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► What works, what does not and why in Decent Work Country Programmes, 2020 - 24?

A synthesis review of Decent Work Country Programmes,
Country Programme Reviews and high-level evaluations

September 2025

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5 September 2025



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Executive Summary

The Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) are the ILO's programming instrument at the country level. ILO Regional Offices, in coordination, with Country Offices, conduct Country Programme Reviews (CPRs) of DWCPs as required for management and learning purposes. In addition, each year EVAL conducts at least one DWCP evaluation based on an established DWCP High Level Evaluation (HLE) Protocol covering a cluster of countries or a subregion in a region.

Synthesis reviews (SR) synthesize information on results, lessons learned, and good practices. The purpose of this synthesis review is to contribute to organizational learning, especially in terms of cross-fertilization among ILO staff as well as ILO constituents towards improved DWCP design, implementation, and evaluation to advance the DW agenda.

The methodology involved meetings with key stakeholders and a document analysis of key reports. This included meetings with EVAL and programming and evaluation staff from PROGRAM and the five regional programme units (RPU) or similar Regional Office units. The main body of the synthesis review is an analysis of CPRs and HLEs to answer the key questions listed in the ToRs. This analysis identifies and synthesises key results, lessons learned, and good practices to make these findings accessible and useful to ILO officials and constituents. It was carried out with the support of AI data analysis software (Atlas.ti).

Chapter 2 provides answers to the key SR questions under the headings of DWCP formulation process and document; DWCP implementation and results; DWCP M&E; Resource mobilization, advocacy and communication; and cross-cutting themes. It identifies common patterns in successful implementation. Chapter 3 summarises key lessons in relation to what works and why regarding the implementation of a CPR. Finally, on the basis of the discussion in chapters 2 and 3 and informed by the interviews with key stakeholders, chapter 4 sets out key recommendations.

In general, the review of CPRs indicates that formulation of DWCPs is one of the strengths of the DWCP process. DWCPs are generally very relevant to national priorities and aligned with UN policy frameworks (UNSDCF). DWCPs are designed (at least in principle) in a results-based manner and include linkages to SDGs. Recommendations from CPRs and HLEs indicate that there is scope to improve the design of results framework with stronger linkages between outcomes, outputs and indicators (e.g. use of SMART indicators); and the inclusion of definitions for indicators, baselines and targets.

One of the key issues in the implementation process is to ensure ownership of the DWCP by the constituents. CPRs would suggest that, while constituents are generally actively involved in developing the DWCP, more attention is required to ensuring that constituents remain involved and engaged in the implementation of the DWCP and that they feel ownership over the process and results. Continuous efforts to strengthen the capabilities of constituents through capacity building (including quality assurance feedback) and resources are also crucial. Implementation of the current approach to DWCP can also be challenging given the human resources capacities of ILO with limited staff covering a wide range of countries.

The SR does raise the issue as to whether the current approach to a highly structured DWCP is appropriate or whether an alternative approach focussed more on results rather than outputs and activities would be more productive. This alternative approach would retain the current advantages of promoting policy dialogue with the tripartite and other key stakeholders and providing a policy framework which would assist in resource mobilisation. This would see the DWCP as a country-level results framework for Decent Work agreed upon by constituents, aligned with national and UN priorities, and grounded in ILO values.

Many CPRs indicate that M&E is one of the weakest areas of DWCP implementation and this would appear to be a longstanding issue. This partially relates to the design of the results framework and the M&E system itself, but it also includes issues such as limited capacity and resources, lack of data and limited (if any) involvement of constituents and ILO staff in this aspect of the work.

Given the weaknesses identified in current M&E, a key question is how to strengthen it in a way that is practical, focused, and meaningful for both constituents and the ILO, especially given capacity, data, and resource constraints. This might require a rethink of how DWCP M&E should be approached. An alternative approach would be to adopt a much simpler M&E approach while making DWCP M&E more collaborative and problem-solving. Thus, data reporting as to what has been achieved during a DWCP could rely on a synthesis review of project evaluations, the results from Regular Budget funded activities, and evaluations of the work of other constituents. DWCP M&E could be more closely integrated with the CPR process so as to use participatory monitoring and real-time data to adjust course.

If, in contrast, the current approach is to be maintained, there is a need to make it work and to provide necessary resources and capacity. This would require each DWCP to have a robust M&E framework and ensure adequate systems and tools in order to manage the process of assessing and reporting progress towards achieving DWCP outputs and outcomes. This should involve a baseline analysis and the establishment of a methodology to ensure that appropriate data are collected on a regular and timely basis. Finally, developing the M&E framework should involve an assessment of the evaluability of the program, providing information at an early stage on the degree to which the DWCP can be evaluated and identifying any necessary actions to facilitate evaluation.

In relation to resource mobilisation, this is an issue which appears to be dealt with more on an ad hoc rather than a structured basis in many DWCPs. There would appear to be a strong case for DWCPs to include a fully-fledged resource mobilization strategy. It would also involve building a business case that can be pitched and modulated accordingly to potential development partners' priorities and interests to fund DWCP activities.

In relation to advocacy and communication, CPRs make little or no reference to whether DWCPs include advocacy and/or communications plans. The importance of advocacy and communication was highlighted in a number of CPRs, and it would be important that DWCPs should include an overall communications plan not just in relation to individual actions but in relation to the role and importance of the DWCP itself.

Finally, it would appear that implementation of cross-cutting themes is not consistently applied across all DWCPs. While cross-cutting themes are generally addressed in DWCPs,

the extent to which this applies in implementation and the focus varies significantly from one theme to another and from one country to another. In general, issues concerning environmental sustainability receive limited attention in most DWCPs in the period covered here. Several CPRs highlighted the need to develop inclusive, gender-responsive and non-discrimination policies as a part of future DWCPs and there is also a clear need to ensure that cross-cutting principles including gender, non-discrimination and environmental sustainability are applied in the implementation process and not simply in theory. In particular, there would appear to be a need for further work on how environmental issues can be integrated such as, for example, assessing the carbon footprint of the DWCP.

The report presents with the following **recommendations**:

DWCPs

DWCP formulation

1. ILO should **consider whether an alternative approach to DWCP design might be appropriate**. This would see the DWCP as a country-level results framework for Decent Work agreed upon by constituents, aligned with national and UN priorities (UNSDCF), and grounded in ILO values and would focus more on identifying priority areas and outcomes for ILO work.
2. **Risk management** should be introduced into the programming and monitoring practices, to confer agility and decision-making guidance during implementation.

DWCP implementation and results

3. The **shared ownership** of the DWCP by all constituents needs to be strengthened by actions such as ensuring that the tripartite Steering Committee works effectively (and regularly) and providing capacity building supports to constituents to support their engagement.
4. There should be a **more integrated approach to the DWCP** highlighting synergies, coherence and integration between the objectives and activities of the DWCP rather than a range of standalone activities.
5. There is a need to develop inclusive, gender-responsive and non-discrimination policies as a part of future DWCPs and also to ensure that cross-cutting principles including **gender, non-discrimination and just transition to environmental sustainability** are applied in the implementation process.

DWCP M&E

6. ILO should consider whether the current approach to M&E is viable and **identify the simplest viable DWCP M&E system that adds value without overburdening staff and national partners**. An alternative approach would be to **adopt a much simpler M&E approach** while making DWCP M&E more collaborative and problem-solving.
7. However, if the existing approach is to be implemented, a **detailed and robust M&E framework** should be established to ensure adequate systems and tools in

order to manage the process of assessing and reporting progress towards achieving DWCP outputs and outcomes. This should involve a baseline analysis and set up a methodology to ensure that appropriate data are collected on a regular and timely basis identifying budget, roles and responsibilities. Finally, developing the M&E framework should involve an assessment of the evaluability of the program, providing information at an early stage on the degree to which the DWCP can be evaluated and identifying any necessary actions to facilitate evaluation. **This approach has significant resource implications which have not been addressed to date.**

DWCP Resource mobilization, advocacy and communications

8. DWCPs should include a fully-fledged **resource mobilization strategy** which would include a thorough mapping of current development partners' priorities, and an analysis of potential new partners.
9. DWCPs should include **an advocacy and communications plan** to promote the visibility and importance of the DWCP to increase awareness and buy-in from constituents, the general public and target audiences including direct and indirect beneficiaries.

CPRs

Purpose

1. CPRs should **focus on learning** (as indeed emphasised by current Guidance) and be **more integrated with the DWCP M&E** process.

Evaluation questions

2. CPRs should adopt **clear questions structured around the OECD DAC and in line with the learning rationale.**
3. **CPRs and HLEs should be required to engage in a structured manner with questions** such as ownership by constituents and (where necessary) steps needed to improve ownership; the added-value; and resource mobilization.

Methodology

4. Future **CPRs should be timed (insofar as possible) to synchronise with the UNSDCF process.**
5. CPRs should be **more participatory** in nature in order to maximise ownership by constituents.
6. More **informal interim/mid-term reviews** should be carried out in a manner which is integrated with final CPRs and with M&E.
7. Where possible, CPRs should **draw on synthesis reviews of existing ILO evaluations**, the results from Regular Budget funded activities, and evaluations of the work of other constituents.

Finally, the following **formative insights** have been developed:

- DWCPs risk becoming a formality without major reform. Though aligned with SDGs and national frameworks, their added value is often assumed rather than proven; weak ownership, steering committees, and poor integration limit impact.
- Monitoring and evaluation is the weakest link: missing baselines, vague indicators, and irregular data impede learning and mid-course correction, reducing DWCPs' strategic relevance.
- Resource mobilisation and advocacy are rarely built in. Few DWCPs have clear fundraising or communication strategies, limiting visibility and influence.
- If the UNSDCF functions as a strong single framework, DWCP machinery may be redundant. Full integration into UNSDCFs could cut duplication, streamline reporting, and let the ILO focus on shaping UN priorities.
- DWCPs should be reviewed regularly (e.g., every two years) through participatory workshops to update content and strengthen ownership.
- CPRs add value only if redesigned. They should align with UNSDCF cycles, follow clear learning questions (i.e. ownership, added value, resource mobilisation), and use participatory mid-term reviews to guide course correction.

Overall, DWCPs can remain useful if re-engineered with full UNSDCF integration, robust M&E, real tripartite ownership, risk management, resource mobilisation, and strong communication; otherwise, they risk becoming a costly formality.

Abbreviations

CO	Country Office
CPR	Country Programme Review
DC	Development Co-operation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DW	Decent Work
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
DWP	Decent Work Programme
DWT	Decent Work Team
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EVAL	ILO Evaluation Office
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
HLE	High-Level Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MTR	Mid-term Review
OECD DAC	Organisation for Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee
PDR	People's Democratic Republic (Lao)
RBM	Results-Based Management
RBTC	Regular Budget Technical Cooperation
RC	Resident Coordinator (UN)
RMG	Ready-made Garment
RPU	Regional Programming Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (targets)
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SR	Synthesis Review
ToC	Theory of Change

ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
XB	Extra-budgetary funding

1. Introduction and methodology

1.1 Decent Work Country Programmes

The Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) are the ILO's programming instrument at the country level.¹ They provide a framework that identifies the priorities of ILO constituents in a country and specifies the planned support of the Office to the achievement of results under those priorities. They are developed with full participation of national governments and employers' and workers' organizations and are implemented with their active engagement. Country ownership and results orientation are key aspects of DWCPs. DWCPs are aligned with national development priorities and henceforth with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). They constitute the ILO's contribution to the wider UN effort in a country towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.2 Reviewing DWCPs

ILO Regional Offices, in coordination, with Country Offices, conduct Country Programme Reviews (CPRs) of DWCPs as required for management and learning purposes following ILO Guidance Notes as to how to approach such reviews.² In addition, each year EVAL conducts at least one DWCP evaluation based on an established DWCP High Level Evaluation (HLE) Protocol covering a cluster of countries or a subregion in a region.³ These are described further in Annex A.

