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High-level evaluations of strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes

Purpose of the document

This document presents a summary of the findings and recommendations of three independent high-level evaluations conducted during 2024. Part I pertains to the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25. Part II concerns the ILO strategies and approaches for the development and use of labour statistics. Part III reviews the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) strategies and activities in Western Africa. The Governing Body is invited to endorse the recommendations and request the Director-General to ensure that they are implemented (see the draft decision in paragraph 119).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Enabling outcome B: Effective and efficient governance of the Organization.

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

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: Largely within existing budget allocations.

Follow-up action required: Follow-up to the recommendations will be reviewed by the ILO's Evaluation Office (EVAL) and the Evaluation Advisory Committee, and reported to the Governing Body through the annual evaluation report.

Author unit: Evaluation Office (EVAL).

Related documents: [GB.352/PFA/8](#); [GB.332/PFA/8](#); [GB.331/PFA/8](#).

► Introduction

1. This document provides a succinct summary of three high-level evaluations conducted by the ILO's Evaluation Office (EVAL) in 2024: the ILO [Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25](#); the [development and use of labour statistics in the ILO](#); and [ILO Decent Work Country Programmes in Western Africa](#). These evaluations aim to guide strategic decision-making and adhere to international standards. They are based on thorough data collection, including desk reviews, project evaluation synthesis, interviews, surveys and case studies. Each evaluation uses a six-point rating scale, from “highly unsatisfactory” to “highly satisfactory”. This year, some evaluations encountered challenges due to limited access to crucial ILO data, which was either uncollected, unaggregated or lost due to poor knowledge management. This resulted in delays, inefficiencies and gaps in analysis.

► Part I. Independent high-level evaluation of the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25 (evaluation period 2018–24)

Purpose and scope

2. This high-level evaluation covers the period January 2018 to June 2024 of the current ILO Development Cooperation strategy and implementation plan (which covers the period 2020–25) and briefly considers the events and discussions during the transitional period 2018–19 that contributed to their development. The adoption of the Development Cooperation Strategy in the 340th Session included a request to submit an implementation plan to accompany the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25. This plan was discussed and adopted by the Governing Body at its 341st Session (March 2021). Additionally, a mid-term review of both the Strategy and its implementation plan was undertaken upon request of the Governing Body in 2023. This evaluation assesses what worked well and what did not in the Strategy and its accompanying plans, with the aim of supporting the Office and constituents in making informed decisions about future directions in development cooperation. The scope of the evaluation does not include the results or impact of the ILO's large development cooperation portfolio per se, but aims to address the value added by the strategy itself. The high-level evaluation was based on a document review, a meta-study of 206 project evaluations, over 260 stakeholder interviews,¹ a global survey of constituents and two ILO staff surveys with a number of data challenges as outlined in paragraph 1. The team selected five country studies and four thematic case studies.²

¹ Interviews were held with 117 women (45 per cent) and 145 men (55 per cent). The surveys were sent to 1,018 constituents in the three languages, with a response rate of 23.8 per cent. A general ILO staff survey was sent to 2,000 ILO staff members, with a 23.2 per cent response rate; and a curated survey for corporate institutional services staff was sent to 65 staff members, with a 23 per cent response rate.

² These country case studies were: Bangladesh, Jordan (remotely), Paraguay, Uganda and Uzbekistan. The thematic case studies were Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, Better Work, the Partnership for improving

Key findings by evaluation criteria

A. Relevance

Key finding 1: The strategy lacks a clear vision for improvement and does not effectively outline desired impacts beyond activity completion. Its purpose and measures of success are unclear and it lacks a theory of change.

Key finding 2: The strategy broadly addresses findings from the 2015 independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's strategy for technical cooperation 2010–15 and the 2021 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment, but more attention is needed on some critical issues.

3. The strategy lacks a clear purpose and success measures. Although the implementation plan detailed deliverables and responsibilities, it often focused broadly on headquarters, offering little guidance for staff in the field, where most development occurs. Some elements were de-emphasized or vaguely worded, leaving them open to interpretation rather than providing specific, measurable objectives. The strategic intent of many actions was unclear, and while the strategy cross-references other plans, its added value in terms of clear actions and deliverables is not always evident.
4. Some issues raised in the [2015 ILO high-level evaluation](#) and [2021 MOPAN assessment](#) remain unresolved. Projects still struggle to deliver results on time due to overambitious designs and slow start-ups. Small-scale projects with limited impact persist, with no consistent shift to large-scale, long-term programmes. Efficiency in important areas remains poor, and data on development cooperation impact is lacking. Poor project monitoring hinders timely action on underperformance. To address these issues, the strategy needed more specific goals and clear action pathways towards intended results.

B. Coherence

Key finding 3: The development cooperation strategy broadly follows directions set by key International Labour Conference documents and other ILO plans, but the level of coherence is inconsistent. Its efforts to better align development cooperation with constituent needs and to specific programme and budget outcomes lack detail and measures of success.

5. The strategy covers the priorities set out in the resolution concerning effective ILO development cooperation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted at the 107th Session (2018) of the International Labour Conference (2018 International Labour Conference resolution on development cooperation) but offers minimal practical guidance. Coherence is stronger in the areas of capacity development, transparency and inclusive partnerships, but weaker in the areas of adopting a programmatic approach, coordination and inclusion. It echoes the call by the 2018 International Labour Conference resolution on development cooperation for improved constituent engagement but does not demonstrate a coherent and measurable approach to achieving this.
6. The programme and budget documents stress need to direct development cooperation resource mobilization to areas where funds are scarce, making the strategy an important means of providing clarity on how this can be achieved. The strategy cross-references the

prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), and the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC-ILO), Turin.

programme and budget but it lacks detail on how it would mobilize resources to address gaps in development cooperation coverage across the eight policy outcomes or on systematic initiatives towards this end.

7. The strategy emphasizes improving coherence between the ILO, the United Nations (UN) system and a range of other stakeholders. Actions set out in the implementation plan on this are more detailed.

C. Effectiveness

Key finding 4: The mechanism to drive and implement the strategy was ineffective. Monitoring and reporting dropped off after the 2023 mid-term review.

Key finding 5: With pillar * 1 – services to constituents – tools and guidelines were introduced to foster national ownership of DWCPs and support South–South and triangular cooperation. Development cooperation often aligns with national priorities, but challenges persist. Gaps remain in using development cooperation to promote social dialogue and tripartism, and to address the organizational needs of constituents.

Key finding 6: With pillar 2 – partnerships for policy coherence – the ILO maintained its trajectory in promoting decent work through better policy coordination, but evidence of added value from the strategy's actions is unclear. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions has established its management structure, and volunteer pathfinder countries are formulating road maps. The Global Coalition for Social Justice shows promise for improved coherence but is still in its early stages.

Key finding 7: With pillar 3 – partnerships for funding – the high-level evaluation found little evidence that the strategy significantly contributed to the recent increase in development cooperation funding, much of which relates to geopolitical events. Funding partners emphasized the need for the ILO to promote its unique blend of normative mandate, technical expertise and country-level activities more strongly for sustainable results.

Key finding 8: With pillar 4 – efficiency, decent work results and transparency – the ILO delivered most of the planned tools, guidelines, training initiatives and communication products. It improved transparency in development cooperation work and took steps to enhance social and environmental safeguards. However, progress was less evident in introducing systems for continuous improvement in the way the ILO delivers and supports development cooperation.

* The strategy refers to four “focus areas”. For brevity the evaluation used the term “pillars”.

8. The strategy lacks an effective organizational arrangement for implementation. The Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department (PARTNERSHIPS) is the custodian but shares responsibility with many others, leaving final accountability unclear. A network of focal points manages delivery and progress updates. Work on the strategy is expected to occur both with and without the involvement of PARTNERSHIPS. Oversight and management of this process is loose. Reporting since the mid-term review has been patchy.
9. Pillar 1 of the strategy builds on existing ILO strategies for capacity development, social dialogue, tripartism and South–South and triangular cooperation. It reinforced these as ongoing priorities and launched numerous initiatives to enhance services for its three constituent groups, with South–South and triangular cooperation emerging as a growing support area. There is evidence that greater engagement of constituents in ILO development cooperation and UN planning processes improves project performance. Development cooperation programming generally responded to national constituents' needs and agendas; however, gaps remained where differing funding partner interests took precedence.

10. Under pillar 2, new agreements were made with international financial institutions, and the ILO joined policy-focused partnerships, though often in areas with existing policy coherence. While the ILO participated in joint UN programmes, growth in this area is not evident, and stakeholders questioned the benefits versus increased procedural complexity.
11. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions is an example of coherence promoted by the ILO development cooperation strategy, reflecting the common agenda advocated by the UN Secretary-General. The ILO has played a core role in developing its approach, and 15 countries have volunteered as pathfinders, with some starting to develop road maps for implementation. The new Global Coalition for Social Justice holds considerable promise for improved coherence.
12. Pillar 3 has been modestly effective. While the high-level evaluation found little evidence that the strategy had directly led to changes in the type and volume of development cooperation funding, it has emphasized the importance of development cooperation in enacting its normative agenda. Development cooperation partners would not be drawn to the ILO if not for its technical expertise and normative work. Tension remains within the ILO between those emphasizing the longer-term normative policy and legislative agenda and those promoting the immediate benefits of development cooperation for beneficiaries.
13. External stakeholders value how the ILO's development cooperation work combines its normative mandate with its specialist technical expertise. They cautioned that an overemphasis on development cooperation growth could lead it to appear to be "just another implementing body" with low comparative advantage, as there are other bodies that have higher implementing capacity – especially in countries where the ILO is not resident. The ILO is now also grappling with the issue of organizational overstretch and risks reputational damage if the quality of its development cooperation deteriorates because of unconstrained growth.
14. The strategy failed to provide a bold vision for the ILO's role in development cooperation, resulting in unclear objectives and directions regarding where the ILO should be heading. The strategy's approach to funding partnerships and modalities lacks clear purpose, direction and boundaries. Any new ILO development cooperation strategy would need to establish more explicit objectives and targets to drive the direction and scope of the ILO's ambitions as implementer. Funding partners reported that they focused on the ILO as a specialized agency rather than as a broad-spectrum implementer and viewed funding proposals in this light.
15. Pillar 4 included disparate activities offering tools and resources to enhance existing development cooperation. These activities comprised the development of an online training platform and modules for development cooperation staff by the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC-ILO), improving transparency to meet international standards, and advancing an environmental and social sustainability framework. However, no progress was reported on implementing a new development cooperation costing model or on systemic efforts to boost efficiency.
16. More ambitious and potentially more effective actions under this pillar were not pursued. Consistent with many internal and external reports, there is a need to improve the monitoring of ILO development cooperation at both the project level and across portfolios. Improved monitoring would enable action on underperforming projects, identify and correct system inefficiencies, and improve project impact.
17. Enhancements to the project appraisal system can also improve the quality, sustainability and impact of development cooperation projects, and ensure that the lessons of past projects are

considered, that the focus of ILO development cooperation work is clear, and that its strengths are maximized.

