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A brief history of evaluation in the ILO

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Abbreviations

AER	Annual Evaluation Report
ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
AMRS	Automated Management Response System
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EAC	Evaluation Advisory Committee
EMCP	Evaluation Manager Certification Programme
EVAL	Evaluation Office
GB	Governing Body
HQ	Headquarters
IASGE	Inter-Agency Study Group on Evaluation
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation
IEE	Independent evaluation of the evaluation function
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MERS	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PARDEV	Partnerships and Field Support Department
PFAC	Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee
PROGRAM	Strategic Programming and Management Department
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

Thematic timeline featuring the evaluation Zeitgeist (spirit of the times) of each decade



ENLIGHTENMENT

With regard to evaluation in the ILO, the 1960s were analogous to the period of enlightenment in world history. The third resolution adopted by the 51st session of the International Labour Conference shows that the ILO was becoming aware of evaluation and of the need to conduct evaluation.

1960s



EVALUATE

Faux pas, stock taking and correction
The beginning of the 1970s, the ILO was strongly aligned with UNDP draft evaluation guidelines. After realizing that they did not fulfil its management needs, the ILO discontinued its alignment and conducted a stock taking exercise that ultimately led to the establishment of an evaluation unit called PROG/EVAL.

1970s



EXPAND

Scaling-up and institutionalization
PROG/EVAL staff increased 200% (from one to three) and the ILO began to institutionalize evaluation by refining methodological materials, establishing evaluation schedules, providing technical backstopping and quality control for the evaluation system, and disseminating evaluation information to users.

1980s



REFORM

During the 1990s there were renewed calls from member States for the United Nations system as a whole to become more relevant and effective. In the case of the ILO, the constituents demanded enhanced transparency and accountability of the Organization's activities.

1990s



REBIRTH

In November 2000 and 2002, the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee (PFAC) set out a new evaluation framework. A key development was the 2005 policy inspired by UNEG Norms and Standards and the creation of a central Evaluation Unit. Shortly thereafter, an Evaluation Advisory Committee was established to oversee the use and implementation of and follow-up to lessons learned and recommendations.

2000s



TRANSFORMATION

Independence and Modernization
After an independent evaluation of the evaluation function, major organisational changes were made to ensure its structural independence. Reorganized into an ILO Evaluation Office and equipped with a time-bound strategy bold steps were taken to harmonize procedures, improve compliance, quality and use, while modernizing operations through web-enabled guidance and tools.

2010s

A brief history of evaluation in the ILO

Introduction

1. In 2019, the International Labour Organization is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The Centenary is an opportunity to celebrate the ILO's achievements and to reaffirm the ILO's position as the authoritative global organization for the world of work. Formal evaluation in the ILO does not extent back one hundred years. Nonetheless, the ILO Evaluation Office thought that it might be interesting to friends and colleagues to read a case study of the historical evolution, organized by decade, of the programme evaluation function in the ILO. The perspective of the case study is the central corporate evaluation function rather than the various evaluative activities that has been done throughout ILO as part of individual programmes and projects. In taking a chronological approach, the study is descriptive rather than analytical, although some recurrent trends and areas of focus of evaluation are identified. The study also does not review or describe focus and content of evaluation reports over the years, such as key findings and lessons learned. Such reviews are part of various other publications of the Evaluation Office (EVAL), focusing on themes or specific periods. A historical analysis of focus and content would be a useful follow-up to this study.

1960s--Enlightenment

2. Historically, evaluation dates back to the 18th century.¹ Evaluation is an evolution of social science research. Using elements from scientific methods, evaluation has taken place in various implicit forms throughout history as part of public administration, use of administrative data and policy functions, such as early public review commissions to investigate and evaluate educational and social programmes. Education accreditation through formal evaluation has been done since the early 1900s. On a small scale government agencies and social services conducted various investigations/measurements and evaluations. Some of these covered public schemes in places where development cooperation activities were implemented.²

¹ Hogan, L. (2007). The historical development of program evaluation: exploring the past and present. Online Journal for Workforce Education and Development, Vol 2 (4).

² This overview of the history of evaluation outside ILO is largely based on the treatise in Module 1: Introduction to development evaluation. 2005; International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) Handbook, The World Bank Group; and in "Exploring the History and Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation in International Non-governmental Organisations: Complemented by Intern Experience at Save the Children, USA" by Scott Toscano, SIT Graduate Institute, 2013. Further sources on the history of evaluation are the sections on "History of Evaluation" in Encyclopaedia of Evaluation, SAGE, 2005 (ed. Sandra Mathison); the International Atlas of Evaluation (Comparative Policy Evaluation), 2002, SAGE (by Jan-Eric Furubo (Editor),

