



FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Evaluation report of the sectoral action programmes

1. The Office was requested to carry out an evaluation of the sectoral action programmes of the 2004-05 biennium in accordance with the evaluation framework initially discussed at the Global Steering Group meeting in October 2005¹ and presented in revised form to the Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues (STM) of the Governing Body in March 2006.² In September 2006, the Global Steering Group met to discuss the evaluation report³ and requested that a report of its deliberations be conveyed to the Committee for further discussion. This document contains a short overview of general comments made in the meeting, followed by a more comprehensive summary of the discussions of the Global Steering Group meeting.

Highlights of the discussion

2. Many speakers outlined the action programmes' achievements and value and provided insights into the functioning and the results achieved in specific sectors. Comments of a more general nature centred on the evaluation report and the lessons learned from the first round of action programmes.
3. In relation to the evaluation report, participants made suggestions on how the process could be improved. These included the use of external evaluators, the appointment of field-based evaluators already at the initial stages, or in-depth interviews with those involved in the programmes. It was also suggested that a focus on quantitative indicators should be considered to better evaluate improvements in specific sectors.
4. In discussing the action programme concept, participants gave particular attention to the following aspects: planning (including the programmes' focus and time frame), management and supervision, and sustainability (including the programmes' connection with decent work country programmes (DWCPs)).

¹ AP/SPM/2005/2/2.

² GB.295/STM/4 and GB.295/13(Rev.)

³ AP/GSG/2006/2.

5. Regarding the planning of future action programmes, it was suggested that the ILO should ask member States to identify their needs (with the involvement of national social partners) before making concrete proposals to the Global Steering Group or, alternatively, that priorities should be based on the existence of decent work deficits. Some speakers urged that the programmes be focused on fewer countries; other speakers considered that the selection of countries be closely connected with specific sectors' demands and circumstances. The suggestion to concentrate on fewer topics seemed to find wide support. In relation to the question whether action programmes should span over more than a single biennium, some speakers supported longer time frames, while others considered that the extension of the first programme's duration had been exceptional.
6. A number of measures were suggested to improve the management of the programmes. These included more (and more illustrative) information to be given to governmental representatives based in Geneva and Governing Body members. The existence of the Global Steering Group was seen as positive. Speakers differed, however, on whether the amount of time, energy and resources required was adequate.
7. A large number of speakers wondered how the action programmes could become sustainable. Since all speakers considered funding by governmental or other external sources necessary to ensure the programmes' sustainability, many participants referred to the possibility of linking action programmes with DWCPs. While some participants regarded these links crucial to ensure the sustainability of the programmes, others pointed out that such linkages could lead to programmatic adjustments that would deviate from the action programmes' original approach to address the needs of national tripartite constituents and pointed out that caution needed to be taken to ensure that the programmes would continue to be tripartite in design.
8. In relation to the general orientation of the Sectoral Activities Programme, participants recommended that the Office should continue to attach importance to building its knowledge-base on sectoral issues. It was suggested that action programmes might be linked to sectoral meetings to allow sharing of information.

Summary of the discussion

9. Ms. Walgrave, Director of the Social Dialogue, Labour Law, Labour Administration and Sectoral Activities Department and acting Executive Director of the Social Dialogue Sector, opened the meeting of the Global Steering Group, which had been convened to discuss the internal evaluation of the first generation of sectoral action programmes. The principal aim of action programmes had been to provide concrete follow-up to global decisions at the field level. Lessons learned figured prominently in the evaluation report and it was hoped that discussion would be oriented toward future improvements.
10. Ms. Tinoco, Chief of the Sectoral Activities Branch, noted that the evaluation process had been a learning experience for those involved and she thanked the Evaluation Unit for the guidance and feedback provided throughout the process. The evaluation had been more qualitative than quantitative. Questionnaires had been formulated on the basis of three indicators common to all programmes as well as sector-specific indicators. Documentation generated in the course of the action programmes, interviews, and follow-up to discussions within the National Steering Groups (NSGs) had also provided insights. Major findings focused on three main areas: decision-making, country focus, and resources and sustainability. These would therefore provide the framework for discussion.
11. Mr. Zellhoefer, spokesperson for the Workers' group in the STM Committee, felt that the discussion should look to the past as well as the future. The choice had been made to

embark on action programmes because the cycle of sectoral meetings had not always produced what the constituents needed. While there had been stops and starts and some difficulties along the way, the process of setting up the action programmes had been important and constituent involvement critical. He noted that the Global Union Federations were structured to work on a sectoral basis, and there were multiple points within government that had sectoral focus, but the employers did not have the same types of structures. It was important to keep in mind that action programmes were meant to feed into a whole range of sectoral work. A realistic approach was needed. Reasonable goals should be set, the work completed and then the programme could move on. With regard to sustainability, a focus on employment creation and skills development was important. The Global Steering Group was useful and did not represent a major cost. In future, meetings should be spaced sufficiently apart from STM Committee sessions. An annual meeting might be sufficient. He looked forward to in-depth discussion within the STM Committee.

