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Delivering decent work results

Implications of a meta-analysis of ILO
Decent Work Country Programmes

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Introduction – Why undertake this Think Piece?

Over the last four years I have undertaken two meta-analyses of internal reviews and independent evaluations of ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). In the first meta-analysis,¹ the findings drew attention to the teething problems of introducing the DWCP concept and aligning existing decent work activities with an overall DWCP framework. In terms of DWCP achievements, there was not a lot to report, though there were a range of favourable insights in relation to ILO's technical capacity, its ability to draw stakeholders together, to secure external funding and to serve as capable project managers on catastrophic occasions such as the Indonesian Tsunami of 2004. There was some expectation that the next wave of DWCPs would be more integrated, rather than a compilation of existing Decent Work project endeavours. Additionally, it was hoped that this next wave would demonstrate more comprehensive results on DWCP achievements, particularly if the findings of the meta-analysis and those of other ILO research on improving performance were taken on board. Given that an internal Country Programme Review (CPR) process had been in operation for some years (since 2008) at the time of the meta-analysis, it seemed that these internal CPRs had considerable potential to improve DWCP ownership and performance and were worthy of increased attention and effort.

Given the number and range of CPRs that had been undertaken by 2013, the ILO Evaluation Office (EVAL) decided to undertake a meta-analysis of these CPRs along similar lines as that for the DWCP evaluations. The aim was to synthesize the findings of fifteen of the most recent CPRs undertaken and to draw out lessons learned and good practices. The full study,² available on the ILO web site, serves as the reference point for this Think Piece.

From the two meta-analyses, a range of issues emerged on how the DWCP approach was performing and what might be the contributing factors for obtaining the results reported. This gave rise to the commissioning of this Think Piece. Apart from making the results of the meta-analysis of the CPRs more accessible, and considering implications such as a principle-based approach to CPRs, this Think Piece provides an opportunity to speculate on why such results were obtained in order to build for the future. As such, it therefore involves some personal reflections and speculations that provide food for thought in terms of achieving better work outcomes for ILO's constituents.

¹ J. Martin: [*Meta analysis of lessons learned and good practices arising from nine Decent Work Country Programme evaluations*](#) (Geneva, ILO. Evaluation Office, 2011).

² J. Martin: [*Delivering decent work results: A meta-analysis of 15 ILO Decent Work Country Programme reviews*](#) (Geneva, ILO. Evaluation Office, 2014).

Decent Work Country Programme internal reviews

How do these differ from independent DWCP evaluations?

There are some practical issues with important implications when distinguishing the internal CPR approach from the independent evaluations of DWCPs. CPRs are intended to be a participatory self-evaluation process which is managed and undertaken by the ILO regions during the implementation of the DWCPs with the close engagement of stakeholders. Their primary aim is to improve the DWCP as it is being implemented as well as having an eye for improvement of future DWCPs. CPRs can be classified as **formative evaluations** as they help form the content and direction of the DWCP. These CPRs can be contrasted with the independent evaluations of the DWCPs managed by the Evaluation Office, undertaken by an independent external consultant, after the DWCP has been implemented for a significant period of time, or right before it begins a new phase of programming. Its aim is to provide an independent assessment of what has been achieved, lessons learned and implications. These **summative evaluations** are more focused on accountability and aim to assess the performance of the DWCP in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. These five evaluation criteria are the standard set agreed by the OECD Development Advisory Committee (OECD/DAC) and subsequently also adopted by the ILO.

The distinction between formative and summative is important given the increased level of participation and ownership by management which is expected in the CPR process. However, the distinction is somewhat blurred in practice given that the CPR Terms of Reference (ToRs) address some of the evaluation criteria above, such as relevance, and it is expected that the CPR findings would also inform future programming of DWCPs. In the CPRs reviewed the ToR was not specifically adapted to the particular needs of the individual country, nor the content and status of its DWCP.

The ToR for all the CPRs typically covers a standard set of issues, namely:

- Relevance and coherence of the DWCP
- Tripartite constituents' capacities
- ILO's capacity, comparative advantage and efficiency
- Partnerships, strategies and inter-agency relations
- Managing for results
- Progress made on tangible outcomes
- Knowledge management and sharing
- Lessons learned

Although a number of the issues covered above are more about process and implementation status, an important part of the CPR process was to rate and report on the achievements of the DWCPs according to the above criteria using a six point scale (ranging from very unsatisfactory to very satisfactory). The ratings were overseen by the CPR team and involved a range of stakeholders. There was some variation in the way ratings were undertaken and reported by the CPR reviewers. The review teams encountered, to varying degrees, a range of

problems in generating the ratings,³ including what was being rated, whose perspectives the ratings represented, the availability of evidence to support the ratings and the limitations involved in aggregating the ratings.

