

Board of the Centre

88th Session, October 2024

CC 88/2

FOR INFORMATION

SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

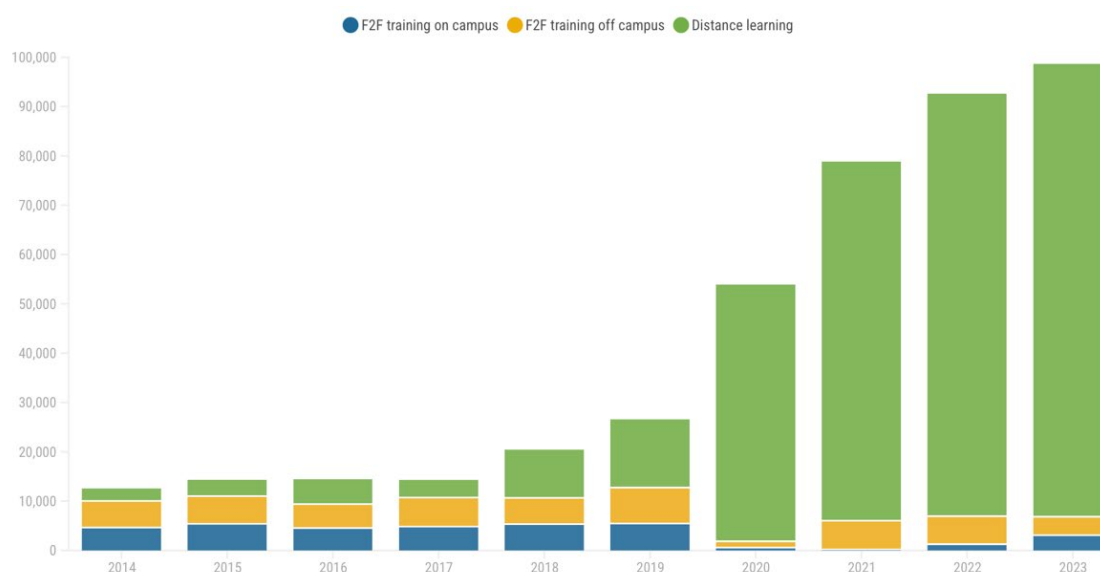
Independent external evaluation of the training courses of the Workers' Activities Programme - Management response

I. Introduction

- 1. Quality** is a central pillar of the Results-based Management Framework underpinning the 2024-25 Programme and Budget of the International Training Centre of the ILO (the Centre). The Centre continuously monitors the quality of its capacity development services along the service cycle and furthermore commissions **external evaluations** to evaluate positive change in the performance of participants after treatment. The main evaluation is annual and covers the training activities of the Centre; in addition the Centre may commission ad hoc evaluations of both training and non-training capacity development activities, and including the Master Programmes offered by the Turin School of Development¹. **The 2024 external evaluation** of the Centre's training activities covered in this Board paper **covers both face-to-face training and distance learning activities**, mindful of the shift of the organization towards distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic *and* the resurgence of face-to-face training in the 2022-23 biennium (see graph below). The 2024 evaluation thus allows for benchmarking of different learning modalities to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation methodology is aligned with OECD and ILO evaluation principles and allows for the comparison of results across calendar years.

¹ For copies of all evaluation reports since 2014 go to <https://www.itcilo.org/about/board>. The findings of selected evaluations have been synthesized in digital briefs that are accessible via <https://www.itcilo.org/resources/digital-briefs>

Enrolments in training activities (2014-23)



Source: Management of Activities and Participants (MAP), eCampus, Solicomm, external e-learning platforms curated by the Centre. The 2022 and 2023 DL figures includes indirect trainees enrolled in training courses on platforms curated by the Centre.

