



FINAL EVALUATION BRIEF | JULY 2024

# FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION: USING KNOWLEDGE TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS IN THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOR AND FORCED LABOR (R2A) AND EVIDENCE TO ACTION: INCREASING THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH TO MOBILIZE EFFORTS AGAINST FORCED LABOR IN MADAGASCAR AND ARGENTINA (E2A)

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

**R2A Award:** Total funding USD 3,360,000

**R2A Project Goal:** Accelerate the use of rigorous research by policymakers and practitioners in support of efforts to eliminate child labor and forced labor around the world.

**R2A Implementation Countries:** Global plus research agendas in Chile, Malawi, Nepal, Paraguay, and Uganda

**E2A Award:** Total funding USD 3,725,000

**E2A Project Goal:** Increase the use of forced labor research in policy and programmatic decision-making to eliminate forced labor around the world.

**E2A Implementation Countries:** Argentina and Madagascar

## EVALUATION OBJECTIVE

Assess achievement of project objectives and outputs, challenges encountered, intended and unintended effects, lessons learned, emerging good practices, and project sustainability.

USDOL commissioned the Institute for Development Impact (I4DI) to conduct an independent final performance evaluation of From Research to Action (R2A) and Evidence to Action (E2A).

## KEY RESULTS

### R2A

#### OUTCOME 1

The project did not collect adequate information to allow an assessment of the achievement of Outcome 1. While the project contributed important data inputs and attracted a significant number of users to the Delta 8.7 platform, we do not know much about the quality of the interaction and how the information was used.

### OUTCOME 2

The R2A project achieved three of its four indicator targets under Outcome 2. However, it would have been useful to have a specific indicator to measure whether researchers increased their understanding of the knowledge gaps.

### OUTCOME 3

Outcome 3 did not include an indicator to actually measure improved capacity of researchers as stated in the outcome statement. While the project exceeded its indicator target for the number of researchers it trained, and produced training materials that are available online, the evaluation team could not objectively assess to what extent the capacity of researchers actually increased.

### OUTCOME 4

The evaluation team considers that Outcome 4, engagement of skilled multidisciplinary, policy-oriented researchers that carry out rigorous studies on child labor and forced labor issues, was achieved.

### E2A

#### OUTCOME 1

The evaluation team could not assess achievement of the Outcome 1 indicator target because the project had not yet conducted the training and pre- and post-tests to assess changes in stakeholder perceptions at the time of the evaluation.

#### OUTCOME 2

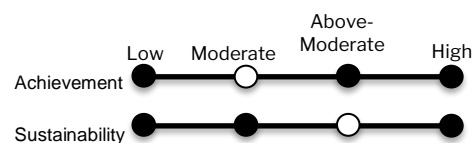
Like Outcome 1, the evaluation team could not assess the achievement of Outcome 2 indicator targets because the project intends to wait until the end of activities to measure changes in perceptions about the usefulness of the research and their intention to use the information.

## DETAILED RESULTS

### R2A Project

#### OUTCOME 1

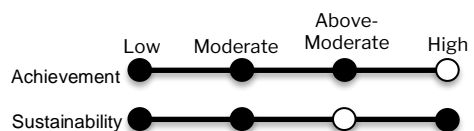
**ACHIEVEMENT.** The project did not collect adequate information to allow an assessment of the achievement of Outcome 1. While the project contributed important data inputs and attracted a significant number of users to the Delta 8.7 platform, we do not know much about the quality of the interaction and how the information was used. UNU decided to take the platform down in December 2023 due to a lack of funding to maintain the platform, which further complicates the process of assessing the effectiveness of the platform. Key output achievements under this outcome include the child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking bibliography linked to the evidence gap maps, research for policy guidance tool, and the R2A platform that houses these tools and resources.



**SUSTAINABILITY.** The bibliography has been incorporated into the ILO Library system and thus has been institutionalized. The challenge, however, is to find the resources to update the bibliography at least once per year. The R2A platform hosts key R2A research tools and resources. The plan is to institutionalize the platform by eventually folding it into the ILO system. Like the bibliography, the R2A platform should be kept up-to-date. The policy guidance tool exists and is available on the R2A platform. It should be sustainable in the short to medium term but longer-term sustainability will depend on resources to update the tool so it remains relevant.

#### OUTCOME 2

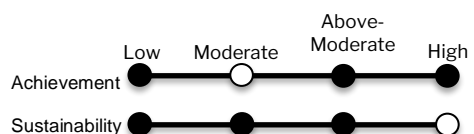
**ACHIEVEMENT.** The project achieved three of its four indicator targets. However, it would have been useful to have a specific indicator to measure whether researchers increased their understanding of the knowledge gaps. The project also achieved its outputs and sub-outputs, including the global and country research agendas, situational briefs, the meta-analysis/literature reviews, and the evidence gap maps, which helped increase the understanding by researchers of existing child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking knowledge gaps that need to be addressed by research.



