Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee

PFA

FOR DECISION

THIRTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Annual Evaluation Report 2008–09

I.   Introduction

1. The ILO relies on several functions to support the oversight role of the Governing Body regarding effective implementation of its programme of work. Within the Office, the Evaluation Unit (EVAL) contributes to the consolidation of a results-based focus through the conduct of specific evaluation studies and oversight of the evaluation system of the Office as a whole.

2. Under the current evaluation policy, the Office presents to the Governing Body an annual report on progress made in implementing the ILO's evaluation function. This year's report contains: a summary of action taken to align the evaluation function with implementation of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (the Social Justice Declaration); a review of performance aspects of evaluation oversight and quality management; an analysis of factors affecting the quality of evaluation reports; a status report on the follow-up to recommendations from high-level evaluations; and a listing of planned evaluation activities for the following year. The report also provides background information on lessons learned from recent evaluation activities and the contribution of the evaluation function to improving the design and implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes.

3. In November 2008, the Governing Body made a number of suggestions to improve the report. First, it requested more detail on the follow-up to recommendations, and the reasons for partial implementation. Second, it called for evidence that lessons were being learned from evaluations and incorporated into future programming. Third, it asked the Office to move quickly to incorporate the Social Justice Declaration as the main basis for country and programmatic evaluations, including analysis and recommendations for Decent Work Country Programmes. These suggestions have been taken into account in the preparation of the report.

II. Contribution of the evaluation function to implementing the Social Justice Declaration

4. The evaluation function mandate focuses on those activities that are directed towards contributing to the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and social development of member States through the strengthening of tripartite constituents' capacities and action.

5. The Social Justice Declaration invites constituents to consider the establishment of appropriate indicators or statistics, if necessary with the assistance of the ILO, to monitor and evaluate the progress made in implementing the national decent work agenda. It calls on the Office to develop appropriate tools for effectively evaluating the progress made and assessing the impact that other factors and policies may have on constituents' efforts. The Office has strengthened its commitment to adequately monitor and evaluate programmes; ensure the feedback of lessons learned to the Governing Body, including independent assessment; and to monitor and evaluate the implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes.

6. In light of the Social Justice Declaration, the Office has taken stock of monitoring and evaluation practices related to the implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes and technical cooperation activities. It is coordinating the revision of current monitoring and evaluation guidelines and methodologies with technical sectors and regions to ensure that these practices address the expanded scope of evaluation work. Current evaluation methodologies are being revised with the principles set forth in the Social Justice Declaration. Specific initiatives launched during 2009 include:

   ■ the identification of eight pilot countries for supporting national capacities and practices to monitor and evaluate decent work-related policies, programmes and actions;

   ■ an inventory of ILO methodologies for assessing impact at institutional, country and technical intervention levels;

   ■ delivery of "learning by doing" support to field staff and constituents based on the results of "evaluability" assessments and stocktaking of current monitoring and self-evaluation practices;

   ■ systematic revision of terms of reference (TORs) for evaluations based on the scope and principles set out in the Declaration.

