

“Written comments by Mthunzi Mdwaba on behalf of the Employers’ group

GB.340/PFA/7: High-level evaluations of strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes

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

The Employers’ Group underscores the significant importance to the programme of work carried out by the Enterprise Department and that EBMOs and their members have been direct beneficiaries of various activities conducted by the Office, as well as tools such as SCORE, SIYB, and Get Ahead. Many businesses and business owners have received support from the Office to make improvements to their workplaces.

However, the work of the Office needs to go beyond the deployment of these “*legacy*” products. In parallel, the Office must enhance its efforts to work with constituents so that the overall operating business environment is conducive to the private sector’s development. A substantial shift is required in the Office’s strategic orientation towards building constituents’ capacity to influence the development of productive and enabling policies for business and their growth. The COVID-19 crisis is accentuating this need.

The Programme Implementation Report for 2018-19 shows strong signs of misalignment to where Office efforts are critically needed. The results achieved for indicator 4.1 is alarmingly below the originally set target (11 results achieved out of 24 targets). In connection, the Group welcomes the recommendation 2 which highlights the need to establish a more effective mechanism between the Enterprises Department and ACT/EMP. The Bureau plays a critical role in channelling the priorities, needs and concerns of EBMOs to technical departments and thus, consultation and collaboration is essential so that programmes and tools developed for constituents are indeed relevant and fit-for-purpose.

We question the “**relevance**” of the Office work on Sustainable Enterprises – the evaluation reveals that the Office is primarily focused on promoting products and tools to individual enterprises and not simultaneously supporting constituents shape a conducive business environment. Additionally, the HLE also notes that the Office is offering enterprise/entrepreneurship products and tools that increasingly do not match the needs of businesses. We request that the Office make a transformative shift to address this issue.

On improving the “**coherence**” of the Office’s activities and the associated recommendation 1, the evaluators rightfully highlight the need to better demonstrate policy approaches, the need to co-design interventions, and embed resilience into enterprise programmes. However, any new framework should undergo consultation with constituents and not be determined by this evaluation alone or by the Office. For example, the evaluation notes that the framework should “*integrate the ILO’s work into global supply chains and define strategic goals in this area*”. The ILO’s approach to GSCs needs to be re-discussed in the March GB (2021) and it is not for this evaluation or the suggested framework to define strategic goals on GSCs. The group also request that the strategic framework address “*support to enterprises to create and maintain decent work*” must be done “*with and through constituents*” and not “*directly*” with enterprises.

On “**effectiveness**”, a more explicit illustration would be necessary on programmes/tools deployed by the Enterprises Department to measure the impact being made (e.g. productivity improvement at enterprise level). Furthermore, even if programmes like SCORE continue to expand, the impact they have in relation to the number of companies in a country or region is insignificant. Supporting governments evaluate the business environment and designing public

policies make improvements will have a much greater impact.

On “**efficiency**”, the we underscore the absolute imbalance in the programme’s expenditure – only 9 per cent was spent on improving the enabling environment (key finding 16). We request the Office to rethink the appropriateness of the budget distribution considering previous guidance from the GB to more adequately allocate resources for policy-specific work on the enabling business environment. In addition, we reiterate the need to put an end to the lack of available data that tracks resource allocation. It is alarming that the Office is not in a position to calculate the investment made to individual programmes and the return/benefits to participating enterprises/workers.

The assessment made on “**impact and sustainability**” highlights that the Enterprises department needs to make considerable improvements to the overall approach taken to support constituents. The Office can no longer afford to discount the importance of measuring longer-term impacts of interventions made nor can support be provided without building local capacity of constituents.

In connection to the **Office response** made to recommendation 8, we note that the ILO Innovation Strategy is presented for the first time in this paper. The GB has not reviewed or adopted any Innovation Strategy so we would like to understand how the Office moved ahead with implementing the non-adopted Strategy and establishing Facilities for various policy areas.

