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NINTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

High-level evaluations of strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes

Purpose of the document

This document presents a summary of the findings and recommendations of three independent high-level evaluations conducted during 2017. Part I pertains to the independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy and actions on creating and extending social protection floors 2012–17. Part II summarizes the findings of the independent evaluation of the ILO's field operations and structure 2010–16. Part III concerns the evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes, strategies and actions in the Mekong subregion 2012–17. The final section of each summary contains a set of recommendations requiring follow-up and sets out the Office response. The Governing Body is invited to endorse the recommendations and request the Director-General to ensure their implementation (see draft decision in paragraph 127).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome/cross-cutting policy driver: Enabling Outcome B: Effective and efficient governance of the Organization.

Policy implications: The final section of each evaluation summary contains a set of recommendations, the implementation of which will have policy implications.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: Changes in resource allocations within the approved budget level may be required.

Follow-up action required: Follow-up to the recommendations will be reviewed by the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) and reported to the Governing Body through the annual evaluation report.

Author unit: Evaluation Office (EVAL).

Related documents: GB.304/PFA/2, GB.322/PFA/1.

Introduction

1. This report presents a summary of the findings of three high-level evaluations conducted by the ILO's Evaluation Office (EVAL) in 2017. The evaluations were undertaken using standard evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and were built on the approach presented in the ILO's high-level evaluation protocols for outcome strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). The evaluations use secondary data sources as well as substantial original surveys and carefully structured and selected sets of country case studies. [1] Data derived from different methods and sources were triangulated to ensure consistency and reliability. A six-point rating scale, ranging from very unsatisfactory to very satisfactory, was applied whenever appropriate, to complement the evaluation findings. The high-level evaluations aim to generate insights into organizational-level performance within the context of the ILO's results-based management system and are expected to contribute to decision-making on policies, strategies and accountability.

Part I.   Independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy and actions for creating and extending social protection floors (2012–17)

Purpose and scope

2. This high-level evaluation covered the ILO's work on social protection following the adoption of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), which had a profound impact on its work. The evaluation focused on the ILO's strategy and work on promoting social protection, including social protection floors, for the 2012–17 period. This comprised:

(i)   the ILO's support at the country level for the achievement of Outcome 4 under the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15 [2] and Outcome 3 under the transitional Strategic Plan [3] and Programme and Budget for 2016–17;

(ii)   the ILO's contribution to global strategies, policies and debates relating to social protection floors and its coordination within the Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) and the Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I) "One-UN Social Protection Floor Teams", with its multilateral and United Nations (UN) partners;

(iii)   the ILO's work in knowledge management and sharing of experiences through the Social Protection Platform (www.social-protection.org).

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[1] Country or topical case studies for each evaluation are available on request at eval@ilo.org.

[2] GB.304/PFA/2.

[3] GB.322/PFA/1.

3. During May and June 2017, field visits were conducted in five countries [4] while an additional 11 countries [5] were covered by parallel regional thematic evaluations on social protection in Africa, the Americas and Asia. A total of 167 interviews were conducted for the high-level evaluation, including governments', workers' and employers' representatives in all five case study countries. Responses to two online surveys were received from 80 ILO staff members, 28 constituents and nine other partners [6] as well as 30 UN partners and donors. A synthesis review of 24 evaluation reports on social protection also provided inputs to the overall understanding of the ILO's work at the country level. The gender dimension and other cross-cutting themes were considered throughout the methodology and all deliverables, including the final evaluation report.

Findings

A.   Relevance

4. The ILO's work on social protection is relevant at both the global and country/regional levels. The strong focus on the global agenda to achieve more outreach and impact is justified and has high strategic relevance, as reflected in the position that universal social protection has assumed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in the Global Partnership on Universal Social Protection (USP 2030). The ILO played an essential role in efforts towards improved donor coordination at the global level, as a leading actor in the creation and coordination of new collaboration platforms (SPF-I, SPIAC-B and USP 2030). With the multiplication of global initiatives, there is a continuous need to clarify internally and externally the comparative advantages, membership and scope of work of the various global platforms, and adjust these to changing needs and realities. The recently launched Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All [7] is relevant and well designed, but the working modalities for its implementation at country level need to be further developed.

5. At the country level, there is appreciation for the demand-driven approach of the ILO, the comprehensive normative framework that guides its work, the expanded tripartite approach, including other civil society organizations, and the provision of flexible technical support in highly specialized areas, enriched by sharing of cross-country experiences. The ILO has developed relevant tools to undertake a systematic and inclusive assessment in support of social protection policy development. Gaps in expertise on how to most effectively support policy implementation remain. Increased documentation of good practice through guides and manuals is a strong area of the programme as it strengthens the institutional memory, both for advocacy purposes and as part of the technical assistance package and support. While the use of manuals and guides in support of capacity-building interventions is appreciated, constituents pointed to the continued importance of facilitating access to other types of knowledge (tacit) and services from experts, individually or in teams, when responding to country demands.

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[4] Colombia, Jordan, Mozambique, Viet Nam and Zambia.

[5] Cambodia, El Salvador, Ghana, Honduras, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Peru and Thailand.

[6] One person did not indicate his organizational or departmental affiliation.

[7] http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/Flagship.action.

6. Dividing the scarce resources between global and fieldwork is a balancing act, with competing views about the way forward. The question is how the ILO can simultaneously deliver on the broadened social protection floor agenda and growing demand for country support, and enhance or maintain specialized in-house expertise, while also delivering on the expanding global agenda.

B. Coherence

7. Recommendation No. 202 and related policy documents provide a coherent and comprehensive framework for ILO operations. The acceptance and uptake of the framework is generally strong, especially within the ILO [8] and at UN level, but also beyond, through integration in the SDGs, the G20 agenda and in some of the work of the international financial institutions. Within the ILO's strategic frameworks, social protection was one of the main pillars for the 2012–17 period and is also reflected in the Programme and Budget for 2018–19. The narrative covers both country and global work, but the corresponding outcomes and indicators map changes at country level only. Synergies with other ILO departments and the field have improved; however, more can be done to cut across departmental silos and work towards truly integrated approaches.

C. Effectiveness

8. Effectiveness was assessed against the Strategic Policy Framework and the targets set in the programme and budget documents and based on observations from the country field visits and case studies. The programme has been highly effective in the period under review, having surpassed its 2010–15 targets and reportedly achieved the 2016–17 targets early. The evaluation reviewed a selection of country programme outcomes (CPOs) in a sample of countries. The reported outcomes were found to be largely in line with the reality on the ground, although the ILO's specific contribution was not always clearly substantiated. The evaluation documents several examples of effective intervention, especially in policy development, legal reform and technical advice for the reform of social protection schemes.