12. Mr. Trogen, spokesperson for the Employers' group in the STM Committee, expressed his pleasure in participating in the Global Steering Group meeting and congratulated the Office on the evaluation report. From the Employers' perspective, the question remained open as to the most appropriate means of action, whether this meant sectoral meetings, action programmes or other types of activities.
13. Mr. Hayashi, Government of Japan, expressed appreciation to the Office for carrying out the evaluation, which IMEC had requested, and for convening the meeting. The outcome of the meeting should be conveyed to the STM Committee, where there should be further constructive discussion regarding the future of the action programmes.
14. Ms. Eastwood, Government of the Philippines, commended the Office for the excellent document and expressed appreciation for the participation of the Evaluation Unit in the process. She noted, however, the difficulty of drawing conclusions about how well the action programmes were working on the basis of questionnaires which received limited responses. She suggested that evaluators should work at the country level from the initial stages of the action programmes in order to gather results over time and thereby provide evidence from the "bottom up" for more impartial evaluation. Proper evaluation would strengthen action programmes and provide a solid basis on which to attract donors.
15. Mr. Chamberlin, Government of the United States, speaking on behalf of IMEC, felt there were two fundamental issues: the nature and quality of the evaluation mechanism; and an assessment of the substantive results. The results should provide insight with regard to sustainability and replicability. An individual action programme might be important for the sector and the countries concerned, but the ultimate value lay in the substantive lessons that could be extracted and the potential for replicability.
16. Mr. Omondi, Government of Kenya, noted that the evaluation report was meant to assess the relevance and effectiveness of action programmes with regard to Strategic Objective No. 4. He felt that there should be greater focus on indicators, especially with regard to improvements in specific sectors, for which quantitative measures were needed. More information should be provided between Global Steering Group meetings and more communication was needed between the ILO sectoral specialists and the Government representatives based in Geneva, to help in information sharing and participation in planning and implementation.
17. Mr. Belau, SECTOR, described the methodology used for the evaluation. Questionnaires had been developed for each action programme based on three generic indicators as well as several sector-specific indicators. The evaluation process had stressed qualitative, rather than quantitative factors. When asked whether questionnaires had been sent to end-users, Mr. Belau replied that only members of the National Steering Groups (NSGs) were

contacted as they were the most relevant parties concerning the development of social dialogue.

18. Mr. Zellhoefer asked what the cost implications would be of sending someone to interview NSG members rather than using questionnaires. In-depth interviews could provide richer responses.
19. Ms. Walgrave observed that such an approach would have to be factored into the budget of an action programme at the start.
20. Mr. Belau reminded participants that the total per country expenditure on action programmes averaged just US\$30,000-35,000.
21. Turning to the issue of country selection, Ms. Walgrave stated that the results of the evaluation had shown that there had been greater motivation and fuller implementation in those countries where constituents had asked to participate in the action programme than in those countries selected from Geneva. With regard to the time frame, her own experience had taught her that it took time to develop social dialogue. Five years or more might be needed before dialogue became an automatic response.
22. Mr. Dejardin, International Organisation of Employers (IOE), suggested that the ILO provide information in advance to all its Members regarding possible future priorities for sectoral activities and request that they respond on a tripartite basis. While he agreed that it took several years to develop effective social dialogue, it was difficult to justify indefinite continuation of action programmes in specific sectors in view of the budget restrictions. Employers had originally agreed to try out action programmes for a two-year period and it had later been decided to extend them on an exceptional basis. Further discussion was needed regarding the basis on which to work. In the end, action programmes should become independent, with only occasional inputs from the sectoral specialist and without any extra budget. He asked the Office to clarify the links between the DWCPs and the action programmes.
23. Mr. Hahn, SECTOR, described the ILO's new approach to country programming, through which priorities for action would be determined at the national level and entered into the IRIS database. Technical units (such as SECTOR) would review the proposals and discuss with field offices about how best to contribute to these. A plan of work would be established for each country. Plans would be revised every six months and adjusted, if required.
24. Mr. Zellhoefer argued that the action programmes were new and there had been no experience to draw on. However, the actual programmes had been the subject of discussion between the Office and the Global Union Federations based on their members' needs and interests. In light of the time needed to develop social dialogue and the desire for replicability, it would be necessary to think beyond the two-year budget cycle, but this had also been the case with regard to rotation planning for meetings. He asked the Global Union Federations for their views.
25. Mr. Kearney, International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), stated that the action programme in the textile, clothing and footwear sector had been a major improvement over meetings which had had little impact, not much follow-up, and poor representation of the industry. The action programme had been almost perfectly focused, timed and positioned, given the post-MFA environment and the growing demand that products be "made in the right conditions". The programmes in Morocco, the Philippines and Romania had been highly appreciated. Through its recent activities, the ILO had positioned itself at the heart of the debate on the textile, clothing and footwear

