



EIGHTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Evaluation**(b) Independent evaluation of the InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security (IFP/SES)****1. Introduction and background**

1. This report provides findings, conclusions and recommendations for the InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security (IFP/SES), as specified in the ILO evaluation framework.¹ It was prepared by independent consultants with no previous involvement in the Socio-Economic Security Programme (SES).² Comments from the Executive Director of Social Protection are included at the end of this report.
2. This evaluation looks at IFP/SES's performance from 1999 to 2005. It assesses three basic areas: the conceptual work of the SES Programme; the conversion of that conceptual work into actionable policy recommendation; the implementation and implementability of those policy recommendations. It used a variety of information sources: a review of the programme's literature, interactions with the International Advisory Board (IAB) set up at the outset to guide the Programme; interviews with a range of ILO headquarters' staff in May 2005; visits to three countries in Africa in May/June 2005; and inputs from a national consultant in the Ukraine.
3. IFP/SES was an ILO response to mounting evidence of increased marginalization of the global workforce through the spread of flexible and informal forms of labour, overstretched social protection systems, and growing inaccessibility to social security schemes. Underlying factors of insecurity are extreme poverty, persistent unemployment and social exclusion.
4. Recognizing that a large share of the working population falls outside this sphere, social security arrangements must also meet the basic needs of vulnerable groups and protect the

¹ GB.285/PFA/10.

² The evaluation team was composed of Mr. Roger Maconick as senior external evaluator and team leader, and Ms. Carla Henry of the ILO Evaluation Unit.

working poor against risk. IFP/SES took as its nucleus seven forms of security to elaborate: labour market security, employment security, work security (occupational health and safety), job security, skill reproduction security, income security and representation security. By addressing these at three levels – household, enterprise and national – the Programme set its means to reconceptualize work.

5. Major aims of the Programme were laid out in the 2000-01 programme and budget.³ The Programme was intended to enhance, through data and analysis, knowledge of economic and social insecurity and better formulation of policies to combat the adverse effects of insecurity. Initial performance expectations were defined in terms of ILO data and research used by policymakers to form policies.
6. At its outset, the Programme was expected to build up collaboration with other ILO programmes, to avoid administrative barriers and ensure the integration of socio-economic security themes and issues into ILO policy work across the world. The Programme was designed with a strong gender dimension, including initiatives that primarily concern women.
7. In addition to a regular budget allocation, funds were raised from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Government of Italy, the Government of the Netherlands and the UNDP. According to ILO management, the total resources allocated to the programme were US\$15.439 million. Of this total, the Government of the Netherlands has provided US\$8.392 million, or roughly 54 per cent.
8. IFP/SES had five professional positions and two support staff from regular budget resources. Two of these positions have not been filled for a period of months for administrative reasons.

2. Main findings

2.1. The strategic choice of IFP/SES within the ILO's decent work policy framework

9. While relatively modest in terms of resources devoted to it, the Organization's SES Programme is strategic in nature and its focus is close to the basic *raison d'être* of the ILO. It represents an effort to rethink and possibly realign the ILO's and the international community's stance on decent work. It sought to re-examine the ILO's relationship to personal security in the light of the changing environment in which the Organization operates. It was in the same vein as a subsequent larger effort, which supported the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which addressed many of the same issues but from a wider perspective.
10. The SES Programme seized upon a significant issue. By urging a move towards basic security for all, it advances a plausible overarching goal. It has yet to come up with the necessary strategy to advance that goal and has misallocated part of the considerable energy and ingenuity which it brought to the task. Nonetheless, the ILO and the SES Programme are to be congratulated for having addressed this set of issues.
11. There is much to applaud, much to improve in the way the evolution of the Programme has been managed within the ILO. But above all, there is *much for the ILO to digest, absorb*

³ GB.276/PFA/9, Part III, The technical programme envelope.

and put to good use. An important question has been raised and an interesting conceptual approach to its solution has been put forward. A dedicated and very hardworking team has been formed, data has been collected, using innovative ways, and analysed. That analysis has been shared with interested researchers in a number of countries and sometimes prepared with them. It has also been shared with some policy-makers as well as the ILO's social partners. Interesting policy prescriptions have emerged, which have aroused a response and prompted vigorous debate in some of the countries concerned and in some instances policies appear to have been influenced by the analysis emanating from the SES Programme.

