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High-level evaluations of strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes

Purpose of the document

This document presents a summary of the findings and recommendations of three independent high-level evaluations conducted during 2020. Part I pertains to the ILO's strategy and actions for promoting sustainable enterprises 2014–19. Part II covers the ILO's research and knowledge management strategies and approaches 2010–19. Part III concerns the ILO's programme of work in selected Andean countries in Latin America, 2016–19. The Governing Body is invited to endorse the recommendations and request the Director-General to ensure their implementation (see draft decision in paragraph 139).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

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

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

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: Changes in resource allocations within approved budget level may be required.

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

Author unit: Evaluation Office (EVAL).

Related document: GB.340/PFA/6.

▶ Introduction

1.   This report presents a summary of the findings of three high-level evaluations conducted by the ILO's Evaluation Office (EVAL) in 2020. [1] The evaluations were undertaken using internationally accepted evaluation criteria covering relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Data derived using various methods (desk reviews, synthesis reviews of related project evaluations, interviews, surveys and case studies) were triangulated to ensure consistency and reliability. [2] A six-point rating scale – ranging from very unsatisfactory to very satisfactory – was applied to complement the findings. While preparatory work had started before the COVID-19 pandemic, the greater part of the evaluation process had to be undertaken when countries had already imposed lockdowns and travel restrictions. This affected the evaluation process and required adapted methods. [3] Interviews were conducted via videoconferencing and by telephone. National consultants were engaged in selected countries to support data collection for case studies. This may have somewhat limited the possibility of validating results reported by the Office on the ground but was compensated for by using multiple sources of evidence.

2.   The evaluations aim to generate insights into organizational performance within the context of the ILO's results-based management system, and are expected to contribute to decision-making on policies, strategies and accountability. Responses to COVID-19 will inevitably affect the ILO's future work. The three evaluations look back at previous work to present ideas on how to undertake future work in this new context.

▶ Part I. The ILO's strategy and actions for promoting sustainable enterprises 2014–19

Purpose and scope

3.   The evaluation reviewed strategic planning documents and reports, and analysed implementation and results, including Country Programme Outcomes (CPOs), global products, programmes and projects that contribute to the outcome, and the resource applied. [4] The evaluation covered the period 2014–19.

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[1] The full text of the evaluation reports provides further details to substantiate the key findings and conclusions presented in the summaries. These reports can be consulted at www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationreports/lang--en/index.htm.

[2] Country or topical case studies and other supporting documentation for each evaluation are available upon request at eval@ilo.org.

[3] ILO, *Implications of COVID-19 on Evaluations in the ILO: Practical Tips on Adapting to the Situation, Operating Procedures* (2020).

[4] A synthesis review of 63 relevant project evaluations was also examined. Ten countries were selected: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Egypt, Ghana, Lebanon, Mexico, Myanmar, Peru, Thailand, Tunisia and Viet Nam. A total of 131 interviews (43 per cent female) were conducted with ILO staff, constituents and other stakeholders. A total of 63 stakeholders participated through online surveys.

Summary of findings

A.   Relevance

> **Key finding 1:** Demand from Member States for ILO support in promoting sustainable enterprises remains strong across all units and programmes within the Enterprises Department (ENTERPRISES), and the support offered aligns with national priorities.
>
> **Key finding 2:** There is tension between what the ILO saw as its contemporary vision and approach and the continued delivery and maintenance of what were seen as "legacy" products, such as the ENTERPRISES Start and Improve Your Business training course.
>
> **Key finding 3:** The ILO's work aligned with the principles of the key policy instruments guiding the work of ENTERPRISES, though constituents expressed some concerns about whether enough attention was being given to all elements.
>
> **Key finding 4:** The ILO's sustainable enterprises work gave attention to the needs of youth and women. Less attention seems to have been given to other marginalized groups.
>
> **Key finding 5**: The ILO's work was relevant to the diverse needs and levels of economic development of the evaluation's countries of focus.

4.   Demand for entrepreneurship training programmes remains especially strong, raising some questions for the ILO about its strategic approach and investment of resources.

5.   The ILO's work in promoting sustainable enterprises focuses on the needs of youth, women and refugees. Less attention seems to have been given to marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities and indigenous and tribal peoples.

6.   The synthesis review of 30 project evaluation reports on the promotion of sustainable enterprises found this work to be highly relevant.

B   Coherence

> **Key finding 6:** There is no current overarching strategy to provide a coherent framework for the ILO's sustainable enterprises activities as a whole.
>
> **Key finding 7:** Developing a strategy for the ILO's work on sustainable enterprises would also provide an opportunity to reflect on its current approach and to consider some difficult questions.
>
> **Key finding 8:** There is a need for processes that encourage workers' representatives to engage more with this work at an operational level, and to build their knowledge and capacity to do so.
>
> **Key finding 9:** The ILO's enterprise work generally complements that of other actors and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

7.   An overarching strategy would support further collaboration and partnerships, and provide the opportunity to reflect on the current approach, especially on whether the ILO is emphasizing the right things and is timely in responding, given the new challenges to be faced in the post-COVID-19 world. The lack of such a strategy threatens the coherence of the ILO's work on sustainable enterprises and risks some areas of work being undervalued, under-promoted and under-resourced.

8.   The ILO's work on sustainable enterprises, as set out in the programme and budget indicators and overall theory of change, broadly reflect the work being done. The ILO's work is strongly coherent with the Organization's strategic objectives.

C   Effectiveness

Key finding 10: The ILO continued to engage with stakeholders at different levels to advance its goals for sustainable enterprises. Results were generally positive.

Key finding 11: The ILO met 60 per cent of the sustainable enterprise programme and budget targets over the period under review and significantly exceeded some targets.

Key finding 12: Work related to the promotion and implementation of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) grew during the period under review, including through development cooperation projects.

Key finding 13: The Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) programme continued to grow and evolve in the period under review, but data collection on effectiveness at the enterprise level can be further improved.

Key finding 14: The Social Finance Programme was especially effective in promoting access to insurance for vulnerable groups.

Key finding 15: The ILO has effectively embedded Green Jobs as a cross-cutting element of its work.

9. The ILO's best results against programme and budget targets are those related to the implementation of entrepreneurship programmes. Work on the Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises (EESE) exceeded its target by 127 per cent in 2016–17, but this result subsequently declined to 46 per cent. Overall, results suggest that the ILO meets or exceeds targets against indicators that relate to direct assistance to enterprises.

10. The evaluation's analysis of CPOs over the period showed a steady use of SCORE and entrepreneurship skills development tools, a concentration of EESE work in the 2016–17 biennium and a reduction in the number of women's entrepreneurship programmes included in CPOs.

D.   Efficiency

Key finding 16: An analysis of expenditures against programme and budget indicators showed that 72 per cent of the total spent has been on developing and implementing entrepreneurship policies and programmes, with 18 per cent on promoting responsible business practices, and 9 per cent on improving the enabling environment.

11. The lack of available data continues to hinder an in-depth analysis of the tracking of resource allocation. The lack of impact data prevents a sound cost–benefit analysis.

12. The evaluation's analysis of development cooperation projects related to sustainable enterprises for 2014–19 identified 227 projects, with a total budget of more than US$25 million. Some 50 per cent of total funds were allocated to Africa, with the next highest being Asia and the Pacific at 24 per cent.

