



Methodological Note

September 2025

Background

The ILO has developed a [comprehensive five-year strategy](#) (2023-2027) promoting **decent work in supply chains** aligned with its global mandate to promote social justice. Under the area of work on Research, Knowledge and Practical Tools, the strategy calls for the ILO to establish a robust evidence base on decent work in supply chains and to develop a systematic Knowledge Management plan to share it with constituents and translate it into policy advice.

To pursue the objective of effectively sharing ILO evidence and knowledge on the topic, the ILO's **Decent Work in Supply Chains Evidence Hub** was developed.

Methodological considerations

Step 1 – Building the bibliography

Source and scope of data

- The bibliography contains all research products listed by the [ILO Library](#) that were either **published by the ILO or by the International Labour Review** over the **last 10 years** (2014-2024) at the time of the start of the development of the hub. The following set of search tags was applied:
 - i. Supply chains
 - ii. Value chains
 - iii. Trade
 - iv. Market systems
 - v. Sourcing
 - vi. Exports
 - vii. Investment/foreign direct investment
 - viii. Responsible business conduct and human rights due diligence
 - ix. Sector
- The **types of research products included in the bibliography** are books, book chapters, reports, working papers, briefs, conference papers, articles published in the International Labour Review, as well as discussion and research papers.
- In this first iteration of the hub, **only publications in English** were included in the bibliography. Research products in other ILO languages will be considered in future iterations.



- In close coordination with the ILO Library and after several iterations, the final bibliography was defined consisting of **535 entries**. All publications are tagged by the ILO Library with metadata describing the topics covered as well as their geographical scope.
- Research with a specific country- and/ or regional-scope was **assigned to one (or more) sub-region based on the ILO's classification**.
- Supply chain categories were developed based on the ILO's sectoral groupings¹ and in close exchange with internal stakeholders. The following supply chain categories were applied:
 - i. Agriculture, food, and forestry (including the following sectors: agriculture, aquaculture, plantations, other rural sectors; food, drink and tobacco; and forestry, wood, pulp, and paper)
 - ii. Fisheries
 - iii. Textile, apparel, leather and related products
 - iv. Other manufacturing (including basic metals, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and transport equipment)
 - v. Private services sectors (commerce, financial and professional services; tourism, hotels, and food & beverage services; media, culture, sports and entertainment; Postal and telecommunications services)
 - vi. Public service, utilities and health (health and social services, public service, utilities - gas, electricity, water, waste management)
 - vii. Electronics, machinery and electrical equipment
 - viii. Infrastructure, construction and related sectors
 - ix. Extractives and energy (mining - coal, other mining; oil and gas)
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Step 2 - Development of the matrix

- The matrix's **factors** and **outcomes** were developed **grounded in the ILO's coordinated research agenda on supply chains**. The development of the matrix definitions and scope was led by the ILO's cross-Office Supply Chain Research Community (SCRC).
- The matrix's design and visual identity were modelled on the ILO [Research to Action](#) evidence gap map.

Step 3 - Application of generative AI

Development of AI-supported summaries

- **AI-summaries for each publication** were developed in an iterative process: based on a random subset of documents (n=50) the prompt was refined over time to improve the overall accuracy of summaries, with oversight from the ILO SCRC.
- After several rounds of iterations deploying ChatGPT-4o, AI-supported summaries were scaled up to the full bibliography.

¹ [Industries and sectors](#) | International Labour Organization

Tagging publications on the matrix

- To **assign research products to specific cross points** in the map, AI was employed to assess their fit for each factor–outcome variable combination, using the following three criteria:
 - i. Semantic matching I: Comparing the full publication to each definition of each y- and x-axis variable and generate cosine similarity score (weight 0.35)
 - ii. Semantic matching II: Comparing the abstract, or if not available the AI-summary, of the publication to each definition of each y- and x-axis variable and generate cosine similarity score (weight 0.35)
 - iii. Keyword matching: Count how often a variable is cited in the full text and in the title (weight 0.3)
- Based on the above, a weighted score was generated ranging from 0 to 10 with a score of 8.0 as threshold. Thus, **only publications with a score of 8.0, or higher, on both x- and y-axis** at a cross point were considered. In case no publication at a certain cross point met this standard, the AI picked the closest combination to that threshold.
- SCRC experts checked the **accuracy** of the AI tagging and made any corrections to the final list of publications at each cross point.
- Publications are featured at **multiple cross points** of the matrix, since they often cover findings that span over more than one factor or outcome.

Summaries of ILO evidence in the matrix

- Based on each publication's summary and on the sample at each cross point, **AI summaries of the publications listed in each specific cross point** were generated. The prompt and the results were first tested on the random subset of publications (n=50) and, after several iterations to refine the prompt, scaled up to the full bibliography.
- ILO researchers working on the nexus supply chains, trade, investment and decent work **closely monitored the results**. This allowed to improve the accuracy of results of the AI in an iterative process. Also, prior to the launch, a consultative meeting including a wide range of ILO staff as well as academics took place.
- All AI-generated summaries were **closely fact-checked by SCRC experts**. While every effort has been made to provide clear and reliable information, these summaries are intended **for general informational purposes only** and should not be considered as a substitute for the full original sources or for ILO direct advice to constituents.

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