Given these issues, in undertaking the CPR meta-analysis, it did not seem appropriate to aggregate the findings and ratings of the fifteen CPRs under review against the eight issues addressed in their ToR (as listed above). In addition, the emphasis on ratings implied a greater focus on accountability, an important issue for independent evaluations, rather than the internal reviews being a vehicle primarily for gaining consensus on how the DWCP might be improved through the shared learning involved, as discussed below.

Collectively, the review and evaluation criteria may be viewed as focusing on three key areas:

- programme improvement
- learning
- accountability

For the CPRs reviewed, the relative emphasis given to programme improvement, learning and accountability by the individual CPRs varied somewhat. This is evident in the purposes cited for conducting each of the CPRs. For instance:

- the Mongolian CPR “focuses on the outcomes and guiding strategies of the DWCP to identify where and how improvements can be made. They enable constituents and ILO staff to apply the concepts and practices of results-based management in country programmes, and enhance national ownership of the review process”;
- the Cambodia CPR mentions “the opportunity for reflection and lesson learning regarding how ILO could improve the effectiveness of its operations in the next DWCP for Cambodia”; and
- the Armenia CPR saw its purpose as being “to improve further programming and ensure internal and external accountability”.⁴

It is important, therefore, to be clear about the purposes of the reviews and the degree of emphasis to be given to each of the three issues, particularly when working out the review processes, undertaking comparisons and making use of the findings.

What are the key structural issues affecting the CPR process?

Across the range of CPRs analyzed, there were a number of issues raised by the reviewers which affected their ability to review the DWCPs appropriately. These

³ Issues relating to the rating framework are covered more comprehensively in the CPR Meta-analysis. In particular, the ILO Evaluation Unit commissioned a review of the CPR rating practices by W. Trochim, *Rating Practices and ILO Country Program Reviews*, December 2013 (personal communication). Trochim reported that there were serious deficiencies in the rating system in terms of its construct validity and reliability.

⁴ These are extracts from internal CPR documents, available by request, from the ILO Evaluation Office, Geneva.

issues have been categorized and reported in the meta-analysis as structural issues. The five key structural issues identified were:

1. **Pre-agreement status of DWCP, or political instability:** The review may have been conducted before the DWCP had been officially adopted by the government or when the DWCP had been affected by changing political will as part of the country's political processes.
2. **Ownership:** The governance structures overseeing the DWCP were not operating well, if at all, and subject to change, notably the national tripartite committees of workers, employers and government representatives. Issues of legitimacy, representativeness, divergent perspectives and communication impacted on their performance.
3. **Conceptual, design and technical issues:** Deficiencies in the design and in the monitoring and evaluation framework for the DWCP meant it was difficult to assess how well individual initiatives were contributing to outcomes and results-based management. This meant that the DWCP was not readily evaluable, in part because of the nature and definition of outcomes and in part because of the difficulty gaining sound evidence linking activities to outcomes.⁵ In terms of management, the CPR seemed to act as a one-off snapshot rather than an ongoing part of monitoring and review processes owned and directed by country authorities.
4. **Resource constraints:** There was little control over the resources needed to implement the DWCP strategies. Dependence on external funding partners meant that desirable initiatives could not be funded or else were delayed or curtailed, particularly since the 2007 financial crisis. ILO needed to operate as a broker in resource mobilization. In some cases, mainstreaming of DWCP programmes through government agency budget systems (notably Ministries of Labour) helped in resourcing, though there were issues of representativeness, overlap and duplication. The general view was that resource mobilization needed to be considered much earlier in DWCP development, i.e. at the design stage.
5. **Communication:** Problems in communication affected knowledge and ownership of the DWCP, the ability to work together and the understanding of the DWCP beyond a limited range of stakeholders. In some countries, there was a strong call for use of local languages, particularly for documentation, to enable better participation and transparency.

In addition, further efforts at **capacity building of constituents** were considered desirable, particularly when combined with enhancing ownership and participation.

⁵ This is consistent with the findings of the EVAL's recent study on evaluability of Country Programme Outcomes which found that, in fact, the evaluability of Country Programme Outcomes was limited. See O. Feinstein: [Improving results-based management in the ILO: Challenges and opportunities](#). Think Piece, No. 5 (Geneva, ILO. Evaluation Office, 2014).