1.3 Synthesis Reviews

Synthesis reviews (SR) systematically synthesize information on results, lessons learned, and good practices. They support the expansion of the knowledge base by synthesizing evaluative evidence on substantive findings and systemic performance and making it available to a wide audience. By analysing large amounts of evaluative evidence, SRs contribute effectively to organizational learning and enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

1.4 Purpose of this Review

The purpose of this SR is to contribute to organizational learning, especially in terms of cross-fertilization among ILO staff (i.e. Regional Offices/RPUs, DWT, Country Offices and all departments at HQ) as well as ILO constituents towards improved DWCP design, implementation, and evaluation to advance the DW agenda.

The SR provides guidance to ILO constituents and the ILO Office following an evidence-based manner on:

¹ See <https://www.ilo.org/about-ilo/how-ilo-works/results-based-management/decent-work-country-programmes> This review does not include Decent Work Programmes agreed at a sub-regional level, particularly in Africa, e.g. the ECOWAS DWP 2020–23 (extended to 2026).

² <https://www.ilo.org/media/391536/download>

³ <https://www.ilo.org/media/390921/download>

1. What works and why considering CPRs findings, recommendations, lessons learned and good practices (chapter 2 of this report).
2. What works and why regarding the implementation of a CPR (i.e. approach and methodology) (chapter 3).
3. Recommendations of ways to move forward on DWCPs design, implementation and evaluation to advance DW (chapter 4).

1.5 Methodology

The methodology involved meetings with key stakeholders and a document analysis of key reports (CPRs, DWCP HLEs and others, Annex A). In addition to the ILO Evaluation Office, we also carried out meetings with programming and evaluation staff from PROGRAM and the five regional Programme Units (RPU) or applicable senior management during the inception phase (listed in Annex A). These interviews were to gather information on the implementation and usefulness and utility of CPRs and HLEs for the Office and constituents, and on the views of ILO staff as to priorities for this synthesis review (see Annex C for a summary of key issues arising).

The main body of the synthesis review is an analysis of CPRs and HLEs to answer the key questions listed above at section 1.4 and the specific questions listed at Annex B. This analysis identifies and synthesises key results, lessons learned, and good practices to make these findings accessible and useful to ILO officials and constituents. It was carried out with the support of AI data analysis software (Atlas.ti). The detailed methodology, including a description of the CPRs and HLEs and of how reports were selected for this Synthesis Review is set out in Annex A, which also outlines some limitations to the study.

The ToRs for the SR set out 26 specific questions grouped under seven headings. They cover the DWCP formulation process and document; the implementation process; results: outcomes, impact and suitability; M&E; resource mobilization, advocacy and communication; and cross-cutting themes. The detailed answers to these questions are set out in Annex B.

2. What works and why for DWCPs?

On the basis of the SR and informed by the interviews with key stakeholders, this chapter aims to answer the key question as to what works and why considering CPRs findings, recommendations, lessons learned and good practices.⁴

2.1 Pre-conditions for successful DWCP

Stakeholders raised questions about the preconditions for a successful DWCP (Annex C). However, CPRs generally did not always explicitly identify key factors. Indeed, it is difficult to identify necessary and sufficient factors in general developmental or political terms as countries which adopted DWCPs varied widely in terms of levels of economic development from low-income countries (in World Bank classification) to upper middle-income countries such as China or Serbia (and indeed to occasional high-income countries such as the Bahamas).⁵ Similarly on the *Democracy Index*, countries varied from autocratic to flawed democracies.

Insofar as preconditions for success could be identified from CPRs and HLEs, **these appeared to relate significantly to trust in the ILO (and UN more broadly) and confidence in the quality of the ILO's technical assistance together with an (at least formal) acceptance of the role of social partners.**

2.2 DWCP formulation process and document

In general, the review of CPRs indicates that **formulation is one of the strengths of the DWCP process.** DWCPs are generally very relevant to national priorities, aligned with UN policy frameworks (UNSDCF) and include linkages to SDGs.

CPRs found that DWCPs are designed (at least in principle) in a results-based manner. However, it was less clear what was meant by this, and no standardised assessment was made as to the extent to which DWCPs were results-based. A number of CPRs and HLEs found that while DWCPs adopted (in principle) a results-based management approach, identifying priorities, outcomes and outputs, in practice the choice of indicators and use of targets to monitor progress was relatively weak.

Several CPRs recommended the inclusion of a theory of change with clear objectives, outcomes, indicators, and actions needed to achieve the objectives which would provide a more coherent roadmap for partners and enable a clear understanding of relevant roles and responsibilities. A requirement to include a ToC is now part of the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes Guidance since 2020.

Recommendations from CPRs and HLEs indicate that **there is scope to improve the design of results frameworks** with stronger linkages between outcomes, outputs and

⁴ This section draws on the answers to the detailed questions set out in the ToRs (see Annex B).

⁵ <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

indicators (e.g. use of SMART indicators);⁶ and the inclusion of definitions for indicators, baselines and targets.

In addition, CPRs and HLEs suggest that:

Risk analysis/management should be introduced into the programming and monitoring practices, to confer agility and decision-making guidance during implementation⁷

Maintaining strong relationships and regular interactions with the UN RC office and other UN entities is critical for ensuring that decent work issues are adequately represented in the UNSDCF.

The Palestine CPR identified one **good practice** in the DWCP relating to the development process of the programme. The DWCP was developed through a participatory and inclusive process and encompassed all key stakeholders of the programme. A national working group comprising academia, key government ministries, civil society, and social partners led the DWCP development process, from which a tripartite plus drafting team with members with specialisation in the four decent work pillars was established.

2.3 DWCP implementation and results

Added-value of DWCPs

One issue which received surprisingly **little attention in CPRs and HLEs was the added-value of the DWCP**. One might imply that the DWCP could have an added value by increasing the coherence of ILO work across different activities and advocating for DW with the constituents, but it was rarely clear that there was much synergy between activities in relation to, for example, employment and social protection. More credibly, one could imply that the DWCP provided added value through creating more structured social dialogue between ILO, employers, trade unions and government. This view was certainly expressed in interviews but was only rarely explicit in CPRs (e.g. Cameroon). Similarly, **it was somewhat unclear to what extent programming of ILO work was informed by the DWCP**.

This does raise the issue as to whether the current approach to a highly structured DWCP is appropriate or whether an approach would be more productive while retaining the current advantages of promoting policy dialogue with the tripartite and other key stakeholders and providing a policy framework which would assist in resource mobilisation. This would see the DWCP as a country-level results framework for Decent Work agreed upon by constituents, aligned with national and UN priorities, and grounded in ILO values. It would focus more on identifying priority areas and outcomes for work on DW by ILO and other actors through projects and government funded- interventions rather than setting out in great detail the outputs to be implemented. This approach could

⁶ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

⁷ The Armenian CPR proposed to create a digital risk management tool for development cooperation projects, which would include all the risks that appeared during the implementation of various projects providing ways to overcome them for application during the performance of other projects.

also have implications for DWCP M&E (below).

Ownership by social partners

There was no standardised assessment of the level of ownership of different constituents though it was recognised that building ownership can contribute to the sustainability of the DWCP. However, **a number of CPRs referred to a less-than-optimal level of ownership** and/or variations in levels of engagement between different social partners. In several CPRs there was reference to the need to improve the level of ownership but without any clear assessment as to what that level was. Implicitly, one can assume that it was less than ideal and some CPRs did explicitly refer to 'weak' or 'limited' ownership.

Thus, one of the key issues in the implementation process would be to ensure ownership of the DWCP by the constituents.

National ownership and commitment are the foundation of successful and sustainable DWCP implementation. *Inter alia* this requires working with a long-term perspective; promoting mutual respect; investment of the necessary time and resources into effective partnerships; being realistic about what can be progressed within existing human and financial resources (Lao PDR CPR).

CPRs would suggest that, while constituents are generally actively involved in developing the DWCP, more attention is required to ensuring that constituents remain involved and engaged in the implementation of the DWCP and that they feel ownership over the process and results after the formulation process. Engagement with constituents during DWCPs should be seen as not merely procedural but as a strategic investment.

The tripartite Steering Committee (a range of different titles are used in DWCPs) plays a key role in this regard. In some cases, no effective Steering Committee was established while in many others, **Steering Committees were much less active than planned**. It would be important to ensure that Steering Committees play the active role envisaged. This may require a range of actions such as capacity building for constituents to support their involvement.

The Sri Lanka CPR recommended that the 'DWCP Tripartite Task Force meetings should be designed to promote the DWCP's ownership and progress tracking by constituents, positioning ILO as a mere secretariat'.

Implementation of the current approach to DWCP can also be challenging given the human resources capacities of ILO with limited staff covering a wide range of countries.

Outcomes

Looking at the results of DWCP implementation, **CPRs and HLEs identify a very wide range of outcomes and (to a lesser extent) impacts of DWCPs**. These include strengthening social dialogue and institutional development; ratification of ILO conventions; and legislative and policy measures in a range of areas including employment opportunities, labour rights, child exploitation, social protection and gender. However, other CPRs refer to a weak level of achievement or to the fact that it is difficult to assess the level due to poor monitoring and evaluation and/or absence of data (e.g. Lao PDR).

There is no standardised assessment of the extent to which DWCPs have been

implemented or the level of impact as this was not the original purpose of the CPR. In some (limited) cases, CPRs make some assessment of the extent to which activities have been implemented (in percentage terms) but even here it is not clear that these assessments are comparable. Thus, it is impossible for this Synthesis Review to make any comparative assessment of levels of achievement across regions etc. which would be robust.

Lessons learned

Lessons learned from the CPRs are that **continuous efforts to strengthen the capabilities of constituents through capacity building and training (including quality assurance feedback) and resources are crucial**. This includes sensitizing constituents to the UN reform process and building strategic partnerships with the UN RC. For example, it was recommended that ILO, the Tripartite + constituents, and other stakeholders should improve the coordination, communication and visibility of future DWCPs by undertaking appropriate actions, including launch of the program, sensitisation meetings, and regular sharing of information on the programme with key stakeholders (Lesotho). CPRs also highlighted the need to support constituents to contribute to the development of effective national policies and actions facilitated by DWCP (Serbia).

A second lesson learned arising from the SR include the **need for a more integrated approach to the DWCP with coherence and integration between the objectives and activities of the DWCP** rather than a range of largely standalone activities.

Third, a **strategic shift from project-focused approaches to policy-driven initiatives is required**, aiming at long-term sustainability rather than short-term gains.

2.4 DWCP M&E

Many CPRs indicate that **M&E is one of the weakest areas of DWCP implementation and this is a long-standing feature** which was identified in the meta-reviews of 2011 and 2014 (ILO, 2011; 2014). This partially relates to the design of the results framework (discussed above) and the M&E system itself, but it also includes issues such as limited capacity and resources, lack of data and limited (if any) involvement of constituents in this aspect of the work.⁸

Given the weaknesses identified in current M&E, a key question is how to strengthen it in a way that is practical, focused and meaningful for both constituents and the ILO, especially given capacity, data, and resource constraints. This might require **a rethink of how DWCP M&E should be approached**. The DWCP is not a traditional ILO project with specific funding allocated. Rather, it serves as a broad framework for ILO activities which can accommodate contributions from various sources including XB and DC projects. Other resources also contribute to DWCP outcomes, such as RBTC, non-financial inputs such as ILO specialists' technical support, staff time, ILO standards and supervisory mechanisms (e.g. the Committee of Experts), as well as external resources mobilised by

⁸ Some CPRs (e.g. Lao PDR, Senegal) did identify good practices in M&E although it is difficult to assess the extent to which these had an impact on DWCP implementation (see Annex B).

constituents themselves or contributed by other development partners.