E. Likelihood of Impact and sustainability

> **Key finding 17:** The ILO does not pay enough attention to measuring long-term impact and the sustainability of its work in promoting sustainable enterprises.
>
> **Key finding 18:** ILO monitoring tends to focus on outputs, but impacts are only ever discovered if a more detailed evaluation or study is commissioned later.
>
> **Key finding 19:** Some work has been done that measures the impact of the ILO's entrepreneurship programmes, which were generally viewed as positive.
>
> **Key finding 20:** Reported decent work results indicated strong links to the SDGs. The evaluation was unable to draw any conclusions from available data about how much the ILO's work contributes to meeting SDG targets.
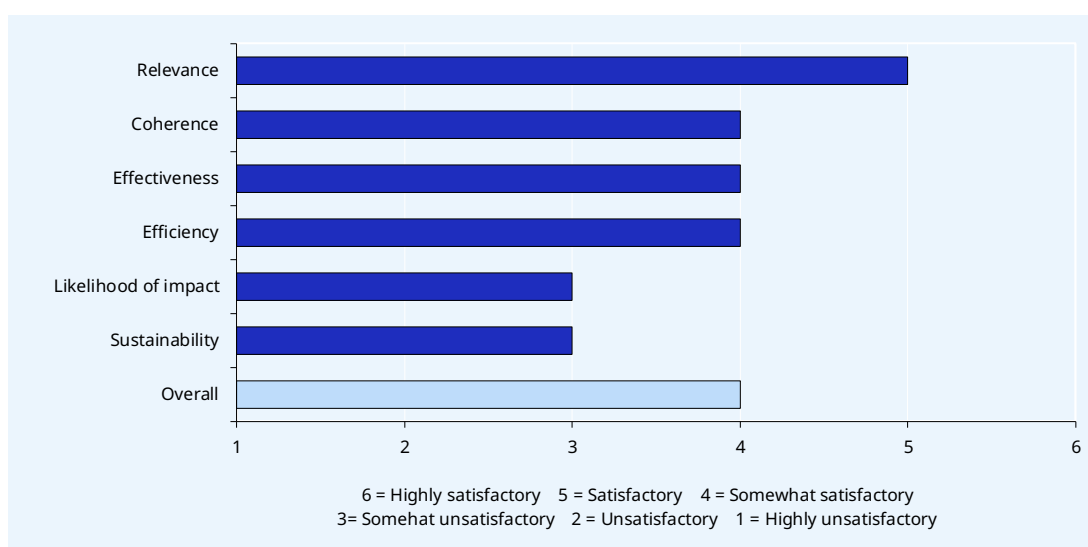>
> **Key finding 21:** Survey results suggest that both constituents and staff perceive the ILO to have improved local capacity to sustain its work without further support or funding.

13. The ILO makes considerable efforts to monitor results, but only during the period of a project. More attention should be given to measuring both the "downstream" results for participating enterprises and the lasting "upstream" changes to local systems and institutions.

14. ILO monitoring tends to focus on outputs and, insofar as they are delivered during a programme, on outcomes; however, impacts are only discovered if a more detailed evaluation or study is commissioned later. More effort should be made during project design to consider appropriate indicators of impact, and to put in place mechanisms to encourage appropriate data recording.

15. Impact work on sustainable enterprises revealed some valuable lessons for future programme designs, especially those targeting women, and illustrate the importance of doing more to assess impact.

Overall assessment

16. Figure 1 presents a general assessment of the identified performance levels for outcome 4.

▶ **Figure 1.   Overall evaluation ratings by criterion**

6 = Highly satisfactory   5 = Satisfactory   4 = Somewhat satisfactory
3= Somehat unsatisfactory   2 = Unsatisfactory   1 = Highly unsatisfactory

Conclusions and lessons learned

17. The ILO's work in promoting sustainable enterprises is of vital importance for achieving its overall decent work goals. Although this work is sometimes characterized as being more relevant to the priorities of employers and their representatives, it has equal relevance for workers and their representatives, and warrants their increased and active engagement. Demand from Member States for this work is strong.

18. Improvement is needed in the overall coherence of this work, and a strategic framework would be beneficial. It could also drive more collaboration across the Organization, set the stage for the challenging period ahead, and provide an opportunity to implement fresh ideas.

19. The ILO's work in promoting sustainable enterprises was diverse and quite effective – a range of projects, which generally achieved their objectives, were completed across various areas of work.

20. Measuring the long-term impact of the ILO's enterprise work remains a weakness, resulting in restrictive assessments of efficiency, especially cost–benefit analyses.

21. Continuing high demand for entrepreneurship training programmes reflects the demand of Member States for practical solutions to labour market problems. Concerns remain about the contribution of these programmes to decent work; their impact, sustainability and cost; and whether the ILO's role should be to innovate, to demonstrate and then to transfer.

22. Entrepreneurship can be an effective means to empower women and create employment, but women continue to face gender-based barriers to starting and growing their businesses. The fact that the ILO has tools designed to address these barriers does not in itself guarantee that the issue will be owned by local stakeholders and more could be done to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all interventions.

23. There have been instances where the ILO's enterprise work has had a beneficial and dialogue-facilitating effect in the case of conflict between the social partners. Bringing all the social partners together can offer a starting point to promote dialogue and collaboration.

24. Integrating the social partners at the start of projects is important, and doing so contributes significantly to the delivery of results.

25. Devising responses from the ground up may reveal that there are cheaper and more sustainable ways of delivering programmes that can achieve impact and that can be more readily scaled up. Local involvement should be encouraged.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

26. **Develop a strategic framework for the ILO's work in promoting sustainable enterprises that builds on and updates the 2010 Framework Agreement on Inclusive Labour Markets, and that repositions this work to respond to the challenges of the post-COVID-19 world.**

This framework would clarify important strategic issues not covered by the programme and budget. It needs to:

• directly support enterprises to create and maintain decent work;

- be clear about the key roles of the project, differentiating those intended to demonstrate possible policy approaches from those that simply target business activity or behaviour;

- reflect and articulate an intervention logic for the development and promotion of sustainable enterprises, considering the new challenges brought about by the pandemic, recognizing the ILO's strengths, and focusing on innovation and demonstration, especially at the field level;

- take an Organization-wide perspective of this work that goes beyond the existing activities, programmes and structure of ENTERPRISES, and define clear linkages with other parts of the ILO to encourage the co-design of interventions and collaboration in a holistic manner, rather than product-driven approaches;

- integrate the ILO's work into global supply chains and define strategic goals in this area – coordination of this work across the Office will be vital;

- update the ILO's approach to achieving gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons from other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including updating the ILO strategy on promoting women's entrepreneurship development approved by the International Labour Conference in 2008 and ensuring gender is mainstreamed across all interventions;

- clarify the role of field specialists in advancing the goals of this strategic framework, including the role expected of them in work areas in which they may not be currently active;

- embed elements in programme design that encourage enterprises to take action to improve their resilience.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, Deputy Director-General for Policy (DDG/P) and Deputy Director-General for Field Operations (DDG/FOP), regional offices and Decent Work Teams (DWTs), Gender, Equality and Diversity and ILOAIDS branch (GED/ILOAIDS)	High	Short-term	Low

Recommendation 2

27. Establish a more effective mechanism at the operational level to get the input of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) to improve programme design and implementation, and to resolve any concerns.

Unresolved issues about some ILO programmes were of lingering concern to the constituents. Interviews with representatives of ACT/EMP and ACTRAV suggested that communication about such issues could be improved, especially at the operational level, so that a path to resolution could be laid.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, DDG/P ACT/EMP, ACTRAV	High	Long-term	Low

Recommendation 3

28. **Undertake longitudinal assessments of impact and sustainability for more projects, and do so one year and three years after the end of the projects, on the basis of impact and sustainability indicators agreed during the design stage.**

Undertaking follow-up monitoring and evaluation for some projects would provide data that could be used to demonstrate effectiveness both to beneficiaries (who might be expected to contribute to the cost of programmes) and donors. It should at least be possible to schedule and conduct reviews that can determine if systems and programmes introduced by past projects are still in place three years down the road and, if they are, the scale of their operation.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, Partnerships and Field Support Department (PARDEV), Evaluation Office (EVAL)	High	Medium-term	High

Recommendation 4

29. **Review different approaches to the delivery, training and consultancy support of the SCORE programme to identify the modality which provides best value for money and time.**

The difficulty of persuading businesses to pay a realistic cost to participate in the full SCORE programme, and the fact that most participating businesses only participate in Module 1, suggest that a rethink of the offer is needed. Being better able to demonstrate productivity improvements through better productivity performance data should enhance programme marketing. The SCORE programme should enhance the capacity of participating companies and itself to collect better data that will help them in reviewing the best modality. The technical consultancy is valued by businesses but should be limited in time, and only extended if the business is willing to pay a commercial rate.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, DDG/P	Medium	Long-term	High