III. Oversight to reinforce high-quality and harmonized practices

7. The Office is responsible for monitoring and reporting its performance with regard to both core and extra-budgetary financed activities. The adequacy and credibility of internal results monitoring, review and reporting mechanisms is periodically verified. Technical support and quality assurance is also provided for independent project evaluations, which are managed by the Office, with monitoring and oversight done by evaluation officers.
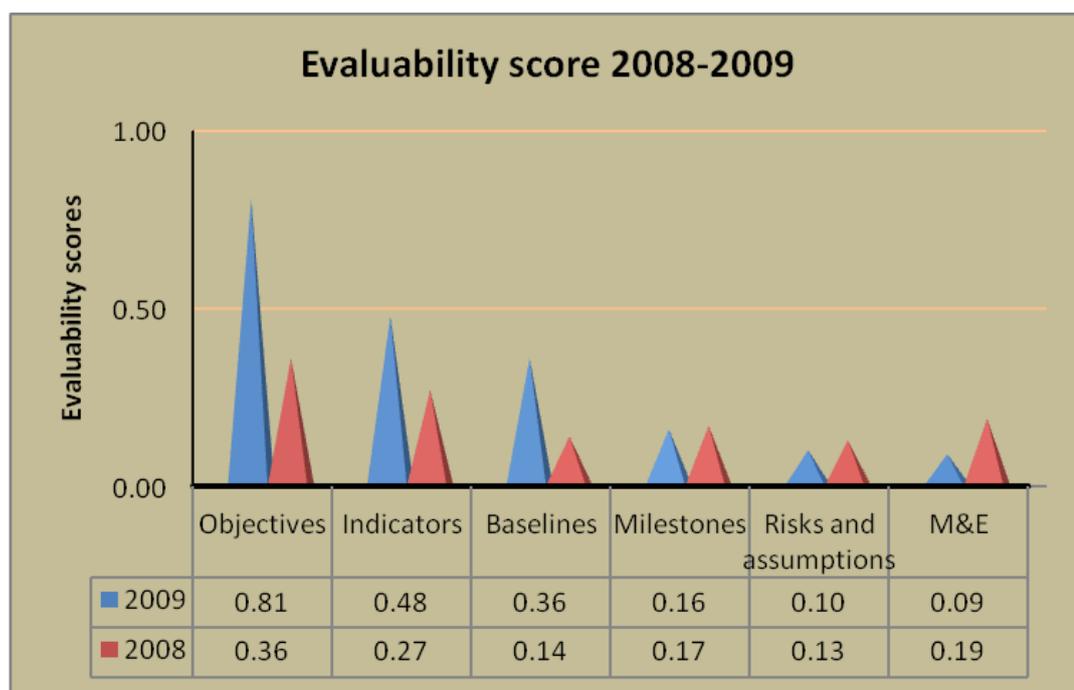
Quality appraisal of evaluation reports

8. In 2009, EVAL carried out again an external appraisal of the quality of technical cooperation project evaluation reports completed in 2008. The scope of this appraisal included the assessment of 42 out of the 66 evaluation reports produced during the year. The methodology called for these reports to be appraised using a quality checklist that contained 73 items. The checklist was revised to incorporate key issues presented in the Social Justice Declaration.

9. Overall, the vast majority (81 per cent) of the evaluation reports contained the necessary components specified in the ILO's quality checklist. The lowest rated sections were those on methodology (27 per cent satisfactory or better) and the evaluation background (38 per cent satisfactory or better). These sections are in clear need of improvement to warrant increased validity and credibility of evaluation findings, conclusions, and corresponding recommendations and lessons learned.

10. According to the report, feedback from evaluation managers further suggested that many evaluations were implemented with limited budgets and time lines. The external appraisal recommended to:

- increase the consistency and quality of evaluation TORs to provide sufficient guidance to evaluation teams and augment the homogeneity of evaluation reports;

- ensure that evaluators are provided with a clear definition of the terms used in the TORs, clear examples of what is expected and qualifies as high-quality work, and adequate resources to sufficiently address the questions posed in the TORs;

- assemble evaluation reports and check for accuracy of report codes and responsible evaluation manager contact information to ensure that formatting is correct and evaluation follow-up is facilitated;

- encourage evaluators to present project budgets and consider cost-effectiveness to enable them to determine the reasons for any deficiencies in projects and evaluations (e.g. lack of funding versus lack of project staff motivation or competency) and to maximize resource use or project reach;

- reconsider the level of funding allocated for evaluation work and whether fewer evaluations with increased budgets could lead to better information;

- continue improving the quality checklist to increase transparency, relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of future evaluation reports and appraisals.

Decent Work Country Programmes' evaluability assessment and follow-up

11. During the year, EVAL refined the methodologies for assessing the evaluability of projects and Decent Work Country Programmes, and conducted assessments of 13 Decent Work Country Programmes. The evaluability assessment methodology seeks to ensure that Decent Work Country Programmes can be evaluated and are oriented towards results-based management (RBM). It assesses the clarity of the stated outcomes and ensures their relevance to the priorities identified in consultation with country authorities, employers' and workers' organizations, development partners, and other stakeholders. Most importantly, it validates the logic and results framework of the document.