How DWCPs reflect the ILO's vision for Decent Work – the big picture

In assessing the reviews and evaluations of the DWCPs, it is important to reflect on what they set out to do and how they address the complexity of the issues involved. At a strategic level, the DWCPs can be viewed as the rallying point for addressing the Decent Work Agenda in individual countries. They provide a framework for pulling together a diverse range of initiatives and constituents in order to achieve better work outcomes for country populations across the globe. They are also the primary tool by which ILO decentralizes the responsibility for the implementation of a coherent and integrated ILO programme of assistance to constituents in member States. Not all of ILO's member States have an active DWCP in place. As of early 2013, 68 of the 185 member States had an active DWCP.

DWCPs aim to fulfill the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO. The emphasis given to these four objectives (with gender equality as an additional crosscutting objective) is manifest in different ways in each of the DWCPs. These strategic objectives are:

1. [Creating jobs](#) – Promote an economy that generates opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, skills development, job creation and sustainable livelihoods.
2. [Guaranteeing rights at work](#) – Obtain recognition and respect for the rights of workers. All workers, and in particular disadvantaged or poor workers, need representation, participation, and laws that work for their interests.
3. [Extending social protection](#) – Promote both inclusion and productivity by ensuring that women and men enjoy working conditions that are safe, allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family and social values, provide for adequate compensation in case of lost or reduced income and permit access to adequate healthcare.
4. [Promoting social dialogue](#) – Involve strong and independent workers' and employers' organizations to increase productivity, avoid disputes at work, and build cohesive societies.

It is clearly evident that for the ILO, it is not sufficient merely to create jobs (objective one) but to also build access to safe and decent work. Decent work includes respecting the rights of workers (objective two), ensuring safe working conditions for women and men (objective three) and strengthening workers' and employers' organizations (objective four) for social cohesion. The DWCPs need to have a clear strategy and a priority-setting framework to turn these complex and ambitious goals into more modest discrete goals and accompanying plans of action that establish ownership by the government and tripartite constituents more broadly. The difficulty of meeting this challenge is likely to be the main source of the structural challenges that have been reported in the CPR meta-analysis.

Comparison of meta-analysis results for CPRs and DWCP evaluations

Despite the differences between the CPRs and independent DWCP evaluations, it is possible to draw some complementary conclusions on how the results of the meta-analysis of CPR evaluations accord with the findings of the meta-analysis on DWCP evaluations. Both studies are based solely on desk reviews of the CPRs and the DWCP Evaluations, hence they lack the benefit of consultation with stakeholders to confirm and refine the findings. For the CPRs in particular, it would be useful to assess how well the findings and recommendations of the reviews were acted upon.

The meta-analysis of DWCP evaluation reports covered nine independent evaluations undertaken and overseen by EVAL. In summary, there are many issues covered in the meta-analysis of the nine DWCP evaluations which are also relevant to the CPRs. This is because when reviewing performance, the CPRs encountered a similar range of issues as those encountered by the DWCP evaluators. All of the issues cited below make it difficult to acquire evidence that would conclusively ascertain the contribution made by the projects and activities to the DWCPs. These issues included: design of the DWCP; the dependence on projects rather than an integrated DWCP; the lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework and lack of available information; and conceptual issues on the results/logical framework.

An inherent difficulty in DWCP design is that the outcomes and performance indicators are typically pitched at a higher level where it is difficult to attribute achievements made to the DWCP objectives, particularly where the evidence is hard to attain and there are a large number of external factors impacting on this performance. Some ILO activities are amenable to be tracked through the results chain, such as when decent work issues, like child labour, require changes in government policy and adoption of legislation which then results in changes on the ground by the various constituents and community in general. Intermediate outcomes become very useful for helping assess performance.