Recommendation 5

30. **Review the design of EESE assessments to promote collaboration and implementation.**

The EESE has had an impact in some countries and is popular with employers' organizations, but some assessments have not resulted in any reforms of public policy. There could be merit in (a) engaging in dialogue with government during the process of undertaking the assessment, to identify areas for reform, (b) engaging with other business membership organizations during the assessment, to ensure that the final

agenda is largely acceptable to all the private sector, (c) engaging with trades unions, to ensure that proposals will not have adverse and unforeseen consequences for decent work, and (d) considering how the work will be driven forward post assessment.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, DDG/P	High	Long-term	Medium

Recommendation 6

31. **The Green Jobs Unit should focus on research and policy, which it already seems to be doing well, and mainstreaming a green dimension across all the ILO's work. It should cease the direct delivery of projects. If there is an opportunity and a need for demonstration projects, they should be managed by an appropriate team from elsewhere in the ILO.**

The Green Jobs Unit is torn between its role as a thinker and policy reformer, and as a project manager. Project management skills already exist in other units, and there is no need for the Green Jobs Unit to replicate these attributes.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, DDG/P	High	Medium-term	Low

Recommendation 7

32. **As part of a new strategic framework, clarify the positioning of entrepreneurship training programmes in the ILO's overall approach.**

Countries often want a visible and direct form of assistance, and these programmes seem to fit the bill. There are some examples where they have taken root and been sustained, but there are many more where they were introduced as short-term, project-bound activities, and have subsequently faded away or remained operating on a relatively miniscule scale.

The ILO needs to decide if it is comfortable continuing to offer these programmes in this way and, if so, under what circumstances. It also needs to understand better the factors that drive success in truly embedding these programmes into national systems, and to define what it sees as a scale of delivery that justifies its investment.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, DDG/P	Medium	Long-term	Medium

Recommendation 8

33. **Actively encourage and support innovation in sustainable enterprises work that directly responds to the circumstances of Member States as they rapidly change.**

The emphasis of this work needs to be on flexibility of design, integration with a market systems approach, speed of implementation, ability to achieve greater geographic reach and scale, cost-effectiveness and sustainability. While existing models and programmes will continue to be useful, there should be space for innovation.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, DDG/P, DDG/FOP	Medium	Long-term	High

Recommendation 9

34. **Ensure that proposals for policy reform consider ways in which governments can build resilience into their economies; review and amend capacity-building programmes to reflect the need for businesses to undertake positive action to become more resilient.**

COVID-19 has demonstrated that too many countries and too many businesses have little understanding of what is necessary to stand firm in the face of disaster. Like greening processes and thinking about gender, building resilience should be integral to the way that governments and businesses "do business".

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ENTERPRISES, DDG/P and DDG/FOP and PARDEV	High	Short-term	Low

Office response

35. The Office takes note of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. The complex situation posed by COVID-19 is recognized insofar as it placed restrictions on the evaluation process in important ways and required adapted methods. This is unfortunate, as some relevant information was, as a result, not considered. The Office thanks the Evaluation Office for the report and will endeavour to maximize using the findings and recommendations to improve focus and delivery.

36. The Office would like to highlight the work done on international policy coherence, engaging and collaborating with other international organizations, as discussed in the POL/MNE segment of the Governing Body.

37. Outcome 4 in the Programme and Budget for 2020–21 is clearly relevant and has, over time, been fine-tuned to provide a more focused approach to delivering on the promotion of sustainable enterprises and the ILO strategic objectives.

Recommendation 1

38. This recommendation is welcomed and is relevant to the current approach of the Office to developing an overarching strategic framework pertaining to sustainable enterprises that goes beyond outcome 4 and that involves key-players and partners in the broader ILO. With reference to key finding 2, there is space for both approaches in response to requests from constituents as they blend well. A clear overarching strategy could help to demonstrate how both approaches blend, and when and how ILO programmes are transferred.

Recommendation 2

39. Working with constituents is a key success factor towards promoting sustainable enterprises and this recommendation will guide existing efforts to strengthen engagement with the Bureaux at both headquarters and field levels.

Recommendation 3

40. This recommendation is welcomed and deserves reflection in obtaining resources and support followed by peer-to-peer meetings on methodology.

Recommendation 4

41. The SCORE programme has reinvented itself and moved beyond a five-module solution to embrace new training offers that include: Short Course, Gender Equality Model, Productivity (Ethiopia), Hospitality Coaching, and a Corporate Social Responsible Module where the programme will generate improved results.

Recommendation 5

42. As can be noted in paragraph 9 of the report, it was extremely difficult to reach targets on the EESE for the last biennium. The targets increased by 60 per cent year on year and measurement criteria drastically changed from one indicator to three indicators, with reduced funding available for delivery. This led to a review of the EESE, and more appropriate measurement criteria are now reflected in the current programme and budget.

Recommendation 6

43. The Green Jobs Programme requires work on projects to support constituents with evidence-based policy development on the ground, and work to mainstream environmental sustainability across policy outcomes, programmes and projects. These two dimensions are complementary and indispensable for the ILO to effectively integrate environmental sustainability into the Decent Work Agenda. Any rethinking should go in the direction of allowing the Programme to perform both functions.

Recommendation 7

44. This recommendation is welcomed.

Recommendation 8

45. The Enterprise Innovation Facility, in line with the overarching ILO Innovation Strategy, was launched at the end of 2019 and has become fully functional in 2020. This was closely followed by the launch of the Green Jobs Innovation Facility. The intention is to do exactly as recommended. We note the need to develop the capacities of constituents and field staff on the cooperative and social and solidarity economy.

Recommendation 9

46. This is one of the deliverables that has been identified by the Enterprise Innovation Facility.

▶ Part II. The ILO's research and knowledge management strategies and approaches 2010–19

Purpose and scope

47. The evaluation examined the ILO's research and knowledge management strategies and approaches (RS&KM) [5] during 2010–18. Knowledge management refers to the complete process of identifying, developing, managing and sharing knowledge, including a range of knowledge products that include products and knowledge from research. The end of the evaluation period was within the time frame of the ILO Strategic Plan 2018–21, the Programme and Budget for 2018–19, the Programme and Budget for 2020–21, the Knowledge Strategy 2018–21 and, more recently, the Research Strategy 2020–21. These strategies and plans were the basis for the forward-looking assessment part of this evaluation, aiming to support the ILO in its next steps. [6]

Summary of findings

A. Relevance

Key finding 1: The design of RS&KM is relevant to, and integrated in, the ILO's results framework. It also aligns with the ILO's Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15, Transitional Strategy 2016–17, Strategic Plan 2018–21, and respective programme and budget documents. RS&KM also contributes to achieving the SDGs, as the ILO is leader of SDG 8 and the custodian agency for 14 indicators on many aspects of decent work.

Key finding 2: There are relevance gaps in relation to the "One ILO" approach for RS&KM. Inconsistent use of the Knowledge Strategies 2010–15 and 2018–21, inconsistent methodologies, know-how and quality of RS&KM across the Office contribute to reduced relevance as well as inefficiencies.

48. The institutional relevance of RS&KM has a long history in the ILO and was leveraged in the Strategic Plan 2018–21, when it started figuring as enabling outcome A. Plans to improve a "One ILO" approach towards RS&KM are expressed in the Programme and Budget for 2020–21, in which the policy departments (including the Research Department (RESEARCH) and the Statistics Department (STATISTICS)) propose research agendas that nevertheless seem to overlap considerably, suggesting assumed synergies. The ILO has been engaged with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development since its inception and has been designing and implementing RS&KM aligned with its SDG mandate.

49. Existing gaps include excessive reliance on informal knowledge exchanges that compartmentalize RS&KM design. In the absence of a theory of change and long-term

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[5] RS&KM refers to "research and knowledge management strategies and approaches", unless otherwise specified.

