

Terms of Reference – Systematic review of what works for youth employment in developing countries

Aims and outputs

The overall aim of the project, an undertaking involving ILO and the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Netherlands ministry of Foreign Affairs, is to improve youth labour market prospects by broadening the knowledge base on what works in youth employment. To realise this overall aim, it envisages:

- an update of the systematic review and corresponding meta-analysis of youth employment programme evaluations (Kluve et al, 2017);
- an update of the 3iE evidence gap map, using articles, reports, etc. that were published in the period 2015 to 2020.

The gap map will be made available through (a) an easily accessible report, including an extensive plain language summary; (b) an interactive web-tool or page (to avoid a static webpage) and (c) presentations on (a) and (b).

Output 1: an update of the systematic review and corresponding meta-analysis of youth employment programme evaluations

1.1: Search – to be completed by 1 December 2020 – 31 January 2021

- The search will build on search protocol of Kluve et al. 2017 and aims to identify new studies that have been published since January 2015.
- Conduct a comprehensive systematic search, including both a primary search (i.e. wide range of general and specialised databases such as RePEc/IDEAS, EconLit and ERIC) and complementary search (i.e. hand-search of websites, journal, thesis and grey literature databases, contacting and interviewing technical experts at international organisations and research institutions).
- The search process, in particular complementary search protocols, will pay special attention to youth employment programmes implemented in the Middle East, Northern Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and gives priority Dutch development aid priority countries (van Afghanistan tot Yemen).
- The search will be restricted to the period 2015-2020 and will use English, Dutch, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish search terms. The relevance of using Arabic search terms will be verified.

1.2: Sample selection – to be completed by 28 February 2021

- The sample selection aims to identify all relevant studies that can be included in the updated systematic review (in addition to the 113 studies of Kluge et al. 2017). The goal is to include studies of new youth labour market interventions and follow-up studies of labour market interventions for which evaluation were included in Kluge et al. 2017. Inclusion of studies will be based on the criteria catalogue of Kluge et al. 2017.
- Evaluated an active labour market programme that included at least one of the following categories of interventions: (a) skill training; (b) entrepreneurship promotion programme; (c) employment services; (d) subsidised employment.
- The active labour market programme to target primarily young women and men aged between 15 and 35;
- Used experimental or quasi-experimental designs
- Reported at least one eligible outcome variable measuring employment (e.g. probability of employment, hours worked, duration in unemployment), earnings (e.g. reported earnings, wages, consumption), business performance (e.g., profits, sales) and, preferably also concerning the level decency of employment (formal/informal, etc.). - Updates of the criteria catalogue will be explored to reflect the increasing attention of policymakers and evaluators paid to the quality of labour market outcomes, including formalisation of jobs, existence of contracts, provision of social security (such as health insurance, pension schemes, unemployment or disability insurance), working conditions (hazardous occupations) and rights at work (for example social dialogue).

1.3: Coding – to be completed by 30 April 2021

- Update the coding sheets and manuals used when preparing the initial systematic review (i.e. Kluge et al. 2017) and ensure harmonisation with the original database of Kluge et al. 2017.
- Produce a complete and cleaned dataset coding all newly included studies (incl. effect sizes, sample sizes, characteristics and information regarding the methodology of the study, contextual factors of the evaluated intervention).

1.4: Analysis – to be completed by 31 July 2021

- Conduct an econometrical meta-analysis using state-of-the-art methods. This analysis will estimate and compare treatment effect sizes across youth employment intervention types and will also include a detailed contextual analysis that will aim to identify determinants of (positive/negative) effect sizes both in terms of intervention characteristics (the “how” of the implementation) the specific contextual factors (the “where” and “when” and “for whom” of interventions).

Output 2: Knowledge products that summarise and complement the findings of the 2017 systematic review developed/updated.

2.1 Research papers and briefs – to be completed by 31 October 2021

- Produce an updated systematic review report following guidelines and protocols that will permit publishing the research through outlets specialised in systematic reviews (such as Campbell Collaboration). Prior to finalising the systematic review the report will be subjected to a rigorous internal and external peer review process.
- Produce an extensive plain language summary of the systematic review report.
- Produce a policy-focused research brief that provides an overview of the systematic review and its findings. This research brief will complement the systematic review by providing additional contextual information about a selected number of newly included interventions with a focus on the Middle East, Northern Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and an extensive section that develops policy and programming recommendations for youth employment programmes.

2.2 Interactive evidence gap map – to be completed by 30 November 2021

- Develop an evidence gap map drawing on the updated database used for the systematic review. The evidence gap map will be made publicly available through an interactive webpage. Several options for publication and hosting will be explored.

Output 3: Findings from the systematic review and complementary research is presented to policy makers and widely disseminated among the youth employment community.

3.1 Results dissemination – planned for October-December 2021

- Organize online and offline seminars to present findings of the project (from the systematic review, the research brief and the evidence gap map) to youth employment stakeholders.
- Integrate the knowledge products of this project into the Knowledge Facility of the ILO-led Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The Knowledge Facility is a digital platform of tools, publications, databases, thematic resources and more to support evidence-informed action on youth employment