The issue of gaining evidence on the contribution of various initiatives to high-level outcomes is an inherent problem in results-based management. An understanding of the major challenges ILO's member States face can be gained from the experience of Australia, which has undergone a range of shifts in results-based management since the 1980s.⁶

Ownership and institutional issues remain a problem, particularly in regard to overall management of the DWCP, as do the challenges involved in seeking

⁶ See, for example, the article by Keith Mackay: The Performance Framework of the Australian Government, 1987 to 2011, *OECD Journal on Budgeting*, Vol. 11/3, 2011, which discusses Australia's experiences on performance frameworks and evaluation from 1987 to 2011. Keith Mackay and this author worked on implementing Australia's evaluation strategy in the Commonwealth Department of Finance during the 1990s. The article demonstrates, among other things, the practical challenges of implementing an outcomes framework at national government level and being able to assess its performance, particularly given different perspectives of prevailing government policies.

funding from partners after the DWCP had been agreed upon but not yet resourced. Broadly speaking, these institutional and management challenges affecting the ability of the review team to adequately engage with constituents were more a problem with the internal reviews than the independent evaluations since the primary purpose of the CPRs was to use a participatory process to gain a shared and realistic understanding of what was working, what was not working and how improvements might be made to the existing DWCP. An added problem, well exemplified by the CPR for Cambodia, is the challenge of conducting broad on-going consultations when there is no country office and a rather large externally-financed set of projects which make up the DWCP.

Additional external factors, including political upheavals, environmental disasters, and the unstable economic environment since the global financial crisis of 2007, made the operating environment for DWCPs quite unstable and also affected inputs from funding partners.

Another important point emerging from these analyses is the comparative advantage that ILO offers in relation to its advice, provision of expertise, facilitating improved labour policies and legislation, capacity building and serving as a trusted adviser/networker to government and partners inside and outside the UN family. In Cambodia, for instance, ILO's technical specialists were highly regarded by stakeholders and performed a key role in attracting funding from partners for major activities. Tensions exist, however, between the roles of the ILO as technical agency, programme manager and/or broker whose aim is to attract funding to carry out desirable elements of the DWCP. Problems evident in the tripartite arrangements are also evident, both in terms of gaining clear direction between employers, workers and government and in determining the appropriate representatives from these constituents to sit on the tripartite oversight bodies.

Other common issues include the challenges of making gender a priority, the difficulties of addressing informal sector issues and the challenges of operating beyond the capital cities, particularly where there is no ILO presence in some countries. Problems in communication and coordination remain a big issue, particularly at local level, including language factors. In addition, many of the reviews reported on the general lack of knowledge within their country on the nature and scope of DWCP activities.

Both CPRs and the DWCP evaluations included references to the fact that there was insufficient time for consultation and evaluators often qualified their findings because of this. It may be considered a particularly important limitation of some CPRs, given that consultation with stakeholders is a central process of undertaking formative evaluations.

It was hoped that internal reviews of the DWCP would bring additional and valuable findings, because these typically have a strong participatory process which enables the various stakeholders to come together, work through issues, reach a better understanding of the potential to achieve objectives and optimize roles that each can play in achieving them. However, underlying problems with DWCP design and monitoring and evaluation frameworks made it difficult to

collect evidence on the contribution that DWCP components were making to the broader DWCP objectives. The way in which the reviews were conducted as short, one-off, externally-driven activities, based on pre-determined standard ToR, seems to have made it difficult for country stakeholders to address specific issues, to develop an agreed plan for improvement and to allocate clearly defined responsibilities.

The challenge of turning vision into achievable outcomes

One of the first challenges that the ILO regions and member States face is transforming these high-level objectives into a coherent programme at country level. The challenge is compounded by the fact that when the DWCP concept was introduced, there were already a diverse range of individual projects and technical assistance initiatives being implemented by the ILO which rarely formed a coherent programme. The Philippines was one of the few countries which had already put the ILO initiatives into a programme framework. However, like the other countries, the Philippines was subject to funding constraints including those linked to donor interests trying to influence what fundable projects could be put forward and implemented. Donor interests did not necessarily match the interests and priorities of those involved in formulating the DWCP. Funding a programme, rather than a project, approach is more challenging. This sometimes created a chicken and egg conundrum in which donors were willing to contribute to an overall DWCP programme funding pool - rather than a specific (project) initiative - only if a robust and coherent DWCP could be articulated, governed and managed effectively.

A second challenge was defining the outcomes for the DWCPs. Overall a substantial conceptual gap exists between the outcomes to be achieved by the various initiatives actually undertaken (typically through projects, other forms of technical assistance and training) and the broader high-level outcomes that the DWCPs aspire to achieve. This is a recurring challenge in programme logic and results-based management. One of the solutions often proposed is to define outcomes at a more modest (intermediate) level so there is more hope of identifying some contribution between the initiative undertaken and the outcome put forward. This issue emerged in the CPR reports when stakeholders were asked to consider the objectives of next-phase DWCPs. Responses tended to be concentrated more at the higher strategic level, but it could prove helpful if more emphasis could be placed on identifying some country-specific, potentially achievable intermediate outcomes for the future programming of their DWCPs.

