



Terms of Reference (TOR)

Mid-term Evaluation

Project Title	Improving China's Institutional Capacity towards Universal Social Protection
Technical Cooperation code	CHN/18/01/EUR
Administrative Unit	ILO Country Office for China and Mongolia
Technical Backstopping Unit	Senior Social Protection Technical Specialist in DWT-Bangkok
Donor agency	European Union
Project duration	1 July 2019 - 30 June 2022
Budget	EUR 2,300,000
Period covered by the evaluation	1 July 2019 to March 2021 (21 months)
Date of Evaluation	April – June 2021

1. Introduction and rationale for evaluation

The project “Improving China’s Institutional Capacity towards Universal Social Protection” is a three-year project, of a value of up to EUR 2.3 million. It aims at providing technical support to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) to promote effective application of international labour standards in China’s pursuit of universal, adequate and sustainable social security coverage. The project is funded by the European Union’s Partnership Instrument, aimed at promoting policy cooperation between the EU and priority countries in areas of mutual interest.

The project's objectives are two-folds:

- 1) To contribute to the improvement of the adequacy and sustainability of old-age benefits. Support will be given to Government of China to further align its social security measures with international social security standards and to consider the ratification of relevant standards such as ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102).
- 2) To contribute to the extension of social security coverage to workers in non-standard forms of employment, with a focus on digital platform workers and special attention to migrant workers and women.



The Department of International Cooperation of MOHRSS is the national counterpart of the project. By the designation of MOHRSS, the Social Insurance Administration of MOHRSS is the executive department responsible for project implementation.

The ILO and MOHRSS jointly launched the project by signing an MOU on project implementation in December 2019 and agreed on a three-year work plan with each year focusing on one theme: (1) universal social security coverage; (2) digital transformation of social security; and (3) adequacy and sustainability of social security.

The COVID-19 outbreak at the end of 2019 has led to a situation of social lockdown and economic disruption, in particular in the first half of 2020. In this context, China's social security regulatory framework was responsive in helping sustain the economy and employment and help workers during the pandemic. But the necessity to respond to COVID-19 has probably delayed some of the policy initiatives envisaged in the medium term plans. Policy developments over pandemic period have increased the relevance of project objectives and its deliverables.

In light of that context, the project periodically reviewed the work plan with EUD and MOHRSS and developed contingency measures to adjust some of the activities. The project has the following major achievements so far:

Start of the research on assessment of China's social security coverage and measures to close gaps and improve portability.

Implementation of Course on Actuarial principles and e coaching services online and start of material development for the training of trainers

Updated study on compatibility of Chinese social security law and practice with C. 102

Policy briefs and pod casts on extension of coverage of social security and social security responses to COVID-19

Conducted bimonthly Social Security Policy China Monitor

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) composed of ILO and EU representatives was tasked with strategic oversight of the project implementation, including review of the project progress and reports. The Project Management Committee (PMC) was established with representatives of ILO and MOHRSS to review project progress, discuss and endorse the project work plan. By the end of 2020, two PSC meetings and two PMC meetings were organized.

In accordance with the ILO-EU agreement, two evaluations are required during the project implementation, one at the mid-term and the other at the end of the Action. Considering the impact of COVID pandemic on feasibility of evaluation and its implications on implementation of project activities, the mid-term evaluation is scheduled a few months after the mid-point of the project life from April to June 2021. The final evaluation will be independent evaluation. The mid-term



evaluation will be an internal evaluation managed by the project team and conducted by a combination of an internal ILO certified evaluator and an independent national evaluator.

The mid-term evaluation will be conducted to review the project performance, using the OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability).

EU has a monitoring framework PIMS, that provides specific indicator and measurement criteria on which progress report was done.

The evaluation will examine cross cutting concerns including how gender dimension has been effectively mainstreamed in the project design and implementation. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation will enhance learning within the ILO and among key stakeholders and help guide the project team in adjusting the project's approach and scope for implementation during the project's remaining period.

The evaluation will be coordinated by the project team of CO-Beijing. Consultants will be recruited to implement the evaluation.