[6] Data were collected by means of a synthesis review of evaluations; a desk review of documents; remote interviews with stakeholders (118 interviews); nine case studies by typology of approaches to RS&KM - Institutional databases and portals; global research products; RS&KM in the policy departments; RS&KM in development cooperation projects; regional knowledge management initiatives; RS&KM in global programmes (knowledge management initiative as integral to global thematic strategy and approach); global advocacy for decent eork in the SDGs; and RS&KM in response to external shocks (not planned in the biennial programme and budget, and requiring quick response)); and web-based surveys of ILO staff (358 respondents) and constituents (52 respondents).

vision, the greatest sources of RS&KM agenda-setting are endogenous to the ILO and bound by the Office structure (staff's workflow, demands from the ILO's regional and country offices and ILO departments). Donors are another critical source of agenda-setting, with agendas not always reflecting similar priorities and with a less prominent role for the constituents. Good practices are not necessarily acknowledged and institutionalized with senior management support, and are not based on a clear understanding of the RS&KM's value added.

B.   Coherence

Key finding 3: The understanding of what research and knowledge management specifically entails varies across the Office. This compromises coherence in the ILO's guidance for RS&KM at all levels. The prevalent understanding is one of an integrated approach to RS&KM, in which research is an input to knowledge management, which in turn feeds into further research efforts.

Key finding 4: There is a gap between the ILO's expectations of knowledge management and the resources committed to it, as well as a lack of internal coherence regarding the structure and governance of research and knowledge management.

Key finding 5: Many RS&KM initiatives do not have a proper business case with work plans and dissemination plans, or results frameworks and instruments to monitor achievements and assess performance.

50.   The ILO has complex institutional guidance for research and knowledge management, with parallel developments that affect the institutional governance of both. This is manifested in different understandings of RS&KM across the Office.

51.   Senior management support is needed to reinforce the implementation of the Knowledge Strategy 2018–21 as a continuous and Office-wide function that is constituent-oriented. Coherence could be improved by the development of a results framework for knowledge products, with indicators comparable to those of other United Nations (UN) agencies.

C.   Effectiveness

Key finding 6: RS&KM are core to the ILO's mandate and have accomplished a wide range of achievements, from generating highly utilized research to launching knowledge-sharing instruments and establishing practical knowledge management processes, with the research and knowledge development dimension of the ILO's recent response to COVID-19 emerging as a possible model for effective RS&KM.

Key finding 7: The ILO produces valuable knowledge products that are reportedly highly utilized by governments, social partners and other stakeholders. The research and other knowledge products are generally well respected and utilized due to their quality and perceived relevance.

Key finding 8: Although RS&KM facilitates productive collaborations with partners, their success is more limited in fostering teamwork and a learning culture within the ILO's compartmentalized and risk-averse dynamics.

52.   RS&KM are core to the work of the ILO and are generally referenced in most projects, programmes and initiatives, although not always explicitly included in their strategies or theories of change. Internal collaboration between units, the production of publications,

South–South and triangular cooperation, and practical approaches, such as toolkits and assessment tools, are examples of RS&KM that most facilitate access and use by constituents.

53. There are significant institutional challenges to building strong RS&KM at the ILO. The lack of operationalization of knowledge management encompasses a lack of coordination, institutional support, capacities and incentives for knowledge management and information sharing.

D.   Efficiency

Key finding 9: Since budget and operational tools are not currently designed to distinguish RS&KM investments and activities, the determination of efficiency is significantly hindered by lack of financial data.

Key finding 10: RS&KM governance lacks strategic coordination. While the global research publications are coordinated, the wide range of other research conducted across the Office is not. Similarly, knowledge management is integrated into efforts across departments without sufficient institutional clarity, prioritization or coordination from the Office.

Key finding 11: RS&KM are essential for enabling the achievement of the ILO's results-based framework, although they are not fully mainstreamed into programmes, projects, monitoring and evaluation.

Key finding 12: Knowledge management tools have supported progress towards mainstreaming gender equality. This has occurred to a much lesser extent when addressing equal opportunity for people with disabilities or from vulnerable situations.

54. The programme and budget and other operational tools are not designed to report separately on RS&KM components, limiting the ability to determine efficiency. Some obstacles to better efficiency are the limited collaboration and teamwork within the Office and the reported limited staff available to inform and influence/advise target audiences.

55. There is no overarching RS&KM coordination to ensure synergistic, strategic institutional efforts. Although global research (such as flagship reports) is coordinated through the programme and budget and the Publishing Committee, other policy research, while responsive to constituents' demands, is not institutionally coordinated. Knowledge management leadership and governance have been even more limited: it is not sufficiently endorsed and promoted by senior management, and lacks sufficient funding.

56. While RS&KM components are integrated into efforts across all policy outcomes in the programme and budget and strategic planning frameworks, they are not clearly articulated into programmes and project documents, results frameworks, and other corporate monitoring and accountability documents. Without explicit RS&KM results frameworks, it is currently challenging to determine their contribution.

E.   Likelihood of impact

Key finding 13: The outputs of the ILO's RS&KM inform international debates and influence global agendas and policy recommendations, such as through the G7, G20 and the UN system.

Key finding 14: The outputs of the ILO's RS&KM inform and influence Member States in developing and establishing national strategies and agendas, collective agreements and policy enactments that contribute to advancing social justice and promoting decent work.

> **Key finding 15:** The outputs of the ILO's RS&KM are taken up by workers' organizations for advocacy and the promotion of decent work.
>
> **Key finding 16:** Employers' organizations use the outputs of the ILO's RS&KM for learning and to inform technical studies.

57. The ILO's RS&KM are used for advocacy and the promotion of decent work and social justice, they inform and promote labour norms and standards, and they have influenced policymakers to improve decent work policies.

58. Furthermore, some RS&KM contribute to the accountability and transparency of the ILO, to the credibility of the ILO in areas such as green jobs, and to positioning the ILO on topics not generally associated with the Office.

59. Knowledge products were found more likely to produce change when anchored in a dialogue with constituents and decision-makers. There remains limited knowledge in the ILO about the usefulness and uptake of research and knowledge products, as well as limited accountability.
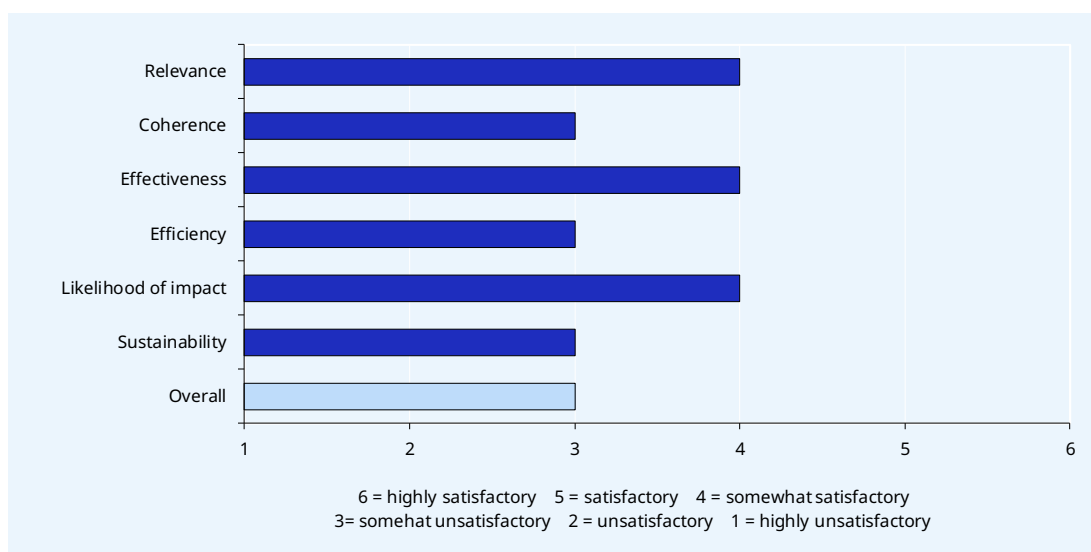
F.   Sustainability

> **Key finding 17:** The ILO's RS&KM offer stronger sustainability prospects when contributing to capacity development and when outcomes have influenced national agendas and policies.
>
> **Key finding 18:** The ILO's RS&KM are frequently faced with funding and institutional challenges, and confront unclear sustainability prospects.

60. The ILO's RS&KM were used by workers' organizations and by governments, and to a lesser extent by employers' organizations. Sustainable outcomes can benefit from more differentiated targeting of RS&KM, from needs assessment and co-design to dissemination.