2.2. Contribution of IFP/SES to clarifying the concept of social security

12. The Programme was set up to promote a rights-based approach to social protection, which was coherent, so that the ILO could promote *basic economic security*, while promoting new forms of social solidarity. To give credence to that perspective, it aimed to generate new ways of looking at people's insecurities and at the relevance of traditional social security policies and institutions for addressing those insecurities, particularly in developing countries, but also in any flexible labour market in which informal labour and work were spreading.
13. The evaluation raises two sets of conceptual issues. First, the Programme has focused on a wide range of vulnerabilities in defining social protection, and issues linked to systemic risk. However, it is difficult for any entity to discuss global standards for personal and social security without addressing the change in the perceived level of individual security in previously "secure" countries over the last four years. This does not appear to have been reflected in the work done by IFP/SES. For decision- and policy-makers, a concern for pressing issues of physical security may take precedence over concern for the issues of socio-economic security, which subsequently may languish both in their thinking and actions.
14. Second, the reasoning behind the limits of the concept of socio-economic security is not obvious. Other aspects of security in which risk plays a part, such as food, health and environmental security, deserve some consideration when developing further the meaning of socio-economic security. IFP/SES has not provided a rationale for why it has defined the limits in the way that it did. From the ILO's efforts, via the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, it is apparent the Organization felt differently.
15. An issue that was raised during the missions in Africa concerned IFP/SES's work in countries where the number of people in formal employment is relatively small and the number of people depending on those earnings is relatively large. A number of observers questioned whether the IFP/SES research had come up with actionable policies that would move either to greater income security let alone voice security. Those concerned appeared to be saying that there was no way that IFP/SES research could lead to policy prescriptions that would be applicable to such countries. This issue needs to be addressed as the ILO looks for ways to translate this research work into application.

2.3. Programme ambition and achievement

16. The SES Programme's scope embraces many aspects of the ILO's technical work and has had potential synergies with a range of ILO initiatives. Its strategy, as described in its medium-term work plan is embedded in the ILO's broader work on the social dimension of

globalization. The strategy was reasonable and appropriate: do research, derive policies and apply them. The first part has been done, the second somewhat and the third very little.

17. That said, the Programme has done a great deal of work. Most was directly related to socio-economic security issues. Most involved collecting data, analysing and diffusing the results in workshops and meetings and by numerous publications. At the global level, the contribution to the literature was recognized by various researchers and practitioners. Some, who did not agree with IFP/SES policy positions, asserted that their analysis was designed to support pre-established conclusions and policy positions. Some others, including several members of the International Advisory Board, were fervent admirers of the ideas which the SES Programme supports and the analysis it has been pursuing, and were concerned about any lessening of ILO support or concern for these issues.
18. The Programme has made good progress in mainstreaming gender into its technical programme of work. The strong emphasis on issues focused on women, and of particular concern to women, has been admirable. Likewise, research and methodologies regularly apply gender and other socio-economic factors when analysing data and drawing policy conclusions and prescriptions.

2.4. Balance between knowledge production and application

Research and publications

19. IFP/SES has published 11 books, over 50 technical IFP/SES papers, over 30 refereed articles in professional journals, and a quarterly newsletter. Three books are close to completion. It has also produced a manual for workers and trade unionists on work security, which has been translated into several languages. It has produced two training manuals for its national surveys. The volume, breadth and quality of much of the published material are impressive.
20. The publication strategy was set by the Programme's Director, who has largely directed the choice, content and composition of core publications. The strategy is not written out and there was little clarity on who were envisioned as target users, why, and how this was to link to effective use of resources for deciding on publications. Procedures, including monitoring of sales and dissemination to key client groups, though established, have not been maintained inside the Programme. The Programme has also not monitored downloads of materials or checked on citations.
21. There are issues related to how the ILO has communicated its position regarding the work of IFP/SES. A flagship publication⁴ published in September 2004 was put out as an IFP/SES product rather than an ILO product, with little clarity however as to why this distinction was being made. The Office can do a better job of communicating its handling of published work that is innovative and exploratory, but that does not yet represent ILO policy positions.