2. Purpose, Scope and Clients of the Evaluation

Purpose

The purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to review the project progress, achievements and challenges, inform the ILO, project partners and the donor of key lessons learned, and propose recommendations for any improvement or adjustment needed for the remaining project implementation period. Specifically, the mid-term evaluation will focus on the following aspects:

- (1) Assessment of the project design and activities, implementation strategy and approaches, capacities of implementing partners, challenges and how these challenges are addressed; and to what extent that these contribute to the achievement of project objectives.
- (2) Drawing key findings and lessons learned and proposing improvement and adjustment needed to ensure that the project remains relevant to the needs of the target groups and contributes to knowledge development.
- (3) Assessment of impact of COVID on the project implementation and how the project responded to mitigate the impact.

Scope

The evaluation will cover the period from July 2019 to March 2021, to create an accurate and comprehensive picture of the project implementation, generating findings on evaluation criteria and documenting good practices and lessons learned. The evaluation will integrate gender equality and non-discrimination as a cross-cutting concern throughout its methodology and all deliverables including the final report.



Clients

The clients and users of this mid-term evaluation include the ILO project team, management and specialists at country, regional and headquarters levels, donor, MOHRSS and other project partners in China.

3. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation will examine project implementation against the hereunder criteria by addressing the following questions. The evaluator will develop a more detailed analytic framework of questions and sub-questions to carry out the evaluation.

RELEVANCE and strategic fit of the project

- To what extent the project objectives/outcomes are relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries? Specifically:

Direct recipients:

- *MOHRSS, particularly the Department of International Cooperation and other technical departments (old-age insurance, rural social insurance, etc.), Social Insurance Administration, and Chinese Academy of Labour and Social Security (CALSS), including their provincial branches*
- *National Healthcare Security Administration*
- *Workers and employers' organizations (CEC and ACFTU)*
- *Other stakeholders including local academia, EU Institutions (DG EMPL and EEAS), EU member state embassies labour and social officers in China (two way policy dialogue)*

Ultimate beneficiaries:

- *All women and men residing in China, especially those with irregular social protection coverage and particularly workers in new forms of employment, migrant workers and women, will benefit from social protection measures during and beyond the project duration.*
- *Residents of other countries that will use the knowledge developed through the Project to ensure the social and financial sustainability of their social security system.*

- Were project methodologies and approaches in line with the project partners' priorities, capacities and expectations?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent have the project’s interventions so far contributed to promoting extension of social security coverage and improvement of adequacy and sustainability of old-age benefits? - Should the project design and methodology be modified to improve its relevance in the second half of the project? If so, how? - To what extent has the project been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and what adjustments has the project made?
<p>COHERENCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The extent to which the project has work in collaboration with other ILO projects - The extent that the project has added value and collaborate with others who are doing similar work in China and not duplicating the efforts with others - The extent the project has yielded the expected results and that it has adhere to ILO norms and standards (ILS, social dialogue and tripartism)
<p>Project PROGRESS and EFFECTIVENESS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent has the project been making progress towards its planned objectives? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What have been achieved so far? ○ What are the major constraints so far? - To what extent has the project secured the commitment of the project partners and built up national ownership? - How do the national project partners explain the delay in delivery? - Have the project approaches appropriately matched the capacity (including political space) of the project partners for their action? - What measures are required to improve the capacity of project partners in the second half of the project? - To what extent has the project promoted non-discrimination and gender equality? What approaches have been adopted to ensure the interests of workers including women and other socially and economically disadvantaged groups of workers are fully taken into account in developing project outputs and carrying out project activities?
<p>EFFICIENCY of resource use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?



EFFECTIVENESS of management arrangements (including monitoring and evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Has the project received adequate political, technical and administrative support from its national partners?- Was there a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities by all parties involved?- How effective is communication between the project team, the ILO and the project partners, as well as the donor?- What should be improved in the second half of the project?
SUSTAINABILITY And IMPACT of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How effectively has the project built necessary capacity of people and institutions (of national partners and implementing partners)? How effectively has the project built national ownership and capacity?- How likely the project will achieve its objectives in the second half of the project and what elements need to be taken into account to ensure sustainability of outcomes?- To what extent has the project contributed to the EU-China policy dialogue?

