

Independent evaluation  
of the ILO's Decent Work  
Country Programme strategies  
and actions in the Mekong subregion

**2012–2017**



International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva



September 2017



EVALUATION  
OFFICE





# 1. Scope



- ❑ This High-Level Evaluation assessed the work of the ILO during 2012-2017 in four countries of the Lower Mekong subregion: **Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand** and **Viet Nam**. Myanmar was not included as the ILO's development cooperation work there is still relatively recent.
- ❑ In three of the countries the ILO delivers its work through **Decent Work Country Programmes** (DWCPs). In Thailand, a set of priority projects constitute a multi-year work programmes.
- ❑ Several regional and global projects operate in the subregion. A total of **US\$55.42 million** in external funds from 67 sources supported **89 projects** and the services of a **Decent Work Technical Specialist Team** (DWT) of **23** specialists and various technical cooperation staff.

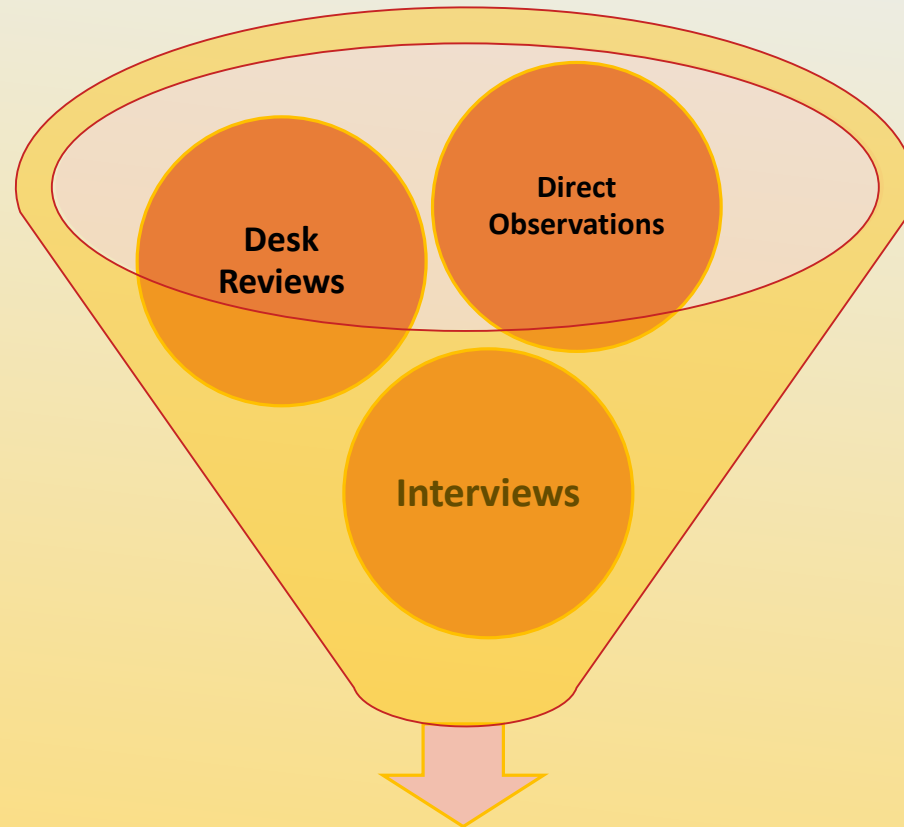




## 2. Methodology



# METHODOLOGY



## MIXED-METHOD EVALUATION

The evaluation is based primarily on qualitative research, drawing on multiple sources of information, including:

- ❑ Document reviews: desk study of more than **140 documents** and **four country case studies**
- ❑ Country missions: country visits to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand, and visits to ROAP and CO/DWT-Bangkok
- ❑ Interviews: A total of **164 persons** (**20% women**) were interviewed
- ❑ Additional evidence: **Twenty-seven** selected external project evaluations and **five** external country programmes reviews provided additional evidence.



# 3. Findings



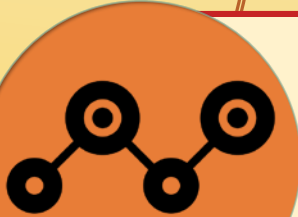
# FINDINGS



The DWCP framework provided a solid foundation for collaboration on decent work in the Mekong countries. The ILO has used its comparative advantage to good effect in the subregion, and is considered by a vast majority of persons interviewed as a highly capable and trusted partner that works with high integrity.