9. Efforts to improve UN collaboration on social protection are increasing and found to be mostly effective, especially in harmonizing policy advice to governments and agreeing on future areas of work. More ILO country offices need to go beyond this initial stage of cooperation and develop joint programmes with a wider group of agencies. At the global level, the programme has managed to improve its visibility through the Internet, new products and partnerships, and the Global Flagship Programme. The visibility at country level increased clearly in countries with an ILO social protection field staff presence. Inter-agency collaboration through SPIAC-B has been especially effective in facilitating dialogue and exchange with a widening group of agencies, and the World Bank in particular, to arrive at joint strategies in relation to the SDGs, discussing the harmonization of data sets and indicators and building a joint Inter-agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) toolbox. It is too early to assess the systematic uptake of ISPA tools by countries and leading donors. Gender integration differs across country programmes, but generally lacks explicit focus and monitoring where there is no specialized gender support capacity.

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[8] At the same time, some internal debate persists about the merits of specific terminology and overall strategies (for example, how to extend social protection to informal workers). Continued communication and dialogue are required.

D.   Efficiency

10. On the basis of fieldwork and existing data sources, including various project evaluations, efficiency [9] is positively assessed in most ILO interventions. In interviews with constituents and other stakeholders, the ILO is seen as carefully applying its relatively limited resources, for example through the provision of technical policy advice, studies and various capacity-building activities. Survey respondents generally perceived the ILO as cost-effective. Areas of concern are: the ILO's transaction-intensive internal systems and procedures; under-staffing in some of the countries; challenges in relation to responding to requests in a timely manner; and weak monitoring and evaluation practices at outcome and impact levels. The new impact-assessment tool to be used in the flagship countries has potential. Its rollout will require substantial effort in terms of awareness raising, training and support.

E.   Impact

11. The goal of Outcome 4 of the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15 was that "[m]ore people have access to better managed and more gender-equitable social security benefits", while the goal of Outcome 3 of the Strategic Plan 2016–17 was that "Member States implement the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), and extend social protection systems as a means to accelerate poverty reduction, inclusive growth and social justice". The available data did not allow a comprehensive assessment of the achievement of these goals. [10] From interviews and the evaluation surveys, it emerges that constituents and other stakeholders are generally satisfied with the ILO's contribution to the social protection agenda. Specific examples were documented where ILO interventions contributed to a long-term sustainable change either at country or global levels. New ratifications of Convention No. 102, as a consequence of Recommendation No. 202 and the integration of social protection floors in the SDGs, are examples of the latter.

F.   Sustainability

12. The principles underlying the ILO's social protection approach (universal social protection, life-cycle approach, focus on fiscal space, etc.) and the nature of the intervention strategies (improving donor coordination, Assessment Based National Dialogue (ABND) approach, focus on policy and legal reforms) all contribute to sustainability. A main challenge relates to the limited resources for responding to the growing demands at country and global levels. A second issue is the nature and unpredictability of existing donor funding for social protection, which often results in rather small, short projects that are not conducive to supporting long-term processes of change. Finally, in the absence of comprehensive capacity-building strategies and systematic monitoring of progress, combined with high levels of staff turnover in key ministries, gains made in building local social protection capacity are under threat.

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[9] Institutionally, the ILO does not yet have the capacity to report on detailed regular budget expenditures against results achieved, which complicates assessing efficiency in a comprehensive way.

[10] Key policy and legal changes, as well as reforms of social protection schemes, are well documented. At beneficiary level, the ILO monitors the coverage of workers, but the data sets often do not allow firm conclusions to be drawn about the ILO's contribution.
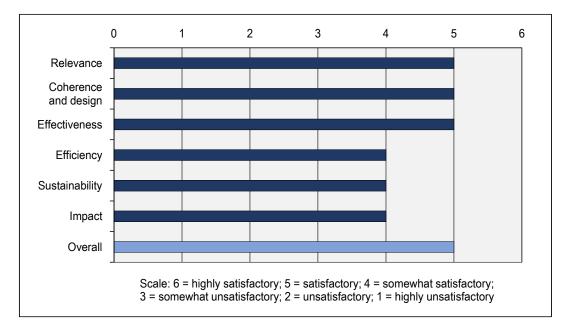

Figure 1.   Overall evaluation ratings by criterion

Scale: 6 = highly satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 4 = somewhat satisfactory;
3 = somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 1 = highly unsatisfactory

Lessons learned

13. Global work gained importance within the overall scope of social protection work in the period under review. Evidence-based global advocacy work and awareness raising, combined with the creation of new spaces for global governance and exchange, have proven to be an effective way to leverage the ILO's limited resources to give the organization more visibility and shape global debates. Moreover, it provides the ILO with the opportunity to influence the agenda of larger agencies (such as the World Bank, regional banks and the International Monetary Fund) and to advocate for the integration of social protection floors in the SDGs.

14. During periods of fast programmatic change, as was the case with the ILO's global work on social protection in the 2012–17 period, there is a need to continuously communicate and engage with the field to lay the foundations for the rollout at country level and ensure broad-based internal support for reform.

15. The country case studies underlined the value of access to other country experiences and the need to build core staff capacity in governmental institutions, while employers' and workers' representatives emphasized building the knowledge and analytical capacity of their constituencies. Social protection agencies highlighted the need for systemic institutional development addressing internal and external institutional barriers. This requires systemic, locally-driven long-term approaches.

16. Consistent consultation and involvement of all social partners is required to ensure that ILO efforts in policy formulation culminate in policy adoption and implementation. The ILO also needs to continue to extend its work with ministries of finance and facilitate more in-depth inter-ministerial dialogue.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

17. *Enhance the capacity of tripartite constituents by developing comprehensive long-term capacity-building approaches that respond to constituents' needs at the country level.*

Social protection-related capacity building is highlighted by constituents as a priority for ILO engagement. To respond to these calls, there is a need to further systematize the ILO's capacity-building approach with more attention to institutional development, in addition to individual staff-development activities. This can involve producing a strategic document on social protection capacity building, in which the broad spectrum of capacity-building strategies and the different ways they can be combined in a coherent trajectory, including the use of ILO manuals and guides (see recommendation 7), are presented. Monitoring the capacity of key partner institutions should inform progress and review strategies whenever needed.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Social Protection Department (SOCPRO), International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC–ILO), Deputy Director-General for Field Operations and Partnerships (DDG/FOP)	High	December 2018	Medium

Recommendation 2

18. *Further increase coherence and continuity of country work by strengthening the ILO's overall intervention logic at country level.*

The programme has undertaken significant efforts to strengthen the theoretical, normative and operational foundations of its work through, among others, the social protection floor framework, the ABND process, and the flagship initiative. This has broadened the ILO's social protection agenda and raised expectations among the ILO's constituents and cooperation partners. However, in several countries, the ILO's potential to respond is still constrained by the limits of working with a set of individual projects which do not form a coherent programme as a whole, thus creating high transaction costs. Explicit theories of change for ILO support for social protection at country level – beyond individual projects – are often missing. The adoption of a more programmatic approach, based on longer time frames and continuity of engagement supported by sound monitoring and evaluation systems, is recommended. This should also include explicit country-level operational plans, supported by multi-country resource mobilization efforts.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
SOCPRO, Deputy Director-General for Policy (DDG/P), DDG/FOP	High	December 2018	Medium