61. Robust exit strategies are frequently lacking for RS&KM. Many development cooperation projects do not have a proper exit strategy or do not factor RS&KM into their scope. The evaluation found many other examples of RS&KM with weak sustainable funding and/or institutionalization. Processes to scale proofs of concept and good practices are insufficiently formalized.

Overall assessment

62. Figure 2 presents a general assessment of the identified performance levels for the ILO's RS&KM.

▶ Figure 2. Findings of the high-level evaluation: Scoring

6 = highly satisfactory   5 = satisfactory   4 = somewhat satisfactory
3= somehat unsatisfactory   2 = unsatisfactory   1 = highly unsatisfactory

Conclusions and lessons learned

63. The relevance of the ILO's knowledge products to the needs of the world of work at the global, regional and country levels is assured by the ILO's unique data, supported by the ILO results framework and strategies to identify global, regional and country needs. RS&KM contribute to achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 8 and others for which the ILO is a custodian. The robustness of the design of knowledge products depends on the level of understanding of their expected value added at all levels.

64. RS&KM are somewhat coherent with the ILO's external cooperation, and internal and global frameworks. The evaluation revealed lack of one common understanding for both research and knowledge management, and of institutionalized governance structure at all levels. Coherence of RS&KM with ILO policies for results-based management is limited. This creates gaps to measure achievement and performance of RS&KM outputs and outcomes.

65. The ILO has made great strides in delivering on its mandate and achieving its goals through RS&KM. Research is used as evidence by stakeholders in dialogue at the global, regional and country levels. Collaborations across the United Nations and with other institutions have enhanced quality and expanded reach. However, RS&KM efforts have been hindered by insufficient prioritization and operationalization of knowledge management, such as a lack of coordination, institutional support and capacities for RS&KM, infrastructure for collaborative and dynamic knowledge-sharing, and incentives for knowledge management and sharing.

66. RS&KM are integral to the functioning of the ILO but there is a lack of institutional coordination and governance structures that ensure consultative agenda-setting, and distinct design, monitoring and reporting processes. Budgeting and operational tools are not currently designed to articulate RS&KM investments and activities, leading to a lack of clear RS&KM strategies or goals.

67. The ILO's RS&KM contribute to informing and influencing international and national agendas and policy recommendations. However, there is limited knowledge about the usefulness and uptake of research and knowledge outputs, and also limited accountability, which can reduce opportunities to identify and scale up good practices that would increase the likelihood of impact.

68. There is a contribution of the ILO's RS&KM to sustainable outcomes (such as policy change), which can be enhanced with targeted initiatives, from RS&KM design to dissemination. Many RS&KM lack sustainability, often relying on short-term funding and/or improper scaling and institutionalization, and absence of, or weakly defined, exit strategies.

69. Key lessons learned relate to how the ILO's internal collaboration and teamwork can be harnessed well in unique situations, such as with COVID-19; and how multidimensional and multi-project RS&KM initiatives are more likely to produce change, particularly when supported by a theory of change reflective of a targeted dissemination strategy.

70. Good practices include: the ILO's research and knowledge development on the COVID-19 pandemic through the use of online collaboration and virtual tools; the potential of global technical teams to facilitate global collaboration and knowledge-sharing; the use of evidence-based dialogue with the government, social partners and others; and research collaboration, where meaningful inclusion of constituents can lead to stronger results.

71. Looking to the future, constituents would value more evidence-based country research, more infrastructure for collaborative and dynamic knowledge-sharing, more evidence-based regional research, more evidence-based sectoral research, and an improved database on standards.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

72. **The ILO needs to develop a long-term vision for research and knowledge management that is supported by a theory of change and equipped with a robust results-based framework.**

   Such a theory of change would establish causal pathways to systematize cross-technical collaboration and synergies, multidimensional approaches, the scaling up of good practices, and the institutionalization of lessons learned. A results framework and instruments would help to better assess the value for money (efficiency), reach (effectiveness), uptake and use (impact), and social benefits (sustainability) of RS&KM.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/P, Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform (DDG/MR), Strategic Knowledge Team	High	Current biennium	Low

Recommendation 2

73. **The ILO needs to provide RS&KM with adequate leadership, governance structure and staffing capacity.**

   It is necessary to strategically position knowledge strategies and approaches in the organizational structure, with top management providing support to knowledge management and being closely connected to relevant units. The RS&KM governance structure should enable coordination and foster synergies between research and knowledge management, with necessary staffing and a balanced scope of work (see also

Recommendation 3). This could be achieved through a layered structure with a management committee and a cross-departmental project team.

Strengthened RS&KM coordination should also build on the Publishing Committee's responsibilities so that strategic direction can be set across all levels of the ILO to strengthen research and knowledge development, and improve the enabling conditions and typology of RS&KM outputs currently in use. This would include recommending priorities for the production of technical research and knowledge products, based on a strategic analysis of knowledge needs reflecting constituents' demands and required synergies to enhance uptake and influence.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Cabinet, DDG/P (in particular RESEARCH and STATISTICS), working with other policy departments, DDG/FOP, Information and Technology Management (INFOTEC), regional and country office representatives	High	Current biennium	Moderate

Recommendation 3

74. The ILO should continue to mainstream knowledge management throughout the Organization and better operationalize it, including making ongoing efforts to build a safe, open learning culture.

Practical guidance and support should be provided to staff to facilitate knowledge management adoption and implementation, and to mainstream knowledge management, knowledge-sharing and knowledge monitoring in the annual objectives of the staff and within regular activities. However, for collaboration and knowledge-sharing to thrive, the ILO should develop a safe and open learning environment.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/P, DDG/FOP, DDG/MR, PARDEV, Human Resources DevelopmentDepartment	Medium	Current biennium	Low

Recommendation 4

75. Global technical teams should continue to be supported and scaled up to become the ILO's cross-cutting technical practice that pools diverse expertise to address constituents' most pressing challenges and ultimately enable the ILO to meet its strategic objectives.

Global technical teams as a vehicle for global technical knowledge development and sharing should be equipped with knowledge management instruments, such as knowledge platforms and communities of practice, allowing a larger community of members to form synergies and share knowledge on technical as well as cross-cutting

themes. The ILO's successful experiences illustrated in the full report could inform the design of the knowledge platforms and services provided by the communities of practice (such as queries and e-discussions, for example). Global technical teams should be capacitated and resourced to allow effective functioning and delivery of selected products and services.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/P, DDG/FOP	High	2021–23	Moderate

Recommendation 5

76. **The ILO should accelerate installing an infrastructure that facilitates knowledge-sharing and collaboration.**

Technological improvements made over the past decade have not yet addressed some of the ILO's core knowledge management needs. Based on the establishment of SharePoint sites across the Organization, a content management architecture, with processes and capacities that facilitate sharing transactional and operational knowledge across departments and offices (such as mission reports and terms of reference), should be developed, including with an internal taxonomy and metadata to foster the use of a common language; it should also facilitate content retrieval and enhance the consistency of content categorization on internal and external platforms. The focus should be on the creation of an integrated environment for collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
INFOTEC, DDG/P, ILO Library	High	2021–23	Moderate

Recommendation 6

77. **RESEARCH should contribute more systemic knowledge to the rest of the ILO and constituents.**

The expertise of RESEARCH adequately translates into flagship reports and other publications, but tends to be leveraged on an ad hoc basis by the rest of the ILO. There is a systemic demand for easier access to RESEARCH's expertise, with more cross-collaborations with technical departments to strengthen the causal links between research, practice and policy. Regional and field offices would benefit from RESEARCH's expertise, in the form of input on their strategic positioning, advice and expertise on research and knowledge development for constituents, and input to develop research capacity in Member States.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DDG/P	High	Current biennium	Low

Recommendation 7

78. **The ILO should leverage its tripartite structure and international presence to tailor its RS&KM efforts to specific stakeholder groups.**

The ILO's RS&KM frequently jointly convey research and knowledge that are broadly relevant to governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations. Some, but few, knowledge products were directly targeted at a whole constituent group. The

ILO could consider more frequently designing differentiated knowledge products that would enhance the overall likelihood of uptake, but target a specific segment of users. The ILO should continue to integrate workers' and employers' organizations into appropriate ILO RS&KM processes, and engage in dialogue with such organizations at different levels to enrich understanding and improve use. Specific knowledge could be used for more productive, evidence-based dialogue among workers and employers, and between stakeholders.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
Cabinet, DDG/P, ACT/EMP, ACTRAV	Medium	Current biennium	Low

Office response

79. The Office welcomes the evaluation and will implement recommendations within the approved budget level for the biennium as follows:

Recommendation 1

80. The long-term vision of RS&KM comes from the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. It will be articulated in the Strategic Plan for 2022–25 and operationalized in the biennial programme and budget. The theory of change is embedded in the overall ILO strategy to achieve decent work results across all policy outcomes. Specific indicators on RS&KM are under the reformed enabling outcome A on improved knowledge and organizational influence for promoting decent work.