4. Methodology

The evaluation will be carried out in accordance with ILO standard policies and procedures, comply with evaluation norms and follow ethical safeguards. The evaluation will address the overall ILO evaluation criteria as defined in the *ILO Policy Guidelines for results-based evaluation: principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations (4th edition 2020)*. The evaluation will also take into account the gender issues into the evaluation process as guided by *the ILO guidance note 3.1: Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation (3rd version 2019)*. The ILO adheres to the United Nations system evaluation norms and standards as well as to the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards.

The evaluation will be carried out in a participatory manner to ensure the involvement of key stakeholders in particular national project partners and the donor, in all phases of the evaluation, including preparation, interviews, report preparation and dissemination.

The evaluation will be carried out from April to June 2021, with a final report being available by 30 June 2021.

The following methods will be used as a minimum to collect information:

Desk review: Review and analysis of documents related to the project, including

- Project Documents: ILO-EU agreement, ILO-MoHRSS MOU, and work plans



- 1st Annual Progress Report submitted to the donor by ILO as per PARDEV reporting guidelines
- Project outputs: work-in-progress studies, actuarial training materials, policy/research briefs, podcasts, technical notes, policy monitors, etc.
- Project documentation: PSC and PMC meeting reports, working-level meeting memos, and relevant correspondence
- Other relevant documents such as the Decent Work Country Programme Document, UNSDCF of 2021-2025

The desk review will suggest a number of initial findings that in turn may point to additional or fine-tuned evaluation questions.

Interviews

List of contacts for interviews will be provided by the evaluation manager in the beginning of the evaluation.

The evaluator will undertake group/individual discussions with the ILO project staff and management in CO-Beijing, and with the ILO specialists in Bangkok and Geneva via virtual channels.

The evaluator will conduct interviews with project partners based on semi-structured questionnaires.

5. Main outputs

The main outputs of the evaluation will be comprised of:

- **Refined evaluation questions**
Upon review of the available documents and an initial discussion, through skype interviews, with relevant ILO officials/specialists in Beijing, Bangkok and Geneva, the evaluator will develop a detailed analytic framework of questions and sub-questions, based on the evaluation questions defined in this ToR, and consistent with Results-Based Management (RBM) and the OECD/DAC criteria.
- **Evaluation report** as per the proposed structure in the ILO evaluation guidelines (see Checklist 5: Preparing the evaluation report) should include:
 1. Title page (standard ILO template)
 2. Table of contents
 3. Executive summary
 4. Body of the report
 - Project background
 - Evaluation background
 - Methodology
 - Main findings



- Gender issues assessment
 - Tripartite issues assessment
 - International labour standards assessment
5. Conclusions
 6. Lessons learned and emerging good practices
 7. Recommendations
 8. Appendices

The main evaluation report should be concise and not exceed 15 pages excluding annexes (supporting data and details can be included in annexes).

- **A PowerPoint presentation with the preliminary findings and recommendations** to be presented with ILO and key stakeholder group

All draft and final outputs, including supporting documents, analytical reports and raw data should be provided in electronic version compatible with WORD for Windows. Ownership of the data from the evaluation rests jointly with the ILO and the ILO consultants. The copyright of the evaluation report will rest exclusively with the ILO. Use of the data for publication and other presentation can only be made with the agreement of ILO. Key stakeholders can make appropriate use of the evaluation report in line with the original purpose and with appropriate acknowledgement.

6. Management arrangements and work plan

Management arrangements

An international evaluator (an ILO experienced evaluator) will be selected to undertake desk reviews, conduct interviews, develop evaluation outputs and present the preliminary findings of the evaluation to the stakeholder meeting. The evaluator will be responsible for delivering the above evaluation outputs using a combination of methods mentioned above. The international evaluator will be assisted by a national consultant to assist with data collection and analyze the data from the methods listed above, use qualitative data analysis techniques, and meet with ILO staff and Chinese partners.

A national consultant will be hired to assist the international evaluator in collecting information, data, documents and reports; translating documents from Chinese to English to be reviewed; facilitating desk review, interviews and formulation of evaluation outputs; and providing interpretation to the international evaluator for meetings with Chinese partners. In addition, the consultant will translate the draft and final evaluation report into Chinese, and participate in the stakeholders' meeting.

The evaluation manager is Mr Luis Frota, Project Manager, ILO Country Office for China and Mongolia. He will ensure the evaluation takes place according to the ToR and select the evaluator for the approval of the director of ILO Beijing.