3. In the 1940s and 1950s international programmes in areas such as health, nutrition and rural community development started, involving substantial expenditures and there was a need for the documentation of results. Evaluation was thus increasingly used in the United States, Canada and Europe to assess such programmes. Countries in Western Europe began to undertake programme evaluation, including on labour markets and employment, and started to establish planning and evaluation units to undertake such work. Beginning in the mid-1960s during a period of domestic reform in the United States known as the Great Society, the government infused large sums of money into a wide range of human service programmes. Evaluation was applied to some of the programmes to ensure that the money was used efficiently and effectively.
4. In the field of international development evaluation, as of the early 1950s donor agencies began to recognize evaluation as an essential management tool used at both the country level and in the United Nations (UN) system. The latter part of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the focus was on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) at the country level where the UN focused on promoting the building of national development planning capabilities³ with evaluation of development projects or technical assistance activities. They were still limited in concept and scope and often concerned more with the disbursement and delivery of physical inputs and outputs than with the nature of and impact on beneficiaries. In 1946, the Secretary-General established the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) as a standing committee to supervise the implementation of the relationship agreements between the UN and its specialized agencies. From 1966 to 1972, the ACC sponsored an Inter-Agency Study Group on Evaluation (IASGE).
5. The need for evaluation in the ILO goes back to the same period of time during which modern day evaluation began—the mid-1960s. In 1967, the third resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 51st session⁴ called for the selective evaluation of technical cooperation programmes with the participation of employers' and workers' organisations. Excerpts can be found in the box on the following page.

Ray C. Rist (Editor), Rolf Sandahl (Editor); and in a follow article “The institutionalization of evaluation matters: Updating the International Atlas of Evaluation 10 years later by Steve Jacob, Sandra Speer and J.E. Furubo, J.-E. (2015), in *Evaluation*. 21. 6-31.

³ United Nations ACC Task Force on Rural Development, Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation [referenced as UN Taskforce]. (1984). *Guiding principles for the design and use of monitoring and evaluation in rural development projects and programmes*. Rome. (ACC Administrative Committee on Coordination).

⁴ ILO: Resolution concerning International Co-operation for Economic and Social Development. In *Resolutions Adopted by the International Labour Conference at Its 51st Session*, Geneva, Jun. 1967.

Evaluation of technical co-operation programmes

- The ILO should continue to give full support to the evaluation studies undertaken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, particularly in order to attain the highest possible degree of objectivity in evaluation criteria, which would facilitate a systematic evaluation of projects.
- The basic objective of any evaluation must be the improvement of the methods used by the beneficiary governments and by the I.L.O. in the preparation and implementation of technical co-operation programmes. In order to judge the effectiveness of such programmes with a reasonable degree of accuracy, it is also necessary to make a rigorous choice among a certain number of projects and programmes in order to study them in depth, without devoting to evaluation resources out of proportion to its objectives.
- It would also be useful to allocate part of the credits for selected projects to a more systematic evaluation of their objectives, their implementation and the results achieved.

Participation of Employers' and Workers' Organisations in Technical Co-operation Activities

- In view of the Constitution and tripartite character of the I.L.O. the participation of employers and workers in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of its technical co-operation programmes is fundamental.
- The participation of employers' and workers' organisations in technical co-operation programmes and projects should be organised systematically, taking account of national practice. The I.L.O. should seek possible methods to ensure such participation and inform governments, as well as employers' and workers' organisations, of the methods followed in certain countries.
- More active participation of organisations of workers and employers at the various stages of technical co-operation projects would contribute to more objective evaluation. In this context it would be desirable to examine all measures which would enable the Governing Body to associate its members, on a tripartite basis, in the evaluation of projects implemented by the I.L.O.

6. It should be noted that the evaluation of technical cooperation programmes and the participation of employers' and workers' organisations in evaluation activities are

issues that are still important for the ILO Evaluation Office and which were featured prominently in the 2017 evaluation policy⁵ and the 2018-21 evaluation strategy.⁶

1970s--Evaluate

7. In 1972, the ACC sponsored the Inter-Agency Study Group on Evaluation (IASGE). The IASGE discussed and endorsed the UNDP draft guidelines for evaluation of country programmes and individual projects. It decided to meet again when sufficient experience had been gained in applying the guidelines to review the results.⁷
8. For a brief time, the ILO aligned itself with the UNDP draft guidelines. While the UNDP evaluation procedures were seen as being useful and worthwhile, they did not adequately fulfil the ILO's management needs. For one thing, they only covered some of the ILO's undertakings and made a limited effort to assess impact.⁸
9. In addition, they did not readily lend themselves to comparative analysis for the purpose of improving project design and implementation. The ILO discontinued its alignment with the UNDP draft guidelines, which were never issued and, ultimately, the IASGE disappeared.⁹
10. About three years later, in 1975, the ILO conducted an internal review of the "state of the art" evaluation activities in the Office.¹⁰ The ILO considered that, in the past, it had evaluated in a general way and that its evaluation activities did not represent an objective and informative evaluation exercise. In response, the Director-General requested a review of past evaluation experience in the ILO, an evaluation methodology seminar for some officials and the development of objectively verifiable indicators in select technical fields.
11. The ensuing report, presented to senior management in February 1976, pointed out that the ILO seemed to lack an "Office-wide evaluation methodology, based on objective criteria; a system to ensure that all but the smallest projects are subjected to regular evaluation; and a system of feedback to ensure that the results of evaluation are fed into the design of new projects and into the planning of programmes" Annex VII, i-ii.