This **requires being realistic about capacities and resources while still aiming for meaningful monitoring and learning**. It would be helpful to clarify what exactly should be monitored, who will use the monitoring data, and for what decisions so as to identify what is the simplest viable M&E system that adds value without overburdening staff and national partners. Other issues include how to ensure that monitoring is participatory, so it also helps build capacity and engagement over time. Arguably it is neither practical nor useful to impose a rigid, project-style M&E framework onto DWCPs.

An alternative approach would be to adopt a much simpler M&E approach while making DWCP M&E more collaborative and problem-solving. Thus, data reporting as to what has been achieved during a DWCP could rely on a synthesis review of project evaluations, the results from Regular Budget funded activities, and evaluations of the work of other constituents rather than attempting to integrate data into a DWCP monitoring framework.

If, in contrast, the current approach is to be maintained, there is a need to make it work. This would require each DWCP to have a robust M&E framework and to ensure adequate systems and tools in order to manage the process of assessing and reporting progress towards achieving DWCP outputs and outcomes. This should involve a baseline analysis and the establishment of a methodology to ensure that appropriate data are collected on a regular and timely basis. Finally, developing the M&E framework should involve an assessment of the evaluability of the program, providing information at an early stage on the degree to which the DWCP can be evaluated and identifying any necessary actions to facilitate evaluation.

Obviously, improvements in M&E would have resourcing implications including human resources needed to support data collection and analysis. However, it would appear from the SR that this is not solely a question of resourcing but that **there is also a need to plan better how appropriate M&E can be integrated into DWCPs and implemented** over the lifecycle of the DWCP within a viable resource envelope.

2.5 Resource mobilization, advocacy and communication

In relation to resource mobilisation, this is an issue which appears to be dealt with more on an ad hoc rather than a structured basis in many DWCPs.

For example, the Sri Lanka CPR makes a strong case for DWCPs to include a sound resource mobilization strategy. "A thorough mapping of current development partners' priorities, and an analysis of potential new partners is imperative to sustain the changes and policies needed for the country's growth and inclusion ambitions."

It would also involve **'building a business case that can be pitched and modulated accordingly to potential development partners' priorities and interests'** to fund DWCP activities. Some CPRs (e.g. Cameroon) highlight the importance of (albeit limited) **government funding for DWCP activities as it creates a greater sense of ownership** than where activities are funded entirely by development partners.

In relation to advocacy and communication, CPRs make little or no reference to whether DWCPs include advocacy and/or communications plans. The importance of both was highlighted in a number of CPRs and it would be important **that DWCPs should include an overall communications plan not just in relation to individual actions but in relation to the role and importance of the DWCP itself.**

2.6 Cross cutting themes

Finally, it would appear that **implementation of cross-cutting themes is not consistently applied across all DWCPs.** While cross-cutting themes are generally addressed in DWCPs, the extent to which this applies in implementation and the focus varies significantly from one theme to another and from one country to another. In general, issues concerning environmental sustainability receive limited attention in most DWCPs in the period covered here. Several CPRs highlighted the need to develop inclusive, gender-responsive and non-discrimination policies as a part of future DWCPs and there is also a clear need to ensure that cross-cutting principles including gender, non-discrimination and environmental sustainability are applied in the implementation process and not simply in theory. These findings are broadly consistent with the 2023 HLE SR of the ILO's strategies and actions to promote fundamental principles and rights at work which found that the lowest rated category was the cross-cutting issues of gender equality and disability inclusion. In particular, there would appear to be a need for further work on how environmental issues can be integrated such as, for example, assessing the carbon footprint of the DWCP.

2.7 Common patterns in successful implementation

Common patterns and good practices observed among successful DWCPs include:

- **Focused Priorities:** Successful DWCPs typically concentrate on a limited number of shared priorities,⁹ which allows for more effective implementation and greater impact. This approach is based on the consensus that fewer interventions can lead to better outcomes.
- **Tripartite Engagement:** The active involvement of tripartite constituents (governments, employers, and workers) in the design, planning, and implementation of DWCPs is crucial. This engagement fosters ownership and accountability among stakeholders.
- **Alignment with National Frameworks:** Successful DWCPs align closely with national development agendas and other relevant frameworks, such as the UNSDCF and SDGs. This alignment enhances the relevance and sustainability of the DWCP.
- **Theory of Change (ToC):** The establishment of a clear ToC that outlines the causal pathways from activities to outcomes and the external factors that can facilitate or hindered the achievement of the outcomes is a relatively new feature of DWCPs and helps in clarifying the relationship between activities and outcomes.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Effective DWCPs incorporate robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks that include baselines, targets, and data collection

⁹ The current (2020) DWCP Guidance encourages a maximum of three DWCP priorities but some DWCPs include more and all have multiple outcomes under each priority area.

procedures. This allows for regular assessment of progress and adjustments as needed.

- **Resource Mobilization:** Successful DWCPs demonstrate effective resource mobilization strategies, engaging with international donors and leveraging partnerships to secure funding for various initiatives.
- **Sustainability Focus:** There is a strong emphasis on building sustainable partnerships with local actors, including civil society organizations and local authorities, to ensure the long-term impact of the DWCP initiatives.
- **Cross-Cutting Issues:** Successful DWCPs address cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, social dialogue, and environmental sustainability, integrating these concerns into their core strategies.

These patterns highlight the importance of strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with broader national and international frameworks in the successful implementation of DWCPs. DWCPs have been most successful in catalysing change where these conditions existed, e.g. alignment with national priorities, strong tripartite support, availability of resources to implement the DWCP and in the absence of challenges such as political instability.

2.8 Comparison with earlier reviews

It is interesting to compare and contrast the findings of this SR with the findings of somewhat similar meta-reviews in 2011 and 2014 (which covered 14 and 15 DWCPs respectively).¹⁰ The 2011 review (which covered the period 2001-10) found that the **relevance and coherence of DWCPs were improving** and, although one must rely on a somewhat subjective assessment, it seems likely that **this trend has continued to 2024**. Most CPRs reviewed here came to a positive assessment on these criteria.

However, other factors are less clear. Similarities between the earlier reviews and this SR included the 'considerable variation in the status, themes and scope of the DWCPs' and the variations in the approach of CPRs (2014). Then, as now, some DWCPs had not been formally adopted by government and oversight structures (steering committees) were not always working well. It is, however, difficult to assess these issues in quantitative terms or to see whether implementation in these areas has improved over time.

One issue which **does not seem to have improved significantly is M&E** where (in both 2011 and 2014) deficiencies in monitoring and evaluation and RBM were highlighted. A mismatch between resources required and those available was also found leading to dependence on external fundings partners. And the 2014 meta-analysis highlighted problems in communication which affected knowledge and ownership of DWCPs. This review also emphasised the **need to give more attention to risk management strategies**. In these areas, it is unclear whether DWCP implementation has improved in the last decade. This finding supports the need for a more radical review of the approach to M&E rather than assuming that what has failed to work in the past will somehow work in the future.

¹⁰ CPRs formally commenced in 2008.

3. What works and why regarding the implementation of a CPR?

This chapter summarises the lessons as to what works and why regarding the implementation of a CPR (i.e. approach and methodology). Although they all cover the same general issues, there is considerable variation between the different CPRs. Some are much more in-depth than others and one assumes that there may have been considerable variation in the resources invested in different countries.

3.1 Consultant-led v consultation

In practice, CPRs are generally consultant-led reviews (albeit with the engagement of most or all constituents). **There are limited examples of a more participatory approach (e.g. Sri Lanka).** The advantages of a more participatory approach would be to support greater ownership by the constituents. Greater engagement of constituents in a more participatory manner should help to support ownership. Inevitably, **this does come at the cost of the need for greater investment of time and resources by all constituents.**

3.2 Improving the CPR process

On the basis of discussions, one issue in improving the function of CPRs is timing and synchronisation with the UNSDCF timetable. **A greater degree of synchronisation with the UNSDCF timetable (including the evaluation timetable) could help to support both ILO and constituents** in integrating the DWCP into the UN process and learning from the lessons of previous ILO and UN frameworks. Of course, national policy frameworks (and their specific timetables) also need to be taken into account.

Second, while it is not necessarily the case that a full-scale CPR is required, it would appear to be desirable that **interim or mid-term reviews of the DWCP should be carried out more frequently.** As we have seen, full mid-term CPRs are unusual. However, interviewees did refer to more informal mid-term review workshops. It may be advisable to develop a process somewhere between a very short-term once-off workshop and a full MTR which can engage constituents in an interim or mid-term review of the DWCP in a structured manner and lead to specific agreements on steps to review or refocus the DWCP implementation. These should be integrated (insofar as possible) with final CPRs. For example, the interim review might be supported by a consultant who has been previously involved in a CPR and/or will be involved in the final CPR to facilitate continuity.

Overall, it would appear that **CPRs can be most useful if they are seen as part of a learning process** feeding into implementation of an ongoing DWCP and/or design of a future DWCP rather than as a once-off exercise. This is related to the discussion of a new approach to M&E in chapter 2 whereby the CPR could be part of a reformed approach to M&E.

3.3 Good practices of the better CPRs

In terms of the difference between the better CPRs and others, good practices both in planning for the CPR (e.g. ToRs) and implementation include:

- **Clear expression of learning rationale for CPR** e.g. Sri Lanka refers to the CPR as ‘part of an ongoing monitoring process aimed at improving the DWCP and facilitating learning’. Although this is highlighted in the CPR Guidelines, not all the ToRs emphasise the ‘learning’ rationale for the CPR.¹¹
- **Synthesis review of existing evaluations** – some countries carried out a national SR of existing evaluations as an input to the CPR to avoid evaluation fatigue.¹²
- **Clear questions structured around the OECD DAC and in line with the learning rationale** - most ToRs adopted DAC-based questions but perhaps more in line with a standard accountability evaluation (e.g. efficiency of resource use).
- **Consultation with stakeholders going beyond simple data collection in interviews/focus groups**, e.g. Sri Lanka,¹³ Bahamas. Most if not all CPRs have a validation workshop but this appears to be a rather short and formal meeting whereas the **workshops in Sri Lanka and Bahamas went beyond this and aimed for ‘qualitative participatory data collection’**.

3.4 Lessons learned for future DWCP, CPRs and DWCP HLEs

Based on discussion above, it is proposed that:

- Future **CPRs should be timed (insofar as possible) to synchronise with the UNSDCF process.**
- CPRs should **focus on learning** (as indeed emphasised by current Guidance)
- CPRs should adopt **clear questions structured around the OECD DAC and in line with the learning rationale.**
- CPRs and HLEs should be required to **engage in a structured manner** with questions such as ownership by constituents and (where necessary) steps needed to improve ownership; the added value of DWCPs; and resource mobilization.
- Where possible, CPRs should **draw on synthesis reviews** of existing ILO evaluations, Regular Budget activities and of other non-ILO projects and activities (if available).
- CPRs should be **more participatory** in nature in order to maximise ownership by constituents.
- **More informal interim/mid-term reviews** should be carried out in a manner which is integrated with final CPRs and with M&E perhaps on a biennial basis.

¹¹ As set out in the CPR Guidelines ‘The purpose of CPRs should primarily be improvement and organizational learning. The CPR is part of the on-going monitoring processes aimed at improving the DWCP, facilitating learning by constituents, ILO and other key stakeholders, and informing the UNSDCF.’

¹² This was also done for several HLEs.

¹³ In Sri Lanka a participatory consultation workshop was organised with tripartite constituents, key partners and relevant stakeholders. The purpose was to gather information from participants; answer CPR questions; and make evidence-based recommendations for the formulation of the new DWCP. The workshop was designed based on the Most Significant Change technique, which is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation.