Recommendation 3

19. *Enhance internal coherence of the ILO's social protection work by fostering a dialogue to develop a common understanding and vision of the implementation of the social protection agenda across headquarters, regional offices and field offices.*

The evaluation team observed divergent views on what type of in-house expertise will be most critical in the future, and how global work and country work should be balanced. This

is a genuine and important dialogue in view of the changing context in which the ILO operates. The analysis requires more reflection and dialogue around the ILO's work and Global Technical Team (GTT) members' roles and responsibilities based on their comparative advantages. At the country level, the support mechanisms should distinguish between different types of partner countries (clustered through a relevant typology). For each cluster, the role division for the ILO at different levels (national/regional/global) could be clarified. This could form the basis of an internal "assessment-based institutional dialogue" together with the field to assess the required social protection expertise and resources at different levels/regions, anticipating also new trends in the world of work. Scenarios for graduation of countries from one cluster to another should be considered.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
SOCPRO, DDG/P, DDG/FOP	High	June 2018	Low

Recommendation 4

20. *To assert the ILO's role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), the responsible units should further strengthen their capacity to support integrated social protection reforms and continue to build on the ILO's track record in multi-stakeholder collaboration at national and international levels.*

The expanding agenda of Recommendation No. 202 increases demand for support for systemic social protection reforms at the national level. This can be expected to complement an increased demand for expertise on integrated approaches, for example on how different contributory and non-contributory components interact, on how different groups of informal workers can be covered under one scheme, or on the institutional dynamics of inter-ministerial collaboration. It also requires additional collaborative efforts and a search for more synergies with related ILO departments. Concurrently, considering resource limitations, there is also a need to engage in expectations management towards different stakeholders to play out the ILO's strongest comparative advantage.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
SOCPRO, DDG/FOP, DDG/P	Medium	December 2019	Medium

Recommendation 5

21. *The responsible units should continue to deepen the use of the ILO's specific strengths, such as tripartism, social dialogue, rights-based approaches and gender equality as the core of its brand.*

Country case studies illustrated stakeholder appreciation for ILO technical advice on issues such as tripartism, social dialogue and rights-based approaches. Tripartism and social dialogue were generally strong during the policy development phase, but less systematic in the policy adoption and implementation phases. Regarding gender, although several dimensions of the social protection floors agenda are inherently gender-sensitive, there is a need for more explicit mainstreaming of gender considerations, from contextual analysis to specific references with indicators and targets.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
SOCPRO, DDG/FOP, DDG/P	Medium	June 2018	Low

Recommendation 6

22. *Continue efforts to enhance the ILO's social protection interventions by developing innovative service delivery models and new partnerships, while paying more attention to internal support and risk management, which includes a strong learning component in the pilot phase.*

The programme is a front runner in the development of new service delivery models and global partnerships to increase the outreach of its work. Some areas of innovation have created internal debate and concerns inside the programme. The successful self-financing pilot with the actuarial unit is acknowledged; however, a strong consultative process with the field could be initiated to discuss how this model could be applied to other services.

The new global business partnership on social protection requires the development of new skills and competencies, and the assessment of risks/benefits before engaging with specific private sector actors in line with ILO policy and procedure relating to public–private partnerships (PPPs).

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
SOCPRO, DDG/FOP, DDG/P, Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP)	Medium	March 2018	Low

Recommendation 7

23. *Continue efforts to strengthen knowledge management by knowledge sharing and provision of technical advice through guidance materials and manuals. The responsible units should carefully monitor the use of these products and combine them appropriately with other types of support to respond to the needs of users.*

The programme is seen as an example of the institutionalization and documenting of knowledge and experiences. To maximize the impact of manuals and guides, their use should, as far as possible, be part of a capacity-building trajectory, which includes informal learning strategies (using the guides when implementing joint projects, or during field visits, and/or supported by coaching). Monitoring and documenting the most effective use of manuals and guides should enhance their outreach.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
SOCPRO, ITC–ILO, DDG/P, DDG/FOP	Medium	June 2018	Low

Office response

24. The Office welcomes the findings of the independent evaluation. Following the adoption of Recommendation No. 202, the Office has sought to provide a coherent and comprehensive framework to enable constituents to develop, strengthen and manage comprehensive national social security systems, including social protection floors.

25. **Developing comprehensive long-term capacity-building approaches for tripartite constituents (recommendation 1)**

On the basis of lessons learned from existing cooperation with universities, the Office, in collaboration with the ITC–ILO, will build a global curriculum for accreditation of national universities with regard to social protection. This will be complemented by tailor-made

capacity development programmes for social partners and free online courses. The aim is to offer a systemic response to social security institutions and tripartite constituents' skills development needs, as well as to educate a broader public. A strategic document will be prepared reflecting these efforts, including a monitoring framework.

26. **Further increasing coherence and continuity of the ILO's social protection work (recommendations 2, 3 and 6)**

The Office's Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All provides a programmatic approach to the development of comprehensive national social protection systems. Grounded in a sound diagnosis of previous interventions and a theory-of-change model, the programme develops national implementation plans tailored to the phase of social protection development in each country, giving continuity and coherence to ILO support consisting of technical assistance, knowledge development, resource mobilization and partnerships. Involvement of field offices will be strengthened increasing synergies between country and global work. A results-measurement tool will keep track of institutional outcomes and impacts on people while building the ILO's institutional memory. Dialogue on capitalizing the added value of field and headquarters expertise to best serve tripartite constituents is ongoing. A service model that will allow expertise to be shared across the GTT is being finalized. Within the normal development process of PPPs, the Office will continue to conduct risk assessments with the Partnerships and Field Support Department (PARDEV), ACT/EMP and ACTRAV.

27. **Enhancing integrated approaches and building on the ILO's track record in multi-stakeholder collaboration (recommendations 4 and 5)**

Building on the traction of the new "Social Protection Systems and Floors Multi-stakeholder Partnership for SDG 1.3", the Office will continue to lead partnerships and networks upholding ILO values and principles for rights-based social protection and achievement of SDGs on social protection. Integrated approaches to strengthen social protection systems, including floors, will be pursued as part of the 2018–19 Outcome 3 strategy.

Further efforts will be made to familiarize stakeholders, through training and capacity building, for more effective participation in areas such as supporting social protection floors implementation.

Good practices on how social protection can contribute to gender equality and non-discrimination will be disseminated, providing guidance on how to better mainstream gender considerations in advisory support.

28. **Continue efforts to strengthen knowledge management and monitor outreach (recommendation 7)**

The forthcoming guides developed on the basis of long-standing ILO advisory services will be applied and disseminated through capacity-building programmes and complement the specialized technical expertise provided by GTT members. Their application and monitoring will allow for updates capturing innovative and remarkable country practices.

Part II. Independent evaluation of the ILO's field operations and structure (2010–16)

Purpose and scope

29. The Governing Body decided in 2011 to commission an evaluation of the ILO's field operations and structure (FOS). The evaluation was postponed on account of an internal review in 2013 which led to further reform in 2014 on the basis of 40 initiatives. The results from these processes ushered in a new field operations structure in 2015.