In addition, the tripartite nature of ILO's mandate and operational approach means that it is not easy to gain harmony between the interests of the social partners in agreeing on a set of priorities for a DWCP. Experience shows, and was additionally cited in the meta-analysis undertaken, that these priorities are subject to change – e.g. through changes in politics and government; changes in membership of DWCP governance structures (such as employers' and workers' representation and that of the appropriate government agencies); and external factors such as the global financial and tsunami crises. The tripartite mandate represents some inherent tension but it is also perhaps ILO's greatest strength - as such tensions are a fact of life and it is fortuitous to have a built-in mechanism

that works to maintain effective communication between the constituents and engenders negotiation on commonly agreed decent work objectives and outcomes for the country concerned. ILO's unique role as a catalyst and honest broker in this context can offer sustained support to establishing an effective dialogue between government, employer and worker representatives. This is especially true if there are complex issues such as gender, the informal sector, decentralized government and political change to be dynamically addressed.

As previously discussed, there are clear challenges inherent in the rating system adopted, related to the quality of the evidence underpinning the ratings, perspectives which the ratings represent; the interpretation of the ratings; and how ratings capture the contributions made to achieving DWCP objectives. Whilst the desired simplicity of the ratings system as a tool for management and accountability is a worthwhile pursuit, it needs to be linked to the purposes of the CPR and informed by the assessments already undertaken of the scope and limitations of the rating system. The more important questions to be addressed if ratings are to be adopted are:

- How will they be used?
- What action is to be undertaken as result of the ratings/assessment?
- Whose responsibility is it for undertaking such action?

Some useful lessons emerging include the overall good quality of the reviews undertaken, despite the obstacles and caveats encountered, the recognized appreciation various government's place on ILOs technical contributions to policy, legislation and capacity building, and the ability to address the complexities of the DWCP endeavour.

A fundamental question emerged in the light of the meta-analyses of both the internal reviews and independent evaluations: *How can ILO can make best use of its resources and comparative advantage to achieve better work outcomes?* Should it pursue the development and implementation of better DWCPs, which serves as a rallying point to address complex DWCP issues over which it has little overall control of the key elements required to achieve the DWCP outcomes? Or, should it spearhead targeted decent work interventions for which it is properly resourced, making full use of the organization's comparative advantages and expertise?

It is clear that future internal reviews need to take into consideration the pre-conditions necessary for a successful review process and that they should be tailored to the particular needs of the DWCP at the time the review is undertaken. The framework for such a case-by case approach is set out below.

Adopting a case-by-case rather than a formula approach to CPR reviews

The experiences and lessons learned gained from undertaking CPRs suggest that guidance for conducting such reviews should be principle-based given the number of pre-conditions that need to be met before such reviews can be successfully undertaken. The methodology needs to be adapted to the:

- Specific purposes for undertaking the review;
- Needs and concerns of national stakeholders;
- Status of the DWCP;
- Prevailing institutional and management arrangements;
- Status of DWCP financing; and
- Status of implementation.

The review also needs to take stock of ***prevailing external factors***, such as the political environment, the state of the global and local economy and, where feasible, environmental upheavals, such as earthquakes, tsunamis and major hurricanes impacting on the DWCP. The review processes also need to ascertain the extent to which ***risk mitigation strategies*** have been put in place and are operational.

In adopting this principles-based approach, guidance is provided by EVAL, namely:

Evaluation in the ILO is primarily used as a management and organizational learning tool to support ILO constituents in forwarding decent work and social justice. It is a critical means to improve decision-making, generate knowledge in the organization and provide verifiable evidence of effectiveness. An evaluation is an assessment of an intervention, focusing on what worked, what didn't work, and why this was the case. The evaluation process also examines if the best approach was taken, and if it was optimally executed.⁷

Proposed case-by-case guidance for undertaking CPRs

The following points are key components to be considered for inclusion in guidance on undertaking internal CPRs on a case-by-case basis.

