



International
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► A self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions

SAM-SDI

Booklet no. 4: Step 3

**A self-assessment method for
social dialogue institutions
SAM-SDI**

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Acronyms

ACT/EMP	Bureau for Employers' Activities, ILO
ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities, ILO
AICESIS	International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
CFA	Committee on Freedom of Association
CSO	civil society organization
DIALOGUE	Social Dialogue and Tripartism Unit, ILO
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization/International Labour Office
IOE	International Organisation of Employers
ITCILO	International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
LDR	labour dispute prevention and resolution
M & E	monitoring and evaluation
MGA	Mutual Gains Approach
NATLEX	ILO database of national labour, social security and related human rights legislation
NGO	non-governmental organization
NORMLEX	ILO information system on international labour standards
SAM-SDI	self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDI	social dialogue institution
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations

► Icons used in the SAM-SDI

To help users navigate the SAM-SDI, icons are used as explanatory devices throughout the method.

	Guiding questions	To facilitate group discussions*
	Definitions	Definitions or explanations of concepts
	Activities	To facilitate participatory and productive work*
	Examples	To illustrate different aspects of the SAM-SDI
	Templates	To organize and record the results of the work*

* Booklet no. 7 comprises a package of interactive templates as presented in the SAM-SDI booklets. The templates allow the results of the self-assessment to be recorded electronically on a continuous basis. The templates included in the first six booklets are not interactive and cannot be used in this way.



► Figure 6: The SAM-SDI journey

► **Step 0: Taking the decision to carry out a self-assessment and getting ready**

1. Decide, through consensus, whether to apply the SAM-SDI
2. Select the assessment team
3. Devise a work plan and budget

► **Step 1: Building an understanding of the history and context of the SDI**

1. Review the SDI's objectives
2. Construct a timeline
3. Map the institutional environment

► **Step 2: Assessing the inclusiveness of the SDI**

1. Assess the five dimensions of inclusiveness using benchmarks
2. Identify objectives and action to enhance inclusiveness

► **Step 3: Assessing the effectiveness of the SDI**

1. Discuss the dimensions of effectiveness and adjust, if necessary, to the SDI
2. Identify examples of achievements and disappointments
3. Assess the five dimensions of effectiveness using guiding questions
4. Identify objectives and action to enhance effectiveness

► **Step 4: Formulating the action plan**

1. Develop the action plan
2. Hold a consultation to gather feedback
3. Finalize and disseminate the self-assessment report and action plan

► **Step 5: Implementing the action plan**

1. Monitor progress
2. Adjust implementation in light of progress





Step 3: Assessing the effectiveness of the SDI

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Step 3: Assessing the effectiveness of the SDI

Step 3 of the SAM-SDI comprises an assessment of the effectiveness of the SDI, and is at the heart of the method. Effectiveness is linked to both the “throughput legitimacy” and the “output legitimacy” of social dialogue.⁵⁷

The method proposed for the self-assessment of effectiveness in Step 3 differs from that used for inclusiveness in [Step 2](#). This is because action to improve the effectiveness of the SDI must address the underlying factors (or *causes*) that influence its effectiveness rather than their *consequences* on the SDI. Building an understanding of these causal factors or influences will provide the basis for the identification of the action needed to strengthen the SDI’s effectiveness.

The SAM-SDI proposes five dimensions, capturing key aspects of effectiveness, as the basis for the self-assessment. Each dimension will be separately assessed through an in-depth examination by the assessment team of specific work or results of the SDI relating to that dimension.

Objective

The objective of Step 3 is the development of an outline action plan to enhance the effectiveness of the SDI.

Outcome

The members of the assessment team have built a shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the SDI with respect to its effectiveness, based on an in-depth exploration of the causal factors influencing effectiveness. Provisional objectives and actions to enhance effectiveness have been formulated.

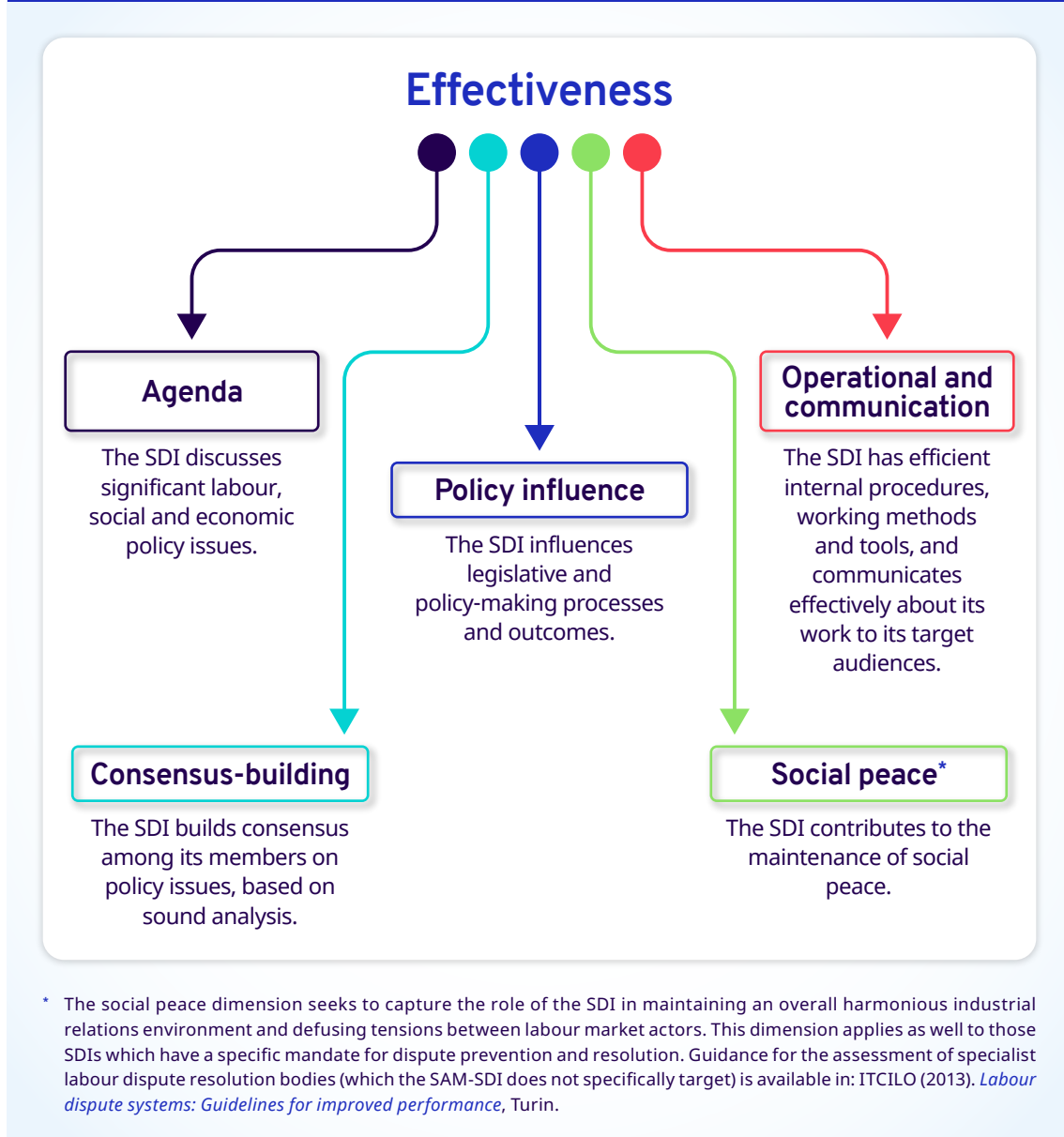
⁵⁷ See the conceptual framework in the Introduction to the SAM-SDI for further explanation. The inclusiveness of the SDI also influences its effectiveness, by enhancing the “input legitimacy” of social dialogue. An SDI which is both inclusive and effective will be better able to contribute to the ultimate goal of more socially just and economically sustainable policy outcomes.