⁵ ILO Evaluation Policy 2017. Governing Body. 331st Session, Geneva, 2017. GB.331/PFA/8.

⁶ ILO results-based strategy 2018-21. Governing Body. 332nd Session, Geneva, 2018. GB.332/PFA/8.

⁷ ILO 1979, Procedures for the design and evaluation of ILO projects. Vol I. Bureau of Programming and Management, Geneva.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sohm, E. (1983). Evaluation system of the United Nations Development Programme. Geneva. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/83/5.

¹⁰ Sohm, E. (1977). Report on evaluation in the United Nations system. Geneva. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/77/1.

12. Based on this assessment, a course of action was approved that included: a) training for two or three officials in project design and evaluation; b) a high-level consultant would be engaged to help to develop a project design methodology; c) proposals would be developed for a method and approach for project design and evaluation; and d) a massive training effort to familiarize all concerned with the new method. It was estimated that the overall operation would take one or two years to complete.
13. In 1977, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) prepared a report on the evaluation function of the agencies, programmes and funds in the UN System.¹¹ The report concluded that the ILO had taken important steps towards devising a comprehensive evaluation system and it was anticipated that the structure for evaluation within the organisation would soon take shape. It showed that most UN entities established central evaluation functions in the 1970s with some very early field programme-oriented UN entities such as UNDP, FAO and WFP creating such units in 1960s.
14. The JIU's assessment appears to have been correct because shortly thereafter, in 1978, an Evaluation Unit (PROG/EVAL) was established within the Bureau of Programming and Management. The unit was staffed by one official who undertook preparation of a series of volumes that were intended to fulfil the mandate to develop a method and approach for project design and evaluation.
15. Volume I, *Procedures for the design and Evaluation of ILO Projects* was issued in January 1979. Some of the definitions, contained therein, seem a bit anachronistic by today's standards. For example, evaluation is defined as "the act of discovering how successful we are in achieving our objectives".¹² However, many of the concepts from Volume I would be familiar to a contemporary reader.
16. What a contemporary reader, familiar with the ILO's 2017 evaluation policy that mandates the strict separation of project design and evaluation, would find unusual is the extent to which these two functions were mixed. Content analysis shows that 59 per cent (18.5 pages) of Volume I is dedicated to project design and 41 per cent (13 pages) is dedicated to evaluation.
17. There were other volumes in the series. Volume II was prepared for the specific guidance of programme managers and originators of technical cooperation projects.¹³ Volume III dealt expressly with the design and evaluation of research. "Certain types of meetings" were foreseen to be the subject of future volumes.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² ILO 1979. "Procedures for the design and evaluation of ILO projects. Vol I. Bureau of Programming and Management", Geneva, p. 3.

¹³ ILO 1978, "Draft Procedures for the Design and Evaluation of ILO Projects", typescript, Bureau of Programme Budgeting and Management, Geneva.

1980s--Expand

18. In 1980, two more officials joined the ILO's small central evaluation unit, expanding the number of professional staff from one to three. The unit concentrated its efforts on improving project design under the assumption that good evaluation starts with good design. It also concentrated on the establishment and surveillance of standardised evaluation procedures in order to improve the quality of technical programmes.¹⁴
19. As the ILO's basic evaluation processes became increasingly institutionalized, the Evaluation Unit's role shifted to the refinement of methodological materials, establishment of evaluation schedules, provision of technical backstopping and quality control for the evaluation system, and dissemination of evaluation information to users.¹⁵
20. The unit also held training seminars for about 280 ILO and other officials (including 68 national officials and donor agency representatives) in Geneva and the regions; design consultations continued; and initial procedures were developed for the feedback of evaluation information.¹⁶
21. A preliminary report was prepared on technical cooperation activities in November 1980, and a summary on the patterns of evaluation findings were used in the annual performance report and other review activities. While activities such as standard-setting or seminars were difficult to formally evaluate, the evaluation system sought to improve these activities as well. The ILO wanted evaluation to be a useful and reasonable management tool, rather than an elaborate process conducted for its own sake.¹⁷
22. From the beginning of 1982 until Nov. 1983, about 80 evaluations of ILO projects were submitted (25 of them used the self-evaluation report format contained in the *Procedures for the Design and Evaluation of ILO projects*).¹⁸ Fifty-five of those evaluations (25 self-evaluation and 30 other reports) were of sufficiently high quality to be retained. On the basis of that limited sample, the following preliminary conclusions were reached regarding the quality of the reports:
 - (a) As a general rule, self-evaluation reports utilizing the project evaluation report format contained in the *Procedures* were more likely to address such key questions as effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of projects than other

¹⁴ Sohm, E. (1981). Status of internal evaluation in United Nations system organizations. Geneva. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/81/5.

¹⁵ Sohm, E. (1985). Status of internal evaluation in United Nations system organizations. Geneva. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/85/10.