Survey and database development.

22. According to IFP/SES's own reporting to the evaluators, the Programme has developed a global database system with six components:

⁴ *Economic Security for a Better World*, ISBN 92-2-115611-7.

- (1) The IFP/SES primary database – national data collected via national correspondents.
- (2) The IFP/SES secondary database – national data collated from ILO and other international agencies.
- (3) The social security database – numerical information on social security policies converted from legislative text data. This covers over 120 countries as of May 2005.
- (4) The labour standards database – a system of information on ratification and application of ILO Conventions dealing with relevant aspects of socio-economic security.
- (5) The Enterprise Labour Flexibility and Security Surveys (ELFS) – 13 countries.
- (6) The People's Security Surveys (PSS) – 19 countries.

23. The development of these methodologies and databases has constituted a huge level of effort. One area, however, that deserves attention is the process for making the data and analysis residing in IFP/SES accessible to outsiders. Some researchers claim difficulty in accessing the database and its results. The ILO needs to sort out this situation in a transparent fashion and make it clear who can access data and analysis prepared with public money, how they can do so, and under what conditions. A second area to consider is the sustainability of databases. Nearly all work done so far has been financed through extra-budgetary resources.

Media and public relations

24. IFP/SES has made effective use of the media in publicizing its work. According to its own records, in terms of media coverage the Programme has generated over 600 newspaper articles. Members of the Programme have been interviewed on television and on radio in many parts of the world. Its work has also featured in prominent academic journals. It also produced a video on insecurities faced by women workers in Gujarat, India, and CNN produced a featured documentary on our work on the health care crisis in Eastern Europe. IFP/SES sponsored several media/public-awareness initiatives to launch major publications. Media coverage of ILO/SES work at national level on socio-economic security has been documented in electronic and print form.

2.5 Defining and reporting performance at governance and management levels

25. The evaluation has tried to consider evidence of the outcome of IFP/SES work at national and global levels, but there is little to go on. The effort was hampered by poor documentation and the absence of a system to monitor the effects or effectiveness of their work. Case studies did find the Programme's influence in thinking and debate within research circles, particularly in South Africa and Ukraine.

26. Some have questioned whether expectations for this Programme were not set too high. In particular, the designers foresaw not only improving the knowledge base, but also assessing the effectiveness of existing ways and means to extend social protection, developing new ways of improving coverage, as well as developing and disseminating elements for new policy options to extend social protection and to promote their implementation. Against these standards, the programme appears to have drifted too far in the direction of globally targeted research publications and information systems, to the detriment of national policy advisory support, as originally envisioned. However, a longer

time frame would be more appropriate for this level of impact. This lesson can be applied when defining indicators and performance targets for similar programmes.

2.6. Internal collaboration

27. The establishment in 1999 of IFP/SES as an InFocus Programme did not combine all work on decent work indicators and addressing socio-economic insecurity in an integrated structure, but it did bring together a technical core into the operational unit of the Programme. However, the administrative division of the social security section into three separate units did not clearly address the cross-cutting nature of the SES Programme within the larger programming level or even beyond the sector level.
28. IFP/SES is clustered within the broad ILO strategy to promote social protection, but it also supports a shared policy effort to develop means of monitoring and measuring decent work. Initial work on developing and implementing surveys as well as enhancing capacity in ILO member States to collect, process, disseminate and analyse data on IFP/SES was envisioned as a joint initiative between IFP/SES, the Bureau of Statistics and the field. As the methodology has now advanced, this collaboration needs to emerge more substantively. This is particularly urgent in the area of statistics.
29. Office-wide changes to rationalize functions such as national policy review and institutional support, statistics and data collection, have implications for IFP/SES and the newly established Social Security Department. Steps to rationalize work and responsibilities should not be delayed.
30. The case studies show unevenness in the collaboration between IFP/SES and the ILO field offices, with few offices knowing how IFP/SES chooses to conduct surveys and other activities in specific countries. The review has also shown that many field specialists do not have a sense of how to use IFP/SES research as an entry point for social policy dialogue. Roles and responsibilities and links to field specialists have not been clear. A next step could be to enhance placement of socio-economic security work in an integrated ILO strategy of support to national constituents, with focal responsibilities better defined for field specialists at SRO level.

