International Labour Organization

Evaluation Office

i-eval Discovery

Ending Child Labour in Supply Chains: Addressing the root causes of child labour in supply chains through an area-based approach – Independent Midterm Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Honduras, Uganda, Viet Nam, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Evaluation date: 30 April 2026

Evaluation type: Joint

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: ILO

Technical Office: FUNDAMENTALS (ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch)

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DC Symbol: GLO/22/37/EUR, HND/22/50/EUR and UGA/22/50/EUR

Donor(s) & budget: Total USD 11.76m. European Commission (DG INTPA) USD 10.34m (88%); UN agency co-financing USD 1.42m (12%).

Key Words: *Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery*

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	
Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	The CLEAR Supply Chains project (USD 11.76 million, May 2023 to August 2026) aims to address the root causes of child labour in the coffee supply chains of Honduras, Uganda and Viet Nam, and in the cobalt supply chain of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Co-funded by the European Commission (DG INTPA), it is implemented jointly by ILO (as lead agency), FAO, UNICEF and ITC. The intervention logic rests on the recognition that child labour in agricultural and mining supply chains is driven by interconnected factors that no single-sector intervention can resolve in isolation. The project's strategy is therefore to combine the comparative advantages of four UN agencies within concentrated geographic areas, so that child protection, education, livelihoods and governance strengthening reinforce one another simultaneously. Action is organised around seven complementary Solution Areas (labour rights, education, livelihoods/agriculture/climate, skills development, social and child protection, responsible supply chains, access to markets) and a results framework with four Result Areas: Knowledge, Solutions, Partnership and Mining. Geographic coverage is differentiated by implementation modality. Honduras and Uganda implement the full integrated model in selected coffee-growing districts. Viet Nam and the DRC receive targeted interventions: Viet Nam on child labour due diligence in the coffee supply chain; the DRC on capacity building to tackle child labour in the cobalt supply chain, with a focus on due diligence and Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems. The project is anchored under the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS), coordinated through a three-tier governance structure (Global Steering Committee, bi-monthly global/country meetings, monthly national meetings), and aligned with SDG 8.7.
Present situation of the project	The project is at an advance stage of implementation, with a scheduled end date of August 2026 and a potential no-cost extension until May 2027. The evaluation considered the progress made until July 2025.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	This independent Mid-Term Evaluation, commissioned by the ILO Evaluation Office, covers project implementation from May 2023 to July 2025 across the four project countries (Honduras, Uganda, Viet Nam and the Democratic Republic of the Congo). It applies five OECD DAC criteria (Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability/Impact) across 17 evaluation questions and 58 indicators. The evaluation has a dual function: summative, providing accountability to the European

	Commission and the implementing agencies; and formative, generating evidence for strategic course correction and informing readiness for potential scale-up. Primary emphasis is placed on the formative role. Primary clients are the Consortium Management Team (ILO as lead, FAO, UNICEF and ITC), the European Commission (DG INTPA), and the evaluation units of the implementing agencies, with the Evaluation Management Committee acting as the principal decision-making body for the evaluation process. Secondary users include the tripartite constituents in the four project countries, community-level structures, civil society and private-sector actors including the ILO Child Labour Platform and ITC Coffee Network, and global initiatives such as Alliance 8.7.
Methodology of evaluation	The evaluation applied a qualitative mixed-methods design combining three complementary approaches: theory-based (using the project's Theory of Change as the primary analytical lens), comparative case-based across the two full-model countries (Honduras and Uganda), and participatory (including debriefing workshops and a formal stakeholder commenting round on the draft report). The mixed-methods rationale reflects the project's design as a multi-component, systems-oriented intervention requiring assessment of how conditions for change are established through component interaction. The evaluation included a desk review of over 120 project documents in English and Spanish, direct interviews (online and in-person) and online survey. Overall, 99 persons were covered through direct interviews. 54 respondents were covered during field missions to the full model countries Honduras (29 persons) and Uganda (25 persons) and 45 through online key-informant interviews. An additional 43 respondents were covered through online surveys. No baseline survey existed for outcome indicators; findings are framed in contribution terms.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	**Overall assessment:** The evaluation finds that the integrated area-based model is validated as a proof of concept. The combination of four agency mandates within the same geographic areas generates protective synergies that single-sector programmes cannot replicate: community-level child protection, educational reintegration, livelihood support, and governance strengthening reinforce one another, and 80.6 per cent of the 43 partners surveyed online confirm the model produces results unattainable through separate delivery. At the same time, the evaluation identifies two structural gaps that must be addressed for the model to

achieve its full potential. First, the Theory of Change does not yet include mechanisms to address the immediate economic pressures that compel the poorest households to deploy children during harvest seasons; livelihood interventions are producing intermediate results, but the income effects are medium- to long-term while the drivers of child labour are immediate, indicating a scope to include the issue of immediate liquidity crisis among the core approaches in future design and implementation. Second, the four-agency governance and financial architecture was not calibrated for the administrative intensity the consortium requires; field-level efficiencies are real but are tempered by coordination overhead that consumed a substantial share of global management time in the first year. The strategic choice for the remaining project period and any future phase is clear: intensify what works at community level, strengthen the economic dimension, and streamline the governance structure.