Recommendation 2

81. The Office is committed to strengthening the ILO's knowledge management function in line with the recommendations of the high-level evaluation. It will pursue its consultations on strategically positioning knowledge strategies and approaches in the organizational structure and providing adequate leadership on knowledge management.

Efforts to improve the functioning of the Publishing Committee will continue to fully enable it to strategically review and discuss priorities for the production of knowledge products and to fully meet its role of ensuring the quality, timeliness, relevance and coherence of the publication portfolio. Specific attention will be paid to improving the basic conditions of research and knowledge development, as well as to the typology of research and knowledge products.

Recommendation 3

82. The Office will promote an enhanced knowledge management culture by increasing the opportunities for staff to be acquainted with knowledge management approaches and methodologies, through training and an internal SharePoint site to access practical guides and tools, and exchange ideas and good practices. The Office will also establish clearer mechanisms to hold managers and staff accountable for their performance through the yearly appraisal system.

Recommendation 4

83. The Office will provide more support to the global technical teams to fully play their role as a vehicle for global technical knowledge development, sharing and dissemination.

Based on a review of their needs that will be conducted as a follow-up to the high-level evaluation, relevant and specific knowledge management approaches and tools will be made available to enhance collaboration, teamwork and knowledge-sharing.

Recommendation 5

84. The Office will strive to roll out software (SharePoint and Office 365) to provide an integrated environment for collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the Office, including developing master data plans for the improved coordination of information sharing.

The ILO is expanding its internal topical taxonomy and developing a new taxonomy on content types, with regular updates from content managers and other users. Support materials and training will be provided to content managers and knowledge management focal points.

The Office continues to centralize the collection of all ILO publications and documents in the ILO institutional repository, Labordoc, with metadata shared with academic institutions.

Recommendation 6

85. Collaborative planning and budgeting for research across the ILO takes place through the programme and budget process. Each outcome includes global products on research; country-level activities include evidence-based policy research; and the new enabling outcome A for 2022–23 will enhance collaborative research. Outcome coordination team leads will be requested to ensure that collaborative cross-departmental and field-headquarters research initiatives are systematically identified and explored. Field specialists, including from ACTRAV and ACT/EMP, will ensure the research needs of tripartite constituents are identified and the outcome coordination team lead will be responsible for ensuring that they are adequately addressed.

Recommendation 7

86. Within its overall mandate of ensuring independent research, the Office will make certain that ILO research addresses the concerns of tripartite constituents. It will tap into the knowledge generated by Member States and systematically gain insights offered by social partners through ACT/EMP and ACTRAV specialists. Systematized meetings between RESEARCH, ACT/EMP and ACTRAV will link to social partner expertise and joint discussions about how to address their concerns.

The Office will step up its knowledge uptake activities to improve the relevance, understanding and accessibility of its research products by identifying and engaging with stakeholders at every stage of the research process.

▶ Part III. Independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Programme in the Andean countries of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 2016–19

Purpose and scope

87. This evaluation examined the ILO's Decent Work Programme in the Andean countries of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 2016–19. The ILO Decent Work Team and Country Office for the Andean Countries (DWT/CO–Lima) was the main interlocutor for the work being evaluated.

88. In an effort to ensure validity and reliability, findings were verified using multiple methods and sources. [7]

Summary of findings

A.   Relevance

> **Key finding 1:** ILO support was considered to have been positive and relevant by the constituents.
>
> **Key finding 2:** ILO programming was aligned with national, regional and international development strategies, as well as with the results of the ILO's programme and budget.
>
> **Key finding 3:** There were no tripartite governance mechanisms in place in the Andean countries for the strategic frameworks/national action programmes.

89. ILO constituents perceived the support received from the ILO as having been positive and relevant. Constituents valued the advances in social dialogue and tripartism. Nevertheless, some thought that the Office could have been more proactive in this regard.

90. ILO programming in the Andean countries aligned with national, regional and global development strategies (including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs), as well as with the results of the ILO's programme and budget.

91. Constituents did not feel a sense of ownership of the ILO programming frameworks, mostly because they were not created in a participatory manner. However, constituents did feel some ownership of the projects and the CPOs to which they were linked.

92. There were no tripartite governance mechanisms in place for the strategic frameworks/national action programmes, which is usually the case in countries with Decent Work Country Programmes.

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[7] Data were collected by means of a synthesis review of 13 evaluation reports; a desk review of 76 documents; remote interviews with 114 stakeholders from the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; four country case studies; and web-based surveys to which 88 ILO staff and constituents responded.

B.   Coherence and validity of design

> **Key finding 4:** The principles of results-based management were not strictly applied to the ILO's programming. This constrained their use for planning, management, monitoring and evaluation.
>
> **Key finding 5:** The programming was perceived by stakeholders as having been done from "behind the desk" and in a "top-down" manner.

93.   The principles of results-based management were not strictly applied to the ILO's programming. This called into question the evaluability of the programming frameworks. The fact that the frameworks were poorly constructed constrained their use for planning, management, monitoring and evaluation.

94.   In a context that was not always conducive to constructive social dialogue, it was not possible to design a programming framework with a joint vision for the subregion. The priorities and the CPOs were designed with a top-down focus.

C.   Reform of the United Nations system – Strategic adjustment of decent work programming

> **Key finding 6:** The ILO succeeded in including some themes related to decent work in international development frameworks in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.
>
> **Key finding 7:** While the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) may provide opportunities to integrate ILO cross-cutting issues into the work of different UN organizations, it also creates important challenges. UN Resident Coordinators often lack understanding of the ILO's tripartite structure and the importance of social dialogue.

95.   The ILO succeeded in including some themes related to decent work in the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and in the new UNSDCFs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

96.   The UNSDCF may provide opportunities to integrate the ILO's cross-cutting issues into the work of different UN organizations. However, DWT/CO–Lima will have to address challenges that affect the Organization's capacities, the fulfilment of its mandate and the effectiveness of the results. Such challenges include: competition among agencies, small portions of shared resources, high administrative costs and resistance to issues important to the ILO.

97.   The ILO is a non-resident agency in most of the countries under study. Delays due to consultations between the country-based project offices with DWT/CO–Lima reduced the ILO's room to manoeuvre and delayed decision-making.

D.   Effectiveness

> **Key finding 8:** Despite the challenges to the implementation of the respective strategic frameworks, considerable results were achieved.
>
> **Key finding 9:** Notable results were achieved in respect of international labour standards and social dialogue. With regard to gender equality and non-discrimination, in general, much

remains to be done. The integration of environmental sustainability is basically absent in all countries.

Key finding 10: The use of trust funds, in particular in Colombia and Ecuador, has been an important way of assuring continued funding for ILO-supported programming. However, there are some challenges regarding the identification of priorities for the allocation of such funds.

Key finding 11: The ILO's capacity to contribute to positive changes in the area of decent work did not depend on large budgets. However, a reasonable and steady volume of funding was indispensable.

98. The four countries have common and unique challenges concerning the implementation of their respective strategic frameworks. Despite these challenges, they collectively addressed programme and budget outcomes 1–10. The results of 57 CPOs were recorded in the Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS) Strategic Management Module.