sector. Two years was clearly an insufficient duration. The programme should be expanded to include more countries. Some might benefit from small programmes, whereas others might need full-scale action programmes. The input in financial terms was very low, so perhaps in future the costs could be absorbed by the government or the industry in some countries, but there would still be the need for further ILO involvement. Resources were likely to be needed until around 2012, since the real impact of trade liberalization would only be felt when the European Union and the United States lifted their remaining barriers to free trade in the textiles sector at the end of 2008.

- 26.** Ms. Longley, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), noted that the action programme on agriculture had drawn on a strong knowledge base, built up through ongoing discussions in various ILO forums, including the two-year cycle of negotiations which had led to the adoption of Convention No. 184. The priority focus on safety and health had grown from that process as well as from the involvement of constituents at the national level. On a recent visit to Kyrgyzstan, she had observed the synergies between efforts made at the national level and Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development (WIND) activities at the village level. It had been heartening to witness the village-level discussions on safety and health and child labour, and she paid tribute to the work carried out. The action programme had also responded quickly to a request for a safety audit in the Jamaican sugar industry and the social partners were still working together along with the ILO to resolve problems there. These were examples of the very direct benefits to constituents provided by the action programme, which had not been seen from sectoral activities earlier. Results had been positive, but a single biennium was simply too short a time frame in the field of safety and health. The link with DWCPs and country programming could provide a key to sustainability.
- 27.** Mr. Dalban-Moreynas, IUF, stated that the action programme in the hotels, catering and tourism sector had worked well in two out of four countries and he therefore had mixed feelings. He agreed as to the importance of a knowledge-based approach in terms of research and sectoral reports. The experience of the action programme showed that more time and discussion were needed before selecting topics and means of action. When too many issues were chosen, there was a lack of focus. The evaluation report showed that where social dialogue already existed, it usually obtained results only on the issues in focus. However, there had been a clearer impact in countries with little or no social dialogue (e.g. Egypt). Real progress had been made through discussion leading to action on training and education. He called for better consultation before decision-making, and added that the Regional Meeting in Asia and the Pacific had helped to identify issues of interest.
- 28.** Mr. Harris, Education International (EI), noted that the reports produced through the action programme in education had been excellent and the programme successful. Progress was ongoing in ten out of 12 countries and the subregional meetings had been successful. Sustainability was the key issue. National steering groups had been set up and were working, but it was unclear whether they would carry on. So far they had not been successful in attracting other resources, despite the fact that the issues of teacher shortages and poverty remained highly pertinent. He suggested that it would be important to weave together "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches in a balanced way. The link with the DWCPs was crucial, but there were practical difficulties relating to field staff. SECTOR's resources should not be used on HIV/AIDS, but instead a sectoral dimension should be injected into the work of ILO/AIDS, using the resources there.
- 29.** Mr. Schwass, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), who had acted as the Global Union Federations' coordinator for the cross-sectoral action programme on HIV/AIDS, felt that, while the sectoral aspect of activities

was welcome, the programme could have been carried out by ILO/AIDS. The work done on mining had not been well coordinated with ICEM. There should have been efforts to produce guidelines like those for the transport sector.