1. The purposes and priorities of the internal review should be clear. The reasons for undertaking such reviews can be classified as either for accountability, programme improvement and/or learning purposes. Whilst each review will typically encompass all of these purposes to some extent, the priority attached to each specific review should be made clear. An internal review focused on programme improvement and learning, considered formative, will typically have a high focus on participation of key stakeholders. The style and process of undertaking such reviews will be different than when the primary purpose of the review is accountability, as there may be more importance placed on independent assessment than participatory processes. This will also impact on ownership of the review report, notably ownership by the ILO Regional Office. At the outset, the review's ToR should address the question: *"What are the specific problems or issues that warrant undertaking this review?"*

⁷ ILO. Evaluation Office: [ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations, 2nd Ed.](#) (Geneva, 2013), p.3.

2. CPRs are best undertaken when there is a DWCP in place which benefits from appropriate institutional, management and financial arrangements. However, it may be necessary to undertake a specific review process to address these issues if they are found not to be in place.
3. There should be a means of vetting the ToR to ensure that what is being sought meets the purposes, and that results can actually be attained (such as gaining access to information on DWCP performance) with the resources provided. This may also entail examining the contents of other previous reviews to determine how fully the review team was able to fulfill their ToR and adapt the scope of the review accordingly.
4. The DWCP should have a clear, operational monitoring and evaluation plan which provides the basic evidence upon which to conduct the review. Within the DWCP, there should be a results/logical framework in place which has addressed the following questions:⁸
 - a. What is the DWCP aiming to achieve (from inputs and outputs through to outcomes)?
 - b. How is success determined? What are the success criteria?
 - c. What are the sources of information which provide the evidence that funds have been spent, inputs used, activities undertaken, outputs delivered and intermediate and higher level outcomes attained? This will include both quantitative and qualitative information such as that obtained from stakeholder surveys.
 - d. What are the external factors, assumptions and/or risks that may prevent the DWCP from achieving set objectives and what strategies are in place to monitor and mitigate these risks?
5. In this regard the review should consider how realistic the match is between the high level outcomes typically expected to be achieved in the DWCP and the initiatives implemented to achieve them. The review should be involved in putting together evidence demonstrating the contribution made by the initiatives undertaken.
6. The management and institutional arrangements for the oversight and implementation of the DWCP must be in place so that the review is seen as part of the inherent management arrangements for implementing the DWCP successfully. This means that the internal review forms part of the ongoing processes aimed at improving the DWCP, enabling learning to take place amongst constituents and other key stakeholders. This is the essence of a formative review.
7. Oversight authorities involved in the implementation of the DWCP, whether at country, regional or headquarters office level, should confirm that there has been sufficient progress in the implementation of the DWCP to warrant undertaking a review process.

⁸ ILO. Evaluation Office: [*Guidance Note 1: Monitoring and evaluation of Decent Work Country Programmes*](#) (Geneva, 2013).

8. Issues impacting the tripartite constituents and which affect the oversight and implementation of the DWCP need to be assessed before the review. This includes the stability and quality of the interactions between the employers', workers' and government agencies involved.
9. The review should engage the appropriate stakeholders, whether national government, workers' and employers' groups, funding partners, ILO officials, beneficiaries and the public. The strategy should cover national, provincial and local levels. The roles and responsibilities of those participating in the review should be specified clearly in the management arrangements.
10. The role of the ILO Country Office (where in place) and the part it plays in the review should be considered. This may also involve assessing the role of ILO - whether as a project manager; as a direct contributor using its comparative advantage in technical advice, policy and legislation, capacity building; or as a trusted networker, advocate, or broker seeking the desired contributions from funding partners.
11. In the ToR and in the process of the review, gender issues need to be addressed effectively.
12. The ToR for the review need to be tailored to the specific needs of the DWCP being implemented, taking on board review guidance provided. See suggestions for case-by-case guidance for the CPR set out earlier.
13. The nature and size of the review team and its duration should take into account review principles such as objectivity, value for money, practicality and likelihood of being of material benefit. The duration of the review should be sufficient to engage with key stakeholders, whether tripartite partners, funding partners or beneficiaries to meet the review's objectives. Where funding is constrained, the scope of the review may be tailored to the priority areas needing to be addressed.
14. Caution should be exercised when the review is seen as primarily providing input into the design of the next DWCP. Experience with reviews undertaken demonstrates that basic pre-requisites are often not in place, such as the formal adoption of the DWCP; established funding; and effective institutional, management and governance structures to effectively implement and monitor the DWCP. These issues may need to become the focus of the review, rather than determining what elements are most appropriate for achieving decent work outcomes.
15. Established and approved funding for the DWCP, as well as actual and forecast expenditures, should be made available when the review is being considered. This will be needed, among other things, to assess implementation and to provide a means to implement any modifications proposed by the review.