► Introducing the dimensions of effectiveness

The five dimensions of effectiveness are presented below.



► Figure 3: The dimensions of effectiveness



Before proceeding, some further explanation of the scope and meaning of each dimension of effectiveness is essential.

Agenda effectiveness

The first dimension refers to the issues or topics that the SDI addresses and which appear on its agenda, whether as standing items, ad hoc items, or those dealt with by specific committees or working groups, or in any other manner. Under the assessment of agenda effectiveness, the team will consider questions such as whether the SDI addressed significant national policy concerns in the labour, social and/or economic fields on its agenda, including both new and emerging issues in the world of work and those of long-standing concern.⁵⁸ For those SDIs which have a mandate to undertake tripartite consultations regarding the ILO-related matters covered by [Convention No. 144](#), article 5, this role should also be considered. In the examination of agenda effectiveness, you will focus on whether the SDI's agenda included important policy issues, and not on the content or eventual outcomes of those discussions.

Consensus-building effectiveness

Under this dimension, the team will explore the internal processes through which the policy issues on the agenda of the SDI were addressed, as well as any external influences on these processes. Questions will include, for example, whether the SDI succeeded in bridging possibly diverse points of view of its members in order to formulate agreed policy positions or recommendations. The team will also consider whether the SDI's working methods facilitated constructive and solution-oriented discussions. This dimension includes consideration of the processes and outputs of the SDI but does not cover whether or not those outputs influenced policy-making.

Policy influence effectiveness

This dimension picks up where the consensus-building dimension left off, by examining the fate of the SDI's outputs. Under this dimension, the team will explore whether the SDI had a discernible influence on the direction and content of national policy and legislation. In some instances, an SDI's outputs may be binding in their own right, for example, in the case of certain tripartite pacts and agreements and minimum wage setting. In this case, the team may consider for example, whether the SDI monitored the implementation of the agreement. However, very often, an SDI's outputs feed into further decision-making processes. In that case, the team may discuss whether the SDI followed-up on its recommendations in an effort to increase the likelihood of them being incorporated into public policy. While the SAM-SDI enables the team to build an understanding of the factors influencing the uptake of the SDI's outputs in national policy-making, it is beyond its scope to assess the substantive content and eventual impact of those policies once they were adopted and implemented.⁵⁹

Social peace effectiveness

This dimension concerns how effectively the SDI, in fulfilling various aspects of its mandate, contributed to the achievement or maintenance of sound industrial relations and social peace.⁶⁰ The SDI may have done this in two main ways. First, it may have offered a safe, neutral space in which the social partners and the government, through social dialogue, could discuss and

⁵⁸ The team will examine these questions in relation to specific, real examples of the work of the SDI in recent years – hence, the use of the past tense.

⁵⁹ In light of this, assessing the extent to which the SDI contributed, through its policy-influencing work, to the achievement of decent work, inclusive growth or sustainable enterprises lies beyond the scope of the SAM-SDI. Investigating those aspects would need to be the subject of an in-depth impact assessment applying a different methodology to that proposed in this method.

⁶⁰ As explained in the Introduction, “social peace” refers to the maintenance of a harmonious industrial relations environment in the country and the easing of tensions between the labour market actors.

seek to resolve pressing labour market issues that, had they remained unresolved, would have undermined social peace. Second, the mandate of certain SDIs may have established them as dispute resolution authorities in their own right.

Regarding the first, broader role of the SDI, the self-assessment team may explore an instance where the SDI offered the social partners and the government the opportunity to discuss an emerging issue before it escalated into a dispute. Another example could be where the SDI issued policy advice on a contentious or complex labour market issue that had been put on its agenda by the social partners. Regarding the second, narrower role of the SDI, the assessment team may, for example, explore the case of a specific dispute in which the SDI was involved in its mediation and resolution.

Under this dimension, questions to be addressed may include whether the SDI was proactive in seeking to prevent conflict between workers, employers and governments, whether it applied consensus-based approaches to resolving the dispute or the extent to which its advice was fully aligned with the real needs of the labour market actors.

Operational and communication effectiveness

The final dimension of effectiveness addresses its internal procedures, working methods and tools, including its communication strategy. To a large extent, this dimension underpins the first four dimensions of effectiveness as the internal operations of the SDI are there to support all aspects of its work and results.⁶¹ The dimension is divided into two sub-dimensions: the first deals with the internal procedures, working methods and tools and the second with communication issues.

Under the first sub-dimension, the team will consider the strengths and weaknesses of the SDI regarding how it operates, including the functioning of the secretariat (where one exists), the budget, facilities and equipment available, the SDI's working modalities and external partnerships. The second sub-dimension focuses specifically on the communication of the SDI, given the particular importance of this aspect. Effective communication is critical if the work of the SDI is to be truly influential in policy-making, as well as to demonstrate to a wider audience that the SDI is fulfilling a valuable role and therefore merits public investment and confidence.

⁶¹ The method for assessing the operational and communication dimension of effectiveness is different to that used for the other dimensions, and is explained in [sub-step 4](#) of Step 4.

► Process

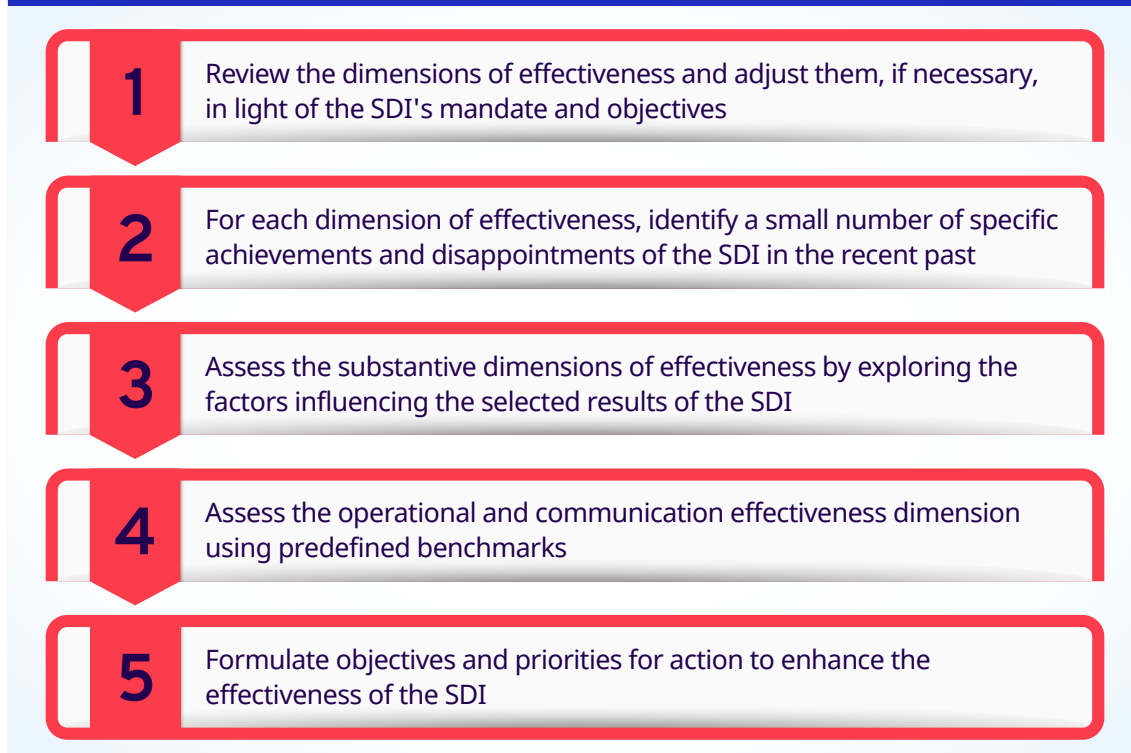
Step 3 constitutes the largest part of the SAM-SDI and is likely to take the most time. You may consider different options to organize your work, such as:

- addressing the dimensions one-by-one, phasing your work over a number of weeks or even longer;
- allocating time for intensive work over several consecutive days with a view to completing the self-assessment in one go;
- tackling only certain dimensions now, and coming back to the others later, if necessary⁶²;
- adopting a flexible approach. Although the task may seem a little daunting at first, you may find that, with experience, it becomes easier and faster to work through the step in its entirety.

While Step 3 can be accomplished by the assessment team working alone, you may find it useful to draw on additional sources of information or insights, including those suggested in [Annex 5](#).

The process to be followed in Step 3 is summarized in Figure 13, which gives an overview of the five sub-steps involved, each of which is explained in the following sections.

► **Figure 12: Sub-steps of Step 3**



⁶² The assessment team is encouraged to review the whole of Step 3 before deciding which parts to implement immediately and which, if any, to postpone or drop entirely.

► 1. Reviewing the dimensions of effectiveness

The SAM-SDI proposes five dimensions of effectiveness as the basis for the self-assessment. First, you should consider whether these dimensions adequately capture the mandate and objectives of the SDI. Refer to the list of objectives or functions that are set out in the SDI's founding document and to the explanation of the dimensions of effectiveness given above. Using the template below, match the objectives of the SDI to the five dimensions of effectiveness. Do they correspond well? Perhaps several of the SDI's objectives or functions fit under a single dimension, while other dimensions may not be relevant.



Template 4: Matching the SDI's objectives with the effectiveness dimensions proposed in the SAM-SDI

Dimension	The SDI's objectives or functions
► Agenda	<i>Write here the objectives of the SDI that correspond to each dimension of effectiveness. If there are none, leave blank.</i>
► Consensus-building	
► Policy influence	
► Social peace	
► Operational and communication	
► Other dimension(s) <i>Write here the name of any additional dimension(s)</i>	<i>Record here the stated objectives or functions of the SDI that correspond to the other dimensions of effectiveness (if any).</i>

Next, consider the following questions:

1.1 Are there any missing dimensions?

Does the SDI have an objective or function that is not captured by the five dimensions proposed by SAM-SDI? If this objective is crucial to the effectiveness of the SDI, you may wish to formulate a short name and description for a corresponding new "dimension", and add this to the template for inclusion in your self-assessment.

1.2 Are there any missing objectives?

During your discussion, you may identify certain functions that the SDI does not currently have, but which you think it should have. Make a note of them, as you may identify this as an opportunity for the SDI that should be addressed in the action plan.

1.3 Select the dimensions to be included in the self-assessment

Do you wish to cover all the dimensions of effectiveness in your self-assessment, or select only a few? You may have already considered this question in [Step 0](#) (work plan), but can revisit your decision now, using the guiding questions below.



Selecting the dimensions for the assessment of the SDI's effectiveness

- a. Are there any areas of work of the SDI where you consider its effectiveness to be most challenged and which should be assessed as a priority?
- b. Are there areas in which the experience of the SDI is particularly rich, from which you think useful lessons could be derived for other areas of work?
- c. Are there any areas in which the SDI has had very limited or no experience until now, and which are not yet ready to be assessed?
- d. Could you tackle any dimensions that you do not assess now at a later date?

► 2. Identifying results of the SDI for each dimension of effectiveness

The assessment of the effectiveness of the SDI relies on an exploration by the assessment team of examples of the SDI's specific results – both positive and negative - in the recent past. The terms used in the SAM-SDI to describe these results are “achievements” and “disappointments”, respectively.



► Achievements and disappointments of the SDI

An **achievement** is an instance or event that you consider to have been a success of the SDI, in which it achieved the desired result through its work.

A **disappointment** is an instance or event that you consider to have fallen short of the expectations or planned results of the SDI, and where it did not achieve the desired result through its work.

The first step is to select a small sample of the SDI's significant and specific achievements and disappointments to serve as the basis for the analysis. Do not try to be comprehensive or exhaustive when compiling your list. It is suggested that you should not spend too long selecting the examples, and that you choose those with which the team members are most familiar and which stand out in their memory.

2.1 Choose a time frame

First, select a time period for the assessment. It is better not to go back too far, as it may be difficult to recall exactly what happened, or the team members may not have been associated with the SDI at the time. The past four to five years may be a suitable timeframe.

2.2 Select a sample of achievements for each dimension of effectiveness

The box below provides some examples of the types of achievements you may wish to include. Discuss the SDI's notable achievements over the period in question for the various dimensions of effectiveness that you have decided to examine. Select two of them for each dimension.



► Examples of types of achievements

- Substantive discussion of an important labour or economic policy question
- A (policy) agreement concluded and adopted by the SDI
- A significant report, opinion or analysis produced and disseminated
- A recommendation made for the ratification of ILO Conventions Nos 87, 98 or 144
- A policy reform adopted by the government which reflected inputs from the SDI
- Legislation adopted incorporating the SDI's recommendations
- Successful mediation of an industrial dispute
- A high-profile public awareness event or campaign

Describe each achievement as specifically as possible in a few words, and specify the date or period when it occurred. Some achievements may relate only to a single dimension (for example, "agenda effectiveness", after which the SDI's work on the issue ended). Others may be pertinent to several dimensions (for example, "agenda", "consensus-building" and "policy-influencing", in cases where the SDI was able to continue its work through to the policy-making stage). Some fictional examples are presented below.

You may wish to use flip-charts, post-its, colour codes or any other tools to help visualize and organize the list of achievements.



Template 5: Achievements of the SDI (with fictional examples included)

Dimension	Date	Achievements
► Agenda	June 2016	<i>The SDI initiated discussions on the extension of social protection coverage to workers in the informal economy.</i>
	July 2018	<i>The SDI set up a working group to devise recommendations on the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises.</i>

► Consensus-building	Sept 2017	<i>The SDI produced a series of recommendations on extending social protection to workers in the informal economy.</i>
	February 2019	<i>The SDI published a joint research paper on a policy framework to enhance the productivity of SMEs, in collaboration with a university.</i>
► Policy influence	May 2019	<i>The SDI's recommendations on the extension of social protection to workers in the informal economy were, in large part, reflected in a reform of the social security code.</i>
	December 2018	<i>The national parliament approved ratification of Convention No. 144 following a recommendation issued by the SDI.</i>
► Social peace	June – Sept 2018	<i>The SDI successfully mediated a dispute in the education sector, thus averting the risk of industrial action by teachers.</i>
	Jan – June 2016	<i>The SDI developed an advisory note on the role of social dialogue in response to the steady increase of collective labour disputes in certain sectors.</i>
► Operational and communication	Jan – March 2019	<i>The SDI's secretariat devised and instituted an efficient procedure to track the progress of individual agenda items.</i>
	April 2020	<i>The SDI launched a multi-media campaign to raise awareness of violence and harassment in the world of work, which reached an estimated 1.2 million people.</i>

2.3 Select a sample of disappointments for each dimension of effectiveness

It is necessary also to understand the influences leading to disappointing results and to identify the action required to address them. Proceed in the same way as for the achievements. Identify and briefly describe a sample of specific disappointments, with a date for each. It is suggested that you identify two examples for each dimension. Some illustrative examples of disappointments are presented below.