D. Efficiency

Key finding 9: The strategy paid little attention to the overall efficiency of the ILO's delivery of development cooperation projects, despite ongoing concerns about this issue. Various internal and external reviews have highlighted problems with the speed and complexity of systems and procedures, and these concerns were further highlighted by the high-level evaluation.

18. While ILO processes and procedures are rigorously monitored from a compliance perspective, and evaluations assess past performance and highlight lessons learned, the systems that support development cooperation delivery need closer monitoring and continuous improvement. ILO high-level evaluations, project evaluations, meta-studies, synthesis reviews, internal and external audits, and MOPAN assessments have consistently highlighted efficiency problems. Staff involved in development cooperation delivery and the technical units that support them, whether at headquarters or in the field, are frustrated by the lack of responsiveness to their needs.
19. Time taken to recruit key development cooperation staff remains a major pain point, despite some improvements reported by the ILO Human Resources Development Department (HRD) and the introduction of an online toolkit. The efficiency of development cooperation delivery could be enhanced through changes to staff mobility and contracting arrangements and paying more attention to development cooperation talent management and retention (for example, through recruitment rosters and eligibility lists), but ILO rules need to be adjusted to enable this.
20. Procurement is being streamlined and digitalized, but further improvement is needed. Procurement oversight mechanisms in some regions add further delays. Work in fragile and crisis situations often exposes the ILO's weaknesses in these areas compared with more agile partner agencies.
21. Through pooling of staff resources and by creating economies of scale, a programmatic approach to development cooperation delivery enhances efficiency – as historically the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour piloted, and as the high-level evaluation case studies found with Better Work, the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), and in Bangladesh, where a cluster approach has been adopted.

E. Impact and sustainability

Key finding 10: The strategy mainly reaffirms existing practices rather than providing innovative guidance for future priorities and approaches. Its development lacked transparency and engagement with development cooperation practitioners, leading to low staff ownership. To ensure impact and sustainability, future efforts should emphasize “what success looks like”.

22. ILO stakeholders saw the strategy confirming what the ILO was already doing rather than guiding innovative approaches that would have a measurable impact on development cooperation. Its development lacked transparency and broad stakeholder engagement, resulting in low staff ownership. There was a strong opinion that the ILO's development

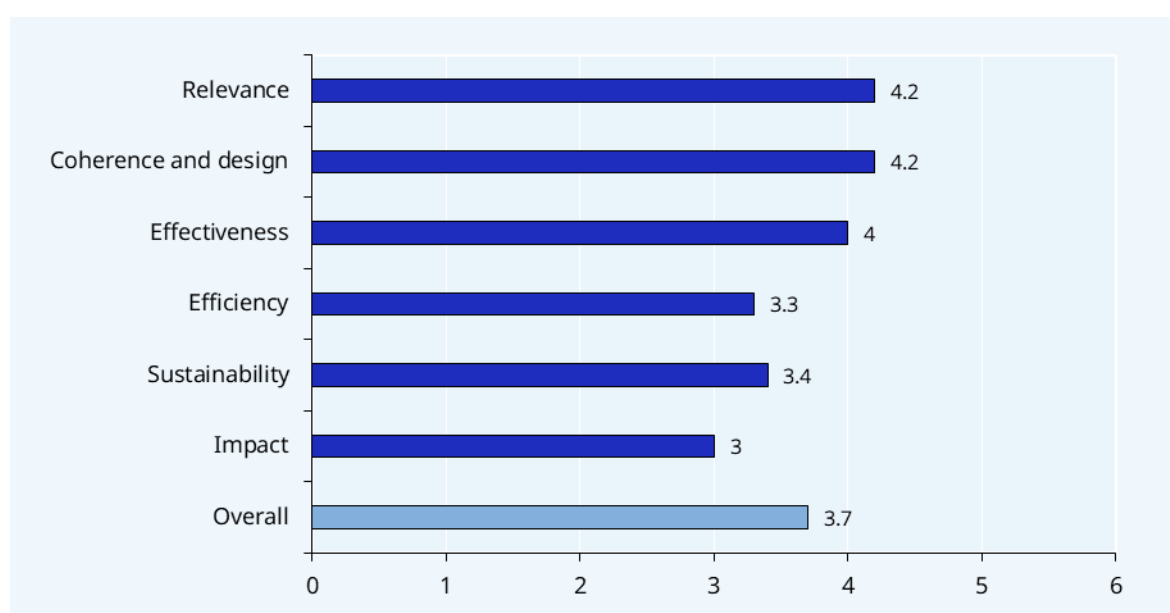
cooperation instead needed more strategic guidance to enhance impact and address long-standing problems in its management and delivery.

23. Future efforts should emphasize the interconnectivity of the four pillars, and improve monitoring and data collection, so that long-term progress towards impacts can be measured. In its current form, the strategy fails to describe what success looks like.

Overall assessment

24. Figure 1 presents the evaluation team's overall assessment.

► **Figure 1. Overall assessment**



Note: 6 = Highly satisfactory; 5 = Satisfactory; 4 = Somewhat satisfactory; 3 = Somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = Unsatisfactory; 1 = Highly unsatisfactory.

Conclusions and lessons learned

25. While the strategy touches on many key issues and broadly aligns with the 2018 International Labour Conference resolution on development cooperation, it fails to clearly outline where we are, where we need to be, and how we will get there. Instead, it focuses on activities, which, while potentially valuable, could not be evaluated for their contribution to improved development cooperation. The ILO development cooperation strategy and implementation plan mirror common criticisms of its individual projects: they are activity-driven, lack theories of change, and are inadequately focused on measuring progress toward impacts. **Lessons learned for the new strategy to consider include the following:**
26. **Need for a more focused and ambitious strategy.** The existing strategy covers many strategic issues, but largely focuses on tweaking what is already in place, rather than seeking to be more transformative and addressing entrenched systemic weaknesses. Stakeholders expressed a need for innovation, rather than a slightly upgraded version of more of the same. See recommendation 1.
27. **Need for a strategy that provides clarity on the centrality of development cooperation.** Many people consulted stressed how vital development cooperation was for reinforcing the realization of the ILO's core role. Others, however, noted that some people in the ILO saw

development cooperation as secondary to this role or even a distraction. The centrality of the ILO's approach to development cooperation – built on tripartism, social dialogue and normative action – needs to be unapologetically reinforced as a primary mechanism for the ILO to achieve its goals and to meet constituent needs. Direction from senior management is needed to encourage two-way accountability between administrative and development cooperation delivery units. See recommendation 3.

28. **Need for a strategy that emphasizes the importance of balanced growth, diversification and focus in development cooperation work – doing fewer things better.** Funding partners seek clarity on the ILO's priorities, but it struggles to articulate these beyond the programme and budget, which covers the full gamut of the ILO's work. Saying that "everything we do is a priority" lets the ILO cast its net very widely when seeking development cooperation funding, but it leads to resource mobilization gravitating more towards meeting the strategic priorities of funding partners. It is necessary to be more intentional in setting development cooperation priorities so that the ILO can, as the 2018 International Labour Conference resolution on development cooperation urges, "promote all the pillars of decent work in a balanced manner" and "take a longer-term, programmatic and focused approach". See recommendations 1 and 4.
29. **Need for a strategy that enhances national ownership and constituent empowerment.** While the high-level evaluation found some improvement in constituent involvement in development cooperation, mechanisms to consolidate this trend are needed, including a more robust and transparent framework to ensure constituent satisfaction. See recommendation 1.
30. **Need for a strategy that strives towards continuous improvement of ILO systems and approach for developing, delivering, monitoring and supporting development cooperation projects.** There is no one part of the ILO that has a span of control that covers all the critical functions necessary for the effective and efficient delivery of development cooperation. The mechanism used by the current strategy left no one ultimately accountable. A new approach is needed, either through a dedicated development cooperation monitoring function or through a system driven by senior management mechanisms that can achieve change (as was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic). See recommendations 2 and 3.

