



# Evaluation Summary



International  
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## Internal Mid-term Evaluation, Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Mexico

**Mid-Term Evaluation:** May 2021

**Evaluation Mode:** Internal mid-term

**Administrative Office:** RO-Lima

**Technical Office:** MULTI

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**Project Code:** RLA/18/04/EUR

**Donor(s) & Budget:** European Union  
(US\$ 4,064,341)

**Keywords:** Responsible business conduct; Sustainable Enterprises; Decent Work; Employers; Workers; Latin America and the Caribbean. ;

### Background & Context

#### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The RBCLAC Project project contributes to the promotion of smart sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean region, by supporting responsible business conduct practices in line with internationally agreed principles set out in UN, ILO, and OECD instruments. This is expected to

help move towards a level playing field by limiting unfair competition driven by low RBC standards. The Project's overarching objective is to contribute to the promotion of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, which will help move towards a level playing field by limiting unfair competition driven by low RBC standards.

#### Present Situation of the Project

RBCLAC, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented in collaboration with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Office of the High Commissioner of The United Nations for Human Rights (OHCHR), aims to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU and in Latin America and the Caribbean, by supporting responsible business conduct practices, in line with the UN, ILO and OECD instruments.

#### Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of this mid-term internal evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the progress to date of ILO's component of the project, through an analysis of its relevance, validity of the project design, effectiveness, effectiveness of management arrangements, efficiency, and sustainability and impact orientation. The evaluation will serve to inform the mid-term independent evaluation to be conducted, as per EU guidelines, of the overall project.

## Methodology of evaluation

The evaluators addressed the evaluation questions using multiple sources of evidence, combining primary qualitative data with secondary quantitative data. Qualitative data were obtained from remote key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Quantitative data were obtained from the performance reporting data presented by the ILO in the semi-annual Technical Progress Reports (TPRs) to the EU; as well as from other secondary sources. Data collection methods and stakeholder perspectives were triangulated to bolster the credibility and validity of the results.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

### Relevance & Strategic Fit

The RBCLAC Project has managed to start integrating RBC into political, social, and entrepreneurial agendas, both across the LAC region as well as in most of the respective countries included in the project. Consulted stakeholders agreed that the RBCLAC Project and the objectives it tries to achieve are considered both relevant and necessary. Interviewees confirmed that the ILO component of the RBCLAC project responds to the needs of the beneficiaries, and that it is aligned with national priorities, particularly in the area of human rights and national development frameworks, as well as with international frameworks and the SDGs.

### Validity of the Project Design

The logic that underlies the Project was found to be solid, and both the strategy as well as the intervention methodology are addressing the identified needs in a logical manner. However, some weaknesses in the project design were identified, such as that the design reflects to some extent a “top-down approach”. Also, the project did not contemplate the extent of the support may be required from the ILO during the project’s implementation in countries that already had a NAP in place. In addition, the design did not foresee the possibility of emerging opportunities, such as the emergence of political will in

countries where this was not initially anticipated, leading to an increased interest for instance in developing a NAP.

In terms of available time and resources, there is an important gap between the objectives that have been established by the donor and what the (ILO) Project can possibly achieve with the available resources; as well as what lies within the organization’s mandate and the provision of the required assistance (internally from the ILO). In addition, the time that would realistically be required to achieve the desired changes was found to be underestimated.

The ILO RBCLAC Project has been able to successfully adapt (to the extent possible) to the many changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The RBCLAC Project has always been relevant: both before and during the pandemic and it can be expected to retain its relevance in the context of the post pandemic recovery scenario.

### Effectiveness of Management arrangements

The ILO has a limited number of staff currently assigned to the project. In view of the wide geographic coverage of the Project, the many demands from different regional and national actors and stakeholders, and the numbers and complexity of their actions (at regional and national level); this level of staffing is insufficient. In terms of the Project’s national governance structures, the overall ILO support for the Project, there is a need to make these processes more effective, especially at national levels.

### Effectiveness

The key result of the overall RBCLAC Project is that the RBC agenda is increasingly positioning itself in the region as well as in the countries (to different degrees). The following is a summary of the current state of the NAP development processes and progress across countries, to which the ILO RBCLAC project has contributed (in varying degree across the countries), and which shows what progress has been made so far in that regard: Peru: Final stage of the first NAP

(expected to be approved in June 2021); Ecuador: Finished the elaboration of a roadmap (hoja de ruta) as a preliminary step for the elaboration of the NAP on Business and Human Rights and completed the first step of the roadmap; Panama: A National Plan for Public and Private Social Responsibility (2020-2030) that was adopted in 2020 is currently under review to allow for the inclusion of the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic; Chile: In the stage of a review of the first NAP / elaboration of the second NAP; Colombia: in the implementation stage of the second NAP as of January 2021.