► Examples of types of disappointments

- An important policy reform on which the SDI was not consulted
- An issue on which the SDI failed to reach consensus
- The SDI's recommendations, which were strongly evidence-based, were not given proper consideration by the government or parliament
- The policy advice issued by the SDI was not underpinned by sound evidence and was therefore of limited value



Template 6: Disappointments of the SDI (with fictional examples included)

Dimension	Date	Disappointments
► Agenda	November 2019	<i>The Minister of Labour prevented the SDI from discussing digital platform workers, maintaining that the issue was already under consideration by the Ministry of Trade and Industry.</i>
	January - March 2017	<i>The SDI did not include reform of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system in its agenda, thus missing an opportunity to contribute to the policy discussion.</i>
► Consensus-building	June - July 2016	<i>The SDI initiated work on climate change, but the social partners could not agree on the scope of the work and the discussions were halted.</i>
	April 2018	<i>The SDI started work on wages and productivity but, lacking good quality data, the discussions collapsed.</i>
► Policy influence	April 2020	<i>The government did not consult the SDI when formulating emergency measures to protect enterprises, jobs and incomes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.</i>
	Jan - May 2018	<i>Following off-the-record informal consultations, parliament adopted a new law restricting the right to organize of certain health workers, totally by-passing the SDI.</i>
► Social peace	March - April 2018	<i>The SDI was approached to mediate an industrial dispute in the garment sector but, lacking trained mediators, it was not in a position to assist.</i>
	Jan 2020	<i>The SDI was not approached to resolve a deadlock during sector-wide negotiations on working hours and overtime, because the parties did not consider it to be a neutral space.</i>
► Operational and communication	January 2018	<i>The SDI did not receive the budgetary allocation needed to support its secretariat and had to lay off several staff members</i>
	2019	<i>The SDI invested in upgrading its website, but did not have the resources to maintain it, so it quickly became outdated and obsolete.</i>

► 3. Assessing the substantive dimensions of effectiveness

Sub-step 3 comprises the assessment of the first four substantive dimensions of effectiveness, namely agenda, consensus-building, policy influence and social peace effectiveness. A different approach is used to assess operational and communication effectiveness and is explained in sub-step 4.

The assessment approach for the first four dimensions involves an exploration by the assessment team of the causal (or influencing) factors that contributed to the specific results (achievements and disappointments) that you identified in sub-step 2. This analysis of influencing factors will provide the basis for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the SDI, and for identifying the objectives and the possible actions needed to enhance its effectiveness in sub-step 5. Guiding questions are provided below to facilitate your discussions about the influencing factors under each effectiveness dimension.

3.1 Understanding the SAM-SDI approach to categorizing the factors influencing the effectiveness of the SDI

Before moving on to the assessment of each effectiveness dimension, it is necessary first to understand how the SAM-SDI approaches the analysis of the many factors influencing the SDI's effectiveness. The analysis depends on a categorization of these influencing factors based on two variables. The first variable is termed the "domain" of the influencing factor – which refers to whether the factor was operating largely outside or within the institution (i.e. external or internal). The second variable is termed the "nature" of the influencing factor – meaning whether it was an enabling or a constraining factor. This categorization is further explained in the table below.



Categorizing influencing factors by domain and nature

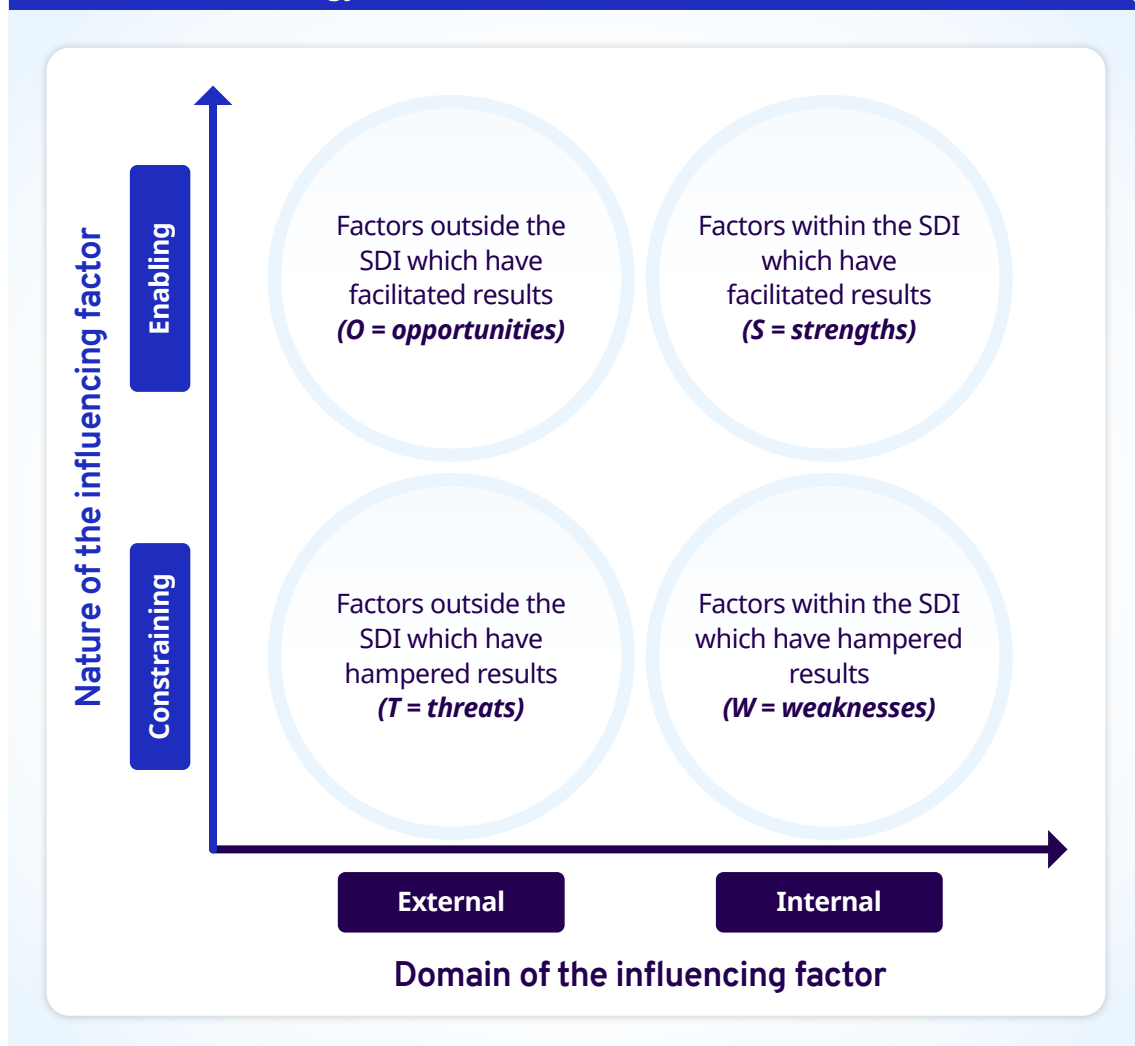
"Domain" of the influencing factor	External	<i>External influencing factors</i> operate in the SDI's wider environment. The SDI is likely to have limited or perhaps no control at all over these factors, which may include, for example, the national political and economic context, the activities of other institutions or the strength of the social partner organizations.
	Internal	<i>Internal influencing factors</i> operate within the SDI. The SDI should generally have a greater degree of control, or at least influence, over these factors, which may include, for example, how the SDI plans its work and allocates its resources, the knowledge and skills of its members or its decision-making procedures.
"Nature" of the influencing factor	Enabling	<i>Enabling factors</i> are those that helped the SDI achieve its desired results or outcomes. They tend to be internal strengths on which the SDI can build or opportunities for further institutional development.
	Constraining	<i>Constraining factors</i> prevented, or were obstacles to the achievement of the SDI's desired results. They tend to be internal institutional weaknesses or external threats to the SDI.