- 2. The purpose of the evaluation** was to provide the leadership and management of the Centre with evidence of the relevance, validity of design, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of both its online and face-to-face training activities, to assess which learning modalities are most effective and efficient, to explore good practices, lessons learnt, and to derive recommendations for the improvement and further development of the Centre's learning service portfolio. The focus of the 2024 evaluation was on the training activities of the Workers' Activities Programme in the Training Department and provide deep insight into the learning activities specifically targeted at one of the core constituents of the ILO, workers representative organizations.
- 3. The scope of the evaluation** was to verify whether participants in these learning activities acquired new knowledge and later successfully applied it. Carried out from May to August 2024, the evaluation focused on 20 sampled training activities delivered in the course of 2023. The courses were chosen based on their representativeness of the training topics evident in the content and delivery of the training. The sample has been drawn purposefully to capture a variety of different training approaches, venues and methodologies. The chosen activities include a variety of online courses, face-to-face and blended courses that took place in the field or on Turin Campus. The activities were chosen to cover a diversity of regions, languages, and most of the selected activities included more than fifteen enrolled participants, languages (English, Spanish and French). As per the policy followed by the Workers' Activities Programme, all training courses in the sample had been offered free of charge to participants, a factor to be born in mind when making a comparison with fee-based training activities offered by other Training Programmes of the Centre.
- 4. The evaluation criteria** were based on the six OECD DAC evaluation principles. The relevance of the sampled activities to beneficiary needs (and where applicable the institutional sponsors financially supporting their participation), their coherence, the activities' efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability have been assessed. Further to the evaluation of effectiveness, it also assessed the meaningfulness of the learning experiences using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000). The guiding questions for the evaluator are listed below:

Evaluation Question DAC	Indicators and data sources
Relevance	
How well did the activity operationalize the 2022-25 strategic plan and the 2022-23 Programme & Budget of the Centre, and the higher-level ILO 2022-25 Strategy Framework and 2022-23 Programme and Budget?	<u>Indicators:</u> -Agreement between predefined indicators between different programme documents -Agreement in vision and strategy between different respondents <u>Data sources:</u> Analysis of Programme/project implementation compared to strategic plan & framework and budgeted + interviews
Coherence	
To what extent does the activity serve the ILO mandate and the needs of the ILO core constituents?	<u>Indicators:</u> - Adherence to ILO's mission, goals, and objectives - Identification of core constituents' training needs - Coherence between needs, mandate, and programme <u>Data sources:</u> Programme documents, interviews, focus group discussions
Validity of training design	
Does the result of online training imply that the design of the activities was logical and realistic?	<u>Indicators:</u> -Completion rates (high completion rates may indicate well-designed & engaging courses)
Did the end of activity evaluation and (where applicable) the follow up activity evaluation effectively measure results and progress?	-Learning outcomes, participant satisfaction, behavioural change -Achievement of the initial objectives (and indicators, if available) <u>Data Sources:</u> -Available statistics -Participant feedback (survey, interviews, focus group discussion)
Effectiveness	
What results have been achieved (or expected to be achieved) and what progress has been made (or expected to be made) by learners since the implementation of the activities?	<u>Indicators:</u> -Initial objectives and indicators have been achieved -COI has been effective -Changes at the level of knowledge, skills, individual and organizational behaviour have been achieved -Potential gaps have been identified
Which gaps remain and how could these be addressed through follow-up activities?	
To what extent have the activities and the used tools been an effective instrument to strengthen the capacity of ILO constituents and other ILO development partners?	<u>Data Sources:</u> -Programme documents -Survey -Interviews and focus group discussions -Case studies
Are there any differential results across groups?	
Effectiveness of Management	
Were the roles and responsibilities of the Centre officials, including programme management, who were responsible for the implementation of the activities clearly defined and understood?	<u>Indicators:</u> -Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities have been reported -Existence and effectiveness of communication channels for clarifying roles and responsibilities -Frequency and effectiveness of feedback mechanisms for addressing misunderstandings or gaps in roles and responsibilities -Effective coordination mechanism and actions
Were the current arrangements for implementing the activities effective?	-Shared resources do exist -Existence of synergies
Were the activities coordinated across technical programmes?	<u>Data Sources:</u> -Interviews with programme staff
Efficiency	
Have the resources invested into the delivery of the activities been used in the most efficient manner?	<u>Indicators:</u> -Percentage of allocated resources (funds, staff, materials, external/internal expertise...) -Budget variance -Time utilization -Cost per output/beneficiary reached
How economically were resources and inputs (funds, expertise, time etc.) converted to results?	
Did the results justify the cost?	
What time and cost efficiency measures could have been introduced without impeding the achievement of results?	<u>Data Sources:</u> Programme documents with strong emphasis on financial reporting + interviews with stakeholders including sponsors/donors
Impact	
What are the participants' perceived benefits from the activities (differentiated by groups)?	<u>Indicators:</u> -Satisfaction of Participants -Learning of the participants (knowledge, skills, competencies) -Behavioural change (at individual level) -Organizational change
What evidence exists of participants benefiting from the activities?	
What actions might be required for achieving long-term impact?	<u>Data Sources:</u> -Survey with participants -Interviews and focus group discussions with participants -5 case study approaches
Sustainability	