Recommendations

31. **Overall Office response:** The Office welcomes the high-level evaluation of the Development Cooperation Strategy and its recognition of the central role of development cooperation in delivering a wide range of services to ILO constituents and advancing the ILO mandate. The increase in voluntary funding and in the diversity of partnerships demonstrates the continued interest of partners in development cooperation activities and their trust in the ILO. While highlighting that this High-Level Evaluation is focused on the Development Cooperation Strategy itself and does not assess ILO's DC projects and activities, the Office is committed to address the evaluation findings and integrate the recommendations provided into the implementation of the current strategy and other related initiatives, as relevant. It is worth mentioning that the Office started in 2023 a process to review the implementation of ILO's development cooperation activities with the aim of identifying potential bottlenecks and areas of improvement.
32. **Recommendation 1:** Initiate consultations on the need for and form and scope of a new ILO development cooperation strategy 2026–29, aiming for possible submission to the Governing Body by late 2025 via a transparent process involving constituents, senior management, policy specialists, development cooperation project practitioners, oversight functions, and administrative and financial management specialists. This process should:

- consider identifying and pursuing opportunities for a more focused and strategic approach to resource mobilization, emphasizing links with the ILO's normative role and addressing resource gaps in key policy areas outlined in the strategic plan for 2026–29, the Programme and Budget proposals for 2026–27, and priority action programmes;
- consider how best to ensure an ILO-wide commitment to improving the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of development cooperation implementation, and to promote two-way accountability between administrative and development cooperation delivery units;
- consider ways to implement the principle of a more programmatic approach to development cooperation contained in the 2018 International Labour Conference resolution on development cooperation, drawing lessons from successful larger-scale programmes and considering mechanisms for enhanced integration and clustering of efforts;
- consider how the new proposed architecture for the Programme and Budget for 2026–27 (for example, outcome 10 and enabling outcome A, output 4) might subsume the current “partnerships for policy coherence” pillar and allow future development cooperation strategies to focus on resource mobilization and efficiency in delivering quality services to constituents;
- consider how development cooperation project appraisals can be strengthened to ensure quality design and specify how inputs from ILO units will be actioned;
- consider options for a realistic but robust framework to ensure constituent involvement in crucial stages of development cooperation development and implementation;
- consider whether a “development cooperation operations unit” responsible for monitoring and managing the development cooperation portfolio is needed for a whole-of-ILO approach. This unit would identify and maximize development cooperation linkages with the programme and budget and ILO norms and standards, and ensure projects have optimal human resources and staff training.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Director-General's Office (regions and Decent Work Technical Support Teams (DWTs))	High	Immediate	Variable
Assistant Director-General (ADG)/External and Corporate Relations (ECR): Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department (PARTNERSHIPS)			
ADG/Corporate Services (CS): Strategic Programming and Management Department (PROGRAM)			
Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)			
ADG/Governance, Rights and Dialogue Cluster (GRD) and ADG/Jobs and Social Protection Cluster (JSP)			

- 33. Office response:** The Office welcomes the recommendation and its proposed actions. As has been the practice, an inclusive and transparent consultation process will begin in 2024 to develop a more focused and forward-looking strategy that considers the evaluation findings and responds to the needs of ILO constituents and the priorities of development partners in

line with the strategic plan for 2026–29 and the related programmes and budgets 2026–27 and 2028–29.

34. Recommendation 2: Develop a new policy and mechanism for monitoring development cooperation that promotes accountability, compares planned outcomes with results, allows flexibility to respond to changing needs, and makes visible not just what has been spent, but what projects have done and what they have achieved. This should:

- provide real-time monitoring and visibility of project performance for agile development cooperation portfolio management (as opposed to the endline or retrospective view currently provided by evaluation and audits) supported by effective information technology platforms and appropriate training packages;
- consider the feasibility of creating a dedicated function responsible for development cooperation monitoring as practised in other peer UN agencies;
- gather data on administrative bottlenecks affecting delivery that can be used for continuous improvements of these systems;
- enhance accountability and performance management of development cooperation programme and project managers, identifying their capacity development needs and improving the processes used for their selection;
- progressively improve the evaluation and measurement of progress towards impact on beneficiaries of development cooperation activities enabled through improved monitoring.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Director-General's Office	High	Immediate to medium-term	High
ADG/CS: PROGRAM			
ADG/ECR: PARTNERSHIPS with Financial Management Department (FINANCE), Information and Technology Management Department (INFOTEC)			

35. Office response: Despite the fact that this recommendation relates more to the implementation of DC projects, rather than to the Strategy itself, the Office agrees with the need to further develop policies and tools for monitoring development cooperation activities, enhance coordination and planning, and reinforce accountability for programmatic delivery. As earlier indicated, the Office started in 2023 an analysis of the administrative processes in the implementation of DC activities to identify areas of improvement. The Office will build upon the findings and recommendations in this evaluation and integrate them into its ongoing analysis. New or updated internal governance policies and procedures might be required to enable swift responses to performance issues of technical or operational nature in development cooperation, ensuring the programmatic fit of development cooperation with the priorities of ILO constituents as reflected in the programme and budget and in DWCPs or other national frameworks.

36. Recommendation 3: Either as part of the new development cooperation strategy or under the plans of the relevant Corporate Services cluster at headquarters and in regional offices, identify

and implement specific and measurable steps to improve the efficiency of support provided to development cooperation practitioners working in the field. This should:

- promote two-way accountability between delivery units and support services (with relevant efficiency/timeline key performance indicators) and seek to bridge the “cultural divide” between the two;
- explore innovations in development cooperation recruitment, such as appointment eligibility lists, development cooperation talent management, and funding to bridge gaps in project phases;
- clarify how programme support income raised by development cooperation projects can be better allocated to support projects without the time lags that currently occur;
- review options to provide additional targeted support to non-resident country programmes at key points of the DWCP/Common Country Assessment/United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) cycles or to meet surges in demand.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ADG/CS: FINANCE, HRD, PROGRAM	High	Immediate to medium-term	Low to medium
ADG/ECR: PARTNERSHIPS			

37. Office response: As indicated under recommendation 2, the Office aims to strengthen accountability systems and, as far as possible, simplify and standardize functions and services across the operating environment, including the provision of technical support provided to DC staff. Further alignment of human resource policies, processes and contracts, improved induction and training, along with greater use of standardized information systems across all activities, will aim to improve efficiency and consistency. Focused risk analyses need to be strengthened at the onset of projects to ensure that the Office has the capacity and capability to deliver results within the negotiated timeframes.

38. Recommendation 4: Strengthen communication strategies tailored and adapted for different audiences covering the unique contributions of the ILO to decent work and the humanitarian-development nexus, emphasizing the significant value added by its normative foundation, high-quality technical research and tripartite approach. This should:

- build on success stories;
- address challenges and how to overcome them using the ILO approach;
- highlight the benefits of longer-term investments to address decent work challenges by showcasing impacts achieved over time in specific countries or through a programmatic approach;
- train ILO staff with resource mobilization responsibilities in communicating the ILO's added value to potential funding partners;
- promote collaborative approaches combining ILO comparative advantages with key strengths of other stakeholders.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ADG/GRD: International Labour Standards Department (NORMES)	High	Immediate to medium-term	Medium
ADG/JSP: Universal Social Protection Department (SOCPRO) and Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods Department (EMPLOYMENT)			
ADG/ECR: All technical units, including Department of Communication and Public Information (DCOMM)			
DWTs			

- 39. Office response:** The Office will strengthen its communication strategies, products and staff skills by using communication technologies and tools to further emphasize the Organization's unique value added based on its normative and tripartite approach, and to enhance its reputation as a knowledge leader, effective development partner and dynamic collaborator in the multilateral system. Communication efforts will focus on the results achieved by DC projects and the broader impact and contribution of programmatic activities to the Decent Work Agenda. It will also continue to highlight the added value that the ILO's work brings to constituents and development partners.

► Part II. Independent high-level evaluation of the ILO strategies and approaches for the development and use of labour statistics (evaluation period 2018–23)

Purpose and scope

- 40.** The high-level evaluation reviewed the Office's efforts towards development and support to labour statistics in 2018–23, focusing on the entire statistical function of the ILO delivered through the Department of Statistics (STATISTICS) and various policy departments. The high-level evaluation was conducted using data from various sources: a synthesis review of 33 project evaluations on statistics; a review of ILO documentation; interviews with ILO staff, constituents, funding partners, the United Nations and other partners; seven case studies (four in-depth country-based, one desk-based, and two thematic); and surveys of ILO staff, constituents and partners.³

³ Case studies included Pakistan, Paraguay, Senegal and Viet Nam (in-depth country-focused); Mozambique (desk-based); the ILO's statistical work on the informal economy; and the ILO's partnerships to promote labour statistics (thematic). A total of 185 respondents (58 per cent men, 42 per cent women) were interviewed, while 28 per cent of staff, 25 per cent of constituents and 32 per cent of partners from the total sample completed the survey.

Key findings by evaluation criteria

A. Relevance

Key finding 1: The ILO enjoys strategic dominance in labour statistics that is recognized by its constituents and global, regional and national stakeholders alike. Its statistical work demonstrates strong alignment with global frameworks and is recognized as a means of advancing social justice through the ILO-led Global Coalition for Social Justice. Governments (notably national statistical offices (NSOs) and ministries of labour), UN agencies, international financial institutions and research institutions are the most prolific users of ILO statistics.

Key finding 2: Limited resources lead the ILO to prioritize promoting the adoption of International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) standards by NSOs for the availability of high-quality, relevant and harmonized statistical data.

Key finding 3: Statistics produced by the ILO are at the aggregate level, including on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and are used to support policy decisions through country, regional and global comparisons. However, they are less pertinent to the everyday challenges encountered by workers' and employers' organizations.

41. The ILO's work on labour statistics includes: (a) standard-setting; (b) collection, analysis and dissemination of data; (c) technical support;⁴ and (d) capacity-building. Statistical standards are based on definitions from ILO Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference. Demand for services and support by constituents and other stakeholders is gathered through the consultative process for the development of statistical standards, through participation in the ICLS and by evaluating country-level policy needs.
42. The ILO's statistical work supports reporting on 14 SDG indicators as custodian or co-custodian entities. International development organizations with global and regional presence (such as the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the African Union) rely on the ILO as a key resource of labour statistics to support their respective mandates and facilitate SDG reporting.
43. The ILO supports NSOs and ministries of labour in collecting, analysing and reporting on labour statistics in accordance with internationally recognized ICLS standards. Support to employers' and workers' organizations is provided as demand-based diagnostic surveys and research at country level. Constituents reported limited utility of the flagship reports for national-level policymaking, and instead rely more on ILO-supported national-level data. Challenges frequently reported include the use of the technical language of international labour Conventions, and the lack of translation into local languages.
44. The ILO promoted the visibility of women, young people and people with disabilities through statistical standard-setting, increased data availability and support to sectors with disproportionate representation of these groups. A just transition towards environmental sustainability features less prominently.