Relevance (Satisfactory). The project is well aligned with SDG 8.7, all four agency mandates, EU due diligence legislation, and national policy priorities. Community demand is strong: in Honduras, communities that initially declined participation subsequently requested inclusion, and in Uganda all field respondents reported perceived reductions in child labour in target areas. The project demonstrated adaptive management in response to extended ministerial decision-making delays in Viet Nam, institutional restructuring in Uganda, and community resistance in Honduras. However, two gaps emerged: the referral-based social protection strategy premised in the Project Document has not proved viable in either full-model country, and integration of disability and migrant worker priorities lags behind other cross-cutting themes. Stakeholders at policy level also identified a need for deeper analysis of coffee value chain economics, including farmgate price dynamics and the pre-harvest liquidity pressures that drive child labour.

Coherence (Satisfactory). The project embeds interventions within existing national governance structures, notably the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour (CONETI) in Honduras and the National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour (NSCCL) in Uganda, rather than creating parallel systems, and assigns clear lead responsibilities by agency comparative advantage. The tripartite approach is operationalized, with workers' and employer organizations actively participating in coordination and capacity-building initiatives. At consortium level, the lead-agency Solution Area model is reinforced by cooperative-confirmed evidence of effective coordination among ITC, ILO, FAO and UNICEF at field level, including joint mechanisms such as the FAO–ILO capacity-building programme for agricultural extension workers and labour inspectors. National sector-coordination platforms, including CLAC in Honduras and the Uganda Coffee Federation, Café Africa and the Uganda Coffee Platform in Uganda, function as enabling structures for Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) and EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) alignment. Cross-cutting coherence is strong for gender, youth, climate, and indigenous peoples, but persons with disabilities and migrant workers lack dedicated budget lines or alignment with specific national policy frameworks. Global financial tracking of cross-cutting themes remains limited, as the budget structure does not permit disaggregation by thematic area.

Effectiveness (Moderately Satisfactory). Output delivery is strong at community level: 557 social service workforce members trained in Uganda, 175 Farmer Field Schools delivering climate-smart agriculture and income diversification, functional child identification and referral systems in both countries, and the Educational Bridges model in Honduras addressing a documented seasonal care gap. The integrated model generates confirmed synergies, including cross-agency data sharing that saved ITC six months of scoping work in Uganda, nutritional inputs from FAO feeding into UNICEF's education programming in Honduras, and ITC's due diligence readiness assessments providing practical compliance support for cooperatives. The combined weight of four UN agencies and the EU secured municipal child protection ordinances and permanent budget allocations in Honduras, a level of policy influence that government counterparts identify as unattainable through single-agency delivery. Limited private sector coverage constrains the evaluation's ability to fully validate market-level outcomes. Progress toward intermediate outcomes is more partial, with policy reform and economic resilience outcomes phased relative to community delivery. This reflects delays in completing the root-cause economic research (Output 1.3) and in finalising the joint targeting strategy during inception rather than at the design stage.

Efficiency (Moderately Satisfactory). Agencies have developed pragmatic cost-sharing at field level, joint field missions, cross-agency data leverage, and joint training delivery; 77–81 per cent of surveyed partners report that joint work delivers time, resource and technical efficiencies single agencies could not achieve. These operational gains are tempered by the administrative demands arising not only from coordination across four agencies but also from the large number of concurrent interventions, a four-month funding tranche delay, ITC's 14-month late contractual integration due to EU administrative procedures (though ITC was informally engaged from the outset and delivered planned outputs within a compressed timeframe upon formal accession), disbursement mechanisms not calibrated for consortium complexity, and the absence of a shared digital information management system contributing to data fragmentation across agencies. The consortium has partially mitigated these constraints through institutional layering (anchoring results in statutory bodies such as Child Wellbeing Committees and Municipal Councils) and through commercial alliances responsive to the evolving EUDR and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) landscape. The governance and financial architecture need adaptation for any future iteration of the model.