¹⁶ Sohm, E. (1981). Status of internal evaluation in United Nations system organizations. Geneva. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/81/5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ ILO: Design and evaluation of operational activities. 224th GB meeting, Geneva, Nov. 1983, GB.224/OP/2/1.

reports. Their utility in identifying the reasons for problems still needed to be ascertained.

(b) The other types of reports (end-of-project reports, mission reports, special studies by consultants, evaluation team reports, donor reviews, etc., all of which were submitted to PROG/EVAL under the heading of evaluation reports) proved extremely varied in quality ranging from excellent and informative to poor.

23. In the mid-1980s a new Chief for evaluation was appointed. At the urging of the External Auditor and at the request of the Governing Body, the Evaluation Unit was strengthened by one-half of a professional post. This enabled the unit to carry out programme evaluations as requested by the Governing Body, top management, or the programme bureau.¹⁹
24. The ILO also developed an evaluation information system to ensure that results were analysed; disseminated and used in decision-making and future planning at the project management level; the technical programme level; and the top management and supervisory body's level. Almost 300 evaluation reports of ILO and other organizations (and methodological studies) were gathered, and some 200 of these were abstracted.
25. ILO recruited a documentalist to establish a database for easier retrieval by a wider group of potential users. The Evaluation Unit also systematically analysed and disseminated lessons learned from evaluations through briefings, abstracts prepared on request, seminars, distribution of external evaluation reports, links with programme analysts, a periodic evaluation newsletter, reports to the Governing Body, and other techniques.²⁰
26. In addition to expanding design and evaluation processes to research projects, the Evaluation Unit developed a computerized listing of about 1,000 representative progress and/or performance indicators and advised staff on their selection. Increased attention was given to the project monitoring process. Efforts also supported the evaluation activities of governments through design and evaluation seminars in the field; wide dissemination of the ILO design and evaluation procedures in English, French and Spanish; and individual technical cooperation projects.²¹
27. The JIU's summary assessment was that the ILO had made gradual but steady and significant progress in developing its internal evaluation system on a step-by-step basis. From a foundation emphasizing the importance of good design and an understanding of the usefulness of evaluation as a management tool, the ILO moved

¹⁹ Sohm, E. (1985). Status of internal evaluation in United Nations system organizations. Geneva. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/85/10.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

on to active project evaluation, programme evaluation, an evaluation information system, and reporting processes to fill out the overall evaluation system structure. The achievements allowed for the expansion of system coverage and refinement of system quality to continue with a good sense of positive momentum.²²

28. The JIU went on to compare the evaluation functions of various UN agencies, programmes and funds.²³ Comparison shows that, even back in the 1980s, the ILO's evaluation function was seen as being quite advanced. Based on 11 parameters for activities of evaluation functions in the UN system, the ILO was the only UN entity that covered ten out of the 11, with only one agency covering all 11 parameters. These parameters included evaluations built into technical cooperation/field programmes and into HQ programmes/activities; and, the existence of guidelines, training programmes and reporting to the Governing Body level.
29. In 1984, at the same time that the ILO was strengthening its Evaluation Unit, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation (IAWG), predecessor to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), was created. During the 1980s and 1990's, the IAWG served as an informal group made up of the Heads of evaluation offices who met annually to discuss evaluation issues. The ILO was part of the IAWG group, as well as the UNEG.

1990s--Reform

30. During the 1990s, there were renewed calls from member States for the United Nations system, as a whole, to become more relevant and effective. Member States that provided extra-budgetary funding established principles for evaluation of development assistance through the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These principles included evaluation criteria to assess technical cooperation and external funding, including those provided to multilateral organizations.²⁴
31. In the case of the ILO, the constituents demanded enhanced transparency and accountability of the Organization's activities. As a new Chief of Evaluation took office, the Office responded by developing, on an experimental basis, a Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (MERS) which would be applicable to all ILO activities irrespective of financial sources.²⁵
32. MERS was rolled out in a limited manner, providing a standardized structure to capture the design, monitoring and technical reporting on programmes and

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD Development Assistance Committee, Paris, 1991

²⁵ ILO. The role of the ILO in technical cooperation (Report VI). Governing Body. 87th Session, 1999.

projects; and serving as an early example for further use in more integrated management systems.²⁶

33. In 1995, PROG/EVAL wrote a manual that superseded the multi-volume series.²⁷ A large proportion of the material in the Manual could be described as a modified version of the main components of the “logical framework approach”. It also incorporated some relevant elements of “participatory approaches”, particularly as they related to the involvement of beneficiaries in the various stages of the programming cycle.
34. This new manual was the basis of a series of training workshops at ILO headquarters, in the regions and at the International Training Centre in Turin, including as part of the UN Staff College project (the predecessor to the UN System Staff College). The workshops at the ITC/UNSC were open to colleagues from other UN entities and cemented the reputation of the ILO as one of the UN entities investing in capacity on design, monitoring and evaluation.²⁸
35. Independent evaluations regularly applied the guidance contained in the manual — and the quality of evaluation reports steadily improved. It is noteworthy that the new manual retained the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability that was originally set out in the multi-volume series.
36. The number of evaluations carried out from 1994 to 1995 remained more or less stable. Subsequently, there was a slight increase until a peak of 113 evaluations was reached in 1996. It is worthwhile to note that 1996 was the year in which total expenditures on technical cooperation reached its lowest level during the period under review.²⁹
37. An analysis of the types of evaluations carried out in terms of timing (interim, final, ex post) and of self- and independent evaluations (self-, independent-external, independent-internal), during the 1994-97 period, shows that interim evaluations became increasingly important during the period under review.³⁰ In 1994, 33 per cent of all evaluations were interim evaluations; by 1997 this share had increased to 44 per cent. This trend may be interpreted as reflecting a greater interest in ensuring that programmes/projects attained their objectives.
38. There was a decrease in the number of ex post evaluations, which focused on the assessment of the long-term impact of programmes and projects. Such evaluations