30. Mr. Leather, Public Services International (PSI), felt that in deciding to move from a meetings approach to action programmes, the ILO and its constituents risked losing the knowledge base that had been regularly renewed through the development of information-intensive sectoral reports, discussions at meetings and the publication of outcomes. Action programmes did not lead to the same extensive gathering of information and development of a knowledge base, which was so crucial for decision-making. With regard to HIV/AIDS and health services, the work accomplished had been timely and extremely important. The publication of the *Joint ILO/WHO guidelines on health services and HIV/AIDS* was a significant achievement. The guidelines had been translated into ten languages. The major task ahead was to get them into use in countries around the world. He cited the contributions of ILO/AIDS, WHO and UNAIDS in bringing the work to fruition. He concluded by noting the learning effect from one generation of action programme to the next, citing the positive global launch of the current action programme in the health sector.
31. Mr. Dejardin observed that the Global Steering Group should take decisions based on the needs and demands of national constituents. The action programmes in textiles and agriculture had been the most successful and also the most demand-driven.
32. Mr. Chamberlin stressed the need to focus activities in fewer countries, sectors and topics. Narrowness of focus would lead to better use of resources, greater hope of sustainability, and more depth of substantive work.
33. Mr. Dejardin generally agreed that the action programmes should focus on a smaller number of countries, but feared that this could lead to reduced impact. He reiterated the Employers' support for sectoral activities.
34. Mr. Hayashi also supported the view that there should be greater focus on fewer issues and countries. If, as the Employers feared, fewer countries would lead to less impact, it would be important to devise countermeasures to expand impact. For instance, traditional sectoral meetings offered the opportunity to share the outcomes of action programmes and could help to ensure sustainability.
35. Mr. Leather, PSI, noted the huge input of time, energy and resources required for decision-making at the global, regional and national levels and asked how prepared the various parties were to commit that level of effort into making the process work.
36. Ms. Gonzalez, ICFTU, felt that action programmes which focused on one or two issues from the world of work, for example occupational safety and health or decent work and competitiveness, were likely to be successful. In her view, the DWCP approach represented a major challenge, as it would become the main tool for delivering extra-budgetary technical cooperation at the country level. It also aimed to better coordinate efforts with other United Nations agencies at the field level. Constituents needed to be involved in the process. She expressed concern about how country programming would work in practice. Citing the example of Zimbabwe, she asked how one could claim that the country programming exercise involved national constituents, when workers' organizations were repressed and their leaders tortured. There was a need for a broad strategic discussion within the STM Committee on this topic.
37. Ms. Tinoco expressed the hope that the Strategic Management Modules in IRIS would lead to better linkages between action programmes and DWCPs as these would add value to

both programmes and strengthen the basis for sustainability. Sustainability remained a challenge as it took time to mobilize donor resources.

38. Ms. Longley noted the wide consensus on linking action programmes with the Decent Work Agenda. With regard to resources, priorities should be set according to need, and decent work deficits should be the key indicator. Linking action programmes to DWCPs would prove difficult in countries where there was a lack of freedom of association. One had to keep in mind the core values of the ILO and the fact that social dialogue underpinned progress in other areas.
39. Mr. Zellhoefer stated that the current task was to review the experience of the first generation of action programmes. The Global Union Federations clearly appreciated the good work done. He warned against allowing action programmes to rely so heavily on external resources that they would become donor driven. It was important to maintain a reasonable sectoral knowledge base to meet the needs of constituents.
40. Mr. Chamberlin observed that most developed countries did not have a powerful interest in the sectoral activities programme, but they could be strong allies. In order to engage their interest, it was imperative to focus on a limited number of objectives in a small number of countries and demonstrate success. A robust approach to evaluation, one involving external evaluators asking tough questions, could lead to greater support. One should not limit the scope of evaluation to interested parties involved in the process. He understood the difficulties of carrying out an evaluation given the short time that the action programmes had been operating, but pointed to the importance of independent evaluation in the long term.
41. Mr. Harris noted that, in the case of the action programme in education, ten countries was not a large number, given the magnitude of the problem. Meaningful results had been achieved in terms of building broad consensus around crucial national issues through social dialogue.
42. Ms. Walgrave took note of participants' views and suggestions regarding evaluation, country selection, focus on issues, sustainability and replication, resources and the need for flexibility within programmes. She then asked the Employer and Worker spokespersons for their concluding remarks.
43. Mr. Trogen fully endorsed the views expressed by Mr. Dejardin. He agreed on the importance of maintaining a sectoral knowledge base and wondered whether the experience gained through the action programmes would be fed back sufficiently into the knowledge base. Linkages between action programmes and sectoral meetings should be further explored. Also, the action programmes needed to be marketed better among the Employers in the Governing Body. A short description on SECTOR's web site, including a few good examples of concrete outcomes, such as the experiences in Kyrgyz villages, would be helpful.
44. Mr. Zellhoefer reminded participants that they had come together to look at action programmes and not at the totality of sectoral activities. The purpose of the action programmes was to serve national constituents and, while improvements were possible, some programmes had worked very well. It was important that action programmes remain distinct from technical cooperation, since donor-driven projects did not have this constituent focus. The Global Steering Group was useful and cost little to convene. The action programmes were a step forward in the development of sectoral activities. They were not too expensive and they produced useful results.

45. Ms. Walgrave suggested two issues for discussion at the next session of the STM Committee: (1) the approach to evaluation; and (2) preparing the future of sectoral activities. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Global Steering Group would be held sufficiently early in February 2007 to allow time for full consideration of the results before the STM Committee. The meeting was closed.

Geneva, 17 October 2006.

Submitted for information.