**SUSTAINABILITY.** The key outputs/products noted above exist and are available on the R2A platform. They should be sustainable in the short to medium term but longer-term sustainability will require resources to keep them up-to-date. The more challenging aspect is the engagement with researchers around these products that requires resources to be successful. It is not clear where those resources will come from now that the project has ended.

#### OUTCOME 3

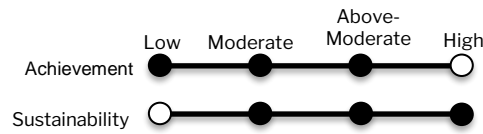
**ACHIEVEMENT.** Outcome 3 did not include an indicator to actually measure improved capacity of researchers as stated in the outcome statement. While the project exceeded its indicator target for the number of researchers it trained, and produced training materials that are available online, the evaluation team could not objectively assess to what extent the capacity of researchers actually increased. However, based on interviews with national statistics officers who participated in the training, their perception is that the training improved their capacity to analyze child labor and forced labor survey data, but more training is necessary.



**SUSTAINABILITY.** The main focus of Outcome 3 was the online training course on child labor and forced labor data analysis that the project developed and piloted with representatives from six national statistics offices in Africa. The R2A project, through the ILO's International Training Centre (ITC-ILO), has made the course (modules) available online free-of-charge to researchers and other key stakeholders. Thus, the course appears to show strong signs of sustainability. The sustainability of the broader outcome, to increase the capacity of researchers, will depend on to what extent researchers take advantage of the online course.

**OUTCOME 4**

**ACHIEVEMENT.** The evaluation team considers that Outcome 4, engagement of skilled multidisciplinary, policy-oriented researchers that carry out rigorous studies on child labor and forced labor issues, was achieved. The 16 research seed grants and fellowships, the research they generated, and the dissemination of this research through the global conference made important contributions to addressing gaps in research on child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking.

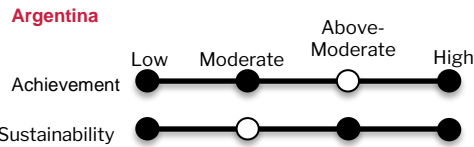


**SUSTAINABILITY.** The research under Outcome 4 was completed and presented at an international conference and is available on the R2A platform. The research appears to provide valuable and important input to policy decisions related to child labor and forced labor. However, the lack of a strategy to get the research in front of policymakers and practitioners could limit overall impact and sustainability. Also, research grant programming is not sustainable because future research will likely require funding from multilateral or bilateral donors or foundations.

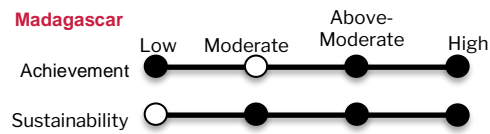
**E2A Project**

**OUTCOME 1**

**ACHIEVEMENT.** The evaluation team could not assess achievement of the Outcome 1 indicator target because the project had not yet conducted the training and pre- and post-tests to assess changes in stakeholder perceptions at the



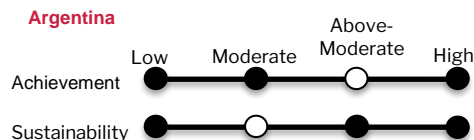
time of the evaluation. In Argentina, the project achieved three of five outputs at the time of this evaluation. These include the rapid sector appraisal, value chain analysis, and prevalence survey. The home-based worker case study was in the process of being completed at the time of the evaluation. However, due to sensitivities about forced labor, the project has decided to wait until the end of activities before disseminating and publishing the results of the research. In Madagascar, the project is behind schedule. It achieved one of four outputs at the time of this evaluation, including the rapid sector appraisal. The prevalence survey was in the process of being conducted at the time of this evaluation. The project intends to wait until activities have been completed before disseminating and publishing the research results. According to interviews, key government and private sector stakeholders are concerned that research showing the presence of forced labor in the garment sector could harm export markets.



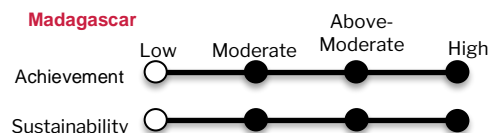
**SUSTAINABILITY.** In both Argentina and Madagascar, the research reports and related knowledge products exist and will be available to policymakers and practitioners. Their sustainable impact, however, will be determined by if and how they are used by these key stakeholders. In Argentina, there appears to be strong interest in using the knowledge generated by the project to inform public policy and forced labor programs. In Madagascar, on the other hand, there does not appear to be as strong interest in using the knowledge. One explanation of this discrepancy is that government and private sector stakeholders are concerned that if forced labor is found to be present in the garment sector, this information could negatively impact its garment export markets.