⁴ Pertaining to data collection and analysis based on agreed statistical standards, for example, a review of survey methodology.

B. Coherence

Key finding 4: The ILO's statistical activities are in line with ICLS resolutions, and strategy and policy frameworks. However, these documents do not serve as comprehensive support frameworks, notably for regional implementation.

Key finding 5: STATISTICS leads the statistical work at the ILO and supports policy departments across the Organization through enabling outcome A. Since 2020, STATISTICS has spent approximately 30 per cent of its working hours on work for other policy outcomes. * Some policy departments also collect and analyse statistics. The integration of staff with statistical capacities in policy departments enhances coherence between data generation and policymaking.

Key finding 6: The ILO's statistical work overwhelmingly focuses on promoting the adoption of the ICLS resolutions through labour force surveys, with limited support for administrative and establishment data. The measurement of digital platform, employment and care work will require further efforts across regions in the short term.

* Source: ILO's official Resource Tracking dashboard.

45. The ILO's statistical function supports normative work on international labour standards, setting operational statistical standards based on ILO Conventions and Recommendations, while also requiring Member States to collect and publish related statistics and data. Despite its unique value proposition, the broad mandate on labour statistics requires an overarching guiding framework. While existing strategic documents, such as the programme and budget and DWCPs, provide some direction, they are limited to guiding cohesive strategies with a long-term vision, notably at regional level.
46. STATISTICS at ILO headquarters, with support from regional statisticians, is responsible for delivering the ILO's statistical work. Data and analytics from STATISTICS are used by ILO policy departments. Across the three biennia, an estimated 72 per cent of the ILO's decent work results involving statistics were reported in various programme and budget outcomes (other than outcome A).
47. The ILO's statistical function serves both as an enabling outcome and an integrated component of various policy areas, as reflected in the proportion of the total time spent by STATISTICS on directly supporting policy departments (31 per cent in 2020–23). While STATISTICS received support for delivering output A.1 in 2020–23, it was mostly from regional statisticians, with policy departments accounting for 5 per cent of the average time spent supporting output A.1.
48. Despite the significant progress made on labour force surveys, gaps remain in the collection of administrative and establishment survey data, leading to unmet demand of certain policy departments, such as the Sustainable Enterprises, Productivity and Just Transition Department (ENTERPRISES) and the Occupational Safety and Health and Working Environment Branch, as well as of ACTRAV and ACT/EMP. These departments use alternative data sources, such as the World Bank, which may not align with the ILO's mandate, and/or undertake additional data collection with some support from STATISTICS.
49. Despite the recognition for the use of big data approaches for skills needs and mismatches under output 5.1 (2020–23), only two country programme outcomes entailed support in this domain. Digital platform work is an emerging area for labour statistics, which so far was addressed in the Latin America and the Caribbean region by measuring digital platform employment.

C. Effectiveness

Key finding 7: Work on producing labour statistics has undergone substantial transformation since 2018, resulting in improved data quality and availability. By 2023, none of the SDG indicators under the ILO's custodianship remained classified as Tier III indicators. *

Key finding 8: Despite various challenges in transitioning to the 19th ICLS, data availability using these standards in just over half of the Member States represents significant progress. Policy areas where statistics made significant progress include social protection, labour migration, disability inclusion and informality.

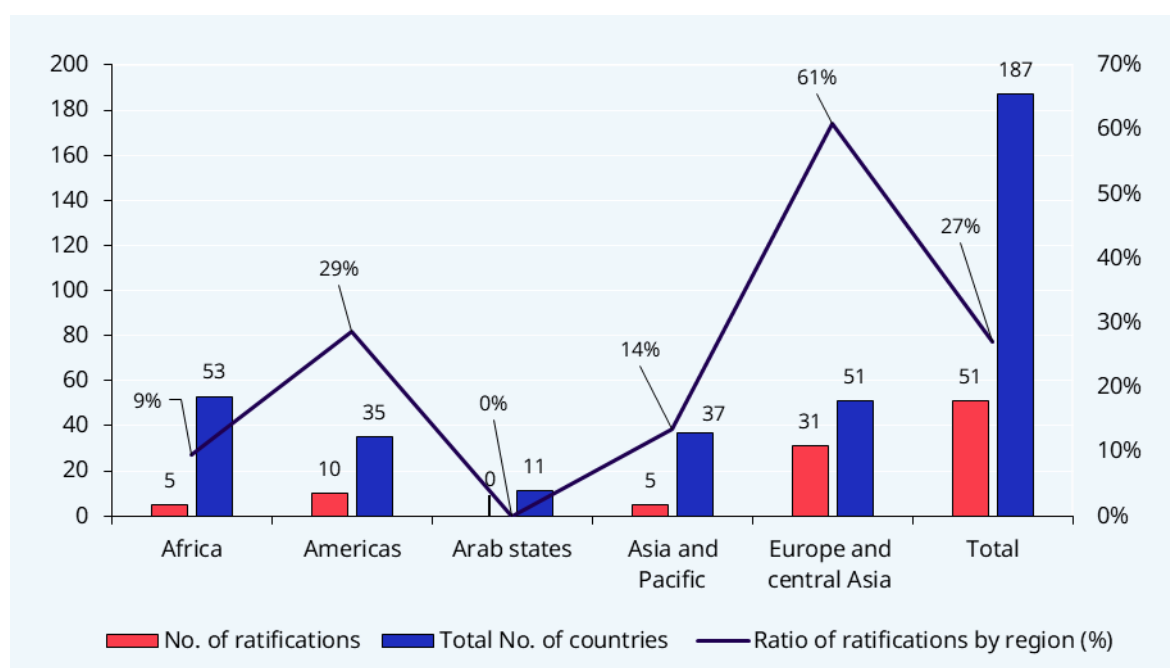
Key finding 9: During the period under review, the ILO exceeded programme and budget targets related to statistics by 83 per cent, likely due to a reduction in the number of targets. Specifically, the target for outcome A (output A.1) decreased by 54 per cent in 2020–21, and by an additional 50 per cent in 2022–23.

Key finding 10: Capacity-building and support to data collection and analysis overwhelmingly supported NSOs, followed by ministries of labour.

* Tier III indicators have neither a clear methodology nor regular data collection.

50. Work on labour statistics is measured through enabling outcome A of the programme and budget results framework, which does not capture specific deliverables on labour statistics mentioned across policy outcomes.
51. To date, 51 Member States have ratified the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160) (figure 2). The ILO undertakes extensive advocacy and support to NSOs for the adoption of ICLS standards. Currently, 120 (64 per cent) and 16 (9 per cent) of the 187 Member States have either fully or partially adopted the 19th and 20th ICLS resolutions, respectively.

► **Figure 2. Ratification of Convention No. 160, by region (2024)**



52. Improvements in microdata processing, enhanced modelled estimates and consolidation of statistical data into ILOSTAT, among others, reduced the burden on NSOs, enhanced the quality and availability of harmonized data, and enabled ILOSTAT to be more responsive to policy areas such as labour migration and disability inclusion. Since 2023, 160 Member States

have provided microdata to the ILO, increasing the number of indicators available by 233 per cent. However, microdata is published only under the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) classification at the 2-digit level for most countries, leading to ad hoc data requests from some policy departments under ISCO classifications of 3- and 4-digit levels.

53. The availability of microdata enabled the ILO to generate and disseminate harmonized regional and global estimates with greater country coverage on the informal economy, labour migration and forced labour.
54. The ILO is promoting labour market information systems, and currently supporting 30 countries and 2 regional intergovernmental organizations in establishing them. The majority (63 per cent) are based in Africa, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (30 per cent), and two are from the Arab States. None are represented in Asia and the Pacific or Europe and Central Asia.
55. Since 2018, the ILO has just over doubled the coverage of Member States (+108 per cent) providing administrative data for the Social Security Inquiry, with data now available for 78 per cent of Member States. Administrative surveys on areas such as labour migration and occupational safety and health (OSH) faced data challenges due to limited reporting by countries caused by capacity and technical constraints.
56. Since 2018, the ILOSTAT portal saw a 313 per cent and 384 per cent increase in the number of sessions and users, respectively. However, both ILO staff and national stakeholders reported challenges in navigating the portal.
57. STATISTICS led in-person and virtual training for constituents jointly with ITC–ILO and regional bodies. Training mostly focuses on NSOs at the regional or global level, notably targeting employment, the informal economy, labour migration, skills, social protection and child labour. Statistics of cooperatives, green jobs and green employment, OSH and industrial relations feature less frequently in capacity-building initiatives.

D. Efficiency

Key finding 11: The ILO's response to the demands and needs of constituents related to labour statistics is constrained by limited human and financial resources.

Key finding 12: Despite improvements, timely availability of data for certain policy areas (such as wages, labour migration, industrial relations, enterprises or OSH) remains a concern. Capacity-building support is highly centralized.

58. Between 2020 and 2023, US\$13.1 million was spent towards output A.1, representing 0.8 per cent of all ILO expenditure.⁵ Global interventions represented the largest expenditure (37 per cent), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (23 per cent), Arab States (15 per cent), and Asia and the Pacific (14 per cent). Africa (9 per cent) and Europe and Central Asia (2 per cent) represented the least expenditure. Extrabudgetary development cooperation resources (69 per cent) represented the largest expenditure source, followed by Regular Budget Technical Cooperation (RBTC) (21 per cent), and the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) (10 per cent).
59. Regionally, seven statisticians across four regions provide hands-on support to country offices, constituents and partners. The absence of statistical capacities in country offices further

⁵ Excluding regular budget resources.

overwhelms the regional statisticians. At headquarters, limited staff in STATISTICS provide adequate support to some policy areas, such as OSH, enterprises and green jobs.

