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Promoting Workers' Rights and Gender Equality at Work in Africa - Final Internal Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: African region with primary focus on Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana

Evaluation date: 18 May 2026

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: ACTRAV

Technical Office: ACTRAV, GEDI

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DC Symbol: RAF/24/10/NOR

Donor(s) & budget: Government of Norway / NORAD, USD 901,538.80

Key Words: workers' rights; International Labour Standards; gender equality; social dialogue; GBVH; care economy; decent work

This "internal evaluation" as per ILO/EVAL types of evaluation of the ILO followed a formalized evaluation process managed by an officer of the Regional Programming Unit of the Regional Office for Africa of the ILO. The purpose of internal evaluations largely serve organizational learning.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	The project was implemented from January 2025 to March 2026 with support from the Government of Norway / NORAD. Jointly implemented by ACTRAV and GEDI, it covered Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana and sought to strengthen workers' rights and gender equality at work. Its two mutually reinforcing outcomes focused on: (i) strengthening workers' organizations' engagement with labour governance and ILS mechanisms; and (ii) strengthening constituents' capacities to advance Equality@Work at national, sectoral and workplace levels, especially on GBVH, care systems, collective bargaining, labour inspection and inclusive workplace practices. A defining feature was the integrated ACTRAV–GEDI model linking normative labour governance with practical workplace action.
Present situation of the project	At completion, the project had generated credible contributions to workers' rights promotion, gender equality awareness, workplace dialogue and institutional capacity strengthening. Operational uptake was visible in advocacy, supervisory mechanisms, collective bargaining, GBVH prevention and care-responsive workplace initiatives. However, institutional consolidation and sustainability remained uneven across countries and depended on labour governance maturity, absorptive capacity, leadership continuity and the broader enabling environment.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	This final internal evaluation assessed the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and early signs of impact over the full implementation period (January 2025–March 2026). It served both accountability and learning purposes and examined the extent to which project-supported interventions moved from capacity development and operational experimentation toward practical application, institutional uptake and continuity. Primary users include ACTRAV, GEDI, ILO regional and country offices, workers' and employers' organizations, government partners and NORAD.
Methodology of evaluation	The evaluation used a theory-based, mixed-methods and contribution-oriented approach. It combined a systematic desk review with semi-structured key informant interviews and purposive stakeholder sampling across strategic, implementation

and beneficiary levels. Analysis was organized through institutionalization, utilization, comparative and contribution lenses. Given the short implementation period, the evaluation focused on emerging contribution pathways and early institutional signals rather than mature long-term outcomes. Key limitations included uneven outcome-level monitoring data, reliance on qualitative evidence for institutional change, and the limits of virtual data collection; these were mitigated through triangulation.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The project was strategically relevant and well aligned with labour governance and workplace equality challenges across participating countries. It addressed institutional gaps affecting workers' organizations' engagement with labour governance systems while also responding to workplace-level barriers related to GBVH, care systems, and inclusive labour practices.

The integrated framing of workers' rights and Equality@Work agendas strengthened institutional receptivity and operational legitimacy across multiple contexts. However, implementation trajectories varied considerably according to labour governance maturity, institutional functionality, and absorptive capacity.

Coherence

The project demonstrated strong internal and external coherence. The integrated ACTRAV–GEDI implementation model represented a major comparative advantage by reducing fragmentation between labour governance and Equality@Work programming.

The two outcomes reinforced each other effectively, with Outcome 1 strengthening engagement with labour governance and ILS mechanisms, while Outcome 2 translated these principles into practical workplace-level interventions.

The project also aligned strongly with relevant ILO frameworks, International Labour Standards, and national priorities. However, regional peer learning and structured cross-country exchange mechanisms remained comparatively limited.

Effectiveness

The project generated meaningful operational uptake and behavioural adaptation across participating organizations and stakeholder groups. Evidence demonstrated practical application of project-supported knowledge and tools in areas including advocacy, collective bargaining processes, workplace policy discussions, GBVH prevention initiatives, and engagement with labour governance systems.

Workplace-level operationalization emerged as one of the project's strongest contribution pathways. However, operational uptake advanced more rapidly than formal institutional integration, with many practices remaining dependent on institutional champions, external facilitation, or continued accompaniment.

Employer engagement and tripartite accountability mechanisms also remained uneven across some contexts.