This four-way categorization of influencing factors underpins the assessment of effectiveness in sub-step 3 (see the four boxes in the table below). The guiding questions for each dimension, provided below, are organized according to whether they concern external or internal influencing factors. However, it will be up to the assessment team to determine whether a particular factor constituted an “enabling” or a “constraining” influence on the SDI in the examples of results being considered. In practice, it may sometimes be difficult to determine in which category a particular influence belongs, as the different categories can be inter-linked and the boundaries unclear. Do not worry if you are unsure how to categorize a particular influence. What is important is to identify the main influences, so that you can think about the action needed to address them.

You may be familiar with a well-established approach to institutional analysis known as “SWOT”, which stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The method proposed in the SAM-SDI is very similar to a SWOT analysis, although different terminology is used.⁶³ The figure 13 below shows the relationship between the terms used in the SAM-SDI and those used in a SWOT analysis.



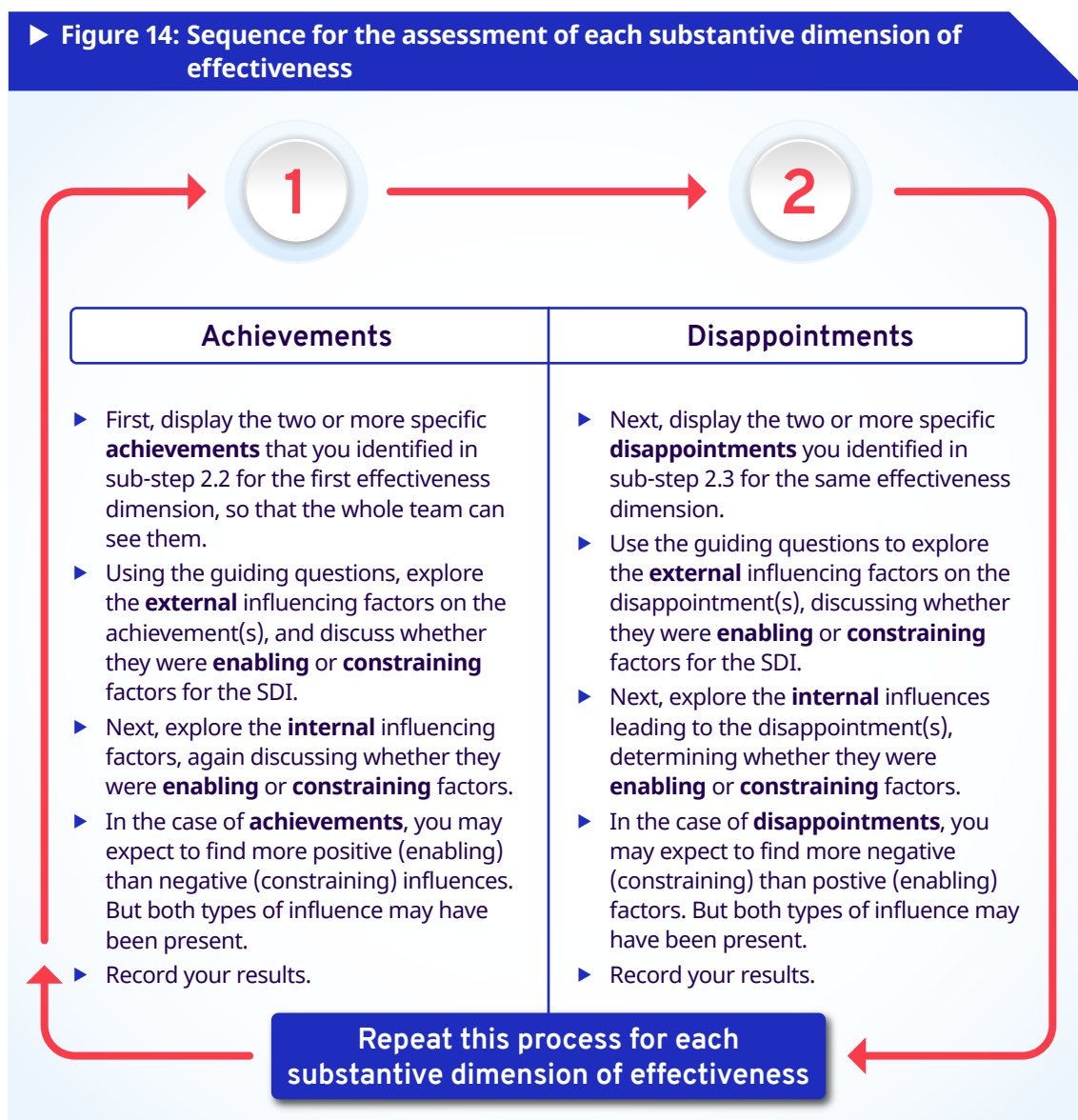
► Figure 13: The SAM-SDI analytical approach and corresponding SWOT terminology



⁶³ For additional online resources on SWOT analysis, see: [Creately](#): SWOT analysis tool to create effective SWOT diagrams online; and [Canva](#): tool to design a SWOT analysis online.

3.2 The sequence to be followed for each substantive dimension of effectiveness

For the assessment of each dimension of effectiveness (with the exception of the operational and communications effectiveness dimension), you should follow the sequence shown in Figure 14.



How to use the guiding questions on the substantive dimensions of effectiveness

► *What is the purpose of the guiding questions?*

The guiding questions provided in section 3.4 below aim to facilitate your discussion on the substantive dimensions of effectiveness. Their purpose is to help structure and focus your discussions, stimulating a collective reflection within the team on the possible causal (or *influencing*) factors that contributed to the specific results (both achievements and disappointments) of the SDI that you identified earlier. Their aim is not to elicit simple “yes/no” responses.

► ***How are the guiding questions structured and framed?***

Guiding questions are provided for each substantive dimension of effectiveness, in order to help you identify the key possible influencing factors at play. Different questions are proposed for exploring the external and the internal influencing factors that contributed to the specific achievement or disappointment being examined by the team. The questions are all framed in the past tense; for example - “Were there any particular social, political or economic developments that brought the issue to the SDI’s attention?” This is because the questions relate to a specific event in the SDI’s past, rather than to a general or on-going situation.

You may skip any questions that do not seem relevant or useful, and add new ones that seem more pertinent to your SDI’s situation. You may also find it helpful to add “*why* (did this happen)?” or “*how* (did we do this)?” to deepen your analysis. The questions should not constrain your discussions or creativity in any way, but are included as a tool to help you.