The evaluation manager will facilitate organization of the programme of the evaluator for interviews and ensure that ILO constituents and all relevant stakeholders are consulted throughout the evaluation process. The project team in Beijing will handle all administrative/contractual arrangements with the evaluator and provide any logistical and other assistance as may be required.

The evaluation manager will provide the necessary support to the evaluator and discuss any technical, methodological or organizational matter that may arise with the evaluator

Time frame and work plan for the evaluation:

The evaluation process will encompass the approximate duration of 3 months, from 1 April to 30 June 2021. The total effort is expected to be 17 days of international evaluator and 13 days of national consultant to complete the full assignment.

Phase	Responsible person	Tasks/Activities	Working days of evaluators		Proposed time frame
			International	National	
Inception	Evaluators/evaluation manager	Brief by evaluation manager Desk review of project related documents Refine evaluation questions	3	3	By 10 April 2021
Interviews (on-site or virtual)	Evaluators (List of stakeholders and their contact information will be provided by the ILO)	Interviews with the ILO project team and ILO specialists Interviews with project partners including national partners and MOHRSS/SIA in participating provinces Interview with EUD	6	6	By 30 April 2021
		Debriefing: present	1	1	



		preliminary findings to ILO and key stakeholder group			
Report drafting	Evaluators	Prepare draft evaluation report and translation	5	2	By 20 May 2021
	Evaluation manager	Organize review of the draft report (by ILO and partners) and consolidate comments			By 10 June 2021
	Evaluators	Finalize the report in both English and Chinese	2	1	By 30 June 2021
Total			17	13	

7. Selection of the evaluators

The international evaluator will be selected from the roster of internal ILO staff who have been trained on conducting internal evaluation, with the assistance of ILO Evaluation Office. Interest and availability of the ILO evaluator should be secured.

The evaluator should have experience with conducting international evaluations. She/he should have a proven track record in the evaluation of similar complex projects. Experience in the field of social protection will be an advantage.

The national consultant will be hired through a public bidding process. A call for expression of interest will be published online. At least three CVs should be received and screened.

The national consultant should have experience with conducting/assisting in evaluations. She/he should have a proven track record in the evaluation of similar complex projects. Experience in the field of social protection will be an advantage. Proficiency in both English and Chinese is required.

Both international evaluator and national consultant should be able to work with reasonable time flexibility considering possible time differences between their locations and China.



8. Legal and Ethical matters

The evaluation will comply with UN Norms and Standards. It must not reflect personal or sectorial interests. The evaluator must have professional integrity and respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and to verify statements attributed to them. Evaluations must be sensitive to the beliefs and customs of local social and cultural environments and must be conducted legally and with due regard to the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its findings.

The project evaluation will operate under the guiding principles based on the norms for evaluation in the United Nations system, as follows: structural independence from the operational management and decision-making functions in the organization, clear intent to use evaluation findings, transparent approach, impartiality, minimum quality standards defined by the Evaluation Office, timeliness, usefulness of the findings and recommendations.

Annex: Relevant ILO evaluation guidelines and standard templates

ILO Policy Guidelines for results-based evaluation: principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations (*4th edition 2020*)

https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationpolicy/WCMS_571339/lang--en/index.htm

Protocol on collecting evaluative evidence on the ILO's COVID-19 response measures through project and programme evaluations, effective on 9 Oct 2020

https://www.ilo.org/eval/WCMS_757541/lang--en/index.htm

Code of conduct form (To be signed by the evaluator)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_746806.pdf

Checklist 5 Preparing the evaluation report

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165967/lang--en/index.htm

Checklist 6 Rating the quality of evaluation report

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165968/lang--en/index.htm

Template for lessons learned and Emerging Good Practices

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_206158/lang--en/index.htm



http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_206159/lang--en/index.htm

Guidance note 7 Stakeholders participation in the ILO evaluation

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165982/lang--en/index.htm

Guidance note 4 Integrating gender equality in M&E of projects

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165986/lang--en/index.htm

Guidance Note 3.2: Adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_721381.pdf

Template for evaluation title page

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_166357/lang--en/index.htm

Template for evaluation summary

https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_166361/lang--en/index.htm