12. In 2009, the exercise included Decent Work Country Programmes for: Albania, Argentina, Bahamas, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Kenya, Mali, Serbia, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

13. As shown in figure 1, the comparison between the 2008 and 2009 shows an overall improvement. The increase in scores is mostly due to increased clarity of outcomes, indicators and baselines. However, significant work still needs to be done to improve the quality and completeness of indicators to better track progress towards results.

Figure 1. Evaluability scores

Evaluability score 2008-2009

	Objectives	Indicators	Baselines	Milestones	Risks and assumptions	M&E
■2009	0.81	0.48	0.36	0.16	0.10	0.09
■2008	0.36	0.27	0.14	0.17	0.13	0.19

14. Based on these results, EVAL undertook a series of "learning by doing" capacity enhancement exercises of selected Decent Work Country Programmes to address the various aspects contributing to low evaluability scores. Three countries in Africa and one in Latin America and the Caribbean participated in this initiative.

15. The exercise is based on a four-step approach: analyse and "unbundle" the logical structure of the Decent Work Country Programme without changing agreed priority and outcome areas; identify, define and/or revise measurable Decent Work Country Programme outcomes and outputs, and relevant indicators; construct sound logical matrices that link Decent Work Country Programme outputs with outcomes; and translate the results framework into implementation, monitoring and evaluation plans that are better aligned with results-based principles for the monitoring and evaluation of country programmes.

Taking stock of the ILO's monitoring and self-evaluation system

16. In preparation for the implementation of the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15, EVAL conducted a desk review of ILO monitoring and self-evaluation requirements, their application and reporting mechanisms. The objective of this exercise was twofold: to identify all the monitoring and self-evaluation instruments currently mandated by Office policy, procedures, guidance and manuals; and to determine how these instruments are

being applied and the extent to which they are providing the information needed for results-based evaluations (independent or self-evaluation).

17. The principal conclusions from the exercise are:

- the Office's main reporting mechanisms are not well aligned, leading to duplication and fragmentation, and are poorly grounded on Decent Work Country Programme outcomes as the main data for reporting;

- there is no integrated, transparent and readily accessible monitoring information system to help manage the implementation of country programmes and projects, and anticipate and manage key assumptions and risks during implementation;

- as programme and project monitoring and evaluation is based mainly on mitigating contingencies as they arise, the procedures set out in the Office's technical cooperation manual and guidance are not always followed. Interestingly, staff often use mechanisms that are not formally approved to address such contingencies.

18. The identification of these shortcomings does not mean that the Office does not monitor its operations but rather that supervision is not as systematic and effective as it should be. The Office is taking the following actions to address shortcomings and ensure better alignment with basic RBM principles:

- Risks that may prevent the achievement of the outcomes have been identified in the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15 and provide an important benchmark for guidance in designing and managing operations, and at the same time improving the effectiveness of monitoring and self-evaluation activities.

- The Programme and Budget for 2010–11 and the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15 establish a formal framework or standards of internal control to ensure that the functions and responsibilities associated with the implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes and monitoring and self-evaluation are consistent and are coordinated in accordance with the agreed outcomes.

- Starting in 2010–11, outcome-based workplanning will address many of the shortcomings identified by strengthening the results-based framework, which will allow for an integrated approach to resource management and promote Office-wide action to support Decent Work Country Programmes and constituent priorities.

- The Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department completed an internal review of the technical cooperation project supervision functions relating to project execution and carried out an internal review of progress reports as a first step towards establishing a monitoring system that can track project implementation across the Office.

- The quality assurance mechanism for technical cooperation projects has been revamped and will incorporate a risk management component. The Bureau of Programming and Management is also reviewing and updating the quality assurance mechanism for Decent Work Country Programmes.