16. As part of the review process, an assessment should be made of how well the recommendations undertaken from previous or related review processes have been implemented.
17. Judgments made in the reviews about the performance of the DWCP should be as objective as possible. This involves the treatment and use of qualitative and quantitative data. Where ratings are used they should be sound, practical and based on actual evidence or verified by processes such as triangulation. They also should be fit for purpose and not imply a degree of accuracy beyond that considered to be appropriate.
18. Ownership of the CPR findings should be explicit. The review's findings may represent the judgments of an independent analyst (such as in an RBSA review) or the perspective of the entity, such as the ILO Regional Office which commissioned the review and/or had oversight of the review. Where the review has been drafted by an independent analyst who is asked to take on board the views of stakeholders consulted, it should be made explicit whose judgments the findings of the review actually represent.
19. The review process needs to engage with local interest groups as appropriate, bearing in mind accountability, learning, programme improvement, ownership and value for money considerations.
20. Individual countries and their national cultures and sub-cultures can have different perceptions about results-based management and vary in their understanding of DWCP concepts, issues and processes. The review process will need to be tailored to address these cultural issues, including the languages adopted for oral and written communication to ensure full participation of identified stakeholders.
21. The review process should identify opportunities for, and any limitations or barriers to, effective communication to ensure information is made available to all appropriate stakeholders, and that a response mechanism is also available. This may also affect the nature of the reports produced.

Overall perspective on the underlying causes of the structural issues

The following is a list of underlying structural and conceptual issues which may impact on DWCP performance and which should be considered when establishing any future guidance for the undertaking of CPRs:

1. ***Political will*** – Is the government committed to the decent work agenda?
2. ***Tripartite governance*** – Do governance arrangements enable the on-going active oversight and engagement of the tripartite constituents? Is the DWCP plan of action one that they are committed to and responsible for?
3. ***Decentralized government*** – Are sub-national layers of government (such as provincial and local government) part of the review process, particularly

where the DWCP activities involve their respective functions and constituents?

4. ***Focused and manageable DWCP*** – Is the programme of action developed under the DWCP fit for purpose in terms of prioritizing and addressing the key decent work issues identified and setting out a realistic programme to achieve tangible results? Have the risks been adequately identified and addressed?
5. ***ILO role*** – Is the ILO undertaking the functions for which it has the mandate and comparative advantage to fulfill the DWCP?
6. ***Independence and learning*** – How impartial are the results reflected in the review processes? Is it clear whose views are actually reported? Does the process of review facilitate learning by stakeholders?
7. ***Communication*** – Is the communication effective across the diverse stakeholders, the tripartite constituents and intended beneficiaries, including the use of appropriate languages, flow and availability of documents and other information?
8. ***Resourcing*** – Have the level of resources and a realistic time frame been established to implement the DWCP? Have the risks involved in attaining the desirable level of resourcing the DWCP been identified and a risk management plan put in place?
9. ***CPR guidance*** – The proposed strategy for undertaking CPRs should be a case-by-case approach based on the principles and guidance outlined above. This will help sharpen the rationale and focus of the reviews and reporting.
10. ***Reporting*** – As part of reducing the complexity of the DWCPs and adopting a manageable programme of work, the reporting requirements should also be simplified and made more accessible to the intended audiences.

Overall implications and conclusions

Fine tuning ILO's role at country level

It is clear that one size does not fit all and ILO needs to determine its comparative advantage when working in individual countries and regions. ILO is a relatively small organization with limited resources but with large technical capacity in labour market issues. Perhaps its varied roles - as provider of technical labour market services, project manager in time of disasters or resource broker in times of budget limitations - need to be re-assessed within a coherent system aimed at achieving ILO strategic objectives in individual countries or regions. It seems clear that the ILO does have a comparative advantage in being able to influence labour-related legislation and to participate at the project level to achieve worthwhile project outcomes. Perhaps it can devote more effort to facilitate better tripartite arrangements for overall governance of a Decent Work programme agenda and address the more neglected areas, such as social inclusion.

In some DWCPs there certainly seems to be a disconnect between addressing big picture issues and the reality and success of small interventions, many of which have limited resources and impact on the big picture objectives (except in areas like advising on legislation). It is clear current mechanisms to identify and acquire funding to undertake a DWCP are quite complex and bureaucratic, which then can result in inefficiencies to deliver a coherent and integrated set of initiatives on a timely basis over an extended period.