60. While technical support is highly sought by ILO policy departments, UN agencies, international financial institutions and regional intergovernmental organizations, it is provided with limited resources and is without an internal mechanism for cost recovery of in-kind support. A functional mechanism to link development cooperation projects to output A.1 is notably lacking.
61. Limited resources, the strong focus of technical support on household-level surveys, the spread of statistical standards across an increasing array of labour domains, and limited national capacities affect timely data availability. The ILO still utilizes the 13th ICLS standards to produce regional and global estimates for SDG indicators involving employment. Despite the use of add-on modules to labour force surveys, offers of flexibility and cost-effectiveness, their increasing frequency burdens NSOs.

E. Sustainability

Key finding 13: The need for ILO support remains high, as it is the sole organization leading standard-setting, providing technical support for labour statistics and supplying harmonized statistical data.

Key finding 14: The adoption of statistical standards, capacity-building and the provision of technical support at country level ensure sustainability. The ILO's statistical work facilitated evidence-based policymaking.

62. The ILO's capacity-building initiatives led to the strengthening of NSOs (followed by ministries of labour) in statistics production, collection and analysis. Its facilitation of inter-agency coordination through labour market information systems presents opportunities to contribute to improvements in the data collection practices of other government entities. However, the ILO lacks a cohesive and resourced roll-out plan for labour market information systems.
63. Partnerships with international and regional development agencies and initiatives – such as Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange, the World Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – facilitate broader outreach and potential impact, and present opportunities for sustainability through resource mobilization and upscaling.

F. Emerging impact

Key finding 15: The ILO's actions positively impacted policymaking and capacity-strengthening. However, lack of strategies for comprehensive support to all constituents and human and financial resources at both the ILO and NSOs hinders impact in the context of evolving ICLS standards.

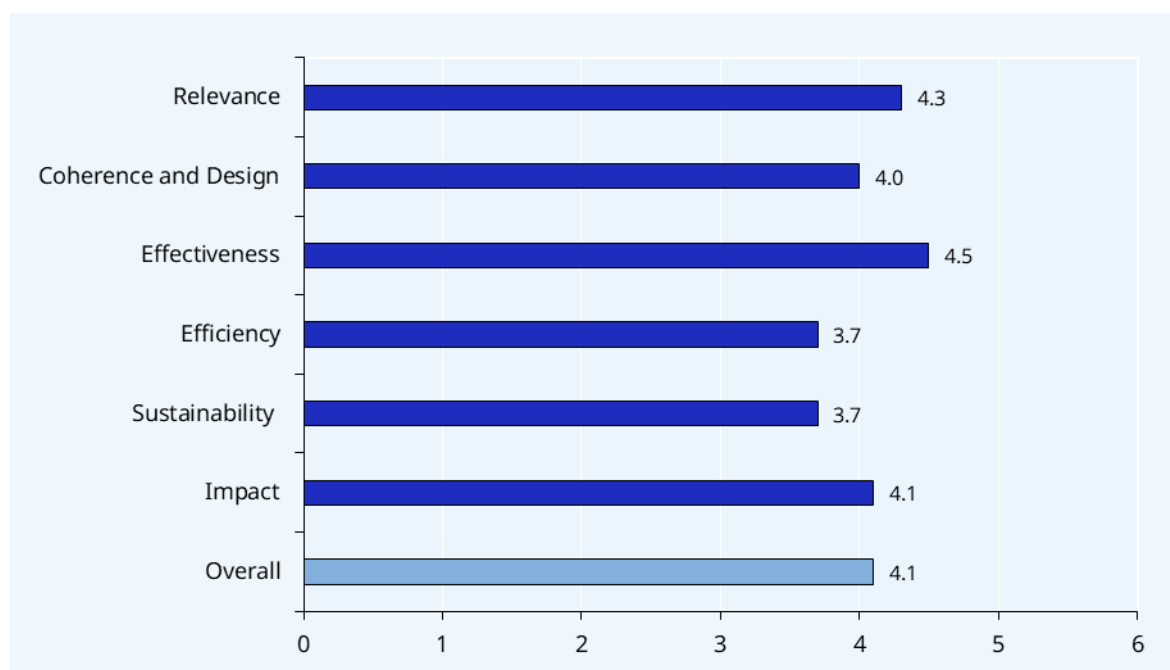
64. Data availability improvements resulted in the use of ILO labour statistics across various indices and reports, such as the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index, the World Bank's World Development Indicators, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Better Life Index. At national level, there were causal linkages between data generation and policymaking in various policy areas, such as the informal economy, employment, social protection and child labour.

- 65. The ILO lacks resources to advocate for and technically support the ICLS standards being introduced, as this requires continued advocacy.
- 66. Interpretation and communication of statistics among governments and employers' and workers' organizations for policymaking remain weak due to limited ILO support.

Overall assessment

- 67. Figure 3 presents the evaluation team's overall assessment.

► **Figure 3. Overall assessment**



Note: 6 = Highly satisfactory; 5 = Satisfactory; 4 = Somewhat satisfactory; 3 = Somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = Unsatisfactory; 1 = Highly unsatisfactory.

Conclusions and lessons learned

- 68. The ILO is recognized as a key authority in labour statistics, predominantly used by governments and development agencies. Transformation since 2018 has enhanced data quality and availability, in alignment with SDG indicators. A significant lag remains between adopting and implementing statistical standards at national level.
- 69. The absence of a comprehensive formal strategic framework limits cohesive planning and implementation, notably at regional level, where demand-driven support prevails. A balanced approach to producing labour statistics utilizing multiple data sources – including labour force surveys, administrative records and establishment surveys – is crucial to ensuring data availability and addressing data gaps.
- 70. The ILO's statistical work supports several Conventions through support to policy areas. While ILO statistics are widely used for policy decisions at national and global levels, they are less pertinent to the everyday challenges encountered by workers' and employers' organizations.
- 71. Limited resource mobilization leads to over-reliance on the already stretched regular budget resources, constraining the ILO's responsiveness to demands for and timely availability of statistical data.

Recommendations

- 72. Recommendation 1:** The ILO needs to develop an Organization-wide strategy for the ILO's statistical function. Aimed at strengthening the coherence of the statistical work across policy outcomes, the strategy should support prioritizing activities to ensure a more comprehensive response to constituents' evolving needs, and integrate different data sources and changing concepts in the world of work, such as the platform economy. To enhance timely availability of data, the ILO should consider developing a framework to guide its approach to alternative data collection sources and analysis techniques – such as big data and machine learning – to be used, for example, for identifying and anticipating skills needs, updating ISCO-08 and measuring skills mismatches.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Deputy Director-General (DDG); STATISTICS	High	Immediate to long-term	High
ADG/CS; PROGRAM			

- 73. Office response:** The Office will develop a strategy for strengthening labour statistics, aligned with the UN Secretary-General's Data Strategy, to support the implementation of the statistical activities throughout the Organization. Given the increasing needs of constituents, prioritization is essential. STATISTICS proposes establishing a statistical data coordination group, to be led by the Chief Statistician, and involving relevant departments – both producers and users of statistical data. This group will assist in defining stages to develop the strategy, focusing on promoting regional coherence, establishing quality assurance mechanisms, supporting the production and collection of statistical indicators, and addressing new domains and priorities identified by the ICLS. It will also address the major existing gaps and explore potential innovative solutions, presenting possible courses of action to address these gaps, subject to resource availability. The strategy will be presented to the ILO Governing Body in 2026.

- 74. Recommendation 2:** Considering internal human and financial resource constraints in STATISTICS, and the high internal and external demand for technical support, the ILO needs to identify opportunities for internal cost recovery to ensure financial sustainability and resource optimization for STATISTICS. This could entail leveraging development cooperation projects to enhance internal capacities and sustain statistical support services. This approach will ensure the availability of dedicated resources for critical areas such as OSH, care work, enterprises and green jobs.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG; STATISTICS	High	Immediate to medium-term	High
ADG/CS; FINANCE			
ADG/ECR; PARTNERSHIPS			

- 75. Office response:** The Office will explore different options to tackle resource constraints for STATISTICS through cost recovery or cost-sharing of statistical activities with the regions and departments. It will identify ways of allocating adequate resources from concrete outputs

across policy outcomes to strengthen statistical support in critical areas that are currently lacking it, and particularly of providing technical assistance to constituents at the country level. With the support of PARTNERSHIPS and FINANCE, special attention will be given to development cooperation projects, ensuring that dedicated resources are explicitly included in work plans when statistical inputs are required. It is proposed that a statistical assessment of the various development cooperation projects should be implemented and included systematically in the design phase.

- 76. Recommendation 3:** The ILO needs to enhance its resource mobilization strategy for labour statistics as limited regular budget resources constitute a major constraint, making it essential to mobilize additional resources to support constituents and stakeholders. Recent experience with partners like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation demonstrated donor interest in statistics. The ILO could implement dedicated resource mobilization drives to address such gaps by engaging with partners and strengthening partnerships through joint funding proposals, especially in policy areas of mutual interest.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG; STATISTICS	High	Immediate to long-term	High
ADG/ECR; PARTNERSHIPS			

- 77. Office response:** While the Office acknowledges the need for a robust resource mobilization strategy for labour statistics, it recognizes that activities like standard-setting and technical support should be funded through stable mechanisms independent of donor-driven orientation. Although development cooperation projects complement regular budget funds, many funding partners avoid financing core functions. Therefore, the Office emphasizes that while development cooperation supports the process, it should not be seen as an unlimited resource. In order to implement key ICLS resolutions effectively, it would be beneficial to secure sustainable funding, particularly to assist countries that are struggling. The Office will need to explore the possibility of establishing trust funds with potential funding partners, including through South-South cooperation, focusing on underfunded areas like the care economy, OSH and establishment surveys.