Efficiency

The project demonstrated comparatively strong operational efficiency relative to its geographic scope, institutional complexity, and compressed timeframe. The intervention effectively leveraged existing ACTRAV, GEDI, and tripartite structures to support implementation and coordination.

The integrated ACTRAV–GEDI model further strengthened operational coordination efficiency by promoting complementarities between labour governance and Equality@Work agendas.

However, coordination and adaptive management processes remained highly dependent on facilitation capacities and key individuals rather than fully institutionalized systems. RBM systems also remained comparatively activity-oriented, limiting systematic tracking of institutional uptake, sustainability, and longer-term change pathways.

Sustainability

Sustainability prospects were assessed as mixed and highly context-dependent. The project generated credible enabling conditions for longer-term institutional strengthening; however, sustainability remained influenced by labour governance maturity, institutional ownership, absorptive capacity, and continued technical accompaniment.

The evaluation found stronger evidence of continued operational use and behavioural openness than of durable institutional consolidation. While some practices demonstrated emerging normalization within participating organizations, formal continuity mechanisms, procedural embedding, and resource commitments remained comparatively underdeveloped.

Impact / Early Signs of Impact

Given the short implementation period, the evaluation assessed early signs of impact rather than mature long-term outcomes. Evidence suggests that the project contributed to increased normalization of Equality@Work agendas within labour governance discourse and strengthened openness toward integrating gender equality dimensions into labour rights discussions.

The intervention also contributed to behavioural and procedural changes at organizational and workplace levels, particularly related to GBVH awareness, workplace dialogue, and inclusion-related practices. However, evidence of durable institutional transformation remained uneven across contexts.

Overall, the project functioned more credibly as a catalytic institutional strengthening intervention than as a mature reform programme. Its most visible contributions were observed in strengthening workers' institutional engagement, promoting gender-responsive approaches to equality at work, and reinforcing participatory dialogue processes linked to labour rights and representation.

Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that the project constituted a strategically relevant and operationally effective intervention linking workers' rights promotion, labour governance strengthening, and Equality@Work agendas within a coherent institutional framework. The integrated ACTRAV–GEDI implementation model represented a major comparative advantage and strengthened both operational legitimacy and thematic coherence.

The project's strongest contribution lay in catalyzing operational and behavioural shifts across labour governance and workplace equality domains, particularly through workplace-level interventions translating normative agendas into practical action.

At the same time, institutional consolidation remained uneven across implementation contexts. Operational progress frequently exceeded formal governance embedding, while sustainability pathways remained dependent on ecosystem maturity, institutional readiness, and continued accompaniment.

The project demonstrated stronger capacity for catalytic institutional strengthening than for achieving mature institutional consolidation within the available timeframe. Future interventions would benefit from more differentiated country implementation pathways, stronger institutionalization sequencing, enhanced governance embedding strategies, strengthened sustainability planning, and more mature monitoring and learning systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

1. Adopt differentiated and phased institutionalization pathways based on country readiness and absorptive capacity.
2. Strengthen ACTRAV-GEDI integration through joint planning, clearer roles, shared monitoring and better inclusion mainstreaming.
3. Reinforce governance embedding, post-intervention consolidation and follow-up support so gains move from uptake to organizational practice.

	4. Strengthen accountability and incentive structures for more substantive tripartite engagement, including employer participation. 5. Improve RBM, adaptive management and institutionalization/sustainability monitoring, with stronger cross-country learning. 6. Consolidate and selectively expand workplace-level Equality@Work models that proved operationally effective, especially on GBVH and care. 7. Strengthen regional peer learning, documentation and comparative analysis of sustainability trajectories.
Main lessons learned and good practices	Lessons learned: (1) capacity development needs follow-up, application pathways and institutional anchoring; (2) combining normative and practical interventions increases relevance and ownership; (3) sustainability depends on absorptive capacity and realistic time horizons; (4) tripartite engagement works best when it creates operational co-ownership, not only consultation; and (5) pilot interventions can generate strong catalytic value even when systemic transformation is still premature. Good practices: (1) the integrated ACTRAV-GEDI labour governance model; (2) workplace-level Equality@Work demonstrations as entry points for labour governance engagement; (3) delivery through existing labour governance and tripartite structures; (4) operational mainstreaming of Equality@Work themes within workers' representation systems; and (5) accompaniment-based capacity strengthening that links training with mentoring, follow-up and practical application.