**OUTCOME 2**

**ACHIEVEMENT.** Like Outcome 1, the evaluation team could not assess the achievement of Outcome 2 indicator targets because the project intends to wait until the end of activities to measure changes in perceptions about the usefulness of the



research and their intention to use the information. In Argentina, the project achieved two of its three outputs, including a mapping of stakeholders for forced labor data and a stakeholder engagement strategy. At the time of the evaluation, the project was in the process of developing recommendations to strengthen stakeholder capacity as



well as completing a set of due diligence tools. In Madagascar, the project completed one of three outputs at the time of this evaluation. The project completed the mapping of stakeholders and their information needs, but was still in the process of developing the stakeholder engagement strategy and completing the set of due diligence tools at the time of this evaluation. However, the project has not been able to engage with Malagasy stakeholders in a meaningful manner. The project also has two global outputs focused on the dissemination of policy knowledge products and the organization of a global webinar conference to disseminate and discuss E2A research activities. These outputs were not achieved at the time of the evaluation.

**SUSTAINABILITY.** The evaluation team found it difficult to assess the sustainability of this outcome since the project decided to wait to implement some of the key activities until the main research products under Outcome 1 are officially published and disseminated to stakeholders. In Argentina, there appears to be interest in dialogue and engagement around the research findings based largely on a relatively high degree of public awareness about poor labor conditions in the informal garment sector. While the public has an appetite to understand the labor problems in the sector, it is not clear what approach the newly elected government will take to address them. Nevertheless, the government and tripartite stakeholders will likely rely on the ILO to lead the dialogue. In Madagascar, while the research results could provide valuable information to government and garment sector decision-makers to help them identify forced labor risks and target the appropriate interventions, it is not clear whether the political willingness exists to address forced labor in the sector that, in turn, will determine to what extent dialogue and engagement can be sustained.

## RELEVANT FINDINGS

- The evaluation was not able to find evidence that the knowledge generated by the R2A and E2A projects informed stakeholders' policies and programs. Changes in policies and programs take time and it is too early to say whether the knowledge led to or will lead to changes. There appears to be a strong interest among R2A stakeholders and E2A stakeholders in Argentina to explore ways to apply the knowledge.
- The evaluation team concluded that the R2A project design was relevant and effectively responded to the needs of its key stakeholders. The evaluation team concluded that the E2A project design was also relevant and effectively responded to the needs and priorities of its stakeholders in Argentina; however, the E2A project had less success in these areas in Madagascar.
- The R2A project collaborated effectively with organizations at both the global level and with the research agenda countries. The E2A project was effective at collaborating with key stakeholders in Argentina but less effective at engaging stakeholders in Madagascar.
- The R2A and E2A projects operated in an efficient manner. They produced outputs with the planned amount of human and financial resources.

## PROMISING PRACTICES

This final performance evaluation identified the following promising practices:

### R2A and E2A

1. Both the R2A and E2A projects applied flexible project approaches that allowed for constant adaptations and adjustments to political situations, and changes requested by stakeholders and project partners at both the global and country levels.

### R2A

1. International advisory boards consisting of academic institutions, international research specialists, and representatives of international organizations, serve as an important platform for research cooperation and dialogue on child labor and forced labor issues.
2. The ILO and IOM staff loan arrangement provided a key IOM researcher to the R2A project to provide input and guidance on migration issues as well as institutional linkages.
3. The selection of Pathfinder Countries to develop the country research agendas allowed R2A to leverage the countries' commitment to address child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through improved research and knowledge.
4. Building project interventions and products into existing ILO systems and procedures created efficiency and contributed to the sustainability of these interventions and products.

**E2A**

1. The active participation of key national stakeholders in the development of methodologies, data collection instruments, and due diligence tools not only provided valuable suggestions to improve these tools but helped create stakeholder commitment.
2. Conducting qualitative studies prior to designing and implementing the forced labor prevalence survey allowed E2A to ascertain and integrate critical sector-specific information.
3. Discussing and adjusting research findings with key stakeholders before making the research reports public helped increase the understanding of the findings and ensure their acceptability.
4. Breaking large research products into several smaller products facilitates targeting audiences with useful information that they can digest and act upon.
5. Building on existing institutions and structures rather than creating new ones increases efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

This final performance evaluation identified the following lessons learned:

**R2A**

1. It is critical to determine the mandates and limitations of potential partners (i.e. IOM and UNU) during the project design phase in order to proactively address possible sub-award issues and other problems related to contracting that could otherwise arise during the implementation phase.
2. Projects like R2A, that aim to accelerate the use of research to improve policy and programs, require specific strategies to get research and research tools in front of policymakers and practitioners.
3. Projects that aim to achieve knowledge and behavior changes, such as using knowledge to improve policies and programs, require M&E systems with indicators to measure changes in knowledge and behaviors.
4. Projects that produce research products such as the R2A country research agendas need a strategy and resources to support their effective implementation.
5. Ambitious projects like R2A would benefit from additional staffing at the global and country levels, which would allow for increased support for project participants, thereby ensuring that the planned outputs and outcomes are achieved.