Evaluation Question DAC	Indicators and data sources
How likely is it that the results of the activities will be maintained or up scaled by the participants?	<p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Existence of post-training plans -Commitment to implementation -Integration into work practices -Upscaling evidence (replicate training outcomes in other areas/projects) -Sharing training knowledge with others) -Resource allocation & long-term planning <p><u>Data Sources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Survey with participants -Interviews and focus group discussions with participants -5 case study approaches

5. Data collection for the evaluation was multifaceted, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. Interviews and focus groups included ITCILO directors, management, ACTRAV teams, training participants, and some sponsors. A total of 32 individuals were interviewed to gain in-depth insights into the training's impact and effectiveness. Additionally, an online survey was deployed using the ITCILO CRM tool to 1152 training participants across four languages, achieving a response rate of 29% after data cleaning.

II. Conclusions and recommendations made by the Evaluators

Conclusions

6. The evaluator drew the following conclusions:²

Relevance-Coherence-Outreach

The relevance-coherence-outreach analysis highlights the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITCILO) as strategically aligned with the ILO's objectives, notably the 2019 Centenary Declaration and the 2021 Call to Action for post-COVID-19 recovery, focusing on lifelong learning, gender equality, and social protection. The 2022-25 strategy involves capacity development via combined face-to-face and online training, supported by advisory services and an emphasis on digital transformation.

The ITCILO's 496 trainings in 2023 included 40 ran by ACTRAV, making up 8% of total offerings. The majority of ITCILO training activities in 2023 was distance learning and blended training. These modalities were the most engaging, attracting 68.2% of the total 1,771 participants. The shift towards online platforms reflects a broader approach to making training accessible globally, particularly in regional or global initiatives.

Survey results show high relevance of the training to participants' needs, with 98% reporting applicability of learned skills and 93% foreseeing institutional benefits. Training evaluations focused on gender issues, labour standards, and social dialogue, indicating strong integration of these themes.

Geographically, training participation of the ACTRAV training activities was highest from Africa and the Americas, with notable contributions from specific countries like Argentina and Uzbekistan, often due to targeted training programs. The demographic data shows a slight female majority among participants, predominantly in the 25-54 age range, highlighting broad and inclusive engagement across different demographics.

² Quoted from: 2024 external evaluation of ITCILO training activities, p. 7

Validity of Training activities

The validity of the training activities is highly valued by the participants. There is a positive reception of a course's organization, where a substantial majority of participants praised its logical and consistent structure. Feedback indicated that over 95% of the respondents were satisfied with how the course was structured.

Similarly, participants felt well-supported, with approximately 89% reporting that they received adequate support when needed and were satisfied with the learning resources, which they found relevant and of high quality. Despite some participants experiencing issues with internet connectivity, the overall technical support was viewed positively. The e-Campus online learning system was noted for its ease of access and navigation. The use of various educational technologies like discussion forums, video conferencing, and content was deemed appropriate by most learners, and the delivery modes of the courses were effective in meeting the participants' schedules and learning preferences. The courses were flexible, provided ample opportunities for participation, and were conducive to understanding and applying content effectively. In terms of the Community of Inquiry framework, there were improvements in teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence, with no significant differences noted between face-to-face and distance learning modalities, underscoring the effectiveness of both. Based on these findings, there is a recommendation to expand distance learning offerings. By increasing the number of distance training programs and participants, the organization can leverage the scalability of distance learning to efficiently accommodate more learners, maintaining or even enhancing the high satisfaction rates observed (*see Recommendation 3. Enlarge the number of Distance participants*).