Evaluations conducted in 2009

Country and strategy evaluations

19. During the reporting period, evaluations of Decent Work Country Programmes for Honduras and Indonesia, and an independent evaluation of ILO's strategy to support youth employment were conducted. [1]

Internal reviews of Decent Work Country Programmes

20. Internal reviews of Decent Work Country Programmes are managed by ILO regional offices, and aim to provide impartial feedback on effectiveness in implementing these programmes. In 2009, three such evaluations were conducted (Bangladesh, Bolivia and Mongolia), with Pakistan being postponed to the end of 2009. Overall, the scope and purpose of these reviews have been evolving and they are expected to align with the end of a Decent Work Country Programme period and include the priorities and strategies from a design perspective to identify next steps for a new phase. Some lessons learned are:

- Experience to date suggests the need to improve alignment with national, United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and ILO planning frameworks and decision-making processes.

- There is a need to refine evaluation tools and guidance on how to take stock of progress, and to improve the metrics for performance aspects of the Decent Work Country Programmes.

- More efforts and better support are required to improve constituent preparedness, participation in the process and involvement in the follow-up to the internal reviews.

21. EVAL will support field offices in conducting internal reviews in 2010 through revamped guidance and hands-on advice.

Independent project evaluations in 2008

22. In 2008, a total of 66 independent project evaluations was completed, a 50 per cent increase over the previous year. The unevenness in the count from year to year is largely due to the ever-changing portfolio of projects requiring evaluations at prescribed timeframes. In addition, EVAL has greatly enhanced its capacity to monitor decentralized evaluation activities.

23. Figures 2 and 3 and table 1 below provide summary information on the distribution of evaluations by region and technical topic. The complete list of independent project evaluations is available on the ILO web site. [2]

---

[1] See GB.306/PFA/13/2 and GB.306/PFA/13/3 for summaries of two of the evaluation reports. Publication of the report on the evaluation of the Decent Work Country Programme for Honduras has been delayed. It will be submitted to the Governing Body as soon as it is available.

[2] www.ilo.org/eval.

Figure 2.   Independent evaluations by region and year, 2005–08
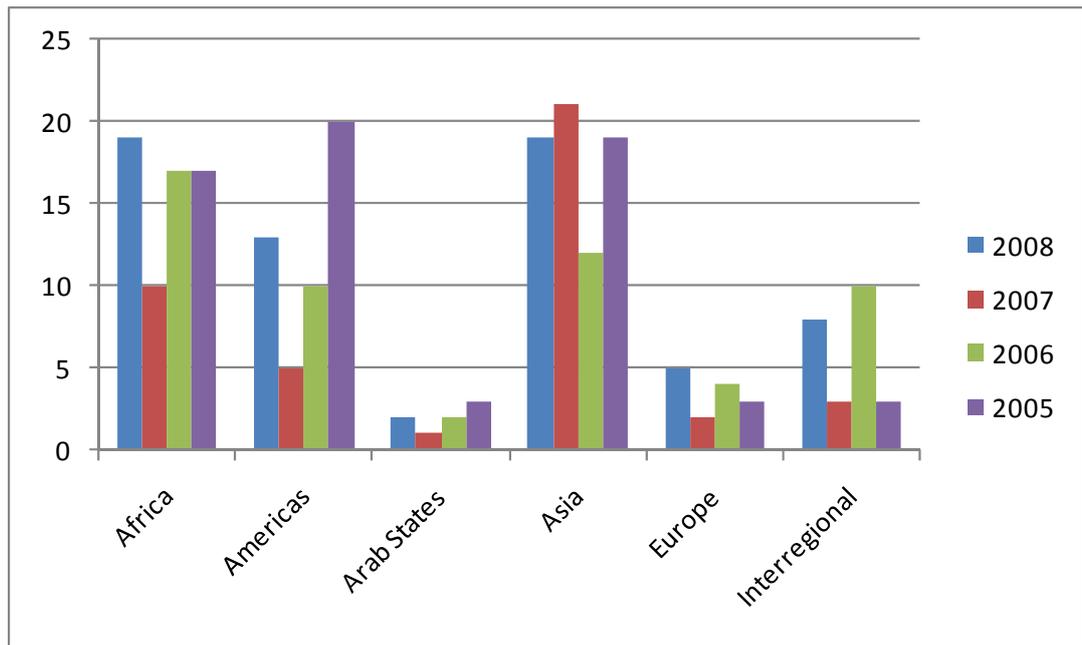

