



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

Evaluation  
Office

## *Independent evaluation of the ILO's work on international labour migration*

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *inter-regional in scope*

**Thematic Evaluation:** *Oct 2013*

**Evaluation Mode:** *Independent*

**Administrative Office:** *MIGRANT*

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### Background & Context

#### Summary of the evaluation purpose, logic and structure

In response to the 8 November 2012 ILO Governing Body's Decision on labour migration (Doc. GB.316/POL/1, paragraph 20 as amended by the Governing Body) (ILO, 2012a), the overall objective of this evaluation is to provide insight on the ILO's response to the changing landscape of international labour migration. Secondly, the evaluation should assess the Office's progress in the promotion of its Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. It will provide an assessment of the ILO's past and current programme of work in the area of international labour migration, looking at its various means of action and delivery mechanisms, strategies and overall impact. Finally, it is meant to provide guidance

on future priorities and initiatives in the area of international labour migration, especially in the context of the ILO's reorganization.

The evaluation took place between 15 March 2013 and 2 August 2013, and was overseen by the Evaluation Unit of the ILO to safeguard independence. In total, 79 interviews with 82 unique individuals were conducted through five field visits (three daytrips to Geneva, one visit to Bangkok and one to Budapest) as well as over telecommunication channels. Additionally a comprehensive review of the ILO's technical work on migration was conducted and supplemented with eight case studies illustrating key aspects of the ILO's work.

### Main Findings & Conclusions

The key findings of the evaluation are listed below:

- The ILO has a large and cross-cutting portfolio of work on labour migration as well as considerable expertise in this area. Activities are not solely located within MIGRANT and do not always relate to Outcome 7 (More migrant workers are protected and more migrant workers have access to productive employment and decent work). Work on labour migration is not a new development within the ILO given the Organization's historic relationship with this topic.

- However, the dissemination of ILO's work in this area is not commensurate with actual achievements. Regular reports on work and key successes, reflecting some of the information presented in Programme Implementation Reports, as well as a stronger on-line presence and showcasing good practices can be suggested to improve dissemination, although it is acknowledged that better outreach has financial and human resources costs. Gaps have also been identified in the area of statistics on labour migration and standards for collecting them. Strength lies particularly in the area of knowledge creation (research, absorption in research networks and partnerships with renowned institutions) and policy advice grounded in strong legal expertise. Human resource constraints appear as a key reason for any loss of momentum in recent years.
- The evaluation has compared topics covered by the ILO (via its different means of action) in the period 2001-2005 with themes covered in 2006-2010 and finds that new emerging thematic areas and topics with an expanded publication portfolio in the latter period reflect well the changing landscape in international migration. A review of publications that appeared between 2011 and 2013 further confirms this judgment. In future, it could be useful to work more on policy impact assessments, including on outcomes for migrant workers, in particular since the ILO appears to have a comparative advantage regarding issues of migration governance and the well-being of migrant workers and these questions have received less attention in global debates in recent years.
- The Office has responded to the findings of an earlier external evaluation (of 2008, see GB.303/PFA/3/5) in collaborating more with other organizations to advance the ILO's mandate on labour migration and in stepping up action on positively linking migration and development, as evidenced by a growing technical cooperation portfolio and other means of action.
- However, the 2008 evaluation also called for increased internal coordination and coherence to do justice to the cross-cutting nature of labour migration, and despite efforts to mainstream labour migration across the Office, in this area the ILO still lacks a clear strategy and a well-functioning reporting system. Not all migration projects and other activities are labeled as such, and the current programme and budget indicators and targets with their focus on individual countries, instead of bilateral, regional or inter-regional approaches, are also not helpful in this context.
- In addition, in mainstreaming labour migration across the Office the employment-migration nexus was somewhat neglected in the period under review and relatively less attention paid to labour migration as an element for effectively operating labour markets. The evaluation attributes this chiefly to the location of the then International Migration Programme, now Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT), in the Social Protection Sector and welcomes MIGRANT's new position within the Conditions of Work and Equality Department (WORKQUALITY). Structurally, this places MIGRANT close to work on labour market institutions.
- The ILO's unique tripartite structure, bringing together Governments, Workers and Employers is clearly a positive construction that adds value in the area of labour migration, even if cooperation is challenging occasionally. The ILO is the only international organization in the position to assist in the development of labour migration policies that adequately reflect the interests of all actors in the world of work.