99. Trust funds provided a significant portion of the total budget of Colombia (70 per cent) and Ecuador (57 per cent). While they constitute an important way of assuring continued funding, their increasing use also posed challenges. One particular challenge was the identification of priorities by the funding partners (who are at the same time recipient countries), which may be different from those identified by the ILO in its national programming frameworks.

100. The ILO's capacity to contribute to positive changes depended on a reasonable and steady volume of funding, different national contexts, administration and management of the project offices, the level of institutional representativeness, the availability of technical support, the quality and relevance of projects, and the capacity to respond to national and international demands.

E.   Efficiency

Key finding 12: Most ILO actions were coordinated with constituents on a bilateral basis.

Key finding 13: The ILO project offices, established in the four countries, were supported by DWT/CO–Lima through resource mobilization and regular technical support. However, they faced challenges due to the rigidity of programming procedures, delays in response from DWT/CO–Lima and budget limitations.

Key finding 14: Especially in Colombia and Ecuador, the use of trust funds has superseded the traditional extra-budgetary development cooperation (XBDC) multidonor funds.

Key finding 15: Constituents ranked the quality of the technical capacity of the project offices as being very high. However, better representation of, and coordination with, tripartite constituents was required.

Key finding 16: The project-based structure of ILO project offices created inefficiencies.

Key finding 17: Overall, support to the ILO's strategic programming was cost-efficient.

101. The ILO coordinated the actions in the different countries, mostly on a bilateral basis (with the government, employers and workers). However, it was generally highly valued by the constituents.

102. The ILO's project offices [8] received support through the mobilization of resources and technical advice from the DWT specialists. Nevertheless, the rigidity of the programming and the administrative delays created challenges that affected the implementation of projects. This ultimately impinged on the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the results.

103. It became difficult for the ILO to mobilize resources for middle-income countries. A more strategic vision that donors could support would be useful.

104. Trust funds became an important component of the total national budget for ILO interventions, especially in Colombia and Ecuador. Since 2017, the use of such funds has superseded the traditional XBDC multidonor funds. This change was caused by the reduction of international cooperation in the region, combined with the increased capacity of countries to fund their own development needs. [9]

105. The project-based structure of the project offices generated technical and administrative inefficiencies that obstructed articulation between projects and teams.

106. The evaluation concluded that, overall, the support of the ILO to the implementation programming frameworks in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru was cost-efficient.

F. Likelihood of impact

> **Key finding 18:** While the decent work results achieved were valued as positive overall, ILO programming should be adjusted to the context of each country, to increase its potential impact.

107. The ILO contributed to the promotion of decent work in diverse, positive ways. However, many stakeholders thought that programming should be adjusted to the context of each country, to increase potential impact.

108. Some of the most commonly highlighted examples of impact were improved capacity to influence policies and programmes, advances in tripartite relations, progress in rural employment, the strengthening of labour administrations and improvements in the application of international labour standards.

G. Sustainability

> **Key finding 19:** The ILO's good reputation was a factor that positively contributed to the continuation of interventions and their success over time.
>
> **Key finding 20:** Sustainability was affected by multiple factors.

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[8] Project offices are ad hoc offices that have been established at the national level, and that are funded from project-specific sources. Their main purpose is to manage the implementation of programmes for which the ILO has received project-specific funding. They are not part of the permanent structure of the ILO, yet they are accountable to the Andean office. These project offices have been established in each of the four countries: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

[9] ILO, Estudio sobre características, restricciones y oportunidades de los proyectos (XBDC) financiados con fondos del gobierno, ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019, 7.

109. The ILO's comparative advantage and high-quality technical assistance, its capacity to involve tripartite constituents, and its role in developing national policies were all factors that positively contributed to the continuation of interventions and their success over time. On the other hand, there were many factors that did not promote sustainability.

H. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic with regard to the impact and the sustainability of the ILO interventions in the Andean countries

> **Key finding 21:** In the short term, the COVID-19 pandemic has had serious repercussions on fundamental global issues and national priorities, which have serious implications for the immediate needs of constituents.
>
> **Key finding 22:** Despite their importance, in the medium term some of the ILO's core labour standards may become less of a priority for donors and governments.

110. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on the labour markets in the Andean countries, causing social dialogue to deteriorate. The pandemic required governments to put high priority issues on the negotiation table. As a result, in the medium term some of the ILO's core labour standards have come to be considered less urgent. It is too early to assess how the pandemic will affect such core standards in the long term.

111. Similarly, there may be changes in the budgetary flows from donors (including national donors), which could result in a possible reduction and/or a refocusing of the thematic priorities to which they will contribute.
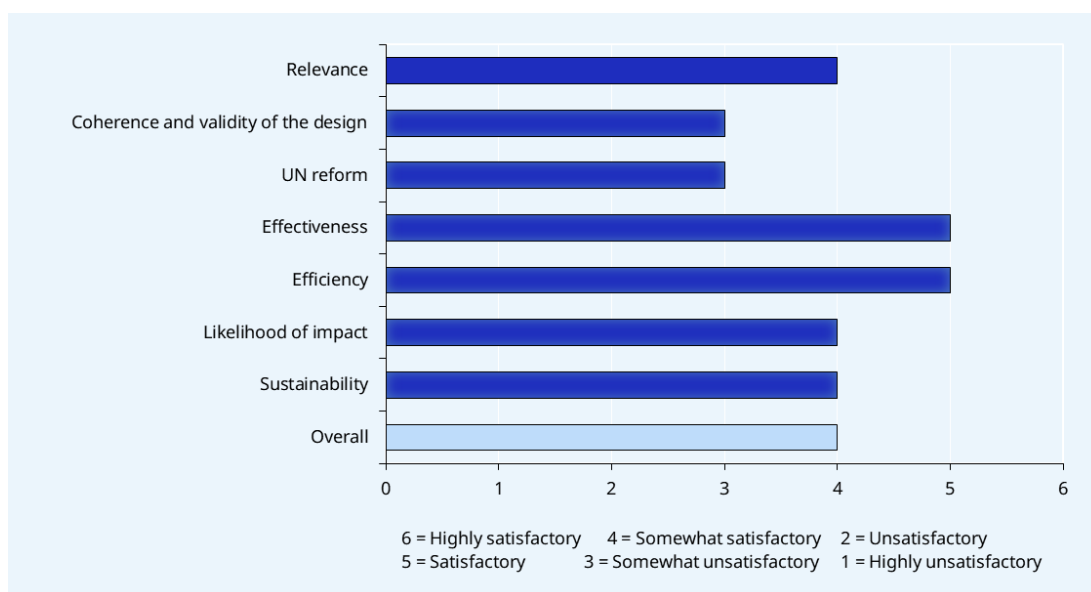
I. Specific considerations for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

> **Key finding 23:** The ILO's limited technical assistance in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela allowed for the continuation of a dialogue in challenging circumstances with selected constituents, particularly with the employers' organization FEDECAMARAS (Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce).

112. As a result of the national context, the ILO did not develop a programming framework in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The limited technical assistance allowed for the continuation of a dialogue with selected constituents, particularly with the employers' organization FEDECAMARAS.

113. The ILO's work in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela focused on promoting fundamental principles and rights at work in the context of its normative mandate. The dialogue between the ILO and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was crucial in facilitating the work of the Commission of Inquiry, the ILO's highest-level normative investigative procedure.

Overall assessment

114. The following general assessment of the ILO's results is based on a desk review, interviews with key informants, case studies and results from a web-based survey of constituents and ILO staff (see figure 3).

► **Figure 3.** **Findings of the high-level evaluation: Scoring**

Relevance: 4
Coherence and validity of the design: 3
UN reform: 3
Effectiveness: 5
Efficiency: 5
Likelihood of impact: 4
Sustainability: 4
Overall: 4

6 = Highly satisfactory   4 = Somewhat satisfactory   2 = Unsatisfactory
5 = Satisfactory   3 = Somewhat unsatisfactory 1 = Highly unsatisfactory

Conclusions and lessons learned

115. The ILO's programming frameworks in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru were relevant to the needs of constituents and consistent with the priorities of the ILO, the national policies and the SDGs. A lack of participation by constituents in the design of the frameworks led to a perceived lack of national ownership and strategic coordination of programming.