30. The evaluation used a mixed-method approach that obtained information from documents, from interviews at headquarters, from field missions to 14 countries in the five ILO regions, and from a survey of ILO staff and constituents on their experiences and assessments of the reform process. A total of 346 individuals (36 per cent women) were interviewed and 513 individuals (120 ILO staff and 393 constituents) responded to the surveys. Stakeholders were consulted on methodology and findings, and provided feedback on the draft report.

31. The report did not evaluate how far those objectives, principles and programmes are being achieved, but rather evaluated the extent to which steps taken to improve the support services to the field and tripartite constituents have had an effect during the 2010–16 period.

Summary of findings

32. In general, good progress has been made on the 2014 "Field Operations and Structure and Technical Cooperation Review: Implementation Plan", although the pace has been somewhat slow. Of the 40 initiatives in the Implementation Plan, the evaluation found that 78 per cent were either complete or in progress. The areas of implementation with the highest level of full completion were "Improving our strategic management and programming" (81 per cent with 16 initiatives) and "Enhancing quality services to constituents" (77 per cent with four initiatives), with less completed in "Investing in our people" (50 per cent with 11 initiatives) and "Presence and partnerships" (44 per cent with nine initiatives). Key initiatives in the plan notably not completed or with "unknown status" included: a portfolio of services to constituents as per typologies of countries; policy or guidance on the ILO's operations in non-resident countries; strengthening multilateral and regional partnerships; and significant progress on functional and geographical mobility.

33. With no major change in total resource allocations, there has been a relocation in numbers of posts from headquarters to the field (especially in the current and forthcoming programmes and budgets), reflecting the complicated processes of organizational change in a zero-growth environment, as well as the opportunities presented by an ongoing trend towards downgrading of technical positions. Such moves have not always been sufficiently gender-responsive to address the gender gaps at various levels. The changes in how the UN system operates in the field in the context of the SDGs has given the ILO an opportunity to build on its strong field presence to position itself in the UN system.

A. Relevance

34. There was widespread agreement among tripartite constituents that the ILO's mandate and work are highly relevant, useful and increasingly important but that the current FOS does not always fully align with current and future needs. The FOS should facilitate the provision of higher levels of technical expertise that is more focused on knowledge generation and better aligned with the needs of different countries, such as middle-income countries.

Increased normative work, with more emphasis being placed on regional and subregional entities, is needed with the ILO's capacity-building efforts being more directed to supporting constituents to implement policies and regulations.

B. Coherence

35. The level of coherence of the field structure varies. There are wide disparities in the number of countries covered by each regional office (RO), Decent Work Technical Support Team (DWT) and by each country office (CO), as well as in the office architecture. Concerns were expressed by constituents, staff and donors that the offices serving a large number of countries are unreasonably overstretched. There is no apparent systematic approach for addressing the ILO's representation in non-resident countries, which also results in varying levels of demand being placed on DWTs and country offices. The inequities were greatest for the African and Arab States.

C. Effectiveness

36. The FOS followed the Organization's priorities and outcomes and showed a general improvement in the services delivered at the country level as reflected in CPOs, DWCPs and UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), although this was relatively slow and had major regional variations. Significant differences between resident and non-resident countries were observed. More generally, issues emanating from resource constraints have slowed the pace of reform. The reform process has resulted in real increases in resource allocations to the field in each programme and budget over the period of the evaluation. Regular budget technical posts have been moved to the field, made possible in part by the cost differentials between staff at headquarters and, in budgetary terms, less expensive field posts. In addition, the control and use of resources continue to be centralized at headquarters level, although for the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA), regional offices preselect proposals and extra-budgetary technical cooperation (XBTC) funds are largely decentralized as per policy. The extent to which programme and budget proposals are based on an assessment of needs is not clear as budgets only marginally change from one biennium to the next. There is some evidence, however, that changes in needs or demands for service may have been addressed through new sources of funding, such as PPPs and modest in-kind contributions, although the latter are often not counted.

37. The number and level of achievement of CPOs, as measured by outcome-based workplans, have improved over time, particularly when the 2014–15 biennium is compared with 2016–17. While DWCPs have witnessed improvements in quantity and quality (except for gender responsiveness in CPOs), there are significant regional differences: greater progress was observable in Asia and Africa than in the Americas. Concerns remain about the extent to which DWCPs can be implemented, and about the level of effort required for their development. There is increasing use of results-based management in field offices, though there are issues with reporting procedures, weak systematic monitoring, and under-resourced monitoring and evaluation functions. In the context of the implementation of the SDGs, especially SDG 8 "Decent work and economic growth", there is evidence that the ILO is becoming a more effective participant in the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), and its work is better reflected in the UNDAFs. In 22 UNDAFs reviewed by the UN system, all gave priority to SDG 8 and recognized the ILO's role in developing the UNDAFs. Significant differences in non-resident countries, however, were once again observed.

38. For the most part, constituents are satisfied with the technical support received. This is to some extent dependent on proximity and presence, with those in countries that host DWT/COs or regional offices/country offices being the most satisfied and those in non-resident countries being the least satisfied. In several areas, proximity correlated with the

number of DWT missions, with significantly more missions seen to countries that provide the home base for DWTs and for country offices. There are also more missions to countries within the DWT/CO geographical competency than to other country offices.

39. Satisfaction levels were lower among staff than constituents, with concerns among those in the field that the FOS does not yet provide a fully effective and efficient enabling environment to carry out their work. The guidance and knowledge tools are generally well received, although considered somewhat heavy. The creation of the GTTs is mostly seen as a positive development, having the potential to dismantle the walls of well-entrenched silos within the ILO by encouraging cross-engagement from headquarters to regions, as well as between regions, but the level of functioning varies. The numerous initiatives at headquarters to focus attention on ILO issues and outcomes such as GTTs and Outcome Support Group mechanisms are largely seen as having a headquarters-to-field focus, rather than two-way communication and learning systems. The training offered through the ITC–ILO was praised by staff and constituents with the latter requesting continued efforts towards a more decentralized training approach.

D.   *Efficiency*

40. With regard to efficiency, no significant increase in resources for field operations or in the flow of resources from headquarters to the field in either the regular budget or from extra-budgetary sources was observed over the period. As raised in other reviews, the administration of field operations is still wanting in adequate decentralization of decision-making; also staff and constituents perceive some procedures to have become more centralized and time-intensive. Delays related to human resource issues, particularly the length of time to fill posts, continue to be a major concern. The roles and responsibilities of ILO officials are reasonably well defined and resource allocation is being tracked by systems, such as the Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS), where it has been implemented. Programme support income (PSI) as funding for support to the FOS and incentive for resource mobilization remains centralized in allocation. Issues not yet acted on include progress on reviewing the actual costs involved in supporting technical cooperation, including the distribution of the collected PSI funds as indicated in the Implementation Plan and a recommendation in the high-level technical cooperation evaluation on more timely and more transparent PSI distribution within departments and regions.