4. Recommendations of ways to move forward on DWCPs design, implementation and evaluation to advance decent work

4.1 DWCPs

DWCP formulation

1. ILO should **consider whether an alternative approach to DWCP design might be appropriate**. This would see the DWCP as a country-level results framework for Decent Work agreed upon by constituents, aligned with national and UN priorities (UNSDCF), and grounded in ILO values and would focus more on identifying priority areas and outcomes for ILO work.
2. **Risk management** should be introduced into the programming and monitoring practices, to confer agility and decision-making guidance during implementation.

DWCP implementation and results

3. The **shared ownership** of the DWCP by all constituents needs to be strengthened by actions such as ensuring that the tripartite Steering Committee works effectively (and regularly) and providing capacity building supports to constituents to support their engagement (based on the level of support that realistically ILO can provide)
4. There should be a **more integrated approach to the DWCP** highlighting synergies, coherence and integration between the objectives and activities of the DWCP rather than a range of standalone activities.
5. There is a need to develop inclusive, gender-responsive and non-discrimination policies as a part of future DWCPs and also to ensure that cross-cutting principles including **gender, non-discrimination and just transition to environmental sustainability** are applied in the implementation process.

DWCP M&E

6. ILO should consider whether the current approach to M&E is viable and **identify the simplest viable DWCP M&E system that adds value without overburdening staff and national partners**. An alternative approach would be to **adopt a much lighter M&E approach** while making DWCP M&E more collaborative and problem-solving.
7. However, if the existing approach is to be implemented, a **detailed and robust M&E framework** should be established and implemented to ensure adequate systems and tools in order to manage the process of assessing and reporting progress towards achieving DWCP outputs and outcomes. This should involve a baseline analysis and set up a methodology to ensure that appropriate data are collected on a regular and timely basis identifying budget, roles and responsibilities. Finally, developing the M&E framework should involve an

assessment of the evaluability of the program, providing information at an early stage on the degree to which the DWCP can be evaluated and identifying any necessary actions to facilitate evaluation. **This approach has significant resource implications which have not been addressed to date.**

DWCP Resource mobilization, advocacy and communications

8. DWCPs should include a fully-fledged **resource mobilization strategy** which would include a thorough mapping of current development partners' priorities, and an analysis of potential new partners.
9. DWCPs should include **an advocacy and communications plan** to promote the visibility and importance of the DWCP to increase awareness and buy-in from constituents, the general public and target audiences including direct and indirect beneficiaries.

4.2 CPRs

Purpose

1. CPRs should **focus on learning** (as indeed emphasised by current Guidance) and be **more integrated with the DWCP M&E** process.

Evaluation questions

2. CPRs should adopt **clear questions structured around the OECD DAC and in line with the learning rationale.**
3. **CPRs and HLEs should be required to engage in a structured manner with questions** such as ownership by constituents and (where necessary) steps needed to improve ownership; the added value; and resource mobilization.

Methodology

4. Future **CPRs should be timed (insofar as possible) to synchronise with the UNSDCF process.**
5. CPRs should be **more participatory** in nature in order to maximise ownership by constituents.
6. More **informal interim/mid-term reviews** should be carried out in a manner which is integrated with final CPRs and with M&E.
7. Where possible, CPRs should **draw on synthesis reviews of existing ILO evaluations**, the results from Regular Budget funded activities, and evaluations of the work of other constituents.

5. Formative insights

As reflections, based on the whole SR analysis, we would like to propose the following points:

- **DWCPs risk becoming a proforma exercise and achieving less than optimal outcomes without a fundamental overhaul.** While DWCPs are often well-aligned with SDGs and national frameworks, their added value is unclear and frequently assumed rather than demonstrated. Weak ownership, poorly functioning steering committees, and limited integration undermine their impact.
- **Monitoring and evaluation is a linchpin—and its weakness limits learning.** Across regions, M&E is one of the weakest areas: baselines are missing, indicators are vague, and data collection is irregular or absent. Without credible M&E, CPRs cannot generate real learning, and mid-course corrections rarely happen. This makes DWCPs hard to implement as serious strategic instruments.
- **Resource mobilisation and advocacy are not fully integrated into DWCPs.** Few DWCPs include structured resource mobilisation strategies. Fundraising success is inconsistent and often unrelated to the DWCP itself. Communication is similarly neglected, leading to low visibility and limited influence with constituents or development partners.
- **DWCP should be reviewed regularly (perhaps biannually) in a participative manner** which would allow space to update and revise the DWCP and to enhance engagement and ownership of constituents. This might be done through a participatory workshop that would produce an updated DWCP.
- **If the UNSDCF functions as a single robust programming and reporting mechanism, much of the DWCP machinery could be superseded.** Since DWCPs are already meant to be embedded within the UNSDCF, it is worth asking whether decent work priorities should be fully included into UNSDCFs, supported by one strong UN-wide monitoring and reporting system. This could reduce duplication, streamline reporting, and position the ILO to focus on shaping the UN joint framework rather than sustaining a parallel system.
- **CPRs can add value—but not in their current form.** At present, CPRs are inconsistent, consultant-driven, and often treated as compliance exercises. Without strong M&E frameworks, they become descriptive rather than analytical, limiting their learning potential. For CPRs to matter, they should:
 - Be synchronized with UNSDCF cycles
 - Take a more participatory approach to build ownership
 - Be structured around clear learning questions (ownership, added value, resource mobilisation)
 - Include mid-term reviews with a participatory approach (different from final CPRs) to enable course correction

This SR of CPRs and HLEs suggests that DWCPs can still be valuable if re-engineered with full UNSDCF integration supported by a single UN reporting system; more relevant M&E, genuine tripartite ownership, integrated programming, embedded risk management, and proactive resource mobilisation and communication strategies. Without these, they

risk becoming a resource-intensive formality, and the case for full UNSDCF integration supported by a single UN reporting system becomes increasingly persuasive.

6. References

EIU, Democracy Index 2024, 2025

ILO, Meta analysis of lessons learned and good practices arising from nine Decent Work Country Programme evaluations, 2011.

ILO, Delivering decent work results: A meta-analysis of 15 ILO Decent Work Country Programme reviews, 2014.

ILO, Conducting decent work country programme internal reviews, 2020.

ILO, High-level evaluation (HLE) protocol for DWCP evaluation, 2021

ILO, High-level evaluation of the ILO's strategies and actions to promote fundamental principles and rights at work: Synthesis review of ILO project evaluations, 2023.

ILO, Inter-regional workshop: Country Programming in the ILO: Stock-taking of recent DWCP experiences in the context of the UN reform: Final Report, 2024

Annexes

A. Methodology including selection of reports for analysis

A.1 Overview

The methodology involved meetings with key stakeholders and a document analysis of key reports. In the Inception Phase, the consultant met with the review manager Ricardo Furman and the director of EVAL Guy Thijs. We also carried out meetings with programming and evaluation staff from PROGRAM and the five regional programme units (RPU) or similar Regional Office units (listed below). These interviews were to gather information on the conduct and impact of CPRs and HLEs for the Office and constituents, and on the views of ILO staff as to what would be useful from this synthesis review (see Annex C for a summary of key issues arising).

The main body of the synthesis review is an analysis of CPRs and HLEs to answer the key questions listed above at section 1.4 and the specific questions set out at Annex B. This analysis identifies and synthesises key results, lessons learned, and good practices to make these findings accessible and useful to ILO officials and constituents. It was carried out with the support of AI data analysis software (Atlas.ti).

A.2 Country Programme Reviews and HLEs

The ILO Regional Offices, in coordination, with Country Offices, conduct **Country Programme Reviews** (CPRs) of DWCPs as required for management and learning purposes. To facilitate a consistent methodological approach, based on evaluation standards, EVAL has developed CPR guidance notes to conduct these reviews. The CPRs reports become a public document uploaded at EVAL i-eval-Discovery platform.

The CPRs are funded by ILO and can be implemented at mid-point and/or at end of the DWCP cycle towards assessing lessons for the current and/or forthcoming DWCP. In practice, most of the CPRs included here were final reviews. The CPR ToRs are developed jointly by RPU, CO and constituents (represented by the National Streeting Committee head). The draft ToRs are shared with the government representative (e.g. Ministry of Labour) and social partners (employers' and workers organizations). The CPR follows a similar process to project evaluations in terms of enhancing participation of the stakeholders (i.e. constituents and partners) at the ToRs formulation stage, data collection, discussing the preliminary findings and recommendations, and reviewing of the draft report.

The CPRs varied significantly in terms of length, detail and focus with different reviews giving more (or less) attention to a specific issue. Some reviews focussed primarily on the substance of the decent work activities implemented by ILO while others focussed more on the DWCP as a policy framework.

In general, they applied the OECD DAC evaluation criteria (as suggested in the Guidelines)

although occasional CPRs applied different criteria (e.g. Armenia). They did not adopt a standardised assessment of these criteria or factors such as ownership by constituents so that it is very difficult to make a comparative assessment of DWCP implementation. This was not, of course, the original purpose of the CPRs.

The current ILO Evaluation Policy indicates that every year EVAL will conduct at least one DWCP evaluation based on an established **DWCP HLE** Protocol. This evaluation covers a cluster of countries or a subregion in a region (covering the 5 ILO regions in a 5 year-cycle). This type of evaluation is managed directly by EVAL, conducted with support of a team of independent evaluators, and presented to the Governing body, along with the management response by the Regional Office.

The purpose of the high-level evaluation is to examine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the ILO's programme of work, how well they achieved them and under what conditions. It also seeks to contribute to organizational learning by identifying lessons learned and emerging good practices. However, in contrast to the CPRs which focus directly on a DWCP, the HLEs included in this SR focused on the implementation of ILO decent work agenda generally and can include countries which did not have a DWCP.

A.3 Selection of reports for analysis

The inception phase included data collection and selection of CPRs and HLEs to be analysed. It was agreed that the synthesis review should focus on 22-25 documents (HLEs and CPRs) completed in the period 2020-24 (considering that since 2020 an updated version of the DWCP formulation process has been introduced). In total, there are 24 CPRs (including three mid-term reviews) for the period 2020-24 (almost all described as internal¹⁴) and four HLEs (covering 10 countries with DWCPs) for 2020-24. In total this covers 29 countries as there is some overlap between CPRs and HLEs. This represents a substantial number of countries compared to the 62 countries which have approved or draft DWCPs according to the ILO website.

Countries with DWCPs have been included even where these are draft or have not been formally adopted (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire) because a CPR means that the DWCP has been actually implemented. However, countries without DWCPs (e.g. Andean Countries, Yemen) have not been included even when covered by HLEs. The SR questions are focussed around DWCPs and it would be impossible to answer them for countries which don't have a DWCP and rely instead on a different programming approach.

In total, this would have involved 28 reports (CPRs and HLEs) and in order to prioritise, it was agreed to exclude two reports from Africa covering two small island countries (population of less than one million): Seychelles (an MTR) and Comoros. Africa is already well represented in the sample.

Four of the CPRs are mid-term reviews (MTR) but – given the period covered - there is no duplication between a mid-term and final review, so MTRs have been included. However,

¹⁴ In this context, internal means approved by Regional Office RPU only and not EVAL.

the 2020 Uzbekistan CPR was not included as the HLE for Central Asia covers the current DWCP. This gives a total of 24 reports for analysis covering 25 countries (as outlined at A.6).¹⁵

These 25 countries included in the review are broken down by region as follows:

Region	Number of countries
Africa	8
Asia-Pacific	7
Europe & Central Asia	6
Arab States	3
Latin America & Caribbean	1

This broadly reflects the coverage of DWCPs.¹⁶ Given that the vast majority of possible reports/countries are being included in the analysis, there would not appear to be a risk of bias in the selection. The limitations in the CPRs and HLEs for the purposes of the SR are discussed below.

We also reviewed several of the CPR ToRs (where available) focussing on more recent ones (2022-24) in order to assist in answering the questions as to what worked in implementing CPRs.