²⁶ Personal communication with Nelien Haspels on 30 Oct 2018 suggests that MERS was a useful precursor to the thinking on Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS) later developed in the ILO.

²⁷ ILO 1995, Design, monitoring and evaluation of technical cooperation programmes and projects: A training manual. Bureau of Programming and Management, Geneva.

²⁸ The training manual was part of the material for the UNSC workshops on “Management of the Programme and Project Cycle” carried out separately, geared to the UN entities and constitutes one of the first UN system-wide training on monitoring and evaluation.

²⁹ ILO. The role of the ILO in technical cooperation (Report VI). Governing Body. 87th Session, 1999.

³⁰ Ibid.

were seldom carried out due to the fact that accounts were closed upon termination of a project, leaving no funds available for conducting evaluations.

39. Additional analysis shows that the share of self-evaluations increased from 26 to 39 per cent between 1994 and 1997. This reflected the fact that self-evaluations were being carried out according to the manual. It also implies a shift in favour of independent-external evaluations, as indicated by the increase of their proportion out of the total number of independent evaluations — from 63 per cent in 1994 to 70 per cent in 1997. This was presented as a welcomed development given the overall higher quality of most independent-external evaluation reports compared to other evaluation reports.³¹
40. In addition to individual project evaluations, thematic evaluations were conducted regularly, cutting across several projects and/or technical programmes or sectors. The discussion of lessons learned from these evaluations was important to enhance a multidisciplinary approach in the Office and to ensure that the findings were incorporated into the design of new programmes and projects.³²

2000s--Rebirth

41. In November 2000 and 2002, the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee (PFAC) set out a new evaluation strategy and framework.³³ The November 2002 document defined the objectives of evaluation in the ILO and set the basic principles, methods and strategy of the evaluation function within a results-based management context. It also outlined the core capacities needed to implement the proposed evaluation framework over a horizon of three years. The evaluation of Decent Work Country Programmes was foreseen.
42. The functions of the central evaluation unit were incorporated for regular programme and DWCP activities into the work of the Strategic Programming and Management Department (PROGRAM) as part of the integrated results-based management and for technical cooperation activities into the work of the department of Partnerships and Field Support (PARDEV).
43. In the absence of capacity within the ILO to systematically undertake independent evaluations, large programmes, such as the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) invested in their own evaluation units that were responsible for the management and implementation of evaluations within their domain.
44. For example, IPEC's Design, Evaluation and Documentation (DED) unit had over 5 professionals and many advanced features such as: comprehensive guidance; an evaluation module in its information system with a repository for evaluation

³¹ ILO. The role of the ILO in technical cooperation (Report VI). Governing Body. 87th Session, 1999.

³² Ibid.

³³ GB.279/PFA/8, ILO evaluation strategy, Nov. 2000; GB.285/PFA/10, ILO evaluation framework Evaluation within a strategic budgeting context, Nov. 2002.

reports; a consultants' database; and, evaluation planning. Work was also done on impact assessment, ex-post and thematic evaluations, and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategies. While behaviour independence was present, the focus of DED was largely on organizational learning, an indispensable feature for one of the largest technical cooperation programmes in the ILO's history.

45. The new evaluation strategy was not without risks and bottlenecks³⁴. Those factors needing particular attention, including:

- High-level support for internalizing evaluation-linked management practices;
- Significantly improved quality of the Programme and Budget and DWCP indicators and documentation of results being achieved;
- Regional capacity to support decentralized evaluation for DWCPs and technical programmes and projects and themes;
- ILO adherence to UN norms and standards for evaluation to protect the credibility of its evaluation function.

46. A watershed event in the ILO's evaluation history was the March 2005 creation of a central Evaluation Unit. On a transitional basis, the unit was based within the Management and Administration Sector. This was an important although insufficient step towards more independence. The new unit had overall responsibility for implementing the ILO's evaluation policy. It was separate from PROGRAM and PARDEV and submitted its reports directly to the Director General, through the Executive Director of the Management and Administration Sector.³⁵

47. In November 2005 a new policy framework was adopted, aimed to improve and strengthen the practice of independent evaluation in the ILO. It also established principles for the systematic self-evaluation of programme performance so that together these provided comprehensive coverage of all ILO activities that supported the ILO's vision, as articulated in the 2006-09 Strategic Policy Framework.³⁶ It also called for an independent evaluation of the policy framework within five years.