Figure 3.   Independent evaluations by region as share of total, 2008
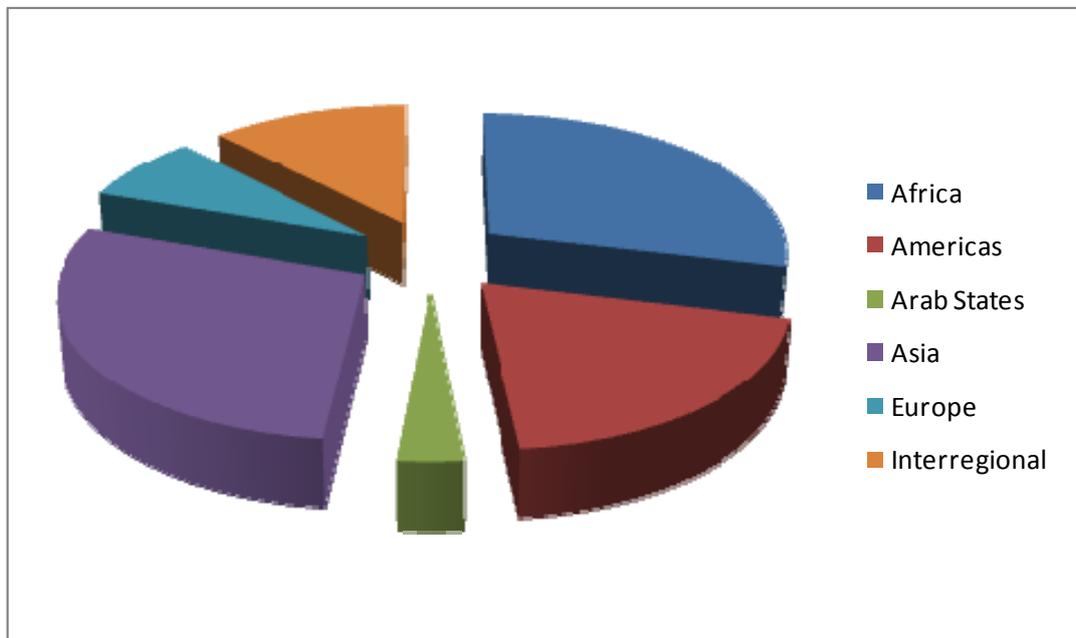
Table 1.   Independent project evaluations by technical topic, 2008

	Technical area	Number	Percentage
Standards	Elimination of child labour	24	36
	Promoting the Declaration	1	1
	Standards total	**25**	**37**
Employment	Employment policies and advisory services	11	17
	Job creation and enterprise development	2	3
	Programme on skills, knowledge and employability	1	1
	Youth employment	5	8
	Boosting employment through small enterprise development	4	6
	Employment total	**23**	**35**
Social protection	Forced labour and human trafficking	2	3
	HIV/AIDS and the world of work	3	5
	Governance and management	3	5
	Workplace education and safety and health	2	3
	Migration	1	1
	Social protection total	**11**	**17**
Social dialogue	Social dialogue, labour law and labour administration and sectoral activities	7	11
	Social dialogue total	**7**	**11**
ILO total		66	100

IV.   Improving the usefulness of evaluations: Follow-up, institutional learning and knowledge-sharing

Strengthening evaluation capacity and skills

24. The ILO places great importance on strengthening the capacities of constituents to engage in, and make use of, evaluation practices as part of their learning and accountability frameworks. In mid-2009, a one-week capacity-building workshop was held at the International Training Centre, Turin, for national tripartite constituents. The workshop covered conceptual and practical aspects of evaluation in the ILO and the United Nations (UN) system, including evaluation approaches and methods, evaluation management and contracting, dissemination and utilization of evaluation information.

25. Outreach to the regions continued for targeted capacity building on monitoring and evaluation for ILO project and field staff (Bangkok, Beirut, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Dakar, Dar es Salaam and Moscow). Joint training activities were developed and delivered under the broader themes of RBM, Decent Work Country Programmes, and UN reform (Addis Ababa, Budapest, Lima). Despite an ambitious outreach programme, the lesson learned is that more effective measures are needed to institutionalize design and evaluation as contributing elements to the RBM process.