- 78. Recommendation 4:** To ensure ready accessibility, the ILO needs to decentralize statistical capacity-building to the country and/or subregional levels, including strengthening labour/statistics institutions for sustained impact. In addition, training programmes must be developed for users of ILO statistics – including ILO staff, constituents and other national stakeholders – to ensure utilization by broader audiences. The ILO should develop a communications strategy to ensure the provision of tailored information to audiences, especially at the country level. Furthermore, there is a need to improve the ILOSTAT user interface.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG; STATISTICS	High	Immediate to long-term	Medium

- 79. Office response:** The Office has been organizing capacity-building activities in partnership with ITC-ILO in certain regions. However, there is a need to expand these activities to regions currently not covered, offering them in various languages and extending them to all ILO

constituents to better communicate labour statistics. While activities could be intensified, they would require additional resources, which are currently unavailable. The Office is working on developing a training programme on labour statistics specific to the needs of social partners, and will assess the need for courses for other audiences. It will explore the feasibility of developing self-administered online courses covering the basics of labour statistics. Communications will be improved through the enhancement of the ILOSTAT interface, and through blogs and statistical guides and manuals.

► Part III. Independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme strategies and activities in Western Africa, with emphasis on Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States (evaluation period 2018–23)

Purpose and scope

80. This high-level evaluation reviews the ILO's work in the Western Africa subregion from 2018 to 2023, focusing on Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The evaluation draws conclusions and recommendations from multiple sources, including key document reviews, a synthesis of 20 project evaluations, an analysis of country programme outcomes, interviews and focus groups with 179 individuals, two surveys of ILO staff and constituents, and four case studies.⁶

Key findings by evaluation criteria

A. Relevance

Key finding 1: The ILO's DWCP strategies and activities are aligned with the decent work challenges in West Africa.

Key finding 2: Understanding among constituents about the purpose, governance, resourcing and monitoring of DWCPs is improving, but room remains for reinforcement.

Key finding 3: Most DWCPs in the subregion cover a broad range of policy outcomes, despite having to address specific priorities. There is limited alignment between the goals of the DWCPs and the extrabudgetary resources mobilized.

Key finding 4: Most DWCPs are not explicit about the integrated programmatic approaches that need to be pursued, despite acknowledging the multifaceted causes of decent work deficits.

81. The ILO aligned DWCP strategies and activities with the needs of constituents. Decent work country diagnostics facilitated consultative assessments and the early engagement of constituents in DWCP design. The DWCPs are aligned with the ILO's programme and budget

⁶ The survey had responses from 42 ILO staff (30 per cent response rate) and 37 constituents (21 per cent response rate). Interviews or focus groups involved 179 individuals (47 per cent female) in Dakar, Geneva and New York, and nine countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. Case studies focused on Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and ECOWAS.

outcomes and regional and international development frameworks, such as the UNSDCF, the Abidjan Declaration, the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, and the SDGs. This alignment ensures the DWCPs effectively guide the ILO's country programming.

82. Differences in expectations and perspectives among ILO staff and constituents regarding the scope, ownership and objectives of the DWCPs highlight the need for clarification. The DWCPs often cover a broad range, if not all, of programme and budget policy outcomes. This wide spectrum creates opportunities for integrating interventions across technical areas in a programmatic manner and provides flexibility in mobilizing and channelling resources as they become available during the DWCP cycle. However, this broad scope also risks dispersing efforts and limiting impact. Additionally, the DWCPs have not always clearly specified the required integrated programme approach, despite recognizing the multifaceted causes of decent work deficits. This issue has been more effectively addressed and framed in various development cooperation projects.
83. One purpose only partially reflected in the DWCPs is the contribution to scaling up results and providing the necessary technical assistance for this effort. Some constituents reported an improved understanding of DWCP ownership but noted the need for further alignment, particularly regarding roles and responsibilities for mobilizing resources and funding implementation. A challenge highlighted by constituents is the misalignment between national budgeting cycles and the timing of DWCPs.

B. Coherence

Key finding 5: There is closer integration between the UNSDCF and the DWCP, allowing constituents' priorities to inform the work of the UN system, but with unclear effects. The DWCPs seldom make any reference to UN partners.

Key finding 6: The DWCPs present incomplete pathways for scaling up results.

Key finding 7: Constituents have been consulted in the design and development of the DWCPs, but to various extents. Employers' and workers' organizations highlighted room for stronger involvement during implementation and to better leverage their networks.

Key finding 8: In countries undergoing post-crisis situations, the ILO has been able to adapt, maintaining project implementation while ensuring the security of the staff.

84. The reform of the United Nations development system has improved coherence between the ILO and the UN system. DWCPs are now better integrated into the UNSDCF. However, it was noted that DWCPs rarely refer to the UN system and partnerships. Collaboration with UN agencies has been variable, influenced by national policy agendas. Examples include joint work with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.
85. Theories of change across DWCPs are often broad, targeting a wide range of policy outcomes and lacking specificity regarding constituents' contributions and UN partners' roles. They generally fail to outline the pathways for scaling up results and the anticipated impact of pilot projects on policy formulation.
86. Constituents have been involved in DWCP design, though there are calls for stronger engagement and use of this process for genuine social dialogue, rather than just reviewing

interim documents. While involvement of young people, women and people with disabilities in DWCP design remains weak, it is improving with the increased use of a tripartite model that includes additional stakeholders, (for example, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria). Involving additional stakeholders beyond the traditional tripartite model is seen as beneficial. The evaluation noted the varying functionality of DWCP steering committees and infrequent monitoring of work plans and logical frameworks.

87. The ILO adapted its interventions in response to the COVID-19 crisis, which caused project delays and temporarily reduced country programme outcomes. The ILO has continued projects in politically unstable countries while ensuring staff security amid rising insecurity. There remains a demand for technical assistance in these countries, but the ILO's strategy for resource mobilization, engagement with constituents and promotion of social dialogue is unclear.

C. Effectiveness

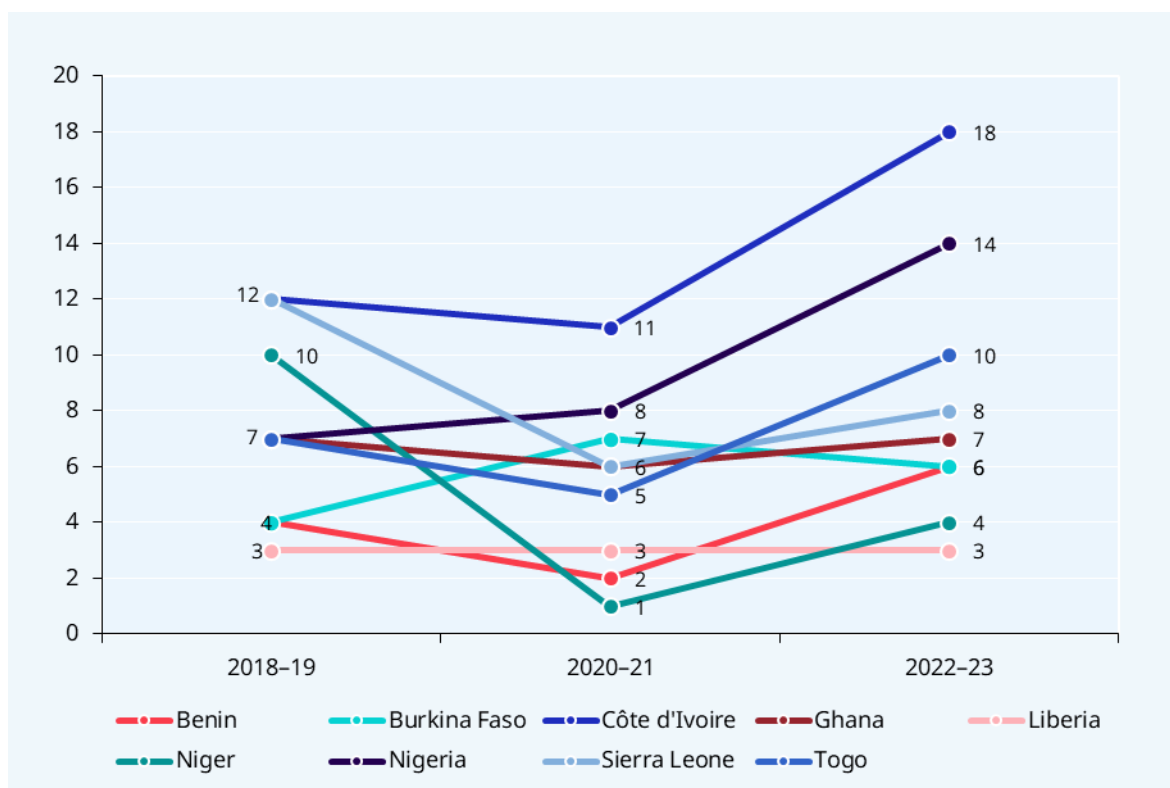
Key finding 9: The number of DWCPs has progressed in the subregion, with five out of nine countries having a DWCP under implementation and two more due to start soon.

Key finding 10: Regular budget technical support has been largely directed towards improving employment and strengthening tripartite constituents and social dialogue, and extrabudgetary funding has been directed towards enterprises and protection for all. Policy outcomes on gender equality, and skills and lifelong learning require further attention.

Key finding 11: Achievements were significant in many areas of decent work, including child labour, employment, enterprises, migration and social protection.

Key finding 12: The ILO's engagement on international labour standards has contributed to the ratification of new Conventions and improved reporting. Social dialogue has been enhanced in several countries, and there is room for further representation of the workers' voice. Environmental sustainability and just transition have been anchored as priorities in several countries.