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

Despite the magnitude of research and knowledge disseminated by the Office, the Employers’ Group has continuously voiced the need for the Office to (1) consult, engage and tap into the knowledge and experiences of constituents when conducting research, (2) develop research that adequately and sufficiently reflects the priorities and perspectives of all three constituents and (3) ensure the independence and integrity of research and knowledge generated by the ILO.

This HLE identifies and reveals a number of institutional and structural problems that have reduced the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the ILO’s research and knowledge management strategies and approaches (RS&KM). Notably, the evaluation finds that (1) the RS&KM agenda is largely set by individual units/field offices and donors, not by constituents, (2) the lack of internal coherence regarding the understanding, structure and governance of RS&KM as well as the absence of workplans /dissemination plans hinder an effective Office-wide approach to RS&KM, (3) the Office’s compartmentalized work organization and culture leads to less than effective and efficient results, (4) there is no overarching coordination and insufficient prioritization and operationalization of knowledge management, (5) and there is less uptake of the ILO’s RS&KM from employers’ constituents. The overall scoring of 3 (“somewhat unsatisfactory”) adds urgency to concerted efforts demanded by the Office to fill the gap and ensure that the ILO is indeed the global centre of excellence for research and knowledge about the world of work that informs policy dialogue.

While the recommendations aim to address some of the institutional and structural deficits to delivering constituents-oriented RS&KM, the we express caution with some of the suggested approaches, including:

- **Recommendation 2:** The DDG-P Office is well-positioned to conduct the necessary coordination required with all relevant departments and units, including the Bureaux and field Offices, with its existing financial and human resources. Creating layered committees is likely to result in even greater silos within the Office. What is needed is strong leadership that harnesses a constituents’ oriented, transparent and inclusive RS&KM culture.

- **Recommendation 4:** Before implementing this recommendation, we request for a thorough review on the effectiveness and impact of the Global Technical Teams (GTT).
- **Recommendation 5:** While technological improvements may facilitate better collaboration, it does not replace the need to tackle the greatest institutional impediment that has been highlighted by this evaluation: “culture”. To address the compartmentalized RS&KM design and lack of coordination and consultation, the Office must invest in developing a knowledge sharing culture that recognizes and awards inter-disciplinary and collective efforts. In this regard, the Office response to promoting an enhanced knowledge management culture (in connection to Recommendation 3) not aiming at creating incentives to improve knowledge sharing and team collaboration unfortunately shows that there is no understanding on how to generate a collaborative, sharing culture from management.
- **Recommendation 7:** What is further needed is for the entire Office to integrate employers-specific needs, priorities, challenges into appropriate RS&KM responses and processes.

On several occasions, the evaluation highlights the “good practice” of the ILO’s RS&KM which includes the work produced during COVID-19. Firstly, the ILO’s response to COVID-19 does not fall within the evaluation period. Secondly, the relevance, impact and effectiveness of COVID-19 specific RS&KM would need to be determined by constituents and done so in a comprehensive way (e.g. by conducting a separate evaluation that examines the policy tools and knowledge products, and country-level support offered by the Office). The Group would like to inquire how precisely the Office meaningfully consulted constituents on COVID-19 RS&KM. Additionally, navigating the COVID-19 portal for information is a near impossible task. For instance, identifying relevant data for enterprises or employers’ organizations should be straight-forward if one goes into the section on “thematic analysis and practical advice”. However, the sub-section on “enterprise resources” takes viewers to the Enterprise Department’s web page, not to all resources that may be relevant for enterprises (e.g. ACT/EMP tools on COVID-19 produced for employers and enterprises).

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

On relevance, the evaluation highlights that “constituents did not feel a sense of ownership of the ILO programming frameworks, mostly because they were not created in a participatory manner”. This is a recurring challenge that has been identified in other DWCP evaluations, hence the Employers’ Group emphasize the imperative to ensuring that ILO programming is done in consultation with constituents. While the policy priorities identified in the Panama Declaration (2018) as well as previous regional Declarations underscore the need to create policies to promote an enabling environment for the creation and development of enterprises, more needs to be done to ensure that ILO programmes and projects support this policy area.