41. Increased staff mobility was a major expectation of the reforms. Although a staff mobility procedure is in place, there is minimal evidence of staff movement in practice, although some differences and variation between regions and departments were observed. This, along with issues about incentives for national staff being lower than in other UN system bodies, is a concern for many people.
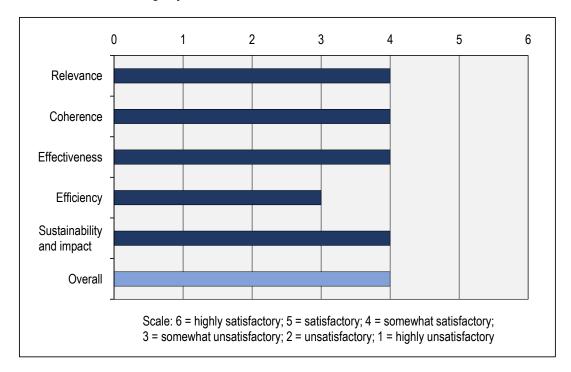
E.   *Sustainability and impact*

42. Staff capacity will continue to be an important variable in the sustainability of the FOS. If further restructuring takes place with more responsibilities coming to the field, an adequate level of support needs to be provided, including to the senior management of regional offices, DWTs and country offices. The decrease in management and administrative positions, delays in filling core positions, the increasing number of mandates, and the number of countries without ILO representation, all pose challenges for the sustainability and impact of the ILO's work.

43. The ILO has been responding to changes, especially in the UN system review of operational activities in the context of the SDGs. Increased attention to international labour standards, including to human rights and gender equality, were particularly noticeable at the country

level, although technical posts relating to gender have been downgraded in a number of cases.

F. *International labour standards, human rights and gender equality*

44. The ILO's efforts on decent work and international labour standards is clearly embraced by constituents, the wider UN system and the donor community. There are increasing demands for these services especially in the context of greater market liberalization. Dedicated financial and staffing resources for the ILO's work on gender have generally declined over the review period, but the demand for ILO expertise and the opportunities for resource mobilization have been on the increase, particularly in the context of SDG 8 on decent work and SDG 5 on gender equality.

Figure 2.   Overall evaluation ratings by criterion

Scale: 6 = highly satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 4 = somewhat satisfactory;
3 = somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 1 = highly unsatisfactory

Conclusions

45. The reform and improvement of the FOS are beginning to show results, although progress varies by region and type of outcome. Participation of ILO field offices in the UNCTs has also improved as reflected in references to the ILO in the UNDAFs. To retain this prominent place as the leader of decent work, the ILO needs to be as efficient and responsive as possible.

46. Redeployment of posts to the field has taken place within existing resources, mostly in the programme and budget for the current and next biennium. More flexibility in financial and human resource management is needed for decentralization efforts to lead to decisions at the field level.

47. Provision of technical support appears to be driven more by supply than demand, including where donor resources are available. There does not appear to be a systematic process for determining demand at the country or regional level although the process of developing DWCPs partly serves this purpose. Whenever new technical needs emerge, the lack of agility

or flexibility in the biennial budgetary and programming process, and lengthy recruitment and mobility processes, inhibit responsiveness.

48. In the field, there is low awareness of the reform efforts despite high interest, with the pace of reform generally perceived to be slow.

49. The effect of the FOS reform on the functioning of the tripartite system varies by region and type of country. Improvement of the future effectiveness of the FOS requires more strategic partners to accomplish a larger mandate on the basis of the traditional tripartite structure.

50. Evidence suggests that the ILO is less effective in countries lacking a resident designated ILO official. This is a major factor in determining whether or not the ILO is an effective partner in all UNCTs. Disparity in the number of countries covered by offices in the field needs to be addressed to ensure quality and equitable delivery of services.

51. It is still mostly a one-way connection between headquarters and the field. Knowledge management and communication systems need to be improved in the context of a culture of sharing to make the work of the FOS more effective.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

52. *Undertake a systematic field operations demand inventory.*

The ILO should ensure this as part of a systematic exercise wherever this is not yet being done, taking into account regional planning exercises, so that a plan can be made defining the technical staffing requirements to meet national needs and feed this into regional plans and programme and budget exercises. This exercise should be complemented by the development of a portfolio of ILO services, reflecting cross-cutting policy drivers such as gender equality and discrimination and according to country typologies.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Regional offices with the support of DDG/FOP and DDG/P	High	Starting in 2017, completed in 2018 and ongoing as needed	Within existing resources

Recommendation 2

53. *Improve decentralization efforts towards more agility of administrative decision-making at the field level.*

Improvement of the FOS in a period of zero regular budget resource growth should be addressed through an appropriate and staged decentralization process, taking into account the recommendation relating to demand inventories and country typologies for support services, combined with a continued plan to increase the deployment of posts/resources from headquarters to the field for both technical and management/administrative functions. In addition, administrative procedures for management of resources should be further modified to improve agility while maintaining accountability for decision-making relating to use.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/FOP, Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform (DDG/MR), Strategic Programming and Management Department (PROGRAM), Human Resources Development Department (HRD), regional offices	High	2017–19	No increase, but continued redeployment

Recommendation 3

54. *Review configuration of the field structure using established models.*

While the field structure is basically sound, there are a number of adjustments that can be made to make it more effective and address several problems identified in the evaluation. This relates to standardization of modalities for ILO resident representation in non-resident countries, adjusting responsibilities for DWT and country office coverage where there are imbalances, and enhanced management support whenever required for directors of DWTs and country offices. Priority for additional support should be given to combined DWT/COs and country offices where defined thresholds for the number of countries served, size of team and budget expenditure are met.

There should be a review of existing models of field structures, from DWTs to DWT/COs to country offices to non-resident countries, identifying the key functions, requirements and challenges. Principles for assessing the coverage and capacity needed should be established with a process for assessing which model to apply under what circumstance and in line with the portfolio of services. This is particularly the case for support to non-resident countries where two options for providing ILO representation in strategically important non-resident countries were identified in the evaluation. Firstly, more DWT members can be outposted to a non-resident country to provide representation in addition to their work on the DWT; this option would require more formal recognition. Secondly, national ILO staff on regular budget funding can be designated official liaisons of the country director for work on UNCTs or other functions.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/FOP, DDG/MR, regional offices	Medium High	2017–20 (review by end of 2018, implementation until 2020)	None for review of reconfiguration and models; possible increase of resources for national posts

Recommendation 4

55. *Improve results-based management reporting at field level.*

While results in a results-based management context are available for central reporting, they currently do not provide a clear basis for indicating the extent to which services provided by the FOS are leading to the expected results. To improve the process, regional and country offices should ensure that expected results, activities and outputs for the office are clearly defined at all levels and reflected in cascading workplans and reports. This will necessitate more systematic sex-disaggregated data collection and monitoring procedures, including of DWT and country office missions. It will also require changing how CPO results are

reported, including a process/mechanism to better reflect work on multiple CPOs, as well as participation and work undertaken with UNCTs, and subregional and regional bodies.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/FOP, regional offices, PROGRAM	Medium	2017–21 (as rolled out; guidance done by end of 2018)	Increase, within existing resources