Effectiveness

The analysis of the effectiveness and operational dynamics of training programs, specifically those managed by ACTRAV-ITCILO are evaluated positively as well. These training programs exhibit consistent effectiveness across various modalities, including both face-to-face and online formats, despite facing logistical challenges such as accommodating different time zones and ensuring stable internet access. Survey data reveals a high approval rating for these programs, with a significant majority of respondents acknowledging improved competencies and performance.

The organizational structure of the ACTRAV-ITCILO unit comprises a program manager, senior program officers, a program assistant, and training assistants, all integral to the unit's operations. Training programs are developed methodically through a collaborative process involving multiple stakeholders, aligning closely with trade union priorities and global labour issues. This careful planning extends to the adaptation of online training, which requires interactive tools to maintain engagement and the development of new skills to manage online environments effectively.

However, the unit faces challenges in inter-unit collaboration within ITCILO after the institutionalized tripartite peer review mechanism for the Centre's training activities had to be set aside during the Corona Pandemic to accelerate the crisis response at programme level. Recent managerial changes aim to improve this by enhancing coordination through regular consultations and initiatives like the Catalyst Program. Still, differences in operational approaches - particularly between market-driven units and the non-fee-based ACTRAV unit - complicate these efforts. Despite these challenges, instances of successful individual cooperation suggest potential for improved institutional collaboration, highlighting the need for enhanced inter-unit cooperation to optimize training effectiveness and resource utilization (*see Recommendation 4. Enhance collaboration between units*).

Efficiency

The advantage of the ACTRAV unit is having a stable and secure funding base, contrasting sharply with other ITCILO units that depend on more market driving funding sources. This financial security allows ACTRAV to plan and execute its core training programs well in advance, facilitating more structured and predictable training schedules. In contrast, other units often must manage ad hoc programs with much shorter lead times.

Despite the structural and financial readiness for distance learning programs, their utilization remains sometimes low, with participation rates not meeting potential. The effectiveness of these programs, in terms of knowledge and skills acquisition, matches that of face-to-face training, suggesting that learning outcomes are comparable across different delivery modes. However, there is a clear preference among trainees for face-to-face interactions, which are highly valued for the networking and cultural exchanges they facilitate. This underscores a significant aspect of learning that extends beyond mere knowledge acquisition, emphasizing the human need for interaction. The evaluation suggests a potential efficiency improvement by separating training from networking objectives, proposing that training could be predominantly conducted online with networking reserved for specific activities. This could help manage costs more effectively while still meeting the diverse needs of participants.

Furthermore, the current model's scalability is limited by staff workload and the necessity for high-quality internet access among participants, indicating that strategic adjustments are needed to expand program reach and impact without compromising quality (see *Recommendation 3. Enlarge the number of Distance participants*).

Impact

The evaluation has revealed that the current focus of the Workers' Activities Programme is on individual capacity development activities (i.e. training) while the ILO capacity development approach followed by the Centre is more holistic, with a triple emphasis on individual capacity development, institutional capacity development and system-level capacity development. Also, in cases where the Workers' Activities Programme has carried out institutional capacity development activities (i.e. advisory services), it appears that it is yet to fully internalize the related Centre's monitoring and evaluation processes and tools. It might therefore be important to invest in staff development activities to further systematize the current approach to institutional capacity development followed by the unit.

An additional element for consideration is that at the level of individual capacity development, the emphasis of the evaluation activities of the Centre is on the verification of out-takes and outcomes, where attribution confidence is high. In turn, the validation of long-term impact of the Centre's activities on the world of work is taking place under the umbrella of higher level ILO impact evaluations (like the 2024 evaluation of long-term impact of the ILO development cooperation activities and the 2023 evaluation of the ILO Covid response). It is important to more clearly accentuate the link between ITCILO inputs and ILO impact along a multi-year results chain, possibly by further elaborating on the Theory of Change, as outlined in the Quality Management Document.