A.4 Synthesis Review questions and limitations to the study

The ToRs set out 26 specific questions grouped under seven headings (Annex B). They cover the DWCP formulation process and document; the implementation process; results: outcomes, impact and sustainability; M&E; resource mobilization, advocacy and communication; and cross-cutting themes. These questions were reviewed by the consultant in the light of the issues raised by stakeholders. The issues raised were covered by the proposed questions and it was not necessary to add further questions.

It has not always been possible to answer all these questions for all reports. For example, one question concerns the contribution of the DWCP Theory of Change (ToC) to achieving results but most DWCPs did not have an explicit ToC. In other cases, CPRs did not specifically address issues such as the added value of the DWCP. However, in general, it is not expected to answer all SR questions from all reports but to extract answers from one or more to share knowledge learned for other countries and specially regions. A main

¹⁵ In the Inception Report it was proposed to cover 27 countries. However, as discussed elsewhere, the HLE on Western Africa which includes Ghana and Nigeria does not actually cover these countries for any significant period when a DWCP was in place and in has, therefore, not been possible to include them.

¹⁶ While there is only one country in Latin América and Caribbean, this reflects the low level of coverage in the region. The ILO website currently lists only five countries with DWCPs in the region.

objective of the SR to support the cross fertilization among the ILO regions.

A key limitation in the SR is that the reports reviewed were not specifically intended to address the key issues of what works and what does not in a comparable manner across countries. The advantage of the CPRs, for this SR, is that they focus on DWCPs. However, while most follow the DAC criteria, they vary greatly in length, depth and focus. CPRs are country-focussed and are not intended to be comparable across countries. Thus, they do not apply a standardised form of assessment. It is, therefore, difficult to make comparative assessments as to what has worked well or even as to whether the DWCP in country X has been more or less successful than that in country Y.

The CPRs are mainly aimed at stakeholders who are very familiar with the context. As such they may take for granted some issues such as national levels of ownership of the DWCP by constituents without specifically assessing this. Thus, some CPRs include references to strengthening ownership of the DWCP but without specifying the current level of ownership. Some CPRs appeared to have assumed knowledge of contextual challenges and did not discuss this issue in detail.

Most CPRs analysed here were final CPRs. Few of these discussed, in detail, the formulation of the DWCP and programming of work, perhaps because it was likely that respondents would often not have been directly involved or would not recall accurately due to the passage of time. In any case, it was difficult to identify answers to the question as to whether programming of ILO work is informed by or guided by the DWCP (or vice versa).

HLEs had the advantage of covering several countries and adopting a broader perspective. However, their focus was on advancing the ILO 'decent work' agenda rather than DWCPs *per se* and the HLEs considered here included countries which had and had not a DWCP. In no case did the HLE specifically address the added value of the DWCP in this comparative context. HLEs generally adopted a more regional approach and were sometimes lacking in country detail. For example, in some cases, HLEs made general comments on an issue in the region covered and it was not always apparent if the comment applied to all or some of the countries covered.

The HLE for West Africa (2024) (which focussed on Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria) was of limited value for the purposes of this SR because no DWCP was in operation in two countries (Ghana and Nigeria) in the period covered. In the case of Cote d'Ivoire, it was possible also to rely on a CPR for that country. In the case of Ghana, a draft DWCP III has been developed covering the period 2023-28. (It is unclear what period was covered by DWCP II). In the case of Nigeria, DWCP II covered the period 2015-18 (before the time period for both the HLE which covered the period 2018-23 and this SR). DWCP III for Nigeria covers the period 2023-27 but since the HLE covers the period 2018-23, it obviously could not make an assessment of how the current DWCP was being implemented in either Ghana or Nigeria. It is unclear from the HLE what occurred between DWCP II and III in terms of a policy framework in either country. Therefore, it was not possible to include Ghana or Nigeria in the study.

A.5 Other relevant documents

The SR also drew on the 2011 Meta analysis of lessons learned and good practices arising

from nine Decent Work Country Programme evaluations¹⁷ and the 2014 meta-analysis of 15 ILO Decent Work Country Programme reviews;¹⁸ and on relevant ILO and UN documents including the [Guidance Note on Conducting decent work country programme internal reviews](#). The SR also had regard to the results of the “Inter-regional workshop Country Programming in the ILO: Stock-taking of recent DWCP experiences in the context of the UN reform” held in Dakar (14-17 May 2024).

The consultant has also reviewed a number of the previous SRs carried out by EVAL (and their Inception Reports) and this report is informed by these examples.¹⁹

¹⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/publications/meta-analysis-lessons-learned-and-good-practices-arising-nine-decent-work>

¹⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/publications/delivering-decent-work-results-meta-analysis-15-ilo-decent-work-country>

¹⁹ <https://www.ilo.org/about-ilo/how-ilo-works/accountability-and-transparency/evaluation-office/synthesis-reviews-and-meta-analyses>

A.6 List of countries and reports for inclusion in Review

Total reports/countries				
CPR		HLE	Total no of countries	Total by Region
Arab States				3
	Jordan			
	Palestine			
		Iraq		
Latin America & Caribbean				1
	Bahamas			
Africa				8
	Cameroon			
	Mali			
	Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire		
	Guinea			
	Mauritania			
	Senegal			
	South Africa (MTR)			
	Lesotho			
Europe and Central Asia				6
	Armenia			
	Moldova			
	Montenegro			
	Serbia			
		Tajikistan		
		Uzbekistan		
Asia & Pacific				7
		Bangladesh		
		Nepal		
	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka		
	Pakistan (MTR)	Pakistan		
	China			
	Lao			
	Thailand		25	25

A.7 List of interviews

Person	Role
Guy Thijs	Director of Evaluation Office
Ricardo Furman	Senior Evaluation Specialist
Hiba Al Rifai	Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Arab States
Redha Ameur	Chief, Regional Programming Services, Arab States (and representative for PROGRAM for this inception report)
Cybele Burga	Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Latin America and the Caribbean
Abderrahim El Moulal	Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Africa
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B. Answers to Synthesis-Review questions

In this Annex we go, one by one, through the SR questions set out in the ToRs. We have restructured the order of the questions slightly in the light of the SR.

B.1 DWCP formulation process and document

Are DWCP aligned with UNDAF/UNSDCFs, SDGs targets and national strategic frameworks? (Q. 1)

Does the DWCP identifies results at level of SDGs targets, if so, which ones are covered? (Q. 13)

In general, all DWCP were aligned with both national priorities (e.g. national development strategies and/or sectoral strategies) and with UN national documents (normally the UNDAF or UNSDCF although a range of UN documents were involved) which were themselves aligned with SDGs.²⁰ The DWCPs also specifically linked to SDGs. To give just one example of these linkages, the HLE found that the DWCP in Iraq was aligned with local and international development frameworks, the National Development Plan for Iraq, SDGs 8 & 16, and the UNSDCF.

Almost all DWCPs did link activities to specific SDG targets. (It may be that all did but that this was not specifically identified in all CPRs). The targets selected (or at least the targets referred to in the CPRs) varied significantly from some which referred only to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) to others which referred to a very wide range of SDGs (e.g. Senegal identifies SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 16 and 17). Most DWCPs fell somewhere in between with most referring to SDG 8 and others to SDGs 1 (social protection), 4 (education) and/or 5 (gender equality).²¹

Are DWCP programmes designed in a results-based and oriented manner? (Q.2)

The vast majority of DWCPs were, at least in principle, described as being designed in a results-based manner. However, it was less clear what CPRs meant by this and no standardised assessment was made as to the extent to which DWCPs were results-based. One of the more explicit assessments can be found in the Central Asian HLE which stated that:

The DWCPs adopted a results-based management approach, clearly identifying priorities, desired outcomes, and outputs. By clearly identifying priorities and desired outcomes and outputs, DWCPs in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were largely effective as a results-based approach to decent work promotion. However, the choice of indicators and use of targets, and activities to monitor progress against outcomes, were relatively weak.

The HLE for South Asia came to somewhat similar conclusions:

Each DWCP framework consists of a set of clear priorities, outcomes and supporting

²⁰ The Mauritania DWCP which was originally adopted in 2012 pre-dated the country UNDAF.

²¹ This assessment is based on the CPRs and it may be that the DWCPs referred to more SDGs than mentioned in the CPRs.

outputs. The DWCPs are accompanied by monitoring and evaluation frameworks for use by the ILO and constituents, consisting of indicators and targets, incorporated in the DWCP document and elaborated in more detail under implementation. The DWCPs vary in the quality of the formulation of outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets according to SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound) guidelines. This has made the assessment of progress challenging in some countries, for ILO and constituents, as well as for external reviewers.

Similarly in Palestine, the CPR found that:

No baselines or targets fixed for the indicators which hampers the utility of the outcome and impact indicators in a results-based approach.

In general, CPRs referred to a clear linkage between the activities, outputs, and outcomes (e.g. Lesotho) although in some cases it appeared that the attempt to adopt RBM had not been fully successful (e.g. the Bahamas MTR where there had been limited monitoring and reporting on selected outcome indicators to date).

B.2 DWCP implementation process

Are all constituents involved in the same degree or to what extent? (Q.3)

This was not generally a question that CPRs were asked to answer so that many did not specifically refer to the extent of involvement of different stakeholders. It could be implied that, in many countries, government stakeholders were the most active, or indeed dominant (e.g. Guinea). In some cases, there was a reference to the weakness of social dialogue in the country or, for example, fragmentation and/or capacity issues in one partner (e.g. trade unions). Unusually in Lesotho it was stated that the social partners did not participate in implementation of the DWCP, reportedly due to inadequate resources.

In other cases, CPRs reported that some groups had not been closely involved in some aspects of the DWCP, e.g. in Cameroon it was reported that some employers' and workers' organizations say they were only invited for its validation. In Thailand, the CPR found an imbalance in stakeholder representation particularly for SMEs and private sector trade unions. In some cases, CPRs suggested that particular elements of one constituent should be more actively involved (e.g. Government stakeholders beyond the traditional Ministry of Labour).

What is the level of ownership of the DWCP by constituents and other stakeholders that participate in the DWCP (i.e., DWCPs on the modality of Tripartite +), or is it assumed as an ILO programme/project? (Q.5)

There was no standardised assessment of the level of ownership of different constituents though it was recognised that building ownership can contribute to the sustainability of the DWCP (e.g. Central Asia HLE). However, a number of CPRs referred to a less-than-optimal level of ownership. In several CPRs there was reference to the need to improve the level of ownership but without any clear assessment as to what that level was. Implicitly, one can assume that it was less than ideal (e.g. Moldova). Some CPRs did explicitly refer to 'weak' or

'limited' ownership (e.g. Cameroon, Jordan, Serbia).

Again, there was rarely an explicit assessment of the extent to which the DWCP was assumed to be an ILO programme. However, this does appear to have been the implicit assumption in most (if not all) countries. For example, in Pakistan the CPR stated that the DWCP needed to be viewed as more than an "ILO" document or strategy and that engagement and involvement of constituent partners to assume ownership was required.

The level of ownership is perhaps related to the operation of oversight mechanism such as a national steering committee (the formal title varies from country to country). In some countries these worked well but, in many countries, they did not meet as much as planned.²² In Côte d'Ivoire, where the DWCP was never formally adopted by the Government, the steering committee, although established, never really functioned which was seen to have a significant negative impact on the implementation of the DWCP. In Sri Lanka, the CPR recommended that the DWCP Tripartite Task Force meetings should be designed to promote the DWCP's ownership and progress tracking by constituents, positioning ILO as a secretariat.