Recommendation 5

56. *Improve staff incentives and mobility to equip field staff with right competencies.*

A key factor in ensuring that the FOS reform works is addressing recurring human resource concerns of field staff, particularly staff mobility; caps on national staff grades; human resource procedures and conditions that take into consideration the situation in the field; and increasing national staff connections to the broader ILO family. The incentive-based staff mobility policy is not yielding significant movement, and further consideration should be given to phasing in a mandatory component with progressive targets for its implementation. The ILO also needs to do more to become an organization of choice to better attract and retain national talent. There should be systematic application for awarding grades beyond National Project Coordinator (NO-B), given the increasing demands upon, and strategic importance of, national staff. Further attention should also be directed to providing national staff with more access to training, mentoring, research and networking opportunities.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
HRD	Medium	2017–21	Unknown

Recommendation 6

57. *Improve communications functions for policy influencing.*

The ILO's communications function at the field level needs to be elevated to the twenty-first century level. The ILO needs to improve its storytelling via media that are now the most relevant to target audiences, particularly through digital and social media. By omitting to do so, it is missing out on opportunities for raising resources and influencing decision-makers. Each office should aim at having a dedicated (or part-time) qualified country office communications position, and media competencies should be required for directors and developed in technical specialists through systematic media training. Increased internal communication is needed about the field reforms and progress made. The current webpages are useful, but need updating and promotion.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/FOP, DDG/MR, regional offices, Department of Communication and Public Information (DCOMM)	Medium	2017–21	Low

Office response

58. The Office welcomes the independent high-level evaluation and notes with appreciation that the reforms are seen to show results in terms of expected outcomes.

59. It should be noted that further implementation of the reform of the ILO field operations and structure will have to take into account the outcomes of the UN Secretary-General's reform proposals regarding the UN Development System.

60. The Office takes note of the conclusions of the evaluation and endorses the six recommendations with the following remarks.

Recommendation 1

61. The Office fully agrees with the imperative of ensuring that ILO services are developed and adapted to meet national needs and subscribes to the recommendation to map demands from member States with the aim of identifying similar requests for ILO support. Efforts are already in progress at regional level to design frameworks of engagement for clusters of countries, including middle-income countries and fragile States.

62. The Office has integrated many of its existing technical projects into five flagship programmes, designed to enhance the efficiency and impact of its development cooperation with constituents on a global scale.

Recommendation 2

63. The Office has redeployed significant levels of resources from headquarters to field offices. There has also been a re-profiling of non-technical positions to analytical and technical front-line work and services, which has further increased the capacity of the Office to deliver value to member States.

64. The Office has invested in reviewing business processes seeking to improve transparency, accountability, governance and efficiency, while maintaining appropriate support for the delivery of operational activities.

Recommendation 3

65. The Office appreciates the need to examine modalities for an effective field structure and for ensuring greater ILO representation in countries where the ILO is a non-resident agency. This recommendation is fully in line with the decisions ensuing from the review undertaken by the Office in 2013.

66. The principal objectives of measures taken since then, notably with regard to the outposting of DWT staff members, have been to strengthen the ILO's technical capacity to directly deliver at country level with a view to responding effectively to constituents' needs and to significantly contribute to the development and implementation of UN joint programmes. This is an ongoing process that the Office is committed to continuing in the coming years.

Recommendation 4

67. The Office will improve results-based management reporting at field level in the context of its renewed action to strengthen results-based management systems and practices, as committed to in the management response to the 2016 external audit of the ILO's results-based management approach and the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) 2015–16 institutional assessment of the ILO.

Recommendation 5

68. The Office has increased efforts to provide development opportunities for staff serving in field duty stations. A new "GROWTH Conversations" tool has been launched and all managers will be required to use it to support the career development of staff, including national officials.

69. The new mobility policy aims to enable all ILO staff members on the regular budget to gain exposure and diverse work experience across the ILO's functions and regions. The implementation of the new mobility policy has so far demonstrated positive results.

Recommendation 6

70. The Office continues investing in communications expertise and technologies to showcase its work and to demonstrate achievements to a wider array of internal and external target audiences. Key measures introduced during the period under review include the Development Cooperation Dashboard and the Evaluation Unit's i-Eval Discovery application.

71. In recent years, the Office has considerably increased the use of social media channels at headquarters and in field offices. ILO Facebook and Twitter followers have almost quadrupled since 2014.

Part III. Independent evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes, strategies and actions in the Mekong subregion (2012–17)

Purpose and scope

72. This high-level evaluation assessed the work of the ILO during the 2012–17 period in four countries of the Lower Mekong subregion: Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam. Myanmar was not included as the ILO's development cooperation work there is relatively recent. In three of the countries, the ILO delivers its work through DWCPs. In Thailand, a set of priority projects constitutes a multi-year work programme. Several regional and global projects also 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 DWT of 23 specialists and various technical cooperation staff.

73. Data were collected through a desk study of more than 140 documents, four country case studies, country missions to Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand, and visits to the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and DWT/CO-Bangkok. A total of 164 persons (20 per cent women) were interviewed. Conforming to the terms of reference, Viet Nam was subject to a document review only. A total of 27 selected independent project evaluations and five independent country programme reviews provided additional evidence for findings.

Summary of findings

A. *Relevance*

74. The priorities and outcomes of the three DWCPs under review (as well as the work programme in Thailand) were highly relevant to the contexts and national priorities in each country. Consultative processes ensured that programmes aligned with national and international development framework policies and strategies, with UNDAFs/UN Partnership Frameworks (UNPAFs), and with the ILO's corporate Strategic Programme Framework.

75. Annual reviews by high-level tripartite constituent bodies overseeing the DWCPs helped to assure their continuing relevance and implementation. As examples, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, this body consisted of a tripartite committee chaired at vice-ministerial or vice-presidential level, serviced by a DWCP Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group. In Cambodia, oversight has been the responsibility of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Decent Work, which includes representation from social partners.

B. *Coherence*

76. The breadth of the DWCPs makes them difficult to grasp; in each country, few beyond the ILO staff and some tripartite constituents involved in review processes are aware of the scope of the work and contributions. The absence of explicit theories of change and the focus on single outcomes, targets and indicators have prevented a holistic understanding of progress, and of the quality and significance of what is being achieved. It has also diverted attention from the need to understand the quality of implementation processes.

77. Linkages among development cooperation projects have not been promoted, limiting potential benefits from complementarity and synergy of projects. Insufficient incentives and a lack of time have also hampered collaboration between DWT specialists.

C. *Effectiveness*

78. Programme effectiveness has been satisfactory. The ILO is generally widely respected and trusted in the subregion. Together with its tripartite constituents and partners, the ILO has achieved good results in priority areas across a wide range of CPOs, with many examples of good practice. It has been particularly successful in influencing a broad range of policies, legislation and regulations in each country, and in strengthening the capacity of some core institutions over a long period.