Key objectives of the evaluation policy (2005):

- Improve Office-wide transparency and accountability for impact of ILO actions to support its constituents;
- Strengthen the decision-making process by the policy organs and senior management based on sound assessment of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability of ILO activities;
- Contribute feedback for learning and ongoing improvement of the ILO's work.

³⁴ ILO. Annual Evaluation Report 2007-2008 Evaluation Unit, ILO, Geneva 2008.

³⁵ ILO. Evaluation: A new policy and strategic framework for evaluation at the ILO. Governing Body. 294th Session, Geneva, 2005. GB.294/PFA/8/4.

³⁶ Ibid.

48. The ILO's work on evaluation was influenced by UNEG's Norms and Standards for Evaluation, first adopted in 2005, to serve as a landmark document for the United Nations and beyond. UNEG, building on the IAWGE and work by various ACC task forces, was founded as an interagency professional network that brings together the evaluation units of the UN system, including UN departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and affiliated organizations. The Norms and Standards, last updated in 2016, has been used successfully to strengthen and harmonize evaluation practice and has served as a key reference for evaluators around the globe.
49. In 2006, the ILO established an Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) to oversee the use and implementation of and follow-up to lessons learned and recommendations resulting from ILO evaluation activities. Following a revamping of membership and practices in 2012, the EAC was, by 2013, recognized by the ILO's external auditors as a good practice of governance.
50. In 2007, the Evaluation Unit (EVAL) co-managed a joint UN Evaluation Group evaluation of the One UN Pilot initiative, participating in two country missions (Uruguay and Mozambique) and preparing case studies that reviewed the designs of the pilots and mechanisms that were put in place for implementing the reforms.³⁷ As a result of this activity, EVAL drafted guidance to converge practices for monitoring and evaluation to be consistent and compatible with United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) procedures for monitoring and evaluation.³⁸
51. In 2008, EVAL took steps to incorporate the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization as the main basis for country and programme evaluations, including a call for analysis and recommendations for DWCPs in light of the Declaration.³⁹

2010s--Transformation

52. In 2010, ILO constituents requested an independent evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function, as called for in the 2005 evaluation policy. Overall, the Independent evaluation of the evaluation function (IEE) 2010 found that the ILO had made significant improvements to the evaluation function over the past five years and concluded that the evaluation policy itself was sound and needed little modification.⁴⁰ While the evaluators found no evidence that the existing reporting line of the Evaluation Unit compromised the independence of the evaluation function, they noted that enough ambiguity existed to convey an impression of a lack of independence. The report noted improved harmonization of evaluation practices and increased participation in the evaluation process. Evaluations were

³⁷ ILO. Annual Evaluation Report 2007-2008 Evaluation Unit, ILO, Geneva 2008.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ ILO. Annual Evaluation Report 2008-2009 Evaluation Unit, ILO, Geneva 2009.

⁴⁰ ILO. Evaluations: Independent external evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function. Governing Body. 310th Session, Geneva, 2011. GB.310/PFA/4/2.

esteemed to be of good quality, however, their results were seldom used. The recommendations of the IEE 2010 were agreed to by the Office and approved by the Governing Body.

53. Under the direction of a new Director of Evaluation, appointed in 2011, the results of the IEE were used to draft a new evaluation strategy that was submitted to the Governing Body in March 2011 for the period of 2011-17 (at conclusion of which another IEE was planned). The revised strategy used a results-based format with indicators, milestones and targets that allowed EVAL to monitor and to better report progress.⁴¹ The Evaluation Unit obtained structural independence as a separate unit directly reporting to the Director-General and the Governing Body.
54. Outcome 1 of the new strategy was: Improved use of evaluation by management and constituents for governance; Outcome 2—Harmonized office-wide evaluation practice to support transparency and accountability; and, Outcome 3—Evaluation capability expanded through enhanced knowledge, skills and tools. The Annual Evaluation Reports (AER), submitted annually to the Governing Body, became the mechanism to report on the status of implementation of the evaluation strategy. In addition, a Part II was added to the AER to provide an overview of the ILO's overall effectiveness as gleaned from evaluation reports.
55. In 2012, EVAL completed work on a comprehensive resource kit on the ILO's evaluation policy with related procedures, guidelines and guidance notes based on good practice. Over 1,000 copies were mailed to stakeholders or downloaded from the EVAL's public website.⁴²
56. The following year, 2013, EVAL created its hybrid decentralized evaluation network. The network consisted of part-time evaluation focal persons in departments at headquarters, together with the full-time regional evaluation officers. The network plays an important role in planning and coordinating a large number of internal and independent project evaluations each year. The hybrid system provides for central oversight of decentralized evaluations and relies heavily on evaluation managers.
57. 2013 was also the year that the Evaluation Manager Certification Programme (EMCP) was launched in response to this need.⁴³ EVAL established the EMCP to adequately prepare evaluation managers, to create a pool of qualified candidates and to upgrade the quality of evaluation management. The programme consists of three phases: 1) distance learning, 2) a three-day, face-to-face workshop, and 3) guided practice. Successful participants are formally certified and join the growing network of evaluation managers.