Sustainability

The evaluation found that while it is too soon to assess the long-term effects, early indications suggest that trainees are actively applying their newfound skills in various professional settings. From ITCILO sustainability point of view, the survey data suggest high loyalty with the training activities. A substantial 92.43% of the 317 respondents expressed a definite interest in enrolling in additional courses, signifying strong ongoing engagement with the training institution. Moreover, the survey facilitated the calculation

of the Net Promoter Score (NPS), a key metric for gauging customer loyalty and satisfaction. With the majority of respondents rating their likelihood to recommend the training highly, the NPS reached a commendable 54.89. This figure reflects a dominant percentage of promoters (64.04% of respondents), who are enthusiastic about the training and likely to advocate for it, versus a minor fraction of detractors (9.15%), who were less satisfied. This blend of quantitative data and anecdotal evidence suggests that the training programs not only meet immediate educational needs but also establish a foundation for sustained engagement and endorsement among participants.

Recommendations

7. The evaluator submitted the following recommendations:³

Recommendation 1. Build Consensus on the expected outcomes & impact

Based on the findings that there are different perspectives on what outcomes and impacts training programs should deliver, it seems advisable to clarify these aspects and align everyone behind a unified vision. According to the Centre's Strategic Plan for 2022-25, the approach suggests that individual training primarily generates outcomes and impacts at the individual level, while institutional outcomes and impacts are mainly achieved through other forms of services (such as setting up platforms and software systems, membership management systems, etc.). Both types (training and service delivery at the institutional level) can naturally go hand in hand and are likely desirable in many forms to ensure the outcomes and sustainable impact on both individual performance and institutional strengthening.

Recommendation 2. Support to Workers' Activities Programme to apply M&E processes

Support the Workers' Activities Programme to more systematically apply the monitoring and evaluation processes and tools governing institutional capacity development. A comprehensive understanding of the holistic ILO capacity development approach at the unit level, along with full proficiency in utilizing the monitoring and evaluation tools, is essential. This necessity arises because the current practices at the unit level do not appear to be streamlined. ITCILO might also want to more clearly articulate the link between its capacity development services (inputs) and longer-term positive change assessed by ILO as part of its organization-wide impact evaluations.

Recommendation 3. Enlarge the number of Distance participants

The main findings of this evaluation research are that in terms of validity (across a wide range of dimensions) and effectiveness, there are no significant differences between the modes of delivery (F2F trainings, blended learning, distance learning). The assessments by participants across various dimensions do not differ significantly. This is, of course, an important finding. On the other hand, participants do indicate a preference for blended and F2F trainings if they are offered (88% of the respondents). As suggested in the text, it appears that participants in the training programs are looking for additional benefits such as networking, social contact, and multicultural experiences. These are not insignificant aspects within the international trade union community.

However, we believe that different objectives should not be conflated. If training and education are the objectives, distance learning proves to be a very good and high-quality offering. **Therefore, it seems advisable to certainly retain and, if possible, expand number the digital training activities (sic).** This could be achieved by

³ Quoted from: 2024 external evaluation of ITCILO training activities, p. 10

offering even more distance learning programmes instead of blended learning with F2F components or exclusively F2F learning environments. If networking is an objective, and again, this is a very important aspect to strengthen the international trade union community, it seems better to develop other types of activities that explicitly foster networking. Other, possibly better, criteria can then be developed to select participants for networking activities.

Another significant finding of the evaluation study is that the number of participants in the distance learning programs varies greatly and, on average, has a low reach. **Therefore, it is recommended to increase the number of participants per distance learning program to achieve greater inclusivity and reach.** This can be accomplished without significant additional costs (only the hiring of tutors). Increasing the number of enrolments per distance module would thus drastically enhance both effectiveness and efficiency.

Recommendation 4. Enhance collaboration between units

The final recommendation is based on the observation that the structural and intensive collaboration between different units within ITCILO is rather limited, despite initiatives taken to achieve this. The main reason for this lies in the fact that the ACTRAV-ITCILO unit should not strictly be regarded as a technical unit but as a multidisciplinary team that primarily serves workers and trade unionists as its target audience.

