

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

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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.