► ***How should you organize the discussions?***

Each dimension of effectiveness should be assessed separately. However, you may decide to spread your discussions over several working sessions rather than to attempt to complete all dimensions in a single “sitting”. You may also decide not to examine all the dimensions if they are not all equally relevant to the SDI.

It is recommended that the achievement(s) and disappointment(s) selected for each dimension in sub-step 2 are displayed where the team members can see them, to help focus the discussion on these specific examples.

There are different possible ways to organize your discussion. For example, you may choose to take each example of the SDI’s achievements in turn, working through the guiding questions, and then turn to each of the disappointments. Alternatively, you may tackle all the achievements together, followed by all the disappointments for the same dimension. It is not recommended to combine the examination of achievements and disappointments, given that different influencing factors may have been present.

It is suggested to start with the guiding questions that address the external influencing factors. Having completed these, the team should turn to the guiding questions on the internal influencing factors.

As you become familiar with the process and identify the approach that suits you best, the work should become easier and quicker.

► ***How to record the outcomes of your discussions?***

In responding to the guiding questions, the team should aim first, to identify what were the key influencing factors and second, to determine together whether each of those factors was an “enabling” (positive) or a “constraining” (negative) influence on the SDI. The outcomes should be recorded accordingly, in line with the analytical framework shown in figure 13 and in template 7.

If team members have divergent opinions that cannot be reconciled at this point, make a note of them; you may come back to them later in the process. Alternatively, you may wish to explore the reasons behind the different points of view – for example, do they reflect gender or other personal characteristics of the team members (such as age, education or experience), organizational affiliation or political ideology? However, there may be a risk of losing momentum if the team spends too long trying to resolve points of disagreement.

3.3 Recording the results of your discussion

To organize and record the results of your discussion, you may wish to use the template provided below, in whatever way you choose - e.g. on a flipchart, with post-its, electronically, etc.



Template 7: Key factors influencing effectiveness

Effectiveness dimension: *Write here the name of the effectiveness dimension being assessed*

Achievement(s) or disappointment(s): *Record here the specific achievement(s) or disappointment(s) discussed for this dimension*

	External influencing factors	Internal influencing factors
Enabling factors	<i>In these boxes, record the key influencing factors identified by the team as enabling</i>	
Constraining factors	<i>In these boxes, record the key influencing factors identified by the team as constraining</i>	

During your discussions, you may already start to identify where action is needed to address the influencing factors and improve the SDI's effectiveness. For example, you may conclude that "this is a serious constraint which we must tackle urgently", or "this is a significant strength which we should make better use of". Make a note of these ideas, as they will be useful when devising specific objectives and actions in sub-step 5.

3.4 The guiding questions for assessing the substantive dimensions of effectiveness



► Dimension 1: Agenda effectiveness

▮▮ Does the SDI discuss significant labour, social and economic policy issues? ▮▮



Agenda effectiveness	
External influencing factors	Internal influencing factors
a. Were there any particular social, political or economic developments (at the national, regional or international levels) that brought the issue to the SDI's attention?	a. Did the SDI act on its own initiative in tabling the issue, or did it do so in response to a request, e.g. from the government, parliament or the public?
b. Were there any external influences or pressures on the SDI either to address or to prevent it from addressing the issue?	b. Did the issue fall within the SDI's mandate?
c. Was the involvement of the SDI in discussion of the issue mandated by law?	c. Did all the SDI's members/constituent groups have an equal say in setting the agenda?
d. Was the SDI the only competent institution in this field or did it compete, or collaborate, with others in dealing with the issue?	d. Was the SDI able to resolve any internal disagreement on whether or not to table the issue?
e. Did the SDI enjoy widespread recognition and respect in policy-making circles, or was it perceived as a marginal player?	e. Did the SDI have good procedures in place to establish its agenda well in advance?
f. Did the SDI have any external "champions" who supported its involvement in policy debates and development?	f. Did the SDI have the flexibility to modify its agenda/work plan in response to changing needs or opportunities?
g. Did the government or any other group seek to bypass the SDI in addressing the issue?	g. Did the SDI have access to the information, data, institutions and people necessary to determine whether this was a significant issue that required its attention?
h. Did the government systematically involve the social partners in the SDI in effective consultations regarding the International Labour Standards (ILS)-related matters specified in Convention No. 144 , at least once per year?	h. Were the SDI's resources (human and financial) adequate to address the key policy priorities that it identified?

► Dimension 2: Consensus-building effectiveness

► Does the SDI build consensus among its members on policy issues, based on sound analysis? ▲▲



Consensus-building effectiveness

External influencing factors	Internal influencing factors
a. Was the national political and social climate stable at the time?	a. Did the SDI's members agree on the scope of the work and the type of output to be produced?
b. Was the subject matter technically and politically straightforward, or inherently complex, sensitive or divisive?	b. Did the SDI establish an effective and appropriate working modality to tackle the issue (for example, a committee or working group)?
c. Was there external pressure on the SDI to complete the work within a specific timeframe?	c. Did the SDI have rules in place to govern its working methods, decision-making, chairing?
d. Was there any external involvement or interference in the SDI's work - e.g. by political parties or civil society groups?	d. Was the team undertaking the work diverse and inclusive, including people with the right mix of profiles, skills and knowledge?
e. Did the topic have a high public profile, receiving prominent media attention and lending a sense of urgency?	e. Did the individuals trust each other, and was everyone treated equally and with respect?
f. Did the SDI collaborate with any external partners or institutions?	f. Were techniques applied to bridge differences, seek compromise and build consensus?
g. Did the representatives in the SDI receive appropriate support and guidance or instructions regarding the position of their respective organizations on the topic under discussion?	g. Did the SDI draw on outside technical or other expertise, where needed?
h. Were good data and information on the issue available and accessible in the public domain?	h. Did the team effectively document and communicate its progress and challenges to the leaders and members of the SDI?

► Dimension 3: Policy influence effectiveness

▮▮ Does the SDI influence legislative and policy-making processes and outcomes? ▮▮



Policy influence effectiveness	
External influencing factors	Internal influencing factors
a. Was there political stability, respect for the principles of democracy and the rule of law in the country?	a. Did the SDI issue its advice or recommendations at the right time for it to be of use to policy-makers?
b. Did policy- or law-makers engage with the SDI on this issue? Was this engagement genuine or was it merely to fulfil a legal requirement or to pay lip-service to social dialogue?	b. Did the SDI regularly inform policy-makers about the progress of its work, and make them aware of its forthcoming output or policy advice?
c. Was it mandatory for the government or parliament to consider or act upon the SDI's recommendations, or to explain their reasons for not doing so?	c. Was the SDI's output robust and balanced, reflecting a consensus position between the membership?
d. Was there pressure from any external source on the government to act on this issue urgently or in a particular way?	d. Was the SDI's policy output produced in an appropriate, persuasive and accessible form or forms, adapted to its target audience(s)?
e. Was the SDI's output legally binding in its own right?	e. Did the SDI disseminate its output effectively to its target audiences?
f. What was the reputation of the SDI, based on its track record or any other factors?	f. Did the SDI follow up with policy- or law-makers after the release of its output?
g. Did any groups, especially those not represented in the SDI, question the credibility of its analysis or recommendations?	g. Did the SDI (or the secretariat) monitor whether its advice or recommendations were followed and, if not, seek to understand the reasons why?
h. Did any other institutions provide supporting or conflicting advice on the same topic?	h. Did the member organizations of the SDI consistently lobby for or otherwise advocate the adoption and implementation of its advice or recommendations?