Follow-up to high-level independent evaluations from 2008

26. Evaluations only lead to organizational improvements if management systematically acts upon recommendations. Independent high-level strategy and country programme evaluations are presented to the November session of the Governing Body and a management response from the Office forms part of the reports. To support the governance process, during the following year, the Annual Evaluation Report updates the Governing Body on the adequacy of the Office's follow-up based on its own assessment and that of the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC), which monitors and ensures adequate management follow-up to these high-level evaluations.

27. In 2009, the adequacy of management follow-up for the four high-level evaluations completed in 2008 was assessed by the EAC. The EAC noted that the evaluation of the ILO country programme for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2002–07 was well-received by the Governing Body. The EAC was satisfied with the follow-up reported and did not request further information. Follow-up of all three recommendations was assessed as satisfactory.

28. The EAC noted that follow-up to recommendations of the evaluation of the ILO's strategy to improve the protection of migrant workers, 2001–07 would partly depend on upcoming actions and decisions to be taken at the governance level. The EAC expressed satisfaction with progress made so far. Follow-up of the recommendations was considered partial, but satisfactory for all five.

29. Information on follow-up to the evaluation of the ILO's strategy to support member States to improve the impact of international labour standards was received too late to present it to the EAC for comment. Of the six recommendations, two were fully implemented and four were partially implemented. It was noted that further follow-up on the partially implemented recommendations would be largely determined at the governance level.

30. Regarding the evaluation of the ILO's country programme for Zambia, 2001–07, [3] the EAC highlighted the need to form a tripartite advisory committee for implementation of the Zambia Decent Work Country Programmes and called for more action on the part of the Office to harmonize decent work within the next UNDAF. Of the 12 recommendations, six were considered fully implemented and the remaining six partially implemented. All of these are expected to be fully implemented within the coming six months. The situation will be monitored over the coming year.

Sharing knowledge: Lessons learned and good practices

31. Evaluation is increasingly appreciated for its influence on thinking and understanding. By capturing and using lessons learned, EVAL's *i-Track* knowledge system [4] is key in building capacity and promoting organizational learning. It is a database that can be searched by key project attributes such as title, scope, phase and key lesson attributes (i.e. nature and scope of the issue described, and recommended action). In addition, it is designed to enable easy access to queries and reports. Since 2008, evaluation schedules, reports, lessons learned and follow-up can also be tracked. Table 2 below identifies

---

[3] GB.303/PFA/3/3.

[4] *i-Track* is a multilingual, Internet-accessible information management system that facilitates evaluation workflow collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

progress made in building the evaluation information base by type and volume of data available.

32. The work done so far to capture the lessons learned from evaluations and make them accessible has highlighted two issues that need to be addressed:

- the quality and inclusion of lessons learned in evaluations is highly variable;

- the dissemination and uptake of lessons by ILO managers and staff is not known.

Table 2.   Summary data on evaluation information coverage of *i-Track* *

Work item	August 2008	December 2008	May 2009	August 2009
Evaluation schedules	97	180	259	314
Recommendations	0	0	113	264
Good practices	0	0	15	24
Lessons learned	0	0	38	122
Evaluation reports	130	227	275	305
Evaluation summaries	13	55	79	150
Guidelines or e-learning modules	2	3	6	11

* Statistics gathered starting 1 August 2008.

V.   Independent external evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function

33. The independent external evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function will be carried out in 2010, five years after the adoption of a new policy and strategic framework for evaluation. [5] It is intended to guide strategic decisions about the evaluation function in the ILO, particularly in the context of the Social Justice Declaration and the ILO's continuing commitment to RBM, which relies on links between monitoring and evaluation, policy formulation and budgeting. The findings will be submitted to the Governing Body for guidance on follow-up on the recommendations.

34. The Office has reviewed the approaches used and the results of previous external evaluations, including the peer review system of the evaluation function now implemented in seven UN agencies. After consultations with Governing Body members and the External Auditor, there was consensus that the Internal Audit and Oversight Unit would manage the evaluation process, with its main role being to ensure that all proper procedures are followed with regard to the selection of the external and independent evaluation consultants through a transparent and competitive bidding process; that the consultants have access to resources and the Office for the work; and that the report is distributed for comment in a transparent manner.