**E2A**

1. National coordinators, based in the countries targeted by the project, are highly important to ensure that activities and outputs advance as planned, especially outreach and engagement with key stakeholders.
2. Involve private sector partners early in the project so that they can help set the agenda and can ensure their needs are being met by the project, which would also help to increase the partners' commitment to the project and sense of ownership.
3. Anticipate and understand the stakeholders' economic concerns of forced labor research and use this information to develop proactive strategies to raise awareness about the risks that forced labor poses to export markets and what countries can do to mitigate the risk.
4. Some project activities do not necessarily have to be implemented in a linear sequence as planned but can and should be implemented in parallel.
5. The involvement of community-based organizations and other civil society organizations is important to help researchers gain access to the study population.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This final performance evaluation identified the following recommendations, organized according to the intended audience:

**ILO AND USDOL**

1. Develop and use a mix of effect-level indicators that measure how research findings are used to address child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking.
2. Design forced labor research projects, including their main strategies, based on the context of the implementation country.

3. Hire national project coordinators to lead the engagement and dialogue around research findings (knowledge) as well as facilitate research activities.
4. Ensure adequate staffing to ensure effective implementation of activities and technical support to project partners.
5. Include a strong research communication/advocacy strategy to help ensure the research findings/knowledge is used by policymakers and practitioners.

## USDOL

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6. Provide specific and detailed instruction in the Funding Opportunity Announcements on the expectation that USDOL funded projects incorporate diversity, equity, inclusiveness, and accessibility principles into the project designs/strategies.

## ILO

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7. Vet potential subcontractors to determine if they are able and willing to adhere to US government contracting rules and regulations. This should be done during the project design phase.
8. When feasible, configure project teams with qualified researchers to take the lead on research activities, supported by local researchers, instead of hiring expensive research firms.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation team used a mixed-methods approach for both projects consisting of document reviews, key informant interviews, and online perception surveys. As such, this evaluation relied primarily on qualitative data. Interviews were conducted virtually at the global level for R2A and at the country level for E2A in Argentina and Madagascar. Interviewees included project staff, implementing partners, ILO and USDOL representatives, and a variety of other stakeholders.

The evaluation team interviewed 60 total persons between the two projects including 32 females and 28 males. These stakeholders included project staff, ILO and IOM representatives, researchers, academics, national statistics officers, and representatives of employers' organizations, trade unions, civil society organizations, and academic institutions.

In addition to document reviews and key informant interviews, the evaluation team used the results of online perception surveys to complement document reviews and interviews. The evaluation team conducted three online perception surveys with R2A stakeholders including the International Advisory Board members, national statistical office representatives, and recipients of the seed grant research component. Rather than conduct an online survey for E2A stakeholders, the evaluation team used the results of an online perception survey that the project conducted.

Qualitative data collected through interviews and document reviews were analyzed using a matrix analysis to categorize, triangulate, synthesize, and summarize the raw data captured from interview and desk research notes. Using an Excel-based tool, the evaluation team created a matrix for organizing data for each of the 10 key evaluation questions. Immediately after each interview, data was populated in the Excel-based tool, organized by evaluation question, country, and stakeholder/organization.

Quantitative data collected from Technical Progress Reports (TPRs) were analyzed by comparing end-of-project indicator and activity targets to actual achievements and calculating variances. The results of the quantitative data analysis are presented in the evaluation report in tabular form by each outcome and output.

The results of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis provided tangible blocks of information, which evaluators used to answer key evaluation questions. The wealth and variety of information collected allowed for high-level reinforcement and synthesis across sources to obtain a cross-cutting and comprehensive analysis of the evaluation questions.

## LIMITATIONS

The primary limitation for this combined evaluation was that the evaluation team was not able to interview any representatives from the government and garment sector in Madagascar largely since the E2A project was not able to develop relationships and engage with these stakeholders. In Argentina, two key labor ministry representatives who participated in the project were not available for interviews.

Another limiting factor was the remote fieldwork in Madagascar (E2A) and interviews with national statistical officers (R2A) in Ghana, Malawi, and Nigeria as well as recipients of research grants (R2A) in Myanmar. At times, the signal was weak, which resulted in interference that made the conversation with stakeholders difficult to understand or, in some cases, dropped calls that had to be reinitiated.

The primary limitation of the online perception surveys was that none of the stakeholders from Madagascar responded to the E2A online perception survey, meaning only the views of Argentina stakeholders were reflected in the E2A survey findings. While the overall response rates for the R2A and E2A survey were acceptable at 40 percent, the response rate for the R2A IAB members was lower at 31 percent.

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