79. Project effectiveness was generally evaluated as satisfactory, although loss of institutional memory as a result of limited-term contracts among project staff and challenges in the field often affected progress. While many failures were outside the control of the project, others could have been foreseen and addressed through effective use of monitoring and early adjustment in strategy.

80. Progress in the subregion has been robust in four important areas of work: the strengthening of social protection systems, ensuring safe and productive migration, addressing employment and skills gaps and mismatches, and strengthening the individual and institutional capacities of tripartite constituents.

81. Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic participated in the first South–South cooperation project funded with US$1 million by China. The evaluation strongly validated the added value of the South–South cooperation modality. Also noteworthy are the innovative PPPs developed in Cambodia.

82. The ILO's coordination and facilitation of several important and challenging tripartite processes have been widely praised. Most prominent is the establishment in Cambodia of a minimum wage-fixing system through a negotiated tripartite process during a period of labour unrest over minimum wages.

83. Areas of slow progress include the ratification of key international labour standards, the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, forced labour, discrimination, and the integration of decent work across sectoral and organizational policies. Despite recent progress, gender equality, indigenous communities and people with disabilities continue to require concerted attention.

84. Between them, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam ratified seven Conventions during the period under review. Complex dynamics in the subregion were reflected in delays in the ratifications of Conventions Nos 87 and 98. Cambodia has been under review by the ILO supervisory system following the adoption of its controversial Trade Union Law in 2016.

D.   *Efficiency*

85. Estimates are that 30–50 per cent of financial requirements are covered at the inception of a DWCP in the subregion. Implementation gains momentum as additional funds are raised. The four countries did well in external fundraising, receiving 4–5 per cent of all the ILO XBTC funding between 2012 and 2016, with nearly all from bilateral and multilateral donor sources.

86. Financial support was provided for all but seven of the 73 CPOs linked to the work programmes in each of the four countries. A total of 71 per cent of the CPOs had demonstrated results, though 48 per cent were funded with less than US$20,000. The ten largest projects received 42 per cent of all XBTC funding; 13 CPOs were supported with more than US$1 million.

87. The ILO delivered good results in the subregion with modest management and human resources. Efficiency was reflected in the use of blended funding, reasonable delivery rates, appointment of local staff and the use of existing tools developed by the ILO.

88. Efficiency has been undermined by the unpredictability of resources, the relatively small size of most grants, the proliferation of short-term one-off activities, and insufficient attention to linking projects to create synergy and to ensure appropriate sequencing of interventions.

89. Bureaucratic procedures and delays in responses and approvals, largely seen as the result of the centralization of authority in the ILO, have caused high levels of frustration among staff and their development cooperation partners, as well as government partners.
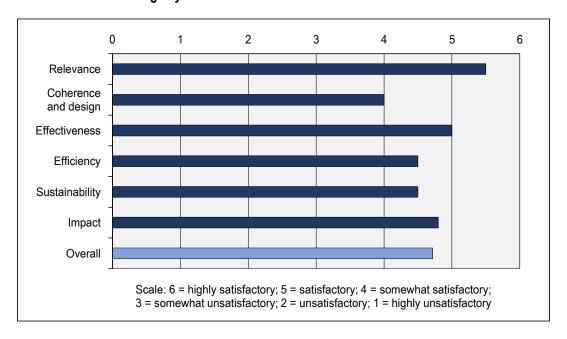
E.   *Impact*

90. The strong focus on single outcomes and the absence of a detailed theory of change prevents the ILO staff from conceptualizing and understanding the impact of DWCP work in a country. This runs the risk of underselling the achievements of the ILO and its tripartite constituents in the subregion.

91. Full use of the ILO's comparative advantage in the subregion has helped it to engage with an impressive number and range of counterparts and partners as well as policies, legislative frameworks, strategies, action plans, regulations and institutional coordination and delivery

mechanisms. Some of these engagements have taken place over prolonged periods, and their cumulative effect increases the potential for medium- to long-term impact.

92. The GMS TRIANGLE project, currently funded with a budget of US$9.4 million from the Australian Government, is one of the projects with the best record of emerging long-term impacts. Among other things, the project has influenced labour migration legislation in Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam, instituted the notion of tripartite consultation in labour migration policy in Cambodia and Viet Nam, and had a noteworthy impact on labour inspection in the fishing sector in Thailand.

F. Sustainability

93. Sustainability remains a key area of concern in the ILO and among its tripartite constituents. Project evaluations indicate only somewhat satisfactory performance in this respect. The ILO's dependence on project funding and the intense focus among staff on fundraising lead to short-term thinking. Exit strategies have not been considered and scaling of pilot projects remains challenging.

94. The chance of sustainability of the DWCP results is greatly strengthened by the ILO's extensive and largely effective contributions to institution building through policy formulation advice and through capacity development.

95. Financial support from governments in the subregion has been growing. The Government of Cambodia and the Garment Manufacturers' Association of Cambodia have consistently, over the past 15 years, contributed around 30 per cent of the budget of Better Factories Cambodia. The Thai Government has provided direct financial support to the ILO's actuarial work in that country, while the Lao People's Democratic Republic Government will fund the next labour force survey after collaboration on the first survey with the ILO.

Figure 3.   Overall evaluation ratings by criterion [11]

Scale: 6 = highly satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 4 = somewhat satisfactory;
3 = somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 1 = highly unsatisfactory

[11] The overall scoring of the ILO's performance in the subregion is bound to a single consultant's rating in the absence of an evaluation survey among ILO constituents and a team composition of several consultants who normally contribute to the rating process.

Conclusions

96. The ILO's strengths, the credibility of the DWCP consultative and review processes, oversight by tripartite and senior-level bodies, and the DWCPs' strong alignment with key national and international frameworks, all work together to provide a solid foundation for collaboration on decent work in each country.

97. In order to be effective, the ILO has had to navigate at least seven tensions inherent in its character and in the demands of the work in the subregion. This has been done with varying levels of success: (i) its normative mandate versus the pragmatism required when working in challenging and sensitive political and societal contexts; (ii) the short-term nature of project-based work, versus long-term perspectives on how to enable and support sustained systems change; (iii) narrow focuses on technical specialization and single outcomes, versus the need for a holistic, systems approach to the ILO's work; (iv) leveraging the tripartite arrangement, versus expanding collaboration with other line ministries for influence at national level; (v) well-recognized strengths and influence in upstream work, versus the perceived need for downstream projects that require very different approaches; (vi) the need for competitive fundraising, versus the expectation of leadership in the UN system; (vii) centralized authority and administrative systems, versus the need for agility, flexibility and impact on the ground.

98. The monitoring and evaluation systems in the ILO do not yet play appropriate roles in management for impact. Insufficient emphasis on useful data, meta-analyses and harmonization between systems in support of management have turned monitoring and evaluation into an exercise in compliance. The result is a disjointed picture of progress rather than a useful overview of DWCP performance in support of the development trajectory of a country.

99. The DWCPs in the subregion have been relatively well resourced, but the unpredictable, short-term nature of the funding hampers effectiveness and efforts to achieve sustained impact.