In this sense, they operate multidisciplinary within the ILO mandate. Additionally, there is a significant difference in the client-driven approach of the training programs of the ACTRAV unit compared to most other units. Participants in the ACTRAV programs do not pay for their registrations. Furthermore, the selection of participants undergoes a multi-layered process. The different approaches thus hinder collaboration.

The current situation will not enhance collaboration in the future unless actions are taken. There is a need for greater structural collaboration between different units within the organization. Therefore, it is recommended that management and leadership seek creative ways to foster collaboration. Given the specific context of ACTRAV and from ACTRAV's perspective, this likely means that any established collaboration (such as e.g. a new joint training program) should allow trade union participants to participate without fees.

It could be considered to reinstate the tripartite peer review mechanism in place before the COVID pandemic and to further expand the work done since the beginning of 2024 by the ITCILO CATALYST team. Creative strategies should be pursued to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and to allow trade union participants to engage without financial barriers. This could involve developing joint training programs that waive fees for these participants.

III. Management response

8. **The Centre welcomes the findings of the external evaluation.** The evaluation shows that the Workers' Activities Programme makes a significant contribution towards the achievement of the mandate of the organization. There also seems to be room to further expand the universe of distance learners among workers representatives. Going forward, and inspired by the principles of continuous quality improvement, the Centre will undertake a series of measures to further develop its portfolio of learning activities, building on the recommendations of the evaluator. The following paragraphs set down the **management response to the recommendations** made by the evaluator.

9. In response to the **first recommendation**, and as part of upcoming consultations leading towards the elaboration of the 2026-2029 strategic plan and the 2026-27 Programme and Budget of the Centre, the capacity development approach of the organization rooted in the 2019 ILO capacity development strategy, will be further evolved in a joint envisioning exercise, taking inspiration from the broader UN-system wide debate and the UN Quintet of Change. As part of this exercise, the theory of change explaining the circular cause-and-effect relationships between individual, institutional and system-level capacity development initiatives will be better illustrated, with case studies of best practice in the house and among other UN agencies.
10. In response to the **second recommendation**, the Centre will offer tailored staff development activities to strengthen the internal capacity of the Workers' Activities Programme to apply the monitoring and evaluation tools of the organization along the standard service delivery cycle. One focus of these staff development activities will be on quality assurance of institutional capacity development services where uptake of existing processes and tools is more erratic; by direct comparison, and judged by the high level of granularity and consistency of the data that was made accessible to the evaluator, the unit-level compliance with monitoring and evaluation routines along the service cycle for training activities seems to be a lesser course of concern.
11. In response to the **third recommendation**, the Centre will support the Workers' Activities Programme to further develop its suite of digital learning activities and to expand the size of the universe of distance learners among workers representatives, while not compromising its face to face training activities and blended learning opportunities. In this regard, one concrete measure is technical and financial support to the Workers' Activities Programme via an innovation fund project to offer mobile micro-learning services to workers. Another proposed measure is to support the Workers' Activities Programme to develop additional self-guided distance learning modules (Masterclasses) on topics of pivotal interest to workers organizations, like leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Good and labour rights in the digital economy.
12. In response to the **fourth recommendation**, the Centre will more strongly emphasize on the facilitation of access for workers and employers' representatives in courses organized by units other than the Workers and Employers Activities Programmes in the Training Department. The Centre will encourage joint planning and delivery of selected bipartite and tripartite+ flagship activities, replicating the successful pilot of the global skill fair convened in February 2024. The Centre will furthermore revive the pre-pandemic tripartite peer review mechanism of the syllabus of selected open courses advertised in the online calendar for the following calendar. As in the past, the peer review mechanism will be bi-directional, i.e. include flagship activities planned across the house, including by the Workers and Employers Activities Programmes while respecting the autonomy of the Social Partners and their priorities. This way, it will be ensured that core ILO policy messages linked to Social Dialogue and Tripartism, Governance, Jobs and Protection can be mainstreamed.