88. Overall, the ILO's DWCPs have effectively advanced the Decent Work Agenda in Western Africa. DWCPs are currently implemented in five of nine countries, with two more expected to be approved soon. The number of development cooperation projects increased from 23 in 2018 to 63 in 2023, reflecting a 400 per cent budget increase. In seven countries, the ILO has strengthened areas such as entrepreneurship and protection for all, with social protection being a priority in the DWCPs, leading to significant policy, technical and institutional outcomes.

► **Figure 4. Number of country programme outcomes reported per biennium**

89. The ILO's engagement has contributed to the adoption of new Conventions in five countries and improvements in reporting to the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. The work on gender equality has progressed but remains under-resourced compared with the size of the agenda. Few interventions have specifically targeted people with disabilities. The performance and coverage of the ILO's work on environmental sustainability have been improved.
90. Several areas require continued attention, particularly resource mobilization efforts aimed at achieving better distribution among countries and improved alignment of resources with DWCP priorities. Additionally, enhanced awareness and focused resource mobilization – addressing skills, gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, and informal economy challenges – are essential.
91. Furthermore, the ILO's management arrangements have faced several constraints, primarily the lack of a resident office in most countries of the subregion, and a distribution of the roles and responsibilities across different offices, which sometimes complicates project execution.
92. The ECOWAS Decent Work Programme (DWP) acted as a proxy for the ILO's subregional strategy, focusing on employment promotion, social protection, child and forced labour, social dialogue and labour standards. Despite a strong partnership, limited capacities within both ECOWAS and the ILO have impeded the DWP's implementation. The evaluation suggests further cooperation through periodic leadership meetings, capacity-building, secondment of project staff, and regular planning and monitoring sessions.

D. Efficiency

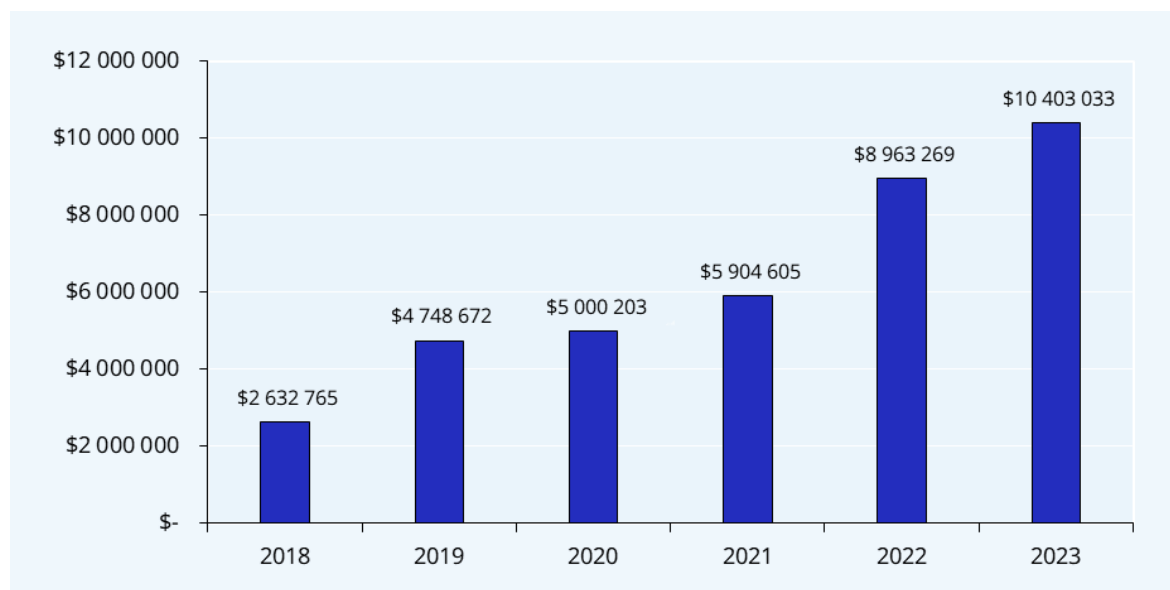
Key finding 13: Resource mobilization has been more effective where the ILO has a country office (Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria) or in countries that triggered the interest of particular funding partners (Ghana and Sierra Leone).

Key finding 14: The ILO has leveraged partnerships with constituents, governments, employers' organizations, UN agencies and civil society organizations/non-governmental organizations to optimize resource efficiency and amplify results across the Western Africa subregion.

Key finding 15: Internal coordination among ILO projects has occasionally contributed to cost efficiencies. However, challenges such as slow financial disbursements and complex procurement procedures have hindered implementation and led to delays.

93. Extrabudgetary technical cooperation resources primarily supported enterprises and protection for all with limited resource mobilization for Benin, Niger and Togo. RBTC resources focused on strengthening tripartite constituents, social dialogue and employment. RBSA funds were catalytic in broadening interventions through RBTC and technical support, favouring continued ILO intervention.

► **Figure 5. Annual extrabudgetary technical cooperation project expenditures in nine countries in Western Africa (US\$)**



Note: The nine countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo.

94. The ILO has leveraged partnerships in Western Africa to enhance implementation efficiencies, despite having less funding than other UN agencies. National resources from governments and employers' organizations have been used for shared ownership and cost-sharing. Workers' organizations have also been mobilized to reach large populations cost-effectively, though there is potential for more systematic leverage. There is a need to build capacities at subnational and local levels to support compliance with the ILO's administrative requirements.
95. The ILO's cooperation with other UN agencies has yielded positive but often restricted results at local level, with some successful collaborations, such as the Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labour in Supply Chains in Africa project (ACCEL Phases 1 and 2), the ENACTE project, the Joint Labour Migration Programme and the AGRIDOM project. However,

slow financial disbursements and cumbersome procurement procedures have hindered project execution, particularly in countries without an ILO office.

E. Sustainability

Key finding 16: The ILO's DWCP strategies and activities in the Western Africa subregion have generated sustainable outcomes, including through the appropriation of strategies and approaches by constituents, and setting aside resources to build on progress and achievements.

Key finding 17: Limited prospects for sustainability were often associated with the lack of exit and sustainability strategies at the project design stage, and limited engagement in scaling up interventions at national level.

96. Evidence of sustainable outcomes includes the ratification of ILO Conventions, the development of national policies and strategies, and funding commitments from governments and the private sector (for example Côte d'Ivoire on informality and child labour, Ghana on labour migration and Nigeria on social protection).
97. Several enabling factors were identified as having the potential to further increase the sustainability of the ILO's interventions. They include stronger involvement of constituents and other key stakeholders in all stages of the DWCPs and in development cooperation projects, as necessary, while better leveraging the capabilities and networks of employers' and workers' organizations; engagement with ministries of finance or planning; UN partnerships; and increased attention to sustainability strategies or scaling strategies over exit strategies.

F. Emerging impact

Key finding 18: At the policy and normative levels, the ILO's interventions have influenced the adoption and implementation of international labour standards and normative frameworks across Western Africa. This includes the ratification of Conventions and adoption of new or revised policies on areas such as employment, social protection and child labour.

Key finding 19: The ILO's DWCP strategies and activities have contributed to institutional development, including with new or relaunched governance structures that have facilitated social dialogue.

Key finding 20: The ILO's interventions have benefited vulnerable groups, such as workers in the informal and rural economies, with notable achievements in terms of social protection and the extension of health insurance coverage. Livelihoods have also been improved, although primarily at local level and not at national level.

Key finding 21: The scaling of successful interventions and their replication to other geographic areas or socio-economic groups has been limited.

98. Considering the resources available for the implementation of the DWCP strategies and activities in the subregion, the evaluation found that the ILO's interventions have had a notable impact on the Decent Work Agenda in the subregion, especially for vulnerable groups. This is demonstrated by the adoption of international labour standards, with the nine countries in the subregion having now ratified the eight fundamental Conventions. Progress also includes the revision or development of national policies in selected countries and collaboration with ECOWAS.
99. The ILO's DWCP strategies and activities have also contributed to institutional development, including the establishment or revitalization of governance structures that have facilitated

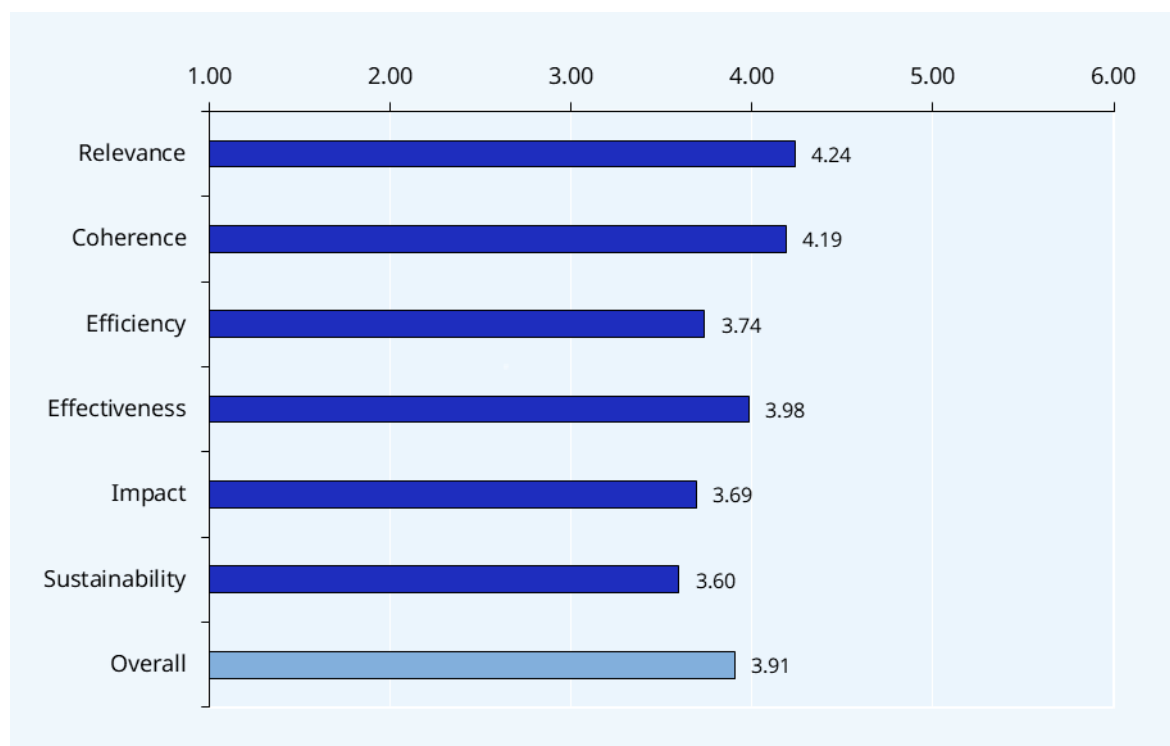
social dialogue by enhancing the organizational capacities of public administrations and employers' and workers' organizations to fulfil their mission and objectives, as well as by improving government responsiveness to trade unions. The support provided by the ITC-ILO was commended with calls for amplification.