What are the lessons learned for a more effective participation of constituents and other stakeholders in the implementation of the DWCP? How can their engagement be stronger? (Q. 7)

The lessons learned in this area can generally be found in recommendations to strengthen participation although these are somewhat generic. In particular, CPRs identified the need to strengthen stakeholder participation in all phases of the DWCP including design, implementation and M&E through both institution and capacity building. CPRs also identified the need to strengthen social dialogue in a broad sense including civil society. Lessons learned also identified the need to strengthen operational: partnerships with national actors, including civil society and local authorities, so as to foster effectiveness and promote sustainability.

The engagement with the tripartite-plus constituents within the structures of the South African National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) can be seen as an example of **good practice**.

CPRs included specific recommendations to

- Continue to strengthen the social dialogue by building the capacities of the Social Council (Montenegro)
- Stakeholder participation in all programming cycle phases should be increased (Moldova)
- Put in place the right collaborative and empowering structures that can improve the delivery and sustainability of the DWCPs; current scope and structure of the Overview Board requires rethinking (Serbia)
- ILO should continue and expand its support to the coalition between the [trade

²² This was partially affected by COVID given the period covered by this review.

union] and civil society organizations (Palestine)

- Greater continuity and coherence to ILO constituent capacity development involving joint development of a 5-year capacity development strategies for each of the social partners in order to strengthen impact and ensure sustainability of capacity development initiatives, supported by annual activity and resourcing plans. (Lao PDR)

Many other similar examples could be provided which does reinforce the point made earlier that participation is probably less than optimal in many countries.

What has been the value added/usefulness of the DWCP document to advance the DW agenda? (Q.4)

This question was very rarely explicitly answered by CPRs or HLEs (even where the latter document covered countries which had/did not have a DWCP). One might imply that the DWCP could have an added value by increasing the coherence of ILO work across different activities, but it was rarely clear that there was much synergy between activities in relation to, for example, decent work and social protection. For example, in Guinea, the CPR found that:

The newly created management instruments and frameworks are struggling to create added value, especially in terms of employment and the formal social protection system, due to a lack of allocation of public financial resources necessary for their optimal functioning.

Although the DWCP creates structured links to UN country documents, it is again unclear whether this provided any added value. One of the few CPRs which explicitly addressed this was Lesotho which found that the

DWCP created complementarity and synergies with other actors and benefited from it. Notably, there were several projects funded or implemented by diverse actors such as the World Bank, IOM, UNDP and [Government of Lesotho] ministries whose activities results were relevant to the planned outputs and outcomes of the DWCP.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which this is also true of other DWCPs. For example, in Mali it was found that as regards the synergy of the various partners at the national level, their work plans had not been developed and therefore not implemented with a view to creating synergy with the DWCP.

More credibly, one could imply that the DWCP provided added value through creating more structured social dialogue between ILO, employers, trade unions and government. This view was certainly expressed in interviews but was rarely explicit in CPRs. One example can be found in Cameroon where the CPR states that:

The programme fostered effective partnerships between tripartite constituents (government, employers, workers) and promoted strategic alliances. This strengthened relationships between the different actors involved in the implementation of decent work policies.

Similarly, in Pakistan the CPR found that:

As a strategic document, the DWCP does add value as it positions the ILO in

partnership with its constituents to prioritise support under key priorities.

It might also be suggested that the existence of a DWCP could support resource mobilisation. In Senegal, it was concluded that the DWCP has succeeded in mobilizing significant resources, exceeding the initial forecast budget, which demonstrates the commitment of partners and the ILO to the programme. However, this was not always the case and the HLE for Western Africa found that 'DWCPs have had limited influence on mobilizing resources'.

Is programming of work, including XB-funded DC, informed by or guided by the DWCP? (Q. 6)

At one level, the answer to this question is definitely yes, since the activities outlined in the DWCP are, by definition, linked in some way to the priorities in that document. However, CPRs rarely looked in detail at programming. Most of the CPRs were final reviews and, therefore, were carried out many years after the original design of the DWCP. They rarely looked explicitly at how activities were selected and, indeed, it would probably have been difficult to do so. The comment in the Pakistan CPR could perhaps be applied to a wider range of countries.

Ultimately the DWCP is guided by what donors will fund. This has the risk of meaning that the strategies become obsolete or forgotten as the ILO seeks to mobilise funds in core areas.

The review for Guinea was one of the few to look at this issue and found programming was not sufficiently guided or informed by the DWCP and that activities implemented are often perceived as isolated, with no clear link to the overall objectives of DWCP. It is difficult to assess whether this is an outlier, but somewhat similar statements can also be found in the CPRs for Cote d'Ivoire and Mali.

Similarly, in Iraq, the HLE found that donor engagement with ILO projects tended to be on a project-by-project basis and that while the DWCP documents provided an overarching country strategy the specific interconnections between projects still seemed underdeveloped.

HLEs generally looked in more detail at programming issues and how to achieve synergies. The HLE for South Asia identified Bangladesh as an example of **good practice**. The Bangladesh Country Office developed and implemented a cluster approach for work in the garment (RMG) sector.

As part of this approach, project and Country Office personnel examined decent work challenges and needed changes in the sector holistically and sought ways to fill gaps through multiple projects' interventions. The approach also aims to avoid duplication of effort, and to maximize resource-sharing by defining roles and dividing up responsibilities between projects more clearly. For example, the ILO developed the Learning Hub, a cross-project strategy on constituent training

It was suggested that this initiative recognized 'the often 'silo-ized' nature of DWCP programming, and the associated opportunity and efficiency costs', and 'aims to maximize programme synergies, mutual reinforcement and longer-term impact by bringing together a number of workstreams into more unified and interlinked groupings.

Has the DWCP ToC contributed to achieve the DWCP results? What are the gaps for this purpose? (Q. 8)

In the vast majority of cases, DWCPs (which were mainly adopted before 2020) did not have an explicit ToC. In the few cases where they did, CPRs found that they contributed to a results-based approach, but this was more assumed than demonstrated. For example, the Jordan CPR identified as a **good practice** the establishment of a ToC around priorities, outcomes, related activities and outputs, performance indicators, and concern for the integration of cross-cutting drivers and risk mitigation strategies.²³

Has the DWCP promoted joint work with UN agencies and other international and national organizations beyond the constituents, and/or vice-versa, has work with UN agencies contributed to promote the DW agenda? (Q. 9)

CPRs rarely assessed this issue in detail. At one level, the answer is again obviously yes in that DWCPs are linked to UN priorities and necessarily involve dialogue with UN country teams and other UN agencies. Indeed, all CPRs make reference to some level of joint activities with other UN agencies and, to a more limited extent, with other international agencies. For example, the HLE for Central Asia found that the ILO had engaged with various national and international organizations to promote decent work. In Guinea, the CPR found that the DWCP had fostered some collaboration with United Nations agencies and other international and national organizations, although this collaboration has been limited in its effectiveness.

However, in most cases, these activities are at a level of co-operation and planning and there is less 'joint work' in the sense of jointly implemented activities (the UN Joint Programme on Social Protection is one exception to this in some of the counties covered). Similarly, in Uzbekistan, the ILO collaborated with the World Bank and UNICEF on joint projects aimed at improving social protection systems. And in Palestine, the CPR found that ILO was involved in a joint programme with UNICEF and the World Food Programme to facilitate the Ministry of Social Development in establishing the components of a Palestinian social protection floor.

CPRs also refer extensively to joint work with national agencies. However, in the case of UN, international and national organisations, it is also somewhat difficult to assess the added value of the DWCP and the extent to which is contributed to such work over and above what would have happened anyway. This is not to say that the DWCP did not do so but simply that there is a lack of clear findings on the issue.

Has alignment to UNDAF/UNSDCF contributed to mobilize partnerships and to align the DWCP outcomes to SDGs? (Q. 20)

As noted in a previous question (Q. 9), alignment to UN priorities has contributed to some extent to mobilise partnerships particularly with other UN agencies though it is difficult

²³ The HLE for Western Africa found that the ToC adopted in the recent (2023) DWCPs in Ghana and Nigeria were somewhat generic and that, in the case of Nigeria, based on somewhat unrealistic statements.

to assess the extent to which this would have happened with or without a DWCP.

Alignment to the UN frameworks (which are themselves aligned to the SDGs) has clearly reinforced the importance of the SDGs and facilitated alignment of DWCP outcomes to the SDGs.

What are the external/contextual factors that have contributed significantly positively, or affected negatively, the advancement of the DW agenda through the DWCP implementation? How have ILO and the constituents faced these factors at different levels or aspects such as outputs, outcomes, timeframe, etc? (Q. 10)

A very wide range of external and contextual factors are cited in CPRs and HLEs. Given the time period involved, COVID and its social and economic consequences, is a key negative factor in many of the countries covered. The impact of COVID varied by country depending on the health and economic impact in that country and the extent to which national responses (such as employment supports or social protection) were supported under the DWCP.²⁴ ILO also supported COVID strategic response such as the COVID-19 Pakistan Socio-Economic Impact Assessment and Response Plan which provided policy recommendations for addressing the pandemic's effects on labour markets.

COVID had a significant impact on design and implementation of DWCPs given that social distancing rules limited consultation and communication, data collection and also activities such as training and capacity building albeit that implementation shifted to online training. Many reports found that a primary issue raised by the pandemic was delay in DWCP processes (e.g. China, Iraq, Montenegro, Pakistan, South Africa).

Other negative factors identified in CPRs/HLEs include economic and social crisis (Guinea), the unstable political and security situation (Mali), occupation (Palestine), political and institutional instability and environmental challenges (Mauritania), weak social dialogue mechanisms; high informality, youth unemployment and gender discrimination; unsafe migration; child and forced labour (HLE for South Asia); political instability and frequent changes of Government (Moldova); military conflict (Armenia). Many more similar examples could be given.

CPRs tend to focus on the negative factors which inhibit implementation though positive factors which supported implementation in specific countries include issues such as entry into force of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

The response to these factors by the ILO and constituents comes at all levels of DWCP design and implementation and depends on the specific challenge. However, one can identify a number of general approaches to addressing external and contextual factors:

Adapting DWCPs to Socioeconomic Changes: DWCPs have aimed to adapt strategies to better align with the changing political and economic conditions, such as rising unemployment and poverty rates, to ensure that the DWCP remains

²⁴ See, for example, the actions outlined in the HLE for South Asia in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

relevant and effective.

Building Sustainable Partnerships: DWCPs have focused on establishing operational partnerships with local actors, including traditional social partners, civil society and local authorities. These partnerships are designed to foster effectiveness and promote sustainability, ensuring that the DW agenda is supported at multiple levels.

Capacity Building and Technical Assistance: DWCPs have included training and capacity-building support to national stakeholders, enhancing their ability to engage in social dialogue and implement policies effectively.

Leveraging External Pressures: DWCPs utilized external pressures, such as compliance with International Labour Standards and ethical production expectations from international buyers, to promote improvements in national policies.

B.3 Results: outcomes, impact and suitability

What are the areas of achievement in terms of DWCP outcomes and impacts? Do we have differences among regions, subregions, and countries? (Q. 12)

As in the case of factors affecting the implementation of DWCPs, CPRs and HLEs identify a very wide range of outcomes and (to a lesser extent) impacts of DWCPs. It would be impossible to give more than some examples here and, in many cases the focus of the CPRs is on implementation of individual activities (often by way of projects).

For example, in Jordan the CPR found that the DWCP had contributed in many ways to supporting sustainable institutional development and creating an enabling environment in the labour market, either by building capacity within the tripartite constituents' staff, by supporting the establishment of durable partnerships, or by promoting amendments to relevant legislative frameworks but was not considered an agent of change by national stakeholders. The CPR also found evidence that the DWCP implementing projects have contributed to the sustainable development of the tripartite constituents and other local institutions.