The strong RBM focus without the logic of explicit theories of change prevents a more holistic approach to understanding and managing the DWCPs. The M&E systems in the ILO do not yet play appropriate roles in management, improvement, accountability and strengthening of conditions and opportunities for impact.



The short-term perspectives fostered by the ILO's reliance on project funding, the underfunding of the DWCPs, and capacity constraints in the field continue to hamper efforts to enable the type of deep and long-term changes and financing models that will sustain progress and impact towards decent work in each country.



# FINDINGS



For greater influence in support of decent work, the ILO must address human resources and other constraints that hamper its contributions in the subregion. It must also address perceptions that its perspectives on decent work for business, social good and development are too insular, and its leadership and guidance in the UN system is too limited.



The impressive volume of work and achievements during implementation of the DWCPs in the subregion point to high-performance teams located in ROAP, CO/DWT-Bangkok and CO-Hanoi. Addressing human resource and administrative constraints in these offices will lead to even higher performance.

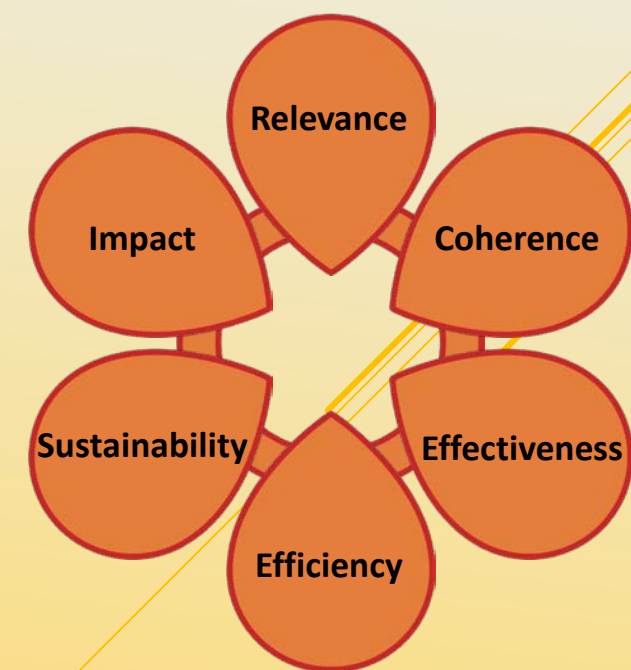
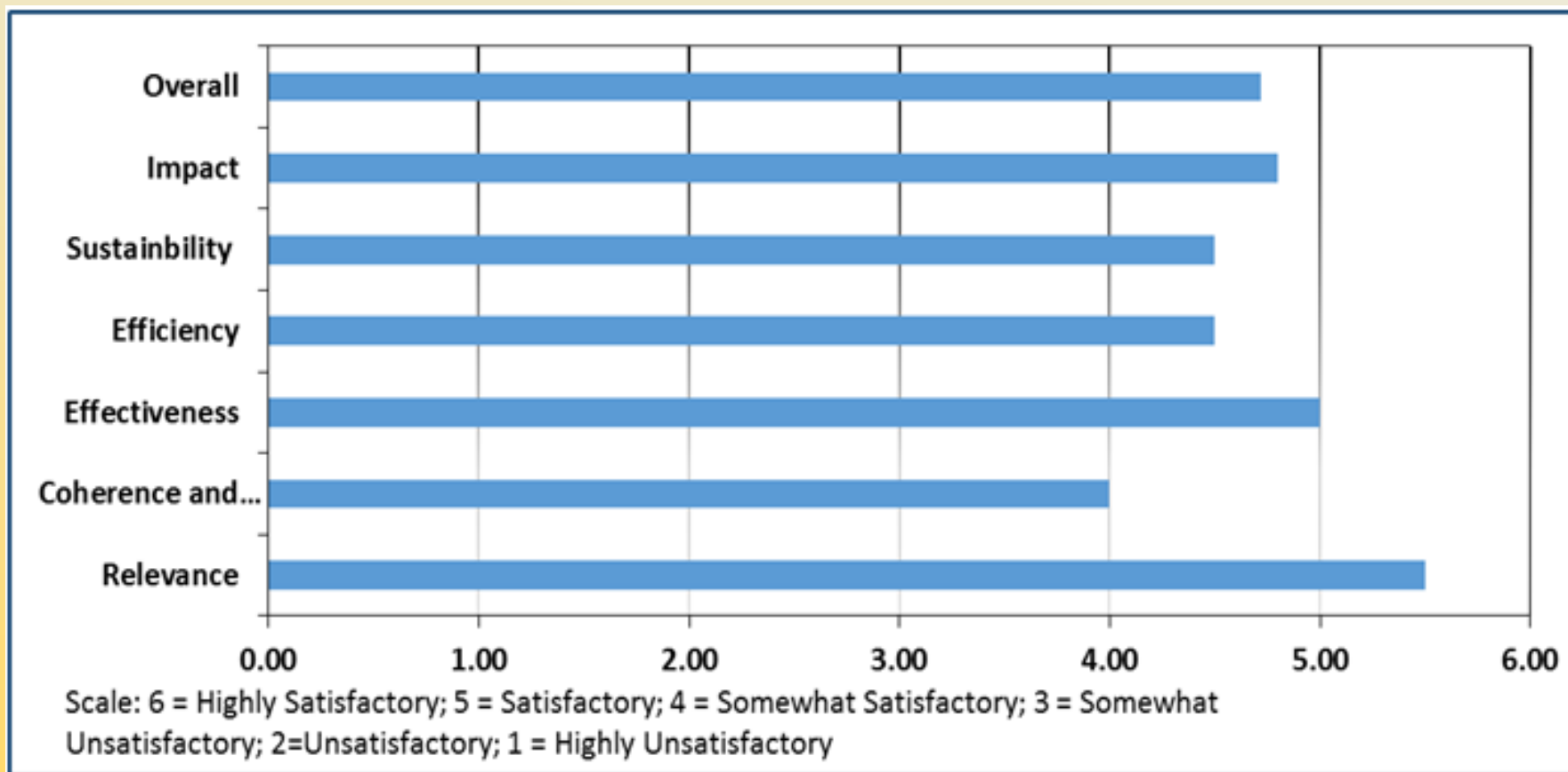