In a context that is not always conducive to constructive social dialogue (as noted in Par 94), social partners should have a more active participation in the process of designing the activity plans for the region. To this extent, the Group expresses the absolute necessity for policy departments and field offices to consult ACT/EMP from the design stage of programmes/projects so the Bureau can serve as a bridge and convey the priorities/challenges of employers’ constituents.

The Office should provide guidance to constituents on how it is making efforts to align the DWCPs with UNSDCFs and national development plans. The Group stresses that DWCPs should be designed

differently, in a more agile manner, allowing for today's pressing priorities, such as rebuilding the productive apparatus and re-generating employment, to be taken into account.

Furthermore, we underline that project offices are not an end in themselves (Par 120). Once project offices are created, they tend to search for new resources to continue working beyond the project's life. These projects are often not geared towards responding to the priorities of the constituents to achieve higher levels of development and economic and social well-being, but rather to satisfying donor priorities. The Office needs drastically transform its modus operandi so that projects are not donor driven but constituents driven and therefore greater synergies between projects and the Office's broader work can be generated.

We acknowledge the substantial support provided to ensure continuity to a work plan for FEDECAMARAS and enable Venezuelan employers to have an institutional reference. However, while Par 122 notes the achievement of the ILO's work in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the support offered to FEDECAMARAS by ACT/EMP should have been better documented in the evaluation.

In relations to recommendation 7, strengthening social protection systems and active employment policies must be prioritized. To do so however requires resources that can only be available if there is a vibrant, profitable, and sustainable business sector. These aspects should be comprehensively considered as the ILO continues to provide assistance.

Overall, the Group re-emphasize the need for future ILO work to apply greater emphasis on the enabling environment for sustainable enterprises as well as the necessity for social partners to be engaged from the onset of programme/project developments to enhance the delivery, implementation and impact of set objectives.

28 October 2020

Governing Body – 340th Session, October-November 2020
Programme, Financial and Administrative Section
Audit and Oversight Segment
Workers’ group comments

DOCUMENT FOR BALLOT BY CORRESPONDENCE

GB.340/PFA/7

High-level evaluations of strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes

The ILO’s strategy and actions for promoting sustainable enterprises 2014–19

The Workers’ Group commends the team of evaluators for their report. In many sessions of the Governing Body, we have reiterated that the goal of the strategy should be in line with what the evaluators also highlight in their first recommendation: the framework should “support enterprises to create and maintain decent work”. This alongside with social dialogue and collective bargaining is what will encourage workers’ organisations to engage in this work as stressed in key finding 8. Sustainable enterprises and decent work are two sides of one coin. This means that for companies to be considered sustainable, workers should have the right to organize, to collectively bargain and there should be real social dialogue. We are confronted with many cases where this is not the reality, where workplace consultations are being used as a ticking the box exercise. We would like to stress again that this practice should not be encouraged by the Office, and that there should be real engagement with both social partners to advance decent work.

All the elements that were agreed in the 2007 conclusions on sustainable enterprises, the economic, social and environmental pillars need to be taken into account as highlighted in key finding 3. This calls for greater cooperation amongst ILO departments. We agree with the evaluation that there is no current over-arching strategy to provide a coherent framework for the ILO’s sustainable enterprises activities as a whole. This work largely relies on product-driven approaches, , some of them with limited contribution to decent work, as is the case of entrepreneurship programmes (para 20). We understand from the Office answer to Recommendation 1 that a new strategy will be built. Therefore we would like to use this opportunity to re-state that the social pillar of sustainability, namely the delivery of decent work by sustainable enterprises, needs to be significantly strengthened as called for 13 years ago by the 2007 Conference conclusions on sustainable enterprises. This goes in line with recommendation 2, particularly in relation to improve consultations with the social partners and better address workers’ concerns in this area of work. The 2015 Conference called on the review of EESE with the full involvement of the social partners with a view to expanding the programme based on: creating stronger links to work on ILO employment and quality of work policies as well as Decent Work Country Programmes and have the right balance between improvement of the business environment and better working conditions. The report prepared by the Office for this review did not pay attention to the 17 components of EESE as identified in the 2007 conclusions and can therefore not be considered an adequate basis for the review. This is an issue of concern all the more because during the consultations on this document, the Office indicated that it had increased its engagement in terms of EESE assessment, whereas the conclusions of 2015 clearly stated that the expansion of the programme should take place