Other examples include:

- strengthening of bipartite social dialogue (Thailand)
- good progress on social protection reform, labour rights advocacy and adoption of ILO Conventions, as well as policy dialogue (Iraq)
- the elimination of systemic child labour and forced labour in the cotton sector (Uzbekistan)
- strengthening country efforts to address child labour, forced labour and human trafficking (Tajikistan)
- ratification of ILO conventions (Lesotho)

- increasing opportunities for productive, decent and sustainable employment for young people, women and people with disabilities, strengthening the protection of workers and strengthening the overall employment policy framework through tripartite consultations and dialogue (Cote d'Ivoire)
- progress at the legal, strategic and operational levels (standards, policies and strategies adopted; implementation instruments in place; etc.), within the priorities retained as the pillars of the programme (Senegal).

However, other CPRs refer to a weak level of achievement (e.g. Mali) or to the fact that it is difficult to assess the level due to poor monitoring and evaluation and/or absence of data (e.g. Lao PDR) (see below).

As mentioned previously, there is no standardised assessment of the extent to which DWCPs have been implemented or the level of impact as this was not the original purpose of the CPR. In some (limited) cases, CPRs make some assessment of the extent to which activities have been implemented (in percentage terms) but even here it is not clear that these assessments are comparable. In some cases, it is clear from the CPR that the DWCP has been successful; in other cases that implementation has been weak. However, in several cases, CPRs tend to be descriptive and avoid coming to strong conclusions about the level of achievement (or otherwise) of the DWCP. Thus, it is impossible for this Synthesis Review to make any comparative assessment of levels of achievement across regions etc. which would be robust.

Have there been any unexpected results identified that could be integrated in further DWCPs? (Q. 14)

In general, this question was not explicitly addressed in CPRs (although it was often included in CPR ToRs). One good example, however, of where this does occur was provided in the CPR for China which is probably also true for many other countries. This is where training and capacity building leads to further capacity building by national stakeholders which is not reported as it is not formally part of the DWCP. Another specific example came from Lesotho which found that the DWCP produced one unexpected positive result relating to improved capacities (knowledge, skills and attitude) of the social partners to engage with other development actors positively in labour matters.

One unexpected negative result of DWCPs which again has implications in all countries is implied in the recommendation of the Mauritania CPR that future DWCPs should simulate and determine ex ante the potential carbon footprint of the programme in order to address the appropriate mitigations.

B.4 DWCP M&E

Are DWCPs implemented with regular monitoring conducted to track progress towards their achievements? (Q. 11)

Does the DWCP have an M&E framework designed and operating beyond separate projects and programmes M&E frameworks? (Q. 15)

Under which conditions do constituents play an active role on DWCP M&E? Have the DWCP Steering Committees and similar bodies used M&E data to manage the DWCP? If so, has this data been taken from the DWCP document and its annexes (i.e., indicators, targets, baselines, etc.)? (Q.16)

In general, DWCPs did, at least in principle, have an M&E framework and did intend to implement the DWCP with regular monitoring. Only exceptionally was this not the case (e.g. in Jordan). However, in practice, monitoring and evaluation was generally one of the weakest aspects of DWCP implementation. In Cote d'Ivoire (where the DWCP was never formally adopted), the CPR found that:

The Steering Committee did not function, which made it impossible to monitor the implementation of the DWCP. The monitoring plan for the implementation of the DWCP was not operationalized.

Some examples are cited here but similar statements could be made for other countries. For example, the Moldovan CPR found that the DWCP had a Results Matrix and Monitoring Plan but challenges around an accurate monitoring mechanism in the implementation of the DWCP remain to be further addressed. In Armenia, the Programme Result Monitoring Matrix was developed in 2018 and never updated, it was not considered during the CPR. In the Bahamas, the CPR identified the lack of a well-functioning M&E system and centralized unit for record and document keeping in line with the progress status.

The Lesotho CPR reported that the DWCP lacked an adequate monitoring and evaluation system capable of delivering robust and useful information. In Mali, the CPR reported that:

Although the DWCP had a monitoring matrix that identified the results to be achieved, the performance indicators to be monitored, the targets and data collection methods, and the associated database were not updated during implementation.

The HLE for South Asia reported that while DWCPs in the region are designed with monitoring frameworks, the actual implementation of regular monitoring varies, with challenges in consistency and effectiveness across different countries. It found that in most countries, the steering committee meetings and related reporting have not been conducted regularly. Constituents are often not directly involved in compiling reports, and the ILO's reporting documents do not consistently utilize the indicators listed in the original frameworks.

Several CPRs refer to data gaps and limitations (including disaggregation of data) in terms of assessing the extent to which targets (were set) have been achieved (e.g. Iraq, Lesotho, Sri Lanka).

One example of potential **good practice** was Senegal where the CPR found that the DWCP was effectively implemented with a regular monitoring framework that allows progress to be tracked and the effectiveness of actions undertaken to be assessed. Similarly in Lao PDR, the CPR found that a key mechanism of the DWCP MEAL system was the Tripartite M&E Working Group, which both provides a venue for developing M&E capacities and reports to the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee. Even here, it was noted that the DWCP stipulates at least quarterly meetings of the working group, which increasingly proved to be problematic in practice.

In terms of constituents' involvement, given that – in many cases – M&E did not work very well, constituent involvement tended to be weak. For example, in Montenegro, the Tripartite Overview Board was involved in reviewing progress to a certain extent, but national constituents were not directly involved. Similarly in Moldova, despite an increasing ownership of the national partners of the DWCP, from the accuracy of reporting perspective, the CPR found that this continued to be perceived as an ILO task.

In Serbia, although ILO regularly tracked the progress of the DWCP implementation through the annual reports and monitoring matrices, the CPR recommended that the role of the Overview Board should be revisited to ensure enhanced engagement of all the parties in the monitoring of the DWCP. In Armenia, an effective tripartite monitoring system was not implemented during the Programme implementation phase. In Sri Lanka, an initial effort to build a monitoring and reporting system, based on the DWCP framework, with reporting responsibilities shared between all parties, did not succeed. The solution adopted placed a weaker emphasis on each constituent's contribution to the priorities or outcomes agreed under the DWCP.

However, there were some countries where the CPR identified a functioning system as in China where it was stated that constituents noted that within the framework of the Tripartite Steering Committee, they have been fully involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the DWCP.

Can we identify good practices and lessons learned regarding DWCP M&E? What can we learn towards improving M&E of DWCP? (Q. 17)

As discussed in chapter 3, one can conclude from the SR that there is a need to rethink the current approach to M&E although this was not explicit in the CPRs which applied the existing guidance. In general, actions to improve M&E within the existing approach need to be taken from the recommendations of CPRs rather than from actual practice. These include:

Design

- DWCP should include a robust M&E instrument that includes baselines, targets, and data collection procedures (Jordan)
- Ensure that project outcomes are quantifiable so that targets can be assessed (Thailand)

- Monitoring frameworks of the development coordination projects should always have a clear alignment with the indicators in the DWCP (Moldova)
- DWCP should include clear, quantified measures of performance backed by baselines and target (Montenegro, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan)
- Use theories of change linked to the M&E system for a comprehensive approach to tracking progress towards impact (Pakistan, Mauritania)

Monitoring

- The role of the Steering Committee should be revisited to ensure enhanced engagement of all the parties in the monitoring of the DWCP implementation (Serbia, Armenia)
- Support tripartite constituents to establish a more formal DWCP monitoring mechanism (Uzbekistan)
- Embed a culture of accountability and transparency with regards to reporting and sharing information and data within the ILO and with key constituents at the federal and provincial level (Pakistan).
- Devise processes to synthesize and use information from evaluation findings and recommendations (Pakistan).
- Revise the Tripartite Task Force monitoring practices to increase the role of constituents and include participatory monitoring practices (Sri Lanka)
- ILO should develop a coherent strategy on how to work with tripartite constituents in fragmented political contexts (Iraq)

Funding

- Increase M&E budget - the budget for monitoring and evaluation is often inadequate to execute long-term assessments (Thailand)

Methodology

- Devise ways to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of capacity strengthening. Experiment with adaptive management techniques that use short cycles of monitoring and reflection. (Pakistan)

Advocacy and communication

- The monitoring programme should include a clear advocacy and communication strategy to generate buy-in at all levels of government and among direct and indirect beneficiaries (Mali)

Again, these are just some of the main issues identified and similar recommendations could be listed from several other countries.

B.5 Resource mobilization, advocacy and communication

When and how have resource mobilization activities contributed effectively to achieve the DWCP outcomes? Which actors, beyond ILO, were involved? Which type of resources were mobilized (national international, government, social partners, civil society, private sector, etc.)? (Q. 18).

When have these resources contributed to expand the DW results beyond the DWCP: unexpected positive results? (Q. 19)

Many CPRs did not analyse in detail resource issues and in some cases available data appears to have been limited. Insofar as these issues were addressed in detail, the picture varied significantly from country to country. In some countries, it was possible to report that ILO and national partners have been very successful in obtaining funds both internally from ILO and/or from third parties to support the implementation of the DWCP interventions (Lao PDR, Mauritania, Montenegro, Senegal).

However, in other countries (particularly in Western Africa)²⁵ it proved difficult to raise the resources necessary to implement the DWCP (Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali). In the Bahamas, it was reported that material and financial resources available from the government, private sector, and civil society are constrained. In Lesotho, financing of the DWCP was one of the major challenges identified in this CPR. Coordinated efforts at resource mobilisation by the government, social partners, and the ILO were not evident.

Depending on the country a wide range of actors were involved including the European Union, national development agencies such as the GIZ and DFID, the UN (e.g. Joint Programme on Social Protection), the US Department of State, private sector bodies (e.g. commercial companies), and others. The HLE for Western Africa found that resource mobilisation had been more effective where ILO had a country office.

It might be expected that the level of a country's development would influence resource mobilization. Thus, the level of national development could have an impact on the ability to mobilize domestic resources for programme implementation. However, it was not possible to confirm this thesis given the level of detail available in the reports reviewed.

Funding from ILO included ILO uses technical advisory services, use of RBSA funding and development cooperation projects. Insofar as DWCPs did raise additional funds, it was rarely possible to identify whether resources contributed to expand the DW results beyond the DWCP, i.e. leading to unexpected positive results.

The Cameroon CPR highlighted the importance of, albeit limited government funding. It found that, despite the limitations in amount, the approach of financing DWCP activities by sectoral ministries gave the programme a comparative advantage unlike programs more or less entirely funded by technical and financial partners.

The South African CPR (MTR) recommended that the Steering Committee should develop a resource mobilisation strategy to augment the implementation of activities under the current and future DWCP. A number of CPRs recommended that in future, budgeting should be part

²⁵ Although the CPRs for Mauritania and Senegal reported that they had raised several times the original budgeted amount.

of the design of the DWCP, i.e. that the activities should be costed at design phase as part of an overall resource mobilisation plan.

The HLE for Western Africa was one of the few reviews to look at issue of the link between resources and DWCPs. It found that quantitative analysis showed a low correlation between the existence of a DWCP, and the resources mobilized for development cooperation projects in a given country. For most countries, the presence of a DWCP has had limited influence on the resources that were mobilized.

Has the DWCP included an advocacy and communication plan? To what extent have such plans, if any, been implemented and successful? (Q. 21)

While DWCPs may have included advocacy and/or communications plans, this was rarely if ever referred to by CPRs or HLEs. Insofar as advocacy or communications activities were referred to in these documents, this tended to relate to specific activities or projects implemented under the DWCP. However, it seems likely that visibility issues were an issue. For example, the Bahamas CPR found that there seems to be a lack of awareness among the general public about the DWCP. One of the few CPRs to explicitly address the issue was the Guinea CPR which found that:

An institutional communication strategy for the DWCP, not only towards the constituents, but also towards the community of development partners in the country, significantly increases the visibility of the programme and promotes the consolidation of the actions of other partners towards its implementation. The weakness of the institutional communication strategy in the implementation of this DWCP has not allowed either the constituents or the development partners of Guinea to better perceive and understand the programme implemented throughout this cycle.