100. Various interventions have improved the livelihoods of communities at local level through income-generating activities and the strengthening of local systems and markets (for example, Niger and Sierra Leone). The amplitude of these effects remains to be gauged against the size of the population in terms of decent work deficits.
101. Constituents and stakeholders expect more engagement from the ILO, both strategically and directly, to scale up results from pilot interventions. Challenges also remain in terms of defining specific and measurable impacts of the ILO's activities as a whole in a given thematic area (regular budget plus all relevant development cooperation projects).

Overall assessment

102. Figure 6 presents the evaluation team's overall assessment.

► **Figure 6. Overall assessment**



Note: 6 = Highly satisfactory; 5 = Satisfactory; 4 = Somewhat satisfactory; 3 = Somewhat unsatisfactory; 2 = Unsatisfactory; 1 = Highly unsatisfactory.

Conclusions and lessons learned

103. The ILO's DWCPs in Western Africa align with constituents' needs and international frameworks, engaging vulnerable groups and fostering ownership. Although coherence with the UN system has improved, collaboration has varied. DWCPs have advanced the Decent Work Agenda, but gaps in coverage and funding limitations remain. Efficiency has been enhanced through partnerships, despite slow disbursements. Overall, DWCPs have significantly

impacted the region by adopting international labour standards, improving social protection policies and making notable progress in child labour elimination.

- 104.** It is crucial to embed implementation within broader programmes, strengthen stakeholder capacities, and leverage both internal and external partnerships. This approach aligns local and national priorities, enhances ownership, and promotes effective and sustainable outcomes.

Recommendations

- 105. Recommendation 1:** The ILO should strengthen the engagement of constituents and local stakeholders to improve the design and implementation of integrated programme approaches in DWCPs and projects. It should do this by:

- building on good practices in the subregion in development cooperation projects and more systematically conducting diagnostics that assess the multidimensional root causes of decent work deficits at the household level. The constituents and other local stakeholders (such as stakeholders in rural and informal economies) should be engaged in the diagnoses and programme formulation;
- formulating DWCP strategies and activities that are vertically integrated and horizontally cohesive and that leverage broad partnerships, reshaping the narrative and the perception of funding partners regarding funding priorities to achieve systemic change.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Country Offices (COs) Abidjan and Abuja DWT/CO-Dakar	High	Medium-term	Low

- 106. Office response:** The Regional Office agrees and will continue engaging with constituents and stakeholders, involving ACTRAV and ACT/EMP specialists, to enhance social partner engagement. CO-Abidjan and CO-Abuja – supported by the ILO Regional Office for Africa (RO-Africa), DWT/CO-Dakar, and other Office-wide expertise – will explore innovative approaches to better understand and address the multiple dimensions of decent work deficits. This will inform DWCP processes, improve programming and strengthen partnerships.

- 107. Recommendation 2:** The ILO should make more room in the DWCPs for supporting constituents in scaling up project results. It should:

- specify in DWCPs, jointly with constituents, the conditions and pathways necessary to scale up the programme results, and identify contributing actors, including financial ministries and planning bureaux, as well as technical, financial and capacity needs, partnerships and the ILO's role;
- leverage good practices from pilot projects on the subject.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
CO-Abidjan and CO-Abuja	High	Medium-term	Low

- 108. Office response:** The Regional Office agrees. Scalability is a key criterion in the region's development cooperation programming, from project appraisals to pilots and evaluations. In

collaboration with PARTNERSHIPS and EVAL, the region will analyse selected pilot projects to highlight successful scaling cases. The active involvement of key ministries – including finance, economy and planning – in DWCP processes and steering committees is standard practice. The Regional Office will work with country offices to ensure more active stakeholder participation.

109. Recommendation 3: The ILO should embed in its resource mobilization efforts an expanded narrative that highlights the structural and sustainable effects of systemic and programmatic interventions. It should:

- advocate for integrated systemic approaches to address structural problems and encourage funding partners to fund comprehensive programme interventions aligned with DWCPs, emphasizing under-resourced subjects, such as gender equality, skills development and informality;
- create, jointly with constituents, stand-alone communication products highlighting DWCP priorities to support resource mobilization. Constituents should integrate the DWCP into their planning and budgeting.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
CO–Abidjan and CO–Abuja	High	Short-term	Low
DWT/CO–Dakar			
ADG/ECR: PARTNERSHIPS			

110. Office response: The offices concerned will enhance actions in line with the recommendation. Integrated approaches, sustainability and theory of change are central to DWCP development, resource mobilization and implementation. The Regional Office will continue to attract a broad range of resource partners and respond to funding opportunities to implement priorities identified by constituents.

111. Recommendation 4: The ILO should continue promoting policy areas that are among the underfunded subregional priorities. It should:

- Promote the mobilization of headquarters and DWT/CO–Dakar technical specialists and the engagement of funding partners in support of underfunded priority areas, such as social dialogue, gender equality, skills development, transition to formality and just transition.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
CO–Abidjan and CO–Abuja	High	Short-term	Low
DWT/CO–Dakar			
DDG: Priority Action Programmes – Transition from the informal to the formal economy (AP/FORMALIZATION) and Just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies (AP/JUSTTRANSITION)			

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ADG/GRD: Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE) and Conditions of Work and Equality Department (WORKQUALITY)/Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch (GEDI)	High	Short-term	Low
ADG/JSP: EMPLOYMENT/Skills and Employability Branch (SKILLS)			

112. Office response: The Regional Office – in coordination with DWT/CO–Dakar, CO–Abidjan and CO–Abuja – will increase efforts to mobilize resources for underfunded priorities. It recognizes that partners may face constraints related to their programmatic, institutional and funding priorities.

113. Recommendation 5: The ILO should increase focus on capacity-building, learning and knowledge management. It should:

- expand institutional capacity-building efforts, especially of under-resourced institutions, to bolster the implementation of DWCPs, developing and using the theory of change for accountability, learning and reporting, and considering increased involvement of ITC–ILO;
- facilitate mutual learning by keeping national project staff informed during the development of a DWCP and consulted as appropriate;
- train national project staff and managers in procurement policies and procedures, and financial management.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
CO–Abidjan and CO–Abuja	Moderate	Medium-term	Low
RO–Africa			
Treasurer and Financial Comptroller (TR/CF): PROCUREMENT			

114. Office response: The Regional Office agrees and will strengthen the capacity of constituents, particularly under-resourced institutions, using earmarked RBTC and other resources. Capacity-building and knowledge management are integral to development cooperation projects. The region will enhance capacity-building for project managers, staff and constituents, scaling up DWCP monitoring training.

115. Recommendation 6: The ILO should strengthen the support provided to ECOWAS in the execution of its DWP. It should:

- align policies and strategies of DWCPs and the ECOWAS DWP;
- advocate for the explicit inclusion in the next ECOWAS DWP of social dialogue, gender equality, skills development, informality and just transition;
- increase ILO capacities to support ECOWAS DWP implementation and monitoring, including its participation in international events on decent work and social justice.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
RO–Africa	High	Short-term	Medium
CO–Abuja			

116. Office response: The Regional Office agrees and will continue supporting the ECOWAS DWP through RBTC, development cooperation, South–South and triangular cooperation and ITC–ILO capacity-building. DWCP and ECOWAS DWP development will ensure alignment with national and regional policies, with a focus on regional economic commission-level and regional integration strategies.

117. Recommendation 7: The ILO should strengthen its representation in non-resident countries and expand it in resident countries according to its responsibilities. It should:

- explore innovative representation models, such as outposting DWT specialists or utilizing project staff, with transparent timekeeping formulas for duties such as UN country team representation, resource mobilization, coordination and knowledge management;
- review the capacity of CO–Abuja to ensure effective support and collaboration with ECOWAS.

Responsible units	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Director-General's Office	High	Short-term	Medium
ADG/CS; HRD, PROGRAM			
RO–Africa			
CO–Abuja			

118. Office response: The Office agrees, noting resource and capacity constraints. The Regional Office will pursue enhanced presence and representation, including exploring outposting specialists. Ongoing actions through development cooperation projects, support missions by specialists, and the engagement of country office directors in UN country teams and UNSDCF processes are positioning the ILO effectively. Support to ECOWAS remains a strategic priority, exemplified by CO–Abuja's dedicated staff for the Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa Project II and joint annual work planning with ECOWAS to ensure coordinated implementation of the ECOWAS DWP.

► Draft decision

119. The Governing Body requested the Director-General to take into consideration the recommendations of the three independent high-level evaluations presented in document GB.352/PFA/9 (paragraphs 32–38, 72–78 and 105–117), and to ensure their appropriate implementation.