary data to inform the evaluation analysis, as well as to inform the case study selection, based on which the evaluation team will design the evaluation tools and refine the methodology.
2. Main data collection phase: the evaluation team will implement its proposed methodology to gather primary and secondary data from a wide range of stakeholders. All evidence will be triangulated during data analysis.
3. Reporting: data analysis will be undertaken to serve as a basis to draft the evaluation report and summary documents, and other deliverables as detailed in Section 7.

Evaluation Methodology

The methodology will be based upon the ILO's evaluation policy and procedures, which adhere to international standards and good practices, articulated in the OECD/DAC Principles and the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (UNEG). The evaluation will be participatory. Consultations with member States, regional and national representatives of employers' and workers' organizations, ILO staff at headquarters and in the field, United Nations partners, and other stakeholders will be done through interviews, meetings, focus groups, and electronic communication.

The evaluation should pay specific attention to responding to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate, gender equality responsiveness and contribution of the ILO to the relevant targets set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The evaluation should include the ILO cross-cutting themes throughout the methodology and deliverables, including the final report. Regarding gender and non-discrimination and disability inclusion particularly, the evaluators will ensure that the views and perceptions of both women and men, vulnerable groups (such as youth, migrants, indigenous groups, and refugees) and people living with disabilities are reflected in the interviews and that specific questions regarding these groups are included, to assess the relevance and effectiveness of gender and disability inclusion related strategies and outcomes. To the extent possible, data collection and analysis should be disaggregated by sex and other vulnerable groups as relevant (e.g. indigenous groups labour migrants, etc.) as described in the ILO Evaluation Policy Guidelines and relevant Guidance Notes. Specific measures to reflect gender and inclusion concerns should be elaborated in the inception report, in line with the UN-SWAP guidance. The evaluation should also consider and integrate the other core ILO cross-cutting priorities, including promotion of International Labour Standards and ILO's normative work; the just transition to environmental sustainability; tripartism and social dialogue and constituent capacity development.

A team of independent evaluation experts (i.e. international consultants and consultants based in the case study countries) will work with EVAL in developing the synthesis review and conducting primary data collection and will review secondary data. It is expected that the evaluation team will apply mixed methods, which draw on multiple lines of evidence (both quantitative and qualitative) and apply multiple means of analysis. The overall methodological approach of the evaluation will include, among others, the following:

► **Desk review of relevant documentation:**

-
- Normative frameworks including ratifications of ILO Conventions and Protocols, comments of the ILO supervisory bodies¹⁶⁹, relevant GB/ILC discussions and resolutions.
 - Strategic Framework(s); ILO P&B documents and implementation reports covering the period 2018-23.
 - Development Cooperation (DC) portfolio and related reviews.
 - Implementation planning, management and reporting documents.
 - Existing meta studies, synthesis reviews and project and programme evaluations, notably DC and RBSA-funded interventions, including other HLEs in the period.
 - Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) and country programme reviews, as relevant.
 - UNDAFs/UNSDCFs, as relevant
 - National development plans.
 - Review of Policy Outcomes, CPOs and Global Products directly and indirectly linked to the countries' targets.
 - Review of financial (all sources and all modalities) and human resource portfolio that could inform efficiency-related analysis within the scope of the evaluation.
 - Review of alignment to UN response plans, and SDG targets and indicators.
- **Structured and semi-structured interviews (for the most part through virtual means) tailored to different stakeholders to reflect diversity and representation within the Office (relevant sector, technical unit, regions, and country situations) as well as among constituents and relevant partners and institutions.**
-
- Field visits to the selected region by the independent evaluation team directly or with the support of national consultants, consisting of the 2-3 countries as case studies.
 - Online surveys to obtain feedback and/or information from a wider set of constituents and other key stakeholders such as multilateral partners, in English, French and Spanish (as appropriate).
 - Participatory workshop with ILO staff to discuss preliminary findings, lessons learned and recommendations prior to the finalization of the evaluation report.

The details of the methodology will be elaborated in the inception report based on the Terms of Reference (TORs) and the initial desk review and inception interviews. The inception report will include a detailed evaluation framework with the methodological approach identified.

Country case studies

The purpose of country case studies in a HLE of DWCPs is to focus on a select group of countries on a sample basis to illustrate the achievements and challenges encountered in the ILO's work within the subregion under review. These case studies involve a detailed analysis of the ILO's initiatives and outcomes in the selected countries, emphasizing key achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and emerging good practices. The analysis also refers to the specific intervention models employed by the ILO.

For details on the selection of the case studies, see section 1.3 above.

169 NORMLEX - Information System on International Labour Standards (ilo.org)

TABLE 2. GENERIC CASE STUDY SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSE ONLY

- ▶ ILO Projects and regular activities implemented between 2020 and 2024.
- ▶ Geographical diversity, focusing on countries reporting substantial results over the timeframe examined versus resources allocated.
- ▶ Countries receiving support on a diverse set of policy outcome/thematic areas,
- ▶ To the extent possible, a diverse set of funding partners and sources, including Regular Budget (RB), Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA), and other extra-budgetary funding for Development Cooperation.
- ▶ To the extent possible, countries which include initiatives working in collaboration with other UN agencies/international organizations and regional entities.
- ▶ Avoid countries that have undergone recent evaluations or where parallel evaluation processes are being planned.
- ▶ Avoid countries where the security situation may hamper the implementation of evaluation activities.

Overall, the case studies will include desk review and fieldwork. The desk review will synthesize and aggregate information from technical studies, project evaluations and project reports to minimize cost and time avoiding repetitive data collection and analysis. In addition, data will be collected through a combination of interviews and focus groups to discuss with stakeholders, including ILO beneficiaries, constituents and other key stakeholders to triangulate findings from the desk review.

Summary ratings

A summary rating shall be expressed by the independent evaluation team addressing the six evaluation criteria and the respective questions outlined in the ToR and the ensuing inception report. The evaluation shall use 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 that criterion has produced outcomes which go beyond expectation, expressed specific comparative advantages and added value, and produced good 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 of 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 of 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 shows minor shortcoming 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; and
- ▶ **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 will be decided together with the external evaluators and the ILO Senior Evaluation Officer (SEO) based on inputs from the synthesis review, data collection phase, achievement of the P&B targets, and results of the surveys of constituents, ILO staff and other multilateral partners.