35. The scope of the independent external evaluation will involve the following aspects:

- the quality of the evaluation function in the ILO, with special regard to independence, credibility and utility, and institutional support for it;

[5] GB.294/PFA/8/4.

- conformity with international evaluation norms and standards;

- structural aspects of the evaluation function and whether the current arrangements contribute to both learning and accountability;

- organizational relationships of the evaluation function including EVAL's mandate and scope, the balance of central and decentralized evaluation activities, and the mix between independent evaluations and self-evaluations;

- the nature of the reporting arrangements both internally to the EAC and to the Governing Body;

- relationships regarding the evaluation functions and responsibilities vis-à-vis the tripartite constituents, and ways in which these relationships could be strengthened;

- relationships to partners in the UN and multilateral and bilateral systems generally;

- the nature of capacities and competencies required for evaluation, and the use of evaluation techniques and methodologies;

- the extent to which the evaluation function contributes to the strategic directions, policies, programmes and projects of the ILO, including the focus on RBM, and how to make it more effective in this respect; and

- the extent to which evaluation results are incorporated into follow-up activities and knowledge management strategies and disseminated to wider audiences.

36. A summary of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be submitted to the Governing Body in November 2010 along with a proposal for a new evaluation strategy. [6]

VI. Evaluations for 2010

37. The 2010 choice for high-level evaluations in the ILO reflects a focus on learning from ILO experience and performance. The following evaluations are foreseen:

- Kyrgyzstan Decent Work Country Programme;

- United Republic of Tanzania Decent Work Country Programme;

- ILO strategies for the extension of social protection to align with the broader 2011 International Labour Conference recurrent discussion report on social protection.

38. In accordance with the rotation schedule proposed in the ILO's evaluation strategy, Decent Work Country Programme evaluations will be conducted this year in Africa and Europe. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan all have Decent Work Country Programmes that are coming to an end in 2009. In consultation with the offices concerned, a decision was made to conduct an evaluation of the Kyrgyzstan Decent Work Country Programme and to conduct a programme review in the other three countries.

---

[6] In July 2009, a full version of the draft TORs was circulated to the secretariats of the Employers' and Workers' groups and representatives of the five regional groups for comment. The draft is available at www.ilo.org/eval.

39. It is also proposed to conduct an evaluation of the United Republic of Tanzania's Decent Work Country Programme because of the maturity of the programme, the relatively large size of the ILO's technical cooperation portfolio and advisory services in the country, and the ILO's strong involvement in UN joint programming initiatives. The United Republic of Tanzania is a "One UN" pilot country and this evaluation will provide useful information on the ILO's participation in the UN country team and "One UN" mechanisms.

40. Table 3 summarizes the proposed schedule for evaluation in 2010.

Table 3.   Type, topic and timing of independent evaluations in 2010

Evaluation type	Topic of independent evaluation	Timing	Dissemination
Strategy	ILO strategy for the extension of social protection	January–July 2010	Summary submitted to PFAC * November 2010 Full report public (Internet)
Country programme	ILO's country programme for Kyrgyzstan	January–June 2010	Summary submitted to PFAC, November 2010 Full report public (Internet)
Country programme	ILO's country programme for the United Republic of Tanzania	January–June 2010	Summary submitted to PFAC, November 2010 Full report public (Internet)
External policy evaluation	ILO's evaluation function: 2005–09	January–August 2010	Summary submitted to PFAC, November 2010 Full report public (Internet)
Project evaluations	Approximately 70 major projects and RBSA**-funded initiatives	–	Full report disseminated on completion Summary report posted on ILO Internet

* Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee.
** Regular Budget Supplementary Account.

41. *The Committee may wish to recommend that the Governing Body:*

(a)   request the Director-General to continue efforts to align the evaluation function with the implementation of the Social Justice Declaration; and

(b)   provide guidance on the evaluation priorities for 2010 and the arrangements for the independent external evaluation of the ILO evaluation function.

Geneva, 1 October 2009.

Point for decision: Paragraph 41.