Establishing DWCP ownership by stakeholders and tripartite constituents

It is also clear that lack of engagement and ownership by stakeholders is limiting achievements, whether such engagement is at the DWCP design stage or during the implementation, monitoring and review stages. Among other things, this may reflect the limited time and engagement of stakeholders in the preparation of the DWCP and in the oversight of its implementation. From the stakeholders' perspective, they may also be reluctant to endorse DWCP objectives and action plans when there is no assurance to gaining the resources needed to implement them.

Two stakeholder groups that emerged from the reviews as needing more involvement in addressing decent work issues are women and informal workers. The logistical and cost issues involved in engaging these and other stakeholders, including intended beneficiaries, will also influence ownership, particularly at the local level.

Additionally, the environment within which the DWCP objectives and the results-based framework are developed needs to be considered. These may need to be tailored to the values of the different cultural groups involved. For instance, in countries and local communities where decisions are based more on hierarchical relationships or social consensus than on an objectives-driven/program logic analysis, the way in which the DWCP is developed will affect ultimate ownership of the DWCP itself.

Addressing some institutional issues affecting organizational performance

Perhaps the main question emerging from the findings is whether the DWCP, in aiming to fulfill the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda, sets out too ambitious an agenda, particularly given the variable capacities of the individual countries in which ILO establishes a DWCP. Within an organization, and when assessing DWCP performance, cognizance should be taken of the differing needs and perspectives of both managerial and technical/professional groups. Compromises required to meet management needs and those of technical/professionals can affect the measurement and reporting of performance.

Firstly, the limitations of a performance measurement need to be understood and appreciated by both parties. Secondly, there should be no incentive or disincentive to accurate reporting. For instance, when a scoring system is adopted it is best used in the CPR review process as a means of creating a conversation centered on improving performance. If high or low scores involve elements of approval or disapproval, there can be an incentive for *gaming* the system or for goal displacement which can lead to results that are positively

biased or misleading. The problem, therefore, becomes difficult if there is no ongoing dialogue between the parties, if the limitations are not understood and if there are incentives or disincentives linked to the performance measurements. Communication flow between the managerial and technical/professional functions therefore needs to be effective and maintained.

On one hand, the uncertainty introduced into the world economy by the global financial crisis is certainly putting more pressure on ILOs traditional tripartite partners. This pressure creates a more difficult environment for governments, workers and employers to agree on strategies for improving the general economic situation. On the other hand, the tripartite mandate of the ILO actually provides a mechanism for negotiating such agreement and in this regard ILO seems to be uniquely positioned. Whilst analysis of DWCPs in the world economy is beyond the scope of this meta-analysis, the reviews of DWCPs demonstrate the significant barriers experienced by ILO's tripartite constituents to implement and benefit from sound governance structures.

It should be emphasized that, when perceived as a system, the DWCP is not yet fully functional. There is inadequate participation of the tripartite partners and other stakeholders, combined with formulaic limitations such as design issues, short time frames, resources, communication and feedback interactions, all of which contribute to inefficient operational processes that are reflected in the attainment of desired outcomes. For the DWCP to meet its full potential the ILO needs to address the fact that expected beneficiaries and various local key stakeholders do not have adequate ongoing engagement in formulating, implementing, reviewing or evaluating the DWCPs. The situation is made particularly more complex by the ILO mandate which calls for economic development and job creation to be undertaken in a framework which ensures fundamental principles and rights at work, and that social protection is recognized and social dialogue encouraged.

One useful national strategy example is that used by Argentina to address its financial crisis, and which was cited in a previous ILO meta-analysis of DWCPs.⁹ The consensus achieved amongst governments, employers, workers and civil society was instrumental in finding ways to address the crisis and set the way forward - one such strategy was to ensure that there was at least one breadwinner in each family (amongst other initiatives). Of course, there are problems in undertaking this, and it is hard to turn the funding tap off when things improve. However, it seems commendable that in the face of a national crisis the different interest groups were willing to draw together to work collectively so that tripartite constituents and civil society could achieve a better sharing of the burden across the population.

Formulating sustainable Decent Work needs to take into account the differing political perspectives of governments and the likelihood of continuous change. The ILO seems to have the comparative advantage and ability to continue to develop and share expertise and lessons learned in this area.

⁹ J. Martin: [*Meta-analysis of lessons learned and good practices arising from nine Decent Work Country Programme evaluations*](#) (Geneva, ILO. Evaluation Unit, 2011).