2.7. Effective oversight

31. There is little evidence that the management system of the ILO provided the supervision necessary to monitor and give feedback on this exploratory research programme. The Programme's Director was not required to set up a method to monitor and report the usefulness of research innovations. External donors to the Programme appear also not to have been demanding in their monitoring expectations. As a result, documentation for progress achieved beyond the output level is scant. Finally, although the IAB was used to gather feedback on IFP/SES's technical work, its role in monitoring and guiding was not fully realized and activity has waned in recent years.
32. A key lesson for the Office to address is how to introduce effective oversight processes for programmes that do not fit well into any one segment of ILO technical structures and to find ways to attenuate the tensions that may arise between a unit that is potentially redefining organizational practice and existing well-established programmes and units. A second lesson is that the Office can better institutionalize regular internal monitoring and reporting practices.

2.8. Sustainability

33. The ratio of extra-budgetary to regular budget funding for IFP/SES over the past three biennia has been high (see Table 1). The reliance on extra-budgetary funds has raised the issue of sustainability of the work. Most extra-budgetary funds were used on survey work in lower income countries, and on database development. In 2004, through Dutch funding, the Programme placed at the centre of its strategy the development of the IFP/SES indicators database, and PSS and ELFS. These, in turn, would promote different forms of social and economic security, with emphasis on providing basic security for the poor and disadvantaged. These are areas where no clear end point or transition to alternatives has been developed.

3. Recommendations

34. This evaluation has highlighted the need for better integration of IFP/SES into regular ILO programmes and budgeting for the sustainability of the Programme's work. The Office should exploit the opportunity to transition this exploratory work into social protection policies that are coherent and politically actionable. The tripartite base for the ILO's work in socio-economic security has considerable untapped potential for influencing global and national agendas. For the ILO to realize this potential there is a need to build consensus on the policy mix and messages linked to socio-economic insecurity.

35. As the Office considers next steps, there is a risk that a considerable amount of dedicated work could be wasted and the intellectual capital in which the ILO has invested squandered. This would be a suboptimal outcome, particularly in those countries where the SES Programme already appears to have had some impact on thinking about policy, as well as in those countries where the research stimulated via the Programme is adding some yeast to national discussions of employment issues. Since the ILO, inter alia, via the SES Programme, has good outreach into the intellectual community interested in its issues, such suboptimal use of resources has consequences that go well beyond the ILO itself.

36. The evaluation offers the following recommendations:

- (a) The ILO is in possession of some important research and analysis generated by this Programme. It needs to build on this and find a constructive and cost-effective way to convert this work into the ILO's mainstream programmes and activities.
- (b) Issues related to sustaining IFP/SES areas of work need to be resolved within a broader rationalization scheme for consolidating functions and responsibilities for research, statistics and data collection, and national policy analysis and advisory support. Cost savings can probably be realized by consolidating functions and responsibilities for research, statistics and data collection, and national policy analysis and advisory support.
- (c) The ILO needs to ensure that any department following up these issues has not only the resources to pursue IFP/SES analysis but also the capacity to convert any such analysis into policies that can be implemented.
- (d) The Programme cannot continue its work with its regular budget resources only. If donor funding for IFP/SES declines, the ILO needs to develop a strategy to mainstream priority areas of work within the ILO's regular budget or an extra-budgetary resource mobilization strategy integrated into an Office-level approach. To leave the Programme intact, but dependent on internal collaboration with other units

where it has the mandate but not the authority or control over resources, would not be wise.