► Dimension 4: Social peace effectiveness⁶⁴

► Does the SDI contribute to the maintenance of social peace? ▲▲



Social peace effectiveness	
External influencing factors	Internal influencing factors
a. Were freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining respected in law and in practice?	a. Was the role of the SDI in maintaining social peace and/or in LDR clearly defined in its mandate?
b. Was the country characterized by a generalized respect for the rule of law?	b. Was the SDI proactive in seeking to maintain social peace and prevent disputes or did it wait for referrals?
c. Was there an adequate legal framework on labour and employment issues? Was it effectively enforced?	c. Did the SDI have members or secretariat staff with the skills and experience to deal with social tensions/ conflict and LDR? Could it access external expertise if needed?
d. Did the scale and potential impact of the issue or dispute in question influence the manner in which the SDI responded?	d. Were the internal procedures of the SDI with regard to social peace/ LDR efficient and adapted to the needs of diverse clients?
e. Were employers' and workers' organizations aware of the role of the SDI in maintaining social peace, the services available and how to access them?	e. Were the respective roles of the government and the social partners clearly defined and appropriate for efficiently resolving the issue or conflict?
f. Did the SDI enjoy the trust and respect of the government and the social partners in equal measure?	f. Did the SDI adopt consensus-based approaches, with an emphasis on prevention of disputes?
g. If specialized labour dispute prevention and resolution (LDR) institutions existed (in addition to the SDI), were their respective roles and responsibilities clearly specified and respected? Did the institutions cooperate well?	

⁶⁴ This dimension is relevant primarily to SDIs with a mandate that includes a dispute prevention and resolution function. A detailed checklist for the assessment of labour dispute prevention and resolution is available in ITCILO (2013). *Labour dispute systems: Guidelines for improved performance*, Turin, pp. 38-49.

► Other substantive dimensions of effectiveness

The preceding four dimensions of effectiveness are those suggested by the SAM-SDI.

Did you identify any other substantive dimensions of effectiveness for the SDI in sub-step 1? If so, you now need to assess these dimensions, by exploring the influencing factors that contributed to the selected achievements and disappointments. You may draw on the same guiding questions as used for the previous dimensions or formulate new questions better adapted to the new dimension being assessed.

Once you have completed your assessment, record the outcomes of the discussion and move on to sub-step 4.

► 4. Assessing the operational dimension of effectiveness

► Does the SDI have efficient internal procedures, working methods and tools, and communicate effectively about its work to its target audiences? ▲▲

The final dimension of effectiveness underpins the preceding four and concerns how effectively and efficiently the internal operations of the SDI support its substantive work. The method for the assessment of the operational and communication dimension differs from that used for the other dimensions of effectiveness. This is because this dimension relates to how the SDI functions whereas the first four dimensions related to what the SDI has achieved (its results in terms of its agenda, consensus-building, etc.).

The issues are presented as “benchmarks” which capture key aspects of the dimension, framed as positive statements against which you will assess the SDI.⁶⁵ The benchmarks are stated in the present tense to reflect the fact that the assessment relates to the current operations of the SDI, rather than its past results (as was the case with the preceding dimensions). Nonetheless, it may still be helpful during your discussions to bear in mind the specific examples of achievements and disappointments identified in sub-step 2, as these may help you to identify the key operational strengths and weaknesses of the SDI which contributed to those results.

The aim of the exercise is to stimulate discussion within the team about the strengths and weaknesses of the SDI with respect to its operational and communication effectiveness. The dimension is divided into two sub-dimensions: the first addresses the SDI’s internal procedures, working methods and tools, and the second, the communication function more specifically.

⁶⁵ This is the same approach as was used for the assessment of inclusiveness in Step 2.



Scale for scoring the SDI against the benchmarks

Score	Meaning
n/a	This benchmark is not applicable or relevant to the SDI ⁶⁶
1	The SDI performs poorly against this benchmark
2	The SDI performs moderately well against this benchmark
3	The SDI performs very well against this benchmark

Taking each benchmark in turn, discuss how well your SDI performs with respect to it. Try to reach consensus within the team on your response or, if this is not possible, note down any differences of opinion. You may wish to apply the scoring method proposed below to quantify your response. At the end of the discussion of each sub-dimension, record the outcomes of your conversation noting, in particular what you consider to be the main strengths and weaknesses of the SDI.



The SDI has efficient internal procedures, working methods and tools

n/a or score 1 to 3

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. The SDI has a permanent secretariat, with a sufficient number of staff who possess the required skills and experience to do their jobs effectively. | |
| b. The tasks of the secretariat are clearly specified and efficiently delivered in a way that fully meets the needs of the SDI. | |
| c. The human resources practices for the secretariat are fair and transparent (for example, regarding recruitment, career development, remuneration, etc.). Diversity and inclusion issues are taken into account in staffing decisions. | |
| d. The SDI and the secretariat have written, clear and effective procedures and rules governing their ways of working and which are respected in practice. | |
| e. The SDI has working modalities that are adapted to the different work items on its agenda (for example, sub-committees or working groups). | |
| f. The SDI has adequate facilities and equipment, such as offices and meeting rooms, furniture, computers and printers, documentation/library, databases, consumables (paper, pens, etc.), internet connectivity, mobile phones, transport etc. | |
| g. The budget of the SDI, including for the secretariat, is adequate to enable the SDI to carry out its mandate, the funds are disbursed on time and robust financial management, accounting and reporting procedures are followed. | |

⁶⁶ "Not applicable" (n/a) would be the case, for example, for the benchmarks referring to the secretariat in an SDI which does not have a secretariat.

h. The leadership of the SDI enjoys autonomy and independence regarding decision-making, including over the allocation of financial and human resources. Government and the social partners have an equal voice in such decision-making.	
i. The SDI has productive partnerships with external institutions, including to access research and data.	
j. The SDI has an annual work plan or other planning framework to guide its work, with performance indicators that are regularly monitored and adjusted.	
k. The SDI innovates in order to increase the efficiency of its operations.	
l. The SDI responds well to changed circumstances (such as those created by the Covid-19 pandemic), and adjusts its working methods accordingly, including by the use of remote ways of working.	

What are the SDI's main strengths with respect to its internal procedures, working methods and tools?

Record the main outcomes of your discussion

What are the SDI's main weaknesses with respect to its internal procedures, working methods and tools?

Record the main outcomes of your discussion



The SDI communicates effectively about its work to its target audiences	n/a or score 1 to 3
a. The SDI has a thorough understanding of its target audiences and their respective information needs.	
b. The SDI systematically disseminates information on its outputs and achievements, using varied means of communication that are adapted to its target audiences.	
c. The SDI has a communication strategy, covering both internal and external communication.	
d. The secretariat includes staff with specific skills and experience in communication.	
e. The SDI engages proactively with the media to promote fair and balanced coverage of its work.	
f. The SDI/secretariat maintains a user-friendly, comprehensive and updated website.	
g. The SDI is well-linked to networks of policy makers and influencers, and systematically makes use of these channels for communication and information exchange.	
h. There is a prevailing culture of openness and freedom of speech in the country.	
i. The national communications infrastructure is extensive and reliable, including for radio, television, internet and mobile phone, in both rural and urban areas.	
j. The SDI has established a reputation as a neutral and impartial body.	

What are the SDI's main strengths with respect to communication?

Record the main outcomes of your discussion

What are the SDI's main weaknesses with respect to communication?

Record the main outcomes of your discussion

Once you have completed the assessment of this dimension, compile the results using template 8.