- The evaluation finds that generally the Office has worked more with Governments than with Workers and Employers on labour migration issues and sees increased engagement with Employers and Workers as crucial.
- There is momentum in international circles for an increased role of the ILO in the area of migration and the Director-General has signaled a growing commitment to work on labour migration, based on constituents' requests. Preparations are underway for ILO participation in the next UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held in New York on 3-4 October 2013, and an ILO Tripartite Technical Meeting on Labour Migration, scheduled for 4-8 November 2013, will provide the opportunity for discussing follow-up to this Dialogue. Importantly, partnerships with concerned international actors will be strengthened while the ILO chairs the Global Migration Group (GMG) in 2014, and the ILO will be able to influence the international agenda during this time. The ILO takes the Chair at a moment of reform of the GMG and in the midst of worldwide discussions regarding the post 2015 development agenda.
- The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration has perhaps not gained the international recognition that was anticipated by some but it has definitely proven a useful tool for ILO staff in ensuring that technical projects and policy advice align with ILO strategy. External actors and constituents interviewed during the evaluation were generally aware of the Multilateral Framework and spoke positively about it, considering it to be a good reference guide.
- Nonetheless, next to the Multilateral Framework, an additional supplementary companion would be useful in order to provide continued updates of good practice,

examples of practical implementation, and more specific insights into areas not currently covered in-depth by the ILO Multilateral Framework on labour migration.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations have come out of the evaluation:

- The ILO should develop a common vision/strategy on labour migration, which feeds into Outcome 7, but one that is also based on other areas of the results framework. This strategy should focus on three key areas of labour migration:
  - the protection of the rights of migrant workers;
  - meeting labour market needs (including skills development based on skill shortages, skills recognition and skills matching);
  - the governance of labour migration.
- Better links should be established between the different areas dealing with migration issues. MIGRANT should play a central and coordinating role: heading the development of a coherent strategy, bringing together others working on migration issues and creating better linkages to the Decent Work Agenda. The ILO's new programming tools, the Areas of Critical Importance, could offer possibilities in this regard.
- The ILO should develop their website to provide a clearer overview of their work portfolio on labour migration, and the MIGRANT homepage should reflect the coordinating role of this ILO unit.
- Projects relating to migration should be clearly tagged to allow for an efficient and transparent reporting system. This strategy should identify key gaps in work on labour migration where the added strengths of the ILO can be best utilized, and look for

opportunities to bring these skills into partnership with other international organizations working on migration (IOM, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP, etc.).

- It is evident that the ILO is already playing a significant role in the development of international labour migration statistics. However, it is also evident that this work has fallen to the wayside and could therefore be revitalized. Migration statistics are a key component of knowledge generation which is essential for the development of better policy interventions that are in line with ILO standards. The evaluators therefore strongly recommend that a person dedicated to labour migration statistics be placed in the Department of Statistics.
- The majority of respondents agreed that having a Labour Migration specialist in every region would be the ideal scenario, as this can increase visibility on the ground, assist in establishing and nurturing relationships with constituents, and increase the size of the technical cooperation portfolio (as seen in the Asia-Pacific region and the Arab States). It is however acknowledged that this requires resource allocation and depends on the extent to which migration is seen as a regional priority.
- If creating posts of regional labour migration specialists in Africa and/or Latin America is not possible, the nascent system of 'labour migration focal points' should be further developed and institutionalized, following a critical examination of its present functioning, strengths and weaknesses. Currently, regular ILO staff serving as experts on other technical matters, such as employment or social protection specialists, act as focal points, as do some Chief Technical Advisors and other project personnel working on migration related projects. In the context of

such a focal point system, a mapping exercise of where in the ILO knowledge lies on specific migration issues will also be of use.

- The ILO should develop a new public relations strategy and devote more time and resources to disseminating its findings. One focus should be to increase the ILO's visibility and to assist it in becoming the go-to organization for issues on labour migration.
- The ILO should prepare biennial reports on their portfolio of work and key successes in the area of labour migration, and the best practice database should be updated on a regular basis. This will not only assist the ILO in monitoring the progress of their strategies but will also act as a tool for constituents and as a way of marketing the strength of the ILO.