⁴¹ ILO. Results-based strategies 2011-15: Evaluation strategy—strengthening the use of evaluations. Governing Body. 310th Session, Geneva, 2011. GB.310/PFA/4/1.

⁴² ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations. Evaluation Unit, ILO, Geneva 2012.

⁴³ ILO. Annual Evaluation Report 2012-2013 Evaluation Unit, ILO, Geneva 2013.

58. In 2014, the unit was upgraded to the status of an Office. It was also in that year that the Joint Inspection Unit conducted a study of the evaluation functions in the agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system. As can be seen in Table 1, the ILO was esteemed to have achieved the status of the second most developed evaluation function, of all the organizations that were assessed.⁴⁴

Table 1. Level of development of the evaluation function by size of the organizations' overall annual budgets and the location of the central evaluation function

	Small		Medium		Large	
	Organization	Grade	Organization	Grade	Organization	Grade
Stand alone	UNODC	5.2	ILO	6.7	WFP	6.7
	UNIDO	6.4	UNEP	5.8	UNDP	7.1
	UN Women	6.4	UNFPA	6	UNICEF	6.3
	UN-Habitat	4.2			FAO	5.9
Co-located/with management	ITC	4.9	UNAIDS	5.3	UNHCR	3.8
	UNCTAD	4.4				
Co-located with oversight/audit	IMO	3.7	UNESCO	6.1	UN-OIOS	6.2
	WMO	3.5	UNRWA	3.4	WHO	4.7
	ICAO	3.9	WIPO	5.2		
			IAEA	5.9		
3.0-4.9 = Below average and low 5.0-6.0 = Average 6.1-8.0 = Above average and high						

59. Also in that year, EVAL conducted an analysis of reports from 2014 through mid-2015. The analysis showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the average qualities of evaluations produced under managers who had completed the EMCP versus those who had not completed the EMCP. Additional studies showed that while quality had not increased, comprehensiveness of the reports had increased substantially. These additional studies also led to a change in the methodology to assess ex-post the quality of evaluation reports.

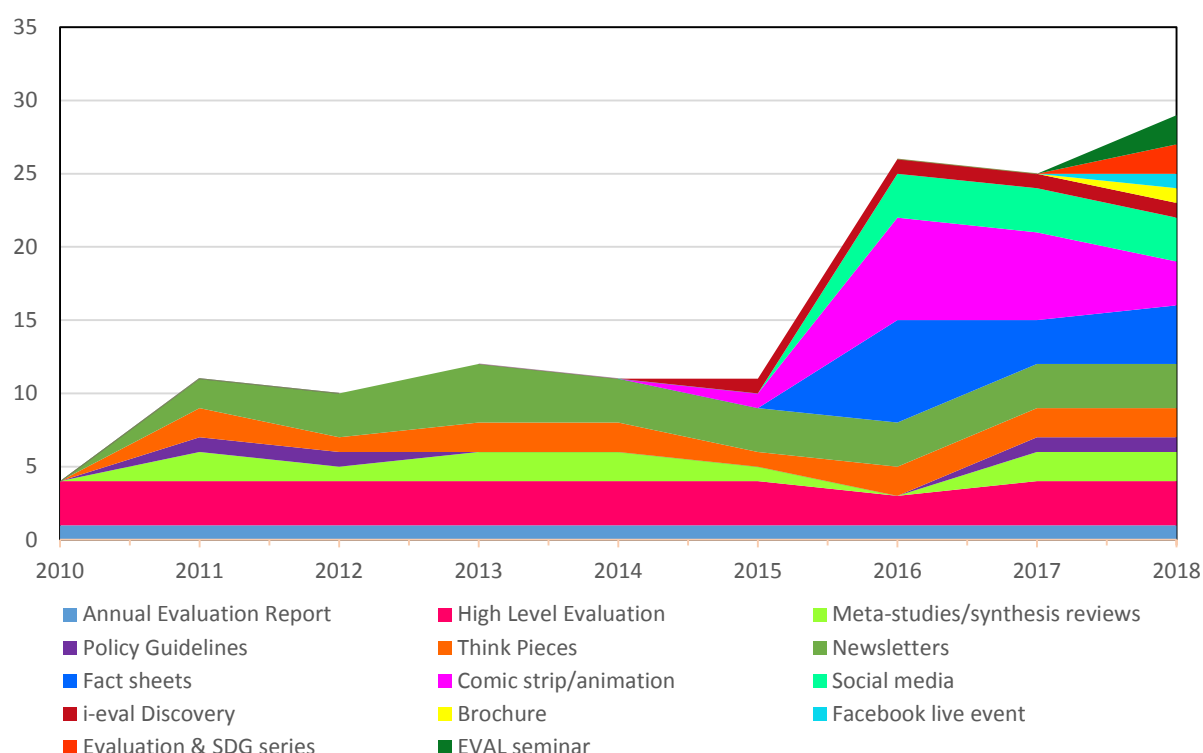
60. EVAL also begun producing a higher volume of, and more diverse, knowledge products. Starting in 2011, the volume of EVAL's publications more than doubled (see graph below) and quadrupled by 2016. Publications included high-level evaluations, meta-studies, synthesis reviews, decent work results studies, newsletters, fact sheets and think pieces, to name a few.