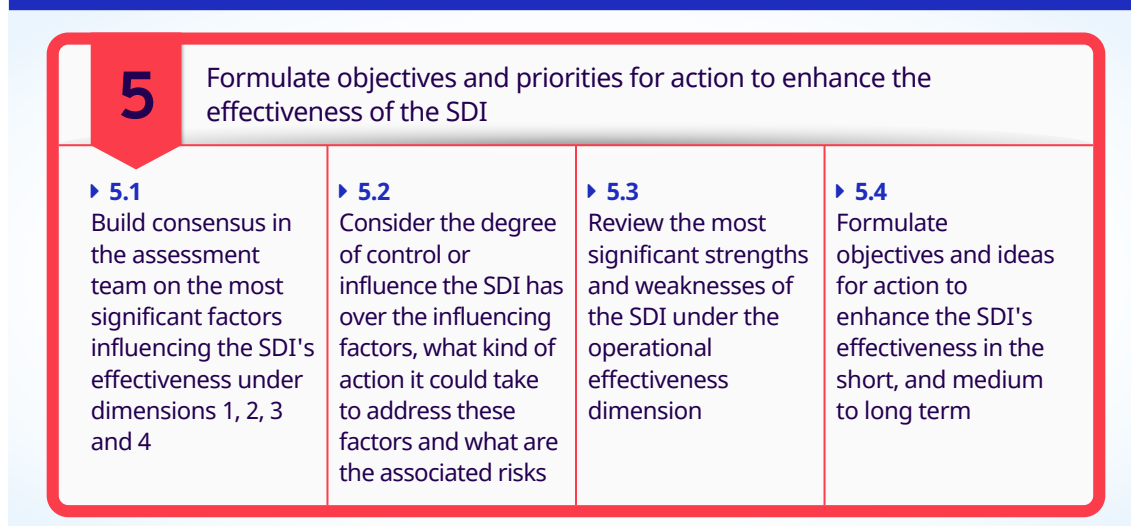
Template 8: Results of the assessment of the operational and communication effectiveness dimension

Sub-dimension	Scores (if used)	Main strengths	Main weaknesses
Internal procedures, working methods and tools			
Communication			

► 5. Formulating objectives and actions to enhance the effectiveness of the SDI

The objective of sub-step 5 is to produce an outline of an action plan to enhance the SDI's effectiveness, drawing on the analysis completed in sub-steps 3 and 4. Figure 15 summarizes the process to be followed.

► Figure 15: The process for determining objectives and priorities for action



5.1 Prioritizing the influencing factors

In sub-step 3, you probably identified a great many enabling and constraining factors influencing the SDI, far more than it would be feasible or desirable to attempt to address. The factors are almost certainly not all of equal significance in terms of their impact on the SDI's effectiveness. It is therefore necessary to prioritize them in order to focus attention on the key factors upon which taking action may be the most beneficial and productive.

First, assemble all the information arising from the assessment of the first four dimensions under sub-step 3, for which you could use template 9 (columns (i) and (ii) labelled “external” and “internal”). When compiling the information on influencing factors, you should remove any duplication of factors across the different dimensions of effectiveness. However, if a particular factor is mentioned very frequently, that may well point to its significance for the SDI.

In a second step, discuss and agree on what were the most significant factors affecting the SDI’s effectiveness for each dimension. These can be noted as well in template 9 (column (iii), labelled “most significant factors”). Set aside those factors considered to be of lower significance. At this stage, it is advisable to avoid the temptation to discard significant factors simply because you think that nothing can be done about them.



Template 9: Compilation and prioritization of the factors influencing the SDI's effectiveness

		External factors (i)	Internal factors (ii)	Most significant factors (iii)
► Agenda effectiveness	Enabling			
	Constraining			
► Consensus- building effectiveness	Enabling			
	Constraining			
► Policy influence effectiveness	Enabling			
	Constraining			
► Social peace effectiveness	Enabling			
	Constraining			
► Other dimensions of effectiveness	Enabling			
	Constraining			

5.2 Determining which factors may be acted upon by the SDI

It is suggested that you sort the most significant influencing factors - both enabling and constraining - into three categories, reflecting the degree of control or influence that the SDI may have over them:

- i. factors over which the SDI has direct control or some degree of control;
- ii. factors that the SDI has no control over, but which it may be able to influence;
- iii. factors that are outside the control or influence of the SDI.

Taking each category in turn, you should discuss whether the SDI could take action to address each influencing factor, and the kind of action that may be possible. While action may be most obvious for the factors falling in categories i. and ii., it may even be envisaged regarding the factors listed under iii., namely those which are “beyond the control or influence” of the SDI. For example, it may be possible for the SDI to plan action to limit the negative impacts of constraining factors that are outside its control, or to enhance the benefits of enabling factors in its environment. You may use template 10 to record the outcomes of your discussion.



Template 10: Sorting the influencing factors by the degree of control or influence exercised by the SDI

Category of influencing factors	Key influencing factors	Possible action to address the influencing factors
i. Factors which the SDI controls	<i>Record here the most significant influencing factors</i>	<i>Write the actions the SDI could potentially take to address the various factors</i>
ii. Factors which the SDI may influence		
iii. Factors which are beyond the control or influence of the SDI		

The guiding questions below may help structure your discussions.



Action to address the factors influencing the effectiveness of the SDI

- a. What action could the SDI take to capitalize on the enabling factors (both external and internal) and operational strengths of the SDI?
- b. What action could the SDI take to counter the constraining factors (both external and internal) and operational weaknesses of the SDI?
- c. Are the benefits of the action likely to outweigh its costs (in broad qualitative rather than precise quantitative or financial terms)?
- d. Are there risks associated with taking the action?
- e. Are there risks associated with not taking the action?

This should be an iterative process, through which the assessment team gradually builds a set of high priority and feasible ideas for action to be included in the action plan. A consideration of risk is important as well at this stage – associated both with taking the proposed action and with not taking it.

5.3 Reviewing the outcomes of the assessment of operational and communication effectiveness

Review the main strengths and weaknesses of the SDI that you identified through the self-assessment of this dimension (at sub-step 4). As with the analysis of the substantive dimensions, start by considering whether or not these are factors over which the SDI has some influence or control. Next, think about what action could be taken to correct the weaknesses and build upon the strengths with respect to the operational and communication functions and performance of the SDI.

5.4 Formulating objectives and proposals for action⁶⁷

Based on the ideas you have generated in the previous steps, you may now put together an outline of an action plan to enhance the effectiveness of the SDI, using template 11 below. The outline should contain a limited number of objectives (the end result that you are aiming to achieve or the change desired in the SDI), as well as proposals for specific actions to be taken, in the short term and medium/long-term, to achieve each objective. Identify and note the principal risks that may jeopardize achievement of the desired objectives.

⁶⁷ Further guidance on formulating an action plan is provided in [Step 2](#) and in [Step 4](#).



Template 11: Outline of an action plan to improve the effectiveness of the SDI

	Short-term action (over the next 12 months)	Medium & long- term action (from one to five years)	Risks
Objective 1: <i>Record the objective here</i>			
Objective 2:			
Objective 3:			

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The self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions

The self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions (SAM-SDI) has been developed by the International Labour Organization to help constituents analyse and strengthen the inclusiveness and effectiveness of their social dialogue institutions.

Booklet number 4 covers Step 3 of the SAM-SDI. In Step 3, the self-assessment team undertakes an in-depth examination of the institution's effectiveness by exploring the underlying factors influencing five dimensions of effectiveness. Drawing on this analysis, the team identifies initial objectives and proposals for action to enhance the SDI's effectiveness.

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