100. Despite the good potential for sustained long-term impact through policy and institution-strengthening contributions, it is at project level where most resources are expended. Downstream projects and upstream policy work have to inform and build on their complementarities to allow for maximum effectiveness and impact.

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

102. For greater influence and impact, the ILO has to address human resource and other constraints that limit its leadership and guidance in the UN system and in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It also has to address the impression that its perspectives on decent work for business, social good and development are too insular.

Lessons learned

103. 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.

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

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

106. 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.

107. 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.

108. 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.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

109. *Improve the chance of generating impacts that sustain in the long term. Conduct meta-analyses and studies to provide guidance to projects and specialists about the attitudes, relationships and conditions that enable good progress and sustained impact in local contexts.*

Hold line-management and project staff accountable for risk management and early detection and resolution of problems. Undertake timely planning with counterparts and stakeholders for exit and sustainability. Conduct evaluations of key outcomes and determine with constituents and partners how to enable more effective: (i) institutional capacity strengthening; (ii) complementarity and connection between projects and technical assistance; and (iii) catalytic action that can lead to impact with limited effort.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO-Bangkok, CO-Hanoi, EVAL, PARDEV	High	Medium, ongoing	Medium

Recommendation 2

110. *Strengthen systems for monitoring, evaluation and learning. Continue the process of harmonizing DWCP-related monitoring and evaluation systems.*

Use theories of change linked to the monitoring and evaluation system for a holistic approach to tracking progress towards impact. Devise processes to synthesize and to use information from evaluation findings and recommendations. Devise ways to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of capacity strengthening. Experiment with adaptive management techniques that use short cycles of monitoring and reflection.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO-Bangkok, CO-Hanoi, ROAP, PARDEV, PROGRAM	High	Medium	Low

Recommendation 3

111. *Review the capacity and office configuration of DWT/CO-Bangkok and related offices for potential improvements including achieving a better understanding of the special role played by national coordinators.*

Strategize together to find and implement ways to lighten the burden of work in the subregion. Review administrative processes that affect effectiveness and efficiency. Devolve authority where this will clearly increase efficiency.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO-Bangkok, CO-Hanoi, ROAP, DDG/FOP	High	Short	Low to medium

Recommendation 4

112. *Give appropriate momentum to progress towards decent work. Determine how integration between development cooperation projects, specialists' expertise and decent work initiatives of countries can be improved.*

Build on good work already done to implement strategies that increase effective high-level interaction and coordination with key organizations.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO-Bangkok, CO-Hanoi, Multilateral Cooperation Department (MULTILATERALS)	Medium	Medium	Low to medium

Recommendation 5

113. *Use the DWCPs to strengthen engagement with ASEAN and the SDGs.*

Develop country and subregional reports that showcase the key elements and achievements of the DWCPs and the synergies across countries or are supportive of regional strategies. Make an integrated normative and business case for the implementation of decent work in the region, within the SDG framework. Build on initiatives such as the II BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) Summit Commitments (Brasilia, 2010) and ASEAN labour ministers' workplans.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ROAP, DWT/CO-Bangkok, CO-Hanoi, MULTILATERALS	Medium	Medium	Medium

Recommendation 6

114. *Strengthen DWT-Bangkok's potential for impact.*

Implement actions that harness the DWT specialists' expertise on issues that affect the DWCPs. Address lack of incentives which hampers collaboration among specialists, and encourage opportunities for such collaboration.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO-Bangkok, PROGRAM	Medium	Low	Low

Recommendation 7

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

Synthesize the progress towards impact as well as the challenges regarding mainstreaming and capacity strengthening related to gender, people with disabilities, and indigenous communities. Develop a system of accountability for results in these cross-cutting areas.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ROAP, PROGRAM, HRD	Medium	Low to medium	Low

Recommendation 8

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

The SDGs, shifts in economic power, and national initiatives such as Thailand 4.0 bring new opportunities to frame the case for decent work. Use this situation to devise a concerted strategy to continue building new relationships and mobilizing funding from innovative and new sources. Make an integrated normative and business case for decent work that resonates with the perspective of the potential source. Overcome obstacles to collaboration with UN partners so that joint funding opportunities can be more frequently exploited.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ROAP, DWT/CO-Bangkok, CO-Hanoi, PARDEV	High	Medium, ongoing	Medium

Office response

117. The Office welcomes the evaluation's positive observations and acknowledges the conclusions and lessons learned. ROAP accepts seven of the eight recommendations fully and one partially as they provide important insights to improve the design, implementation and impact of current and future DWCPs in the Mekong subregion.

118. The Office would like to thank the tripartite constituents in the region (Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam) for their participation in, and contribution to, this evaluation.

Recommendation 1

119. ROAP will provide support to develop theories of change in developing CPOs, and strengthen the institutional practice of monitoring and evaluation. ROAP expects to improve risk management, early resolution of problems, and sound exit strategies. ROAP will support the functioning of DWCP tripartite steering committees to determine with constituents and partners how to enable: (i) more institutional capacity strengthening; (ii) greater complementarity and connections between projects, and between those and technical assistance; and (iii) more action to accelerate progress towards impact.

Recommendation 2

120. ROAP is already working on building monitoring and evaluation staff capacity. Monitoring and annual reporting in relation to the DWCP is discussed and agreed upon. ROAP

recognizes and supports the importance of establishing tripartite steering committees for effective monitoring and adapting programmes to realities.

Recommendation 3

121. ROAP will work with DWT/CO-Bangkok to identify bottlenecks, and consider innovative solutions wherever authorized, but emphasizes that administrative processes are not always determined by the regional office and that there is a need to review centralization versus devolution of authority to ensure the right level. ROAP encourages the latter to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Recommendation 4

122. ROAP agrees with mainstreaming and building on the good work already done to give momentum towards decent work.

Recommendation 5

123. Annual DWCP reporting is already a requirement in the region. Through the annual reports, ROAP will particularly assess the "case" for decent work in the region, particularly in advancing on the 2030 Agenda at the country levels. Efforts are already under way to strengthen the articulation of the theory of change between the CPO and SDG targets at the national level.

Recommendation 6

124. ROAP partially accepts recommendation 6. Evidence from multiple sources suggests that collaboration among specialists of different practice areas is well-established/recognized and satisfactory. The Office agrees to encourage and generate more opportunities for collaboration and strengthening capacity for results-based management among specialists.

Recommendation 7

125. ROAP, in consultation with headquarters units, is strengthening the support towards clear articulation of theories of change in CPOs, which will look at the gender dimension as well. An accountability system is in place where the CPO cross-cutting policy driver captures intended changes for gender equality. The programme implementation report makes reporting on gender mandatory under certain conditions. These strengthen accountability for results on gender. ROAP will continue to work on further improving gender outcomes, including those in CPOs.

Recommendation 8

126. This recommendation is fully aligned with the Office's Development Cooperation Strategy 2015–17 (extended until 2018).

Draft decision

127. *The Governing Body requests the Director-General to take into consideration the recommendations (paragraphs 17–23, 52–57 and 109–116) of the three high-level independent evaluations presented in this document and to ensure their appropriate implementation.*