61. These publications reflect an increased focus on supporting the use of evaluation findings as part of organizational learning and knowledge building. Other areas of work in support of knowledge building are guidance, technical reviews and communities of practices sessions on impact evaluations that are done by

⁴⁴ Prom-Jackson, S. & Bartsiotas, G. (2014). Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system. Geneva. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/2014/6.

department and regions as part of identifying and documenting effective policy solutions.

Graph 1. Evaluation products 2010-18



62. In 2016, EVAL launched [i-eval Discovery](#), an interactive application that visually displays all of the ILO's planned and completed evaluations, recommendations, lessons learned and good practices via a mapping feature. Through the interactive mapping feature and filtering options, users can access very specific and tailored information.

63. Also in 2016, the ILO's evaluation function was the subject of another IEE. The evaluation found that EVAL had undergone transformational change since the last IEE in 2010. As a small centralized office within the ILO, it established mandatory requirements and highly structured systems and processes to deliver the evaluation function. These include tools, such as guidance and manuals, and some innovations, such as the EMCP and linking the *i-track* database to other corporate information technology (IT) systems. The consequence of this success is a systemized evaluation function that is strongly independent and consistently delivers its technical requirements to UNEG standards.⁴⁵

64. A new evaluation policy was subsequently formulated following extensive consultations that involved over 250 staff and constituents.⁴⁶ Following the

⁴⁵ ILO: Independent Evaluation of ILO's Evaluation Function – IEE (2011–2016): Final report. ILO, Geneva 2017.

⁴⁶ ILO Evaluation Policy 2017. Governing Body. 331st Session, Geneva, 2017. GB.331/PFA/8.

adoption of a revised Evaluation policy (November 2017), the Governing Body adopted a new Evaluation strategy 2018-21 during its 332nd session in March 2018.⁴⁷

65. The new policy establishes evaluation as a function for promoting accountability and learning. It reiterates that evaluation is integral to the ILO's results-based management system. Drawing from the policy, the new strategy presents a theory of change that shows the intended contribution of evaluation to an effective ILO through expected changes in the ILO's work based on evaluation with outcomes at the organizational level. Outcome 1 of the new strategy is: Enhanced capacities and systems of evaluation for better practice and use; Outcome 2—Enhanced value of evaluation through the use of more credible and higher quality evaluations (independence, credibility, usefulness); and, Outcome 3— Stronger knowledge base of evaluation findings and recommendations. The importance of the enabling environment for the contribution of evaluation to an effective ILO and to an effective evaluation function are key elements of the strategy.

The new evaluation policy (2017) aims to:

- Reinforce knowledge-generation sharing of the ILO's substantive work, and the processes, approaches and institutional arrangements for implementing such work;
- Strengthen the complementarity between evaluation and other oversight and monitoring functions within the Office;
- Clarify standards for engaging constituents in evaluation; and
- Clarify the division of responsibilities in the ILO for carrying out an evaluation.

66. In collaboration with the department of Information and Technology Management (INFOTEC), EVAL launched an Automated Management Response System (AMRS) in 2018 to follow up on management response to independent evaluation recommendations, thus improving overall efficiency, reporting and organisational learning.

67. Also in 2018, EVAL introduced its new knowledge sharing platform: *i-eval* Connect. It was designed to build a community of evaluation professionals by hosting various interactive facilities: communities of practices, ask a question, capacity development, consultant roster, calendar of events, and mission reports. *i-eval* Connect signifies a substantial improvement in connecting the regional and headquarters evaluation networks, and strengthening the ILO's evaluation culture. *i-eval* Connect, together with *i-eval* Discovery and the AMRS, represent new efforts to help bring the knowledge management of evaluation results into the next centenary.

⁴⁷ ILO results-based strategy 2018-21. Governing Body. 332nd Session, Geneva, 2018. GB.332/PFA/8.

Conclusion

68. In the Evaluation Office's 2013 biennial workshop a vision statement for the evaluation function in the ILO was discussed and agreed upon. The role of evaluation, it was stated, could only be fully realized through appropriate evaluation policies, skills and quality products. In turn, evidence produced by quality evaluations would then inform a more relevant, efficient, effective ILO with greater impact on the lives of the people it serves.
69. Over the years, as this brief history illustrates, the evaluation function in the ILO has made substantial progress on realizing this vision. Policies are in place, capacity building programmes are being rolled-out annually and a harmonized process to improve evaluation quality and to make information more accessible is yielding results.
70. The challenge ahead will be to further enhance the culture of evaluation in the ILO in a way that the organization uses evaluation information to become more relevant, efficient, and effective and, thus, realise the ultimate impact of improving the lives of the people it serves.

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