It seems likely that this statement applies to a greater or lesser extent to a much wider range of countries.

B.6 Cross cutting themes

How has the DWCP contributed to develop constituents' capacities to advance DW, RBM and M&E with special reference to International Labour Standards (ILS), social dialogue, gender and non-discrimination, and just transition to environmental issues? What are the lessons learned and good practices in areas /themes to be strengthened, differences by constituent, etc? (Q. 22)

This question covers two issues: the extent to which the DWCP contributed to develop constituents' capacity to advance DW, RBM and M&E; and the extent to which it did so with reference to the cross-cutting issues identified. Obviously, the answer varies very significantly from one country to another depending on (a) the extent to which the DWCP itself was successful in promoting DW, RBM and M&E (which have been discussed in previous questions); and (b) the extent to which DWCPs focused on specific cross-cutting issues.

Cross-cutting issues were generally addressed in DWCPs (with the exception of environmental

issues) but the extent of focus varied significantly from country to country. The Montenegrin CPR found that the DWCP was effective in incorporating and promoting the cross-cutting themes, e.g. gender mainstreaming and gender-focused interventions. In contrast the Serbian CPR found that while gender-specific and non-discrimination initiatives were included in the DWCP in the conceptualization phase, they were not consistently addressed during DWCP as gender was not particularly considered as a point of high importance. The Armenian CPR recommended that in future DWCPs the principles of gender equality should be reflected 'even more deeply'.

In Iraq, it was found that ILO has made acceptable progress in mainstreaming cross-cutting issues as they relate to gender and non-discrimination, but had made limited progress on environmental sustainability. Broadly similar conclusions could be cited for a range of other countries (e.g. HLEs for Central Asia and South Asia, South African CPR). One exception to the lack of focus on environmental issues was the development of a National green job's strategy in Côte d'Ivoire.

The HLE for South Asia found that DWCPs in the region integrated ILO cross-cutting international labour standards, social dialogue, non-discrimination and, to a lesser extent, environmental concerns. DWCPs were moderately effective in promoting ILO cross-cutting priorities on social dialogue and international labour standards, with some noteworthy accomplishments, as well as persistent gaps. Although to differing degrees, the ILO's programming in each country effectively included gender mainstreaming and gender-focused interventions in its projects, even though design and implementation gaps remain. Similarly, programme consistently included interventions targeting the needs of marginalized groups. However, largely due to inadequate guidance on ways to operationalize environmental concerns in traditional ILO programming, it was found that DWCP achievements and impact are lacking in this area.

In general, DWCPs contributed to building the capacity of constituents to promote the programme in these policy areas, particularly in the following ways:

- Training on International Labor Standards (ILS): Communication and training sessions were organized in a number of countries to raise constituents' awareness of international social protection standards. This led to a better understanding and application of these standards within the national framework.
- Strengthening social dialogue: DWCPs implemented plans to strengthen social dialogue, enabling stakeholders to better interact and collaborate on decent work issues.
- Gender equality and non-discrimination: In a range of countries, DWCPs promoted laws and regulations to prohibit discrimination in hiring and protect women's rights, particularly with regard to maternity, and in the field of social protection.
- Just Transition to Environmental Issues: Although DWCPs primarily focuses on decent work and social protection, they also addressed issues related to occupational safety and health by integrating environmental considerations into work practices. However, there was a very limited focus on environmental issues more broadly.

As noted above, the extent to which these actions occurred in practice varied from country to country. The Chinese CPR identified **a good practice** involving joint design and implementation of activities targeting intersectionality issues (e.g. employment of persons with disabilities; unpaid care work; and others) by ILO and UN partners considerably which strengthened the value of the activity research and increased outreach due to the UN agencies' range of partners.

These findings are broadly consistent with the 2023 HLE SR of the ILO's strategies and actions to promote fundamental principles and rights at work which found that the lowest rated category was the cross-cutting issues of gender equality and disability inclusion.²⁶

What are lessons learned and good practices on integrating/prioritizing vulnerable groups (such as women, people with disabilities, youth, indigenous groups, and labour migrants) at the DW Agenda, at operational and strategic levels? (Q. 23)

Again, the extent to which vulnerable groups are actually prioritised in the DWCPs varies. However, it is also the case that CPRs often do not look at this issue in great detail. References to "vulnerable" groups are common in DWCPs and, insofar as DWCPs address issues such as child or forced labour, for example, they clearly are prioritising vulnerable groups. Other subject areas, such as, for example, strengthening social dialogue or developing social insurance institutions, may or may not, in practice, focus on vulnerable groups.

Limitations on the extent to which gender-related issues were addressed in DWCPs have been mentioned above and will not be repeated here. The extent to which other vulnerable groups were addressed varied by CPR. In China it was stated that there was ample evidence demonstrating ILO's consideration of the situation of migrant workers, youth, gender, disabilities, and HIV issues in its programmes and projects.

B.7 CPRs approach and methodology

What are the pros and cons of applying CPRs as a consultant review versus a more participatory process facilitated by a consultant? (Q. 24)

In practice, the vast majority of CPRs were consultant led and followed a standard approach of document review and key informant interviews often with a stakeholder workshop to present draft findings.²⁷ In some cases, consultants carried out small-scale survey of stakeholders or field visits. A small number of CPRs adopted a somewhat more participative approach with, for example, a three-day stakeholder workshop (Bahamas) or a stakeholder consultative workshop involving participatory M&E (Sri Lanka).

In some cases, the CPR was supported by a prior synthesis review of project evaluations completed during the course of the DWCP. In general, CPRs relied on the data available through the existing M&E system and in no case was additional research commissioned

²⁶ The specific questions were as to the trends with regard to ILO projects mainstreaming gender equality/disability inclusion at design, implementation and monitoring phase

²⁷ In a number of cases, CPRs refer to the fact that it was not possible to interview all stakeholders and responses to surveys were sometimes low.

to assess the impact of DWCP implementation. In two cases, the CPR experimented with a qualitative approach through a partial use of [Most Significant Change](#) technique in Sri Lanka and [Outcome Harvesting](#) in the Bahamas.²⁸

The advantages of a more participatory approach would be to support greater ownership by the constituents. The focus on a consultant-led review funded and organised by ILO must inevitably reinforce the impression that the DWCP is an ILO document rather than a shared document. Greater engagement of constituents in a more participatory manner should help to support ownership. Inevitably, this does come at the cost of the need for greater investment of time and resources by all constituents.

How can the CPRs address the need of the constituents and the COs to make it a useful exercise? (Q. 25)

CPRs did not generally discuss the process involved or how this could be improved and this SR did not involve interviews with wider stakeholders. Therefore, the answers to this question are somewhat speculative. However, on the basis of discussions, one issue in CPRs is timing and synchronisation with the UNSDCF timetable.

A greater degree of synchronisation with the UNSDCF timetable (including the evaluation timetable) could help to support both ILO and constituents in integrating the DWCP into the UN process and learning from the lessons of previous ILO and UN frameworks. Of course, national policy frameworks (and their specific timetables) also need to be taken into account.

Second, while it is not necessarily the case that a full-scale CPR is required, it would appear to be desirable that interim or mid-term reviews of the DWCP should be carried out more frequently. As we have seen, full mid-term CPRs are unusual. However, interviewees did refer to more informal mid-term review workshops. It may be advisable to develop a process somewhere between a very short-term once-off workshop and a full MTR which can engage constituents in an interim or mid-term review of the DWCP in a structured manner and lead to specific agreements on steps to review or refocus the DWCP implementation. These should be integrated (insofar as possible) with final CPRs. For example, the interim review might be supported by a consultant who has been previously involved in a CPR and/or will be involved in the final CPR to facilitate continuity.

Overall, it would appear that CPRs can be most useful if they are seen as part of a learning process feeding into implementation of an ongoing DWCP and/or design of a future DWCP rather than as a once-off exercise.

What are the lessons learned and good practices to consider in future DWCP CPRs and DWCP HLEs? (Q. 26)

This has been answered in chapter 4 above.

²⁸ At the time of writing, the ongoing Indonesian CPR is experimenting with the use of Outcome Harvesting but this is still ongoing.

C. Key points raised in interviews

Overview

There is a significant regional variation in the extent to which Regional Offices and Country Offices are involved in CPRs – largely reflecting the differing coverage of DWCPs - and in how CPRs are carried out. In general, Africa and Asia-Pacific are most active in carrying out CPRs, followed by Europe and Central Asia and the Arab States (with Latin America being least active reflecting the low number of DWCPs in the region).

Respondents raised a number of questions about the role of the DWCP: is it a country plan or a process or policy frame for engaging constituents? There were also issues about how to make it more than a sum of the various ILO projects and how to engage projects staff without having the DWCP simply become a list of ongoing activities. Also, in relation to CPRs, respondents asked if this was an accountability exercise or primarily for learning.

Criteria for implementing CPRs

In general, CPRs are carried out when a DWCP is coming to an end and another DWCP is envisaged. However, CPRs are not systematically carried out in all countries with DWCPs and issues such as stakeholder interest and capacity (both ILO and others) are taken into account. Other relevant factors included the de facto status of the DWCP (the extent to which it was seen as important by stakeholders) and whether there was a resident ILO country office. Full MTRs are rarely carried out, but some regions may organise an MTR workshop.

Views of the CPR process - what worked well, what could have been done better?

In general, the process involved a desk review of relevant documents and consultation with key stakeholders – generally there were no resources for large-scale surveys. Respondents noted the difference between reviewing a policy framework and the standard evaluation of projects and the need for a different approach. Most respondents noted the lack of a comprehensive M&E system and the lack of appropriate data to assess impact.

Difficulties in engaging social partners/constituents in the process. NEDLAC in South Africa was seen as an example of **good practice**. Some respondents also mentioned the need to engage civil society, e.g. the Global Coalition.

Respondents noted that the quality of CPRs was related to capacity: their own and that of ILO staff including country office, that of consultants employed to carry out the CPR and the capacity and level of engagement of constituents.

Early and ongoing engagement of constituents was seen as important, but this takes time and resources.

Process also depends greatly on the country context

Need to look at contribution of all actors not just ILO

What were the key learnings from the CPR process and result? Did this impact on a future DWCP in the country? Did the DWCP provide added value?

Most respondents did feel that CPRs had a positive impact on DWCPs and did inform a future DWCP but were vague as to specific examples.

Respondents generally did feel that DWCPs provided added value (e.g. continuity where there were government changes, a process for engaging constituents) although it was not clear whether this issue had been addressed in CPRs.

What were the key learnings from the DWCP HLE?

Respondents tended to say that HLEs were more impactful in that they had larger resources, involve comparison across countries and also that they were given more importance by stakeholders as they were going to the ILO Governing Body.

What would you like to see coming from this Synthesis Review?

Respondents raised a number of issues:

- What are the preconditions for a successful DWCP (e.g. political will; political stability; capacity, resources)?
- What are the lessons learned from CPRs, what are the drivers for a successful CPR?
- How to engage social partners and create ownership?
- Links to the UN process, including issues of timing, i.e. when should a CPR be carried out so as best to link to UNSDCF?
- What are the best ways to assess impact of a DWCP? Asia-Pacific, for example, is trialling a more qualitative approach to assessing impact. This point is obviously linked to the lack of comprehensive M&E (above)
- What is the role of the regional office?
- How to follow up CPR to ensure its recommendations and lessons are implemented?
- Should there be a more systematic and/or structured approach to carrying out a CPR beyond the EVAL CPRs guidelines? On the other hand, respondents also valued the flexibility which is currently involved.
- To what extent have resource mobilisation issues been addressed in CPRs?

A number of issues raised would fall outside the scope of this SR, e.g. several respondents expressed an interest in how to move towards a DWCP in countries where it was difficult to move towards a full DWCP immediately, for example, by developing a 'Roadmap' as a sort of DWCP lite.