after the review of EESE. This is therefore an issue of governance that needs to be urgently addressed. In respect of Score, while the Office is correct in indicating that other training offers have been included, it is true that given that modules of Score require subsidies, not all companies have been able to go beyond module 1 which is mandatory. This relates to the “business model” chosen by the programme and may need to be reviewed in the next phase of the programme.

We have noted that the Office responses to the recommendations are very general. We would like to request further clarifications from the Office on how the recommendations will be taken into consideration and what steps will be taken in the direction pointed out by the evaluators to build a strategic framework for sustainable enterprises to create and maintain decent work, taking into consideration the views of the social partners. We also fully support the call to define strategic goals for ILO work in GSC that should include among other elements the promotion and implementation of the MNE Declaration.

The ILO’s research and knowledge management strategies and approaches 2010–19

The report provides a comprehensive evaluation of the Research and knowledge management (RS&KM) strategies of the ILO.

It is satisfactory to note that individual research and knowledge products are reportedly highly utilized by constituents, in particular by workers’ representatives (see key finding 15), as well as influence international debates on the important issues in the world of work. This displays the continued relevance of research undertaken by the ILO.

Overall, however, it is concerning that strategic coordination and governance structures are lacking. Despite efforts underlined in the 2018-2021 knowledge strategy and 2020-21 research strategy, the findings showcase gaps in terms of formulating a concerted long-term vision which is implemented consistently throughout the office. Furthermore, the findings report underfunding of RS&KM products as well as a lack of linking the expertise of the Research department to other departments and field offices, which is of particular concern.

Recommendation 1 and 2 on a long-term vision and governance structure is of particular importance, however with the arrival of the new DDG/P and director of research, the office response pointing towards the upcoming research strategy 2022-25 is well noted.

We would like to encourage the Office to consider when implementing the recommendations of the evaluators to take into consideration the November 2019 GB discussion on the Research Strategy (GB 337/INS/7). At that stage we have shared our opinion that is relevant considering the recommendations of the evaluators to serve the constituents: “The first and foremost reference for research priorities should be ILO tripartite agreed documents, such as the Centenary Declaration, the work related to promotion and implementation of standards, the resolutions arising from the recurrent discussion on social dialogue, among others. Social partners, ACTRAV and ACTEMP can weigh on research priorities, but not on the research

results or policy conclusions that are drawn from that. We must avoid any kind of editorial veto arising from these consultations.”

We welcome the recommendations and the responses from the Office.

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

We note that the evaluation was carried out within the framework of confinement and health emergency by COVID-19 and the consequent limitations; however, it is an important effort of objective systematization.

We regret that there in the report, we cannot see disaggregated information from each of the countries, with significant different realities. Particularly, Bolivia suffered a democratic disruption with the coup against Evo Morales in 2019 and Venezuela is subject to economic blockages what we assume should include development cooperation. At the same time, in Colombia social dialogue cannot be considered a reality while violence against union and social leaders are unfortunately high.