- (e) The Social Security Department, the Bureau of Statistics and other technical programmes should develop a new plan for more effective collaboration on decent work indicators, which responds to lessons learned from work done so far by IFP/SES, with cost-effectiveness of the outcomes as a major driver of the work.
- (f) Advisory boards established to guide programmes such as IFP/SES should be kept active in advising for the life of the programme concerned. The ILO needs to supervise any such arrangements made for future programmes.
- (g) All programmes need monitoring. Innovative programmes need innovative monitoring. The ILO and the Governing Body can clarify standards and expectations in this regard.
- (h) All programmes should be required to keep adequate and up-to-date documentation on their performance, and internal audit should follow up this requirement.
- (i) The procedures for access to the results of research the ILO has been involved in, and the data on which those results are based, need to be clear and to be observed. At present it is not clear who has access to what, who decides and on what basis. Senior management may wish to ensure that no ambiguities occur in this regard in future.
- (j) Senior management may wish to consider how in future to manage programmes such as IFP/SES so as to maintain the originality and flexibility needed for experimental, exploratory work, while at the same time keeping them consistently productive of both analysis and actionable policy recommendations which further the Organization's mandate. A frank annual presentation to the Governing Body on results achieved and pitfalls encountered by those in charge of promoting original, solution-oriented research may be one solution.

37. The Office comments on the independent evaluation are as follows:

- (a) The Office welcomes the thorough contribution of the evaluation report to the future development of the policy and advisory work of the Office on the topic of socio-economic security. The recommendations of the report provide important guidance for the future and are in general acceptable to the Office.
- (b) Sector III welcomes in particular that the evaluation report acknowledges the substantial contribution of IFP/SES to the conceptualization of "socio-economic security" and recognizes that a significant amount of research outputs have been produced, including a multidimensional global database. The report acknowledges that the Programme was successful in introducing some of its findings into academic literature and debate. Some of the outputs are well placed to stir and inform national social policy debates on the critical policy issues of social protection and socio-economic security.
- (c) The report observes that the Programme has not been able to turn its analytical work into actionable policies. However, the report also recognizes that the Programme had some impact on policy debates in countries like India, Ukraine and South Africa, as well as the United Republic of Tanzania and Ethiopia. Concrete policy advice through the Programme clearly had to remain at the level of contribution of ideas to national policy debates. The Office could not generally promote newly developed policy ideas as policy advice to countries without discussion and endorsement by its tripartite constituency.

- (d) The report rightly observes that the Organization has a lot to digest, absorb and put to good use. Senior management welcomes the guidance that is offered in this respect. With the re-establishment of the Social Security Department, senior management has created the conditions that allow the ILO to exploit in a feasible and technically coherent fashion those findings of the Programme that refer to social and income security. Other outputs of the Programme will be exploited by other units in the house without losing the coherence of the overall thinking on the issue of socio-economic security.
- (e) The Office accepts and welcomes the advice given with regard to the need to find innovative ways to manage and supervise innovative programmes. The IFP/SES Programme is of an exploratory and transversal nature. It encompasses policy areas that fall within the competence of all units of the sector and that are related to work being done in all four technical sectors. The next step is the absorption of its research results and exploratory policy conclusions across the Office. The Programme has organized a series of technical consultations on specific topics in the Office. However, in this new phase, this will have to be looked at and analysed from an overall perspective, identifying the linkages and potential use and follow-up to the results of the Programme. More generally, a new mechanism at the senior management level and at the level of the Organization will be developed to ensure adequate and consensual follow-up of innovative work done by explorative units, like IFP/SES, with respect to Office-wide policy development and its application in the framework of Decent Work Country Programmes and other advisory services.

38. *The Committee may wish to recommend to the Governing Body that it request the Director-General to take into consideration the above findings and recommendations, together with the deliberations of the Committee, in further work on socio-economic security.*

Geneva, 10 October 2005.

Point for decision: Paragraph 38.

Table 1. IFP/SES – Regular budget

Allocation basis	2000-01*	2002-03	2004-05	% change
P staff (w-y/months)	10	10	10	0
G staff (w-y/months)	4	4	3/7	-11
Non-staff (US\$)	281 452	152 614	5 987	-98
Extra-budgetary (US\$)	4 153 197	2 998 684	2 468 235	-41

*Adjusted for resources reallocated within the sector in 2000.

SES funding, by source: 2000-05