Sustainability and Impact (Moderately Satisfactory). Institutional foundations for continuity are credible: municipalities in Honduras have codified child protection funding into local ordinances, the Honduran Coffee Institute (IHCAFE) has integrated a permanent Social Compliance Unit into its operational structure, and in Uganda the Production Department has advocated for formalizing parasocial workers within district structures. In one Ugandan district, referral pathways surfaced 884 protection cases, demonstrating system functionality beyond the child labour mandate. Unintended positive spillovers, including documented shifts in community norms around child labour and spontaneous demand for replication from non-target communities, reinforce sustainability prospects. Four risks remain: incomplete transition to locally owned coordination financing, the need for structured due diligence frameworks to ensure that increased child labour visibility triggers remediation and co-investment rather than sourcing withdrawal, exposure of frontline workers to retaliation risks requiring additional protection measures, and the need to streamline the model for replication.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The integrated area-based approach is validated as a proof of concept. In Honduras, the vertical coordination structure from municipal Child Labour Prevention Committees (CPCTIs) through CONETI provides architecture that does not depend on project funding for legitimacy. In Uganda, the parasocial worker referral pathway is functional and generating measurable child withdrawal from labour.

Conclusion 2: The project's Theory of Change is validated in its approach to the institutional and social drivers of child labour. Initiatives developed under the project, including diversified farmer plots, strengthened market linkages, and the incorporation of short-term crops alongside coffee, are designed to contribute to household income diversification and pre-harvest cash flow; however, the livelihoods approach does not yet include mechanisms to address the immediate liquidity crises that compel child labour during harvest seasons. The delayed root-cause research (Output 1.3) and social targeting strategy mean that the analytical framework for evidence-based policy dialogue remains incomplete.

	Conclusion 3: Output delivery at community level is strong, but progress toward intermediate outcomes remains partial, reflecting both the expected pace of a mid-term intervention and the incomplete status of key preconditions: the compressed 40-month timeline, delayed foundational research, and the absence of viable mechanisms to address the opportunity cost of withdrawing children from labour. **Conclusion 4:** Field-level efficiencies are real but are tempered by the administrative burden of four-agency coordination and by financial mechanisms not calibrated for consortium complexity. The governance, programmatic design, and financial architecture require adaptation for any future phase. **Conclusion 5:** Institutional sustainability foundations are credible, but three challenges persist: incomplete transition to locally owned coordination financing, asymmetrical progress on inclusion priorities (disability and migrant workers lag behind), and the need for structured human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD) frameworks to ensure child labour identification triggers remediation rather than sourcing withdrawal, building on the structured co-investment partnerships already emerging.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES	
Recommendations	**Intensify** community-level delivery and the conditions for sustained outcomes: **Rec. 1 (High; ILO lead, all agencies):** Strengthen the economic dimension of the Programme Design and Theory of Change by completing the Output 1.3 research and integrating market-based mechanisms to address household liquidity crises. [Conclusions 2 and 3] **Rec. 2 (High; ILO lead, all agencies):** Establish a joint beneficiary identification and monitoring framework, with shared targeting criteria defined at design stage. For any future phase, integrate a baseline-endline impact evaluation. [Conclusion 4] **Rec. 3 (High; ILO National Coordinators):** Develop a transition strategy from project-funded to locally owned coordination, distinguishing support to salaried officials from operational support to community volunteers. [Conclusion 5] **Reduce** administrative burden and programmatic fragmentation: **Rec. 4 (Medium-High; ILO HQ, Steering Committee):** Adapt the governance, programmatic design, and financial architecture to consortium complexity, including adequate dedicated coordination capacity and, for any future phase, consolidation around fewer higher-impact interventions with a structured inception period. [Conclusion 4] **Introduce or strengthen** engagement and inclusion:

	Rec. 5 (Medium; ITC lead, ILO Child Labour Platform (CLP)): Ensure transparency supports remediation and co-investment by strengthening private sector engagement frameworks that channel child labour identification into collaborative action rather than sourcing withdrawal. [Conclusion 5] **Rec. 6 (Medium; UNICEF lead, ILO):** Strengthen integration of disability and migrant worker inclusion in programming and monitoring frameworks. [Conclusion 5] **Rec. 7 (Medium-High; ILO lead, all agencies):** Document and standardize the integrated area-based model for replication, capturing core components, referral logic, and preconditions for sustained outcomes. [Conclusions 1 and 3]
Main lessons learned and good practices	The evaluation documents six lessons and eight emerging good practices **Six lessons:** 1. Mandate Clarity as a Driver of Operational Efficiency 2. Prioritising Social Targeting Before Field Deployment 3. Resourcing Coordination in Multi-Agency Consortia 4. Integrating Immediate Economic Relief into Livelihood Programming 5. Differentiating Operational Support from Institutional Dependency 6. Securing Commercial Guarantees for Remediation-Based Transparency **Eight emerging good practices:** 1. Pooled Operational Resources for Joint Field Delivery 2. Community-Based Monitoring Networks and Integrated Referral Systems 3. Linking Agricultural Outputs with Educational Safe Spaces 4. Cross-Agency Data Utilisation for Accelerated Implementation 5. Strategic Messaging Adaptation for Community Engagement 6. Repositioning for EU Regulatory Compliance 7. Institutionalising Service Delivery through Municipal Budget Allocation 8. Vertical Coordination from Community to National Level