There are some contradictions in the conclusions as on the one side constituents did not feel ownership of ILO programme frameworks, mainly because they were not involved in its formulation; while at the same time they evaluate the ILO support was positive. This goes in line with the first recommendation which calls the Office to strengthen tripartite structures, social dialogue and response to the needs of constituents. The situation briefly described in the evaluation shows that major efforts still need to be done. However, due to the diverse situations in each of the countries, we would like to see differentiated responses from the Office for each of the countries. We would like to have further clarifications on the continuation of the DWCPs and the budgetary sources as the implementation of the programs seem to be attached to earmarked sources (recommendation 3). We disagree with the answer provided to recommendation 5 – Develop a strategic programming framework for the ILO’s project offices in the Andean countries. The ILO should set up its own priorities and not get diluted in the UN framework, particularly because the ILO is a non-resident agency in most of the countries (para 97). The consultation with social partners to establish a proper agenda to promote social dialogue and decent work should be at the core of ILO work in the Andean region and should be promoted with the resident coordinator.

Further clarifications are needed on how the Office will respond to the recommendations, particularly in terms of budget and strategic framework.

IMEC

Agenda item PFA/7 High-level evaluations of strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes

Thank you Chair. I am speaking on behalf of IMEC.

1. IMEC thanks the Office for the report on the high-level evaluations of strategies and Decent Work Country Programmes conducted during 2020.

We appreciate that the pandemic has imposed limitations on conducting some of the usual evaluative activities, particularly for the Decent Work Country Programmes, and value the efforts made to undertake this important work. As the challenges of the pandemic and our remote operating environment continue, we encourage the Office to give consideration to how evaluations can be best conducted to ensure the effectiveness of program implementation and strategies is well understood and learnings are harnessed for continued improvements.

2. IMEC welcomes the review on the strategic planning documents and reports, and recommended actions for promoting sustainable enterprises.
3. We strongly agree that sustainable enterprises are key in the achievement of the ILO's decent work goals, and that the ILO must make an effective contribution in this area, as demonstrated by the demand from member states.
4. IMEC welcomes in particular recommendations 1 and 3. The development of a framework to draw together the ILO's work in this space, including in global supply chains, with the Organization's broader activities, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, will encourage a necessarily strategic and coherent policy approach. Understanding the longer-term impact and viability of projects is key to demonstrating their effectiveness so we would welcome an enhanced focus on monitoring and evaluation, in alignment with the results-based management approach.
5. IMEC notes the Office's response to the recommendations, and its commitment to implement them, aligning with work already underway such as the Green Jobs Programme and the Enterprise Innovation Facility.
6. In respect of research and knowledge management, IMEC welcomes the important assessment of the ILO's strategies in this area and recognises their role in contributing to overall organizational effectiveness. Research and knowledge management is central to strategic planning and its ongoing assessment is undoubtedly valuable to ensuring best practice is embedded in all ILO operations,

and that the ILO can deliver high quality evidence based policy advice within its mandate. This will be increasingly critical in contributing to the global response to COVID-19.

7. IMEC acknowledges the key findings of the evaluation and welcomes the recommendations, and the Office's practical responses for their implementation, noting the importance of internal collaboration and coordination. We look forward to seeing improvement across all indicators through the implementation of the recommendations, both as set out by the Programme and Budget, and in the development of the Strategic Plan for 2022-25.
8. Finally, IMEC also welcomes the findings of the independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes in the Andean countries and acknowledges the challenges present in the region.
9. Despite these challenges, IMEC recognizes that the Decent Work Country Programmes are still highly rated, buoyed by the receptiveness of constituents to the ILO's presence and their perception of the positive impacts.
10. We support refinements to the programmes that are grounded in strengthening tripartite structures and enhance the operating environment and relationships to ensure future successful operations in the region.
11. IMEC commends the Office's engagement with the recommendations, and notes the importance of program implementation, giving due consideration to the ongoing reform of the United Nations system and integration of the Decent Work Country Programmes with the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.
12. We welcome the progress made in terms of gender equality in some of these areas and we encourage the Office to continue its efforts on this front, with a further focus on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons from other vulnerable groups.
13. We encourage the Office to continue to find new ways of conducting these important evaluations through the pandemic, as these reports offer unique insights and learning opportunities and contribute to a results-based management approach.

Conclusion

14. IMEC supports the decision point as drafted.