116. In a context that was not always conducive to social dialogue, it was not possible to design a programming framework with a joint vision for the subregion. Nevertheless, many stakeholders agreed that it would be possible to establish macro-level tripartite agreements that could lead to basic institutional agreements and, ultimately, to the development of national operational plans.

117. Many stakeholders stated that the Decent Work Country Programmes model is not a viable option in the current context in the Andean countries. Nonetheless, there is widespread agreement about the need to adopt long-term, strategic programming models.

118. UN system reform will offer opportunities to integrate ILO decent work issues throughout the UNSDCFs. Nevertheless, in the Andean region the Organization will have to address some important challenges that affect the Organization's capacities, the fulfilment of its mandate and the effectiveness of the results. Further, the fact that the ILO is not a resident agency in the respective countries limits the participation and effective influence of the ILO in the UN national programming frameworks.

119. The trust funds and the extrabudgetary technical cooperation funds were essential to the ILO's operations. However, the programme priorities of funding partners do not always correspond to those of the constituents.

120. The current organizational structure of project offices at country level did not meet the need for continued support of constituents beyond the end of the project. It also obstructed the creation of synergies between projects.

121. The ILO's past experience in dealing with employment issues during the 2007 economic and financial crisis might help to guide the future of the employment policies in the Andean countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

122. The ILO's work in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has focused on promoting fundamental principles and rights at work in the context of its normative mandate. The dialogue between the ILO and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was crucial for facilitating the work of the Commission of Inquiry, the ILO's highest-level normative investigative procedure.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

123. Strengthen tripartite structures, social dialogue and response to the needs of constituents.

DWT/CO–Lima and the project offices in the countries should redouble their efforts to strengthen the structures and processes for tripartite social dialogue in order to provide better-tailored technical assistance.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO–Lima project offices, ACTRAV, ACT/EMP	High	Short- to medium-term	Within existing resources

Recommendation 2

124. Continue working with a focus on the sustainability of results.

In line with the recommendations of the evaluation on field operations and structures of the ILO, [10] it is advisable to undertake a systematic field operations demand inventory, in order to allow for the elaboration of a plan for the required technical demand to meet national needs.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
ILO DDG/FOP, regional office, DWT/CO–Lima	High	Medium-term	Within existing resources

Recommendation 3

125. Define a Strategic Programming Framework for the Andean subregion (grounded in results-based management), to be accompanied by an adequate budget and a resource mobilization plan.

Such a strategic framework would allow the ILO agenda to become more independent from the agenda of the donors.

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[10] ILO, Independent evaluation of the ILO's field operations and structure 2010–2016, 2017.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO–Lima project offices, PARDEV, Strategic Programming and Management Department (PROGRAM)	High	Medium-term	Medium-term

Recommendation 4

126. **Review configuration of the field structure using established models.** [11]

A review of current structure models [12] for ILO resident representation in non-resident countries should be undertaken, both in DWT/CO–Lima as well as in the project offices in the countries, identifying key functions, requirements and challenges.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO–Lima project offices, regional office	High	Medium-term	Low

Recommendation 5

127. **Develop a strategic programming framework for the ILO's project offices in the Andean countries.**

It is necessary for the project offices in the countries, together with DWT/CO–Lima, to develop a programming framework that facilitates planning for ILO assistance and cooperation in respect of decent work for the medium term (four years), on the basis of consultations with national constituents and other relevant actors in the country, and grounded in a country assessment process. It is equally necessary to develop monitoring and evaluation plans, sustainability plans, as well as funding/resource mobilization plans for such strategic national programming frameworks.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO–Lima project offices, regional office	High	Short- to medium-term	Low–medium

Recommendation 6

128. **Improve the positioning of the ILO in the framework of UN reform in the countries.**

In order to better position itself as an agency of tripartite representation, the ILO should review the countries' team profiles and determine the financial resources that are required for the project offices, in order to strengthen both their capacities and their mandate.

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[11] Based on ILO, Independent Evaluation of ILO's Field Operations and Structure, Final Report, September 2017, Evaluation Office.

[12] Along the lines of "National Coordinator", "Country Coordinator", "CTA/international expert-led", "constituent-based" and "Honorary Consular".

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO–Lima project offices, regional office, Multilateral Cooperation Department (MULITILATERALS), DDG/FOP	High	Medium-term	Medium

Recommendation 7

129. **In a post-pandemic scenario, continue contributing to the strengthening of the social protection systems and active employment policies.** [13]

It is recommended that the ILO continue to provide assistance to governments in order to extend social protection and strengthen employment policies, with the objective of countering the effects of the crisis, facilitating access to medical services, and mitigating the social and economic repercussions of the pandemic, both at the level of individual households, to provide a secure basic income, and at macroeconomic level, by stabilizing the aggregate demand.

Responsible unit	Priority	Time implication	Resource implication
DWT/CO–Lima project offices, Social Protection Department (SOCPRO), Employment Policy Department (EMPLOYMENT)	High	Medium-term	Medium

Office response

130. The Office welcomes the overall positive assessment and accepts five of the seven recommendations fully, and two partially (3 and 5). They provide important insights to improve the design, implementation and results of current and future programmes of action of the Office. While the recommendations are useful and will be applied, the Office questions some of the key findings based on shared alternative evidence and country specifics, in particular as related to the top-down approach to programming. The Office provided reports of evaluations, missions and details on programming workshops that balance such an interpretation. It is also worth mentioning that the evaluation unnecessarily distinguishes the project-based offices and the DWT/CO. The two actually overlap, constituting the only recognized formal structure. It is also important to note that the evaluation was done entirely virtually under adverse circumstances related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

131. The Office would like to thank the tripartite constituents in the Andean region for their participation and contribution to this evaluation, despite the most severe crisis faced by the countries in recent history.

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[13] Based on ILO, La pandemia COVID-19 y sus efectos en la sostenibilidad del Seguro de invalidez, vejez y muerte del IESS, ILO Country Office for the Andean Countries, May 2020.

Recommendation 1

132. The Office agrees with Recommendation 1. The Office will strengthen tripartite structures and social dialogue, starting from the existing social dialogue initiatives led proactively by the DWT/CO. The Office will advocate for the set up or consolidation of a more structured consultation process with constituents – and possibly with tripartite bodies in some countries – to ensure that the technical assistance responds to specific and contextualized needs.

Recommendation 2

133. The Office agrees with Recommendation 2. The Office will undertake a systematic field operations demand inventory in order to allow for the elaboration of a plan for the required technical demand to meet national needs.

Recommendation 3

134. The Office partly agrees with Recommendation 3. The Office will develop national programming frameworks, including a resource mobilization strategy aligned with national priorities, with the support of PARDEV.

Recommendation 4

135. The Office agrees with Recommendation 4. The Office is already implementing the recommendation by out-posting one specialist in Colombia and assigning a country coordination role among regular budget (RB) staff. The DWT/CO will formalize such functions in their job description, when appropriate.

Recommendation 5

136. The Office partly agrees with Recommendation 5. The strategic framework should be aligned with the UNSDCF. The duration will depend on the overlap between the UNSDCF and programme and budget cycles. The design of such a strategic framework will be made possible by increasing the capacity of the Programming Unit.

Recommendation 6

137. The Office agrees with Recommendation 6. Investment will ensure that the Office benefits from a more structured and in-depth inception training programme for development cooperation staff on the ILO tripartite structure, international labour standards and supervisory bodies, and the Decent Work Agenda. The Office will also design a co-financing model of the administration and support structures of the project offices, in order to sustain the capacity of the Office and to improve the relationship with constituents and the UN system.

Recommendation 7

138. The Office agrees with Recommendation 7. The Office will increase its interventions related to active employment policies and social protection in particular through XBDC projects and will enhance resource mobilization in coordination with the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) and PARDEV.

▶ Draft decision

139. **The Governing Body, by correspondence, requested the Director-General to take into consideration the recommendations of the three high-level independent evaluations presented in GB.340/PFA/7 (paragraphs 26–34, 72–78 and 123–129) and to ensure their appropriate implementation.**