#### Efficiency of resource use

The evaluation finds that the results that have been achieved to date, justify the expenses of the ILO RBCLAC project. There is an observed imbalance regarding budget implementation percentages with higher levels for employers' organizations as compared to activities with workers organizations, which can be attributed to the decision of ACTRAV to only undertake regional activities.

#### Sustainability and Impact Orientations

The evaluation has found indications of emerging evidence of impacts: the processes of reflecting on the interconnectedness of the mandates of the IOs in their discourse and actions, and the organization of joint activities, and participation in activities organized by the others has started to create a lasting impact; the promotion of and integration of the MNE Declaration in NAPS and other documents and processes; increased capacities of constituents on the labour dimension of RBC and , in the context of the pandemic a joint discourse on the integration of RBC in the response to COVID-19.

In terms of orientations towards sustainability, overall, the basis for sustainability is being established to some extent through high quality technical assistance; capacity building; awareness raising; stakeholder support (to varying degrees across countries) regarding the Tripartite Declaration and for the principles of RBC; and the strengthening of a Responsible Business Conduct "community" at regional and

some national levels. However, the evaluators were not presented with any evidence of the development of a sustainability/exit strategy for the RBCLAC project.

It is important to note that the elaboration of NAPS, is not possible in all cases, nor is it the only way to promote and implement an RBC agenda. This is even more pertinent in cases where the application of an RBC approach through a NAP/or a successful formulation of a NAP will currently not be possible. RBC-related processes and steps may proceed in a non-linear way, dependent on and adjusted to the specific context.

### Recommendations

#### **Main recommendations and follow-up**

1. Apply Participatory approaches to project design from the beginning and throughout implementation. The design of this type of projects should be done with the respective participation and contribution of the IOs and in consultation with national key stakeholders right from the beginning. The design should also take into account the different national contexts and specific country needs; and resource constraints of each country.
2. Clarifying the connections and complementarities between DW and RBC. Clarifying the connections and complementarities between DW and RBC could potentially increase the potential for synergies between ILO programming and potentially improve the integration of RBC within the ILO's DW programming.
3. Prioritization of project activities in countries with an enabling environment. During the remaining implementation period, the ILO should focus its efforts on countries with a conducive environment for the RBC agenda and thus, with larger potential for the achievement of results and impacts: concentrating on the so called "RBC champions". However, the project should honor current commitments and demands from ILO constituents.

4. Prioritization of actions during the remaining implementation time of the current RBCLAC Project to ensure maximum impact.

*During the remaining implementation time of the current RBCLAC Project, the ILO should emphasize activities that are likely to generate the largest impact. The ultimate goal does not necessarily have to be the same in all countries, i.e. the development of National Action Plans should not necessarily be the main focus. Also, at the national level, it would be appropriate to involve the following stakeholders more actively in the national processes and project activities: key employers' organizations (entrepreneurial sector); enterprises, as well as workers' organizations.*

5. Provide complementary high-level advocacy from the ILO, in support of the RCLAC project. *There is an important and essential role for the ILO to undertake high-level "advocacy" (in particular involving the Regional and Country Offices) to guide Governments and constituents in the direction policies and practices. In terms of institutional support from the ILO (HQ, ROs, COs) for the ILO RBCLAC project, there is room for improvement for the ILO RBCLAC project both in terms of support for activities, as well as in terms of advocacy and institutional policy to support the objectives of the project.*

6. Creating more and effective synergies within ILO. *It is important that the Project can fully benefit from and have access to experience, expertise, programmes and resources that are currently available within the ILO. Internal collaboration and coordination is a distinctive feature of the ILO, and improved alignment of the ILO Project with the DW Agenda and the respective departments with mandates linked to the labour dimension of RBC could be key to improve its impact and make the ILO RBC interventions more sustainable.*

7. Systematization of the RBCLAC Fund. *Providing follow up and systematization to projects/activities implemented with the support of the RBCLAC Fund is important for reasons of transparency, as well as, and even more important, in terms of the obtained results,*

*impacts, organizational learning and dissemination of lessons learned and good practices.*

8. Design a Sustainability/exit plan for the Project. *The elaboration of a Project sustainability/exit plan is highly recommended.*