Although there has been some ratification of ILO Conventions, this is an area in need of concerted attention, particularly concerning their implementation. Similarly, work on gender, indigenous communities and people with disability will require concerted attention over the next few years.



# FINDINGS – SUMMARY RATINGS

The report provides a rating of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.



# 4. Lessons Learned





# LESSONS LEARNED



Unless tripartite constituents are the most influential forces in their sectors, progress towards decent work can easily be obstructed by powerful organizations or coalitions with direct access to influential government ministries.



The trust of ministries not used to working with the ILO is gained by proving commitment to the process, rapidly responding to requests when development partners lack interest or expertise.



DWCPs have to be designed and implemented to closely reflect local and evolving contexts and capacities, with a strong focus on ownership and sustainability.



The appropriate timing and sequencing of interventions are important to ensure the readiness of systems and society for changes brought about through policy and regulation.

# LESSONS LEARNED



Successfully connecting projects that are complementary increases effectiveness and the potential for impact.



Monitoring and evaluation are important at all levels within the ILO context, as well as part of institutional capacity development support to partners.



The scale of an achievement needs careful consideration. Major increases in small numbers do not necessarily indicate success if ways to scale effectively are not found.



# 5. Recommendations



# RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** Improve the chance of generating impacts that sustain in the long term
- 2** Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning systems
- 3** Review the capacity and office configuration of the DWT/CO-Bangkok and related offices for potential improvements including achieving a better understanding of the special role played by national coordinators
- 4** Give appropriate momentum to progress towards decent work



# RECOMMENDATIONS

**5** Use the DWCPs to strengthen engagement with ASEAN and the SDGs

**6** Strengthen DWT-Bangkok's potential for impact

**7** Make a concerted effort to improve cross-cutting area outcomes

**8** Expand funding potential by focusing on new types of sources and collective efforts

# CONTACT US

*ILO Evaluation Office*

*Email: [eval@ilo.org](mailto:eval@ilo.org)*

*Web: [www.ilo.org/eval](http://www.ilo.org/eval)*

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