

EVALUATION FINDINGS

This note provides information on three critical areas of evaluation findings: recommendations, lessons learned and emerging good practices. It is meant as a brief on how evaluation findings are formulated, stored and utilized.

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INTRODUCTION

Evaluation findings are core contributions of the Evaluation Office (EVAL) which foster organizational knowledge and improved performance. The purpose of this note is to summarize the specifics of how they are formulated and subsequently made available for organizational learning, using the various systems and processes established by EVAL and in support of results-based management.

The various guidance documents used to provide this summary are listed below and should be consulted for further details:

- [*ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations,*](#)
- [*Guidance note 3: Evaluation lessons learned and emerging good practices,*](#)
- [*Guidance note 6: The evaluation manager – Role and function,*](#)
- [*Guidance note 15: Management follow-up to recommendations for independent project evaluation,*](#) and
- [*Checklist 5 Preparing the evaluation report.*](#)

The contents of this note are focused solely on the findings found in independent project and high-level (strategy, thematic, or Decent Work Country Programme) evaluations. The findings are extracted to create data sets which are stored in the EVAL *i-Track* database and made available for further use and management response.

Note on Evaluation Findings

Section 1 discusses recommendations, the criteria by which their quality formulation is set out and how they are used by management for direct response to the evaluation and for further research. *Section 2* explains the definitions for and the relationship between lessons learned and good practices. *Section 3* presents a summary of the various processes, systems, mandatory reports and data sets that contribute to the utilization of evaluation findings. Annex 1, provides samples of each kind of evaluation finding. Annex 2 is a table summarizing the processes, data and reports involved in evaluation utilization in the ILO.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of independent project evaluation recommendations is to link and activate future corrective action to evaluation conclusions. Management's role is to take appropriate action, and report to EVAL on this as part of the mandatory follow-up exercise. The management response exercise strengthens the use of and buy-in for evaluation findings, promotes organizational learning and establishes management accountability – all of which have substantial potential to improve project design and future implementation and delivery.

The standard criteria: To ensure the highest quality of recommendations guidelines for their formulation are given to all evaluators during the initial briefing. Though considered to be independent the evaluation consultant nonetheless is expected to follow ILO criteria. It is the role of the evaluation manager to see that the evaluator conforms to these requirements. Project management also has a responsibility and an opportunity to comment on the recommendations when the draft evaluation is circulated.

Recommendations should:

- Be numbered in the report, and limited – ideally not more than 12
- Be formulated in a clear and concise manner
- Be relevant and useful
- Be supported by evidence and follow logically from findings and conclusions
- Link to the programme indicators when feasible
- Not be too general but specific to the strategy/country programme evaluated
- Specify who is called upon to act
- Specify action needed to remedy the situation
- Distinguish priority or importance (high, medium, low)
- Specify the recommended time frame for follow-up
- Acknowledge whether there are resource implications

2. LESSONS LEARNED AND EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES

As in the case of recommendations, the texts of lessons learned and emerging good practices must adhere to [ILO definitions and criteria](#). ILO aims to provide quality evaluations which contain findings on lessons learned and emerging good practices that can be easily accessed and recycled into programme and project analysis and improvement.

Note on Evaluation Findings

Formulating quality lessons learned: ILO evaluation wants to present only high quality and useful lessons learned in their evaluations. This requires a framework of understanding and consistency which must be adhered to by the independent evaluators. The following is the criteria guiding evaluators in formulating these important findings.

- A lesson learned can refer to a positive experience, in the case of successful results; or to a negative experience, in the case of malfunctioning processes, weaknesses or undesirable influences.
- A lesson learned should specify the context from which it is derived, establish potential relevance beyond that context, and indicate where it might be applied.
- A lesson learned explains how or why something did or did not work by establishing clear causal factors and effects. Whether the lesson signals a decision or process to be repeated or avoided – the overall aim is to capture lessons that management can use in future contexts to improve projects and programmes.
- A lesson learned should indicate how well it contributes to the broader goals of the project or programme and establish, when possible, if those goals align appropriately with the needs of beneficiaries or targeted groups.
- Each of the following criteria should be considered, included and adequately explained, when appropriate: Context; Challenges; Links to Project Goals; Impact on Beneficiaries; Challenges/Successes; and any Causal Factors.

Identifying emerging good practices: EVAL sees lessons learned and emerging good practices as part of a continuum, beginning with the objective of assessing what has been learned, and then identifying successful practices from those lessons which are worthy of replication. As defined in the previous section, evaluators are encouraged to think through the formulation of these findings carefully and follow criteria. Some key differences between a simple lesson learned and an emerging good practice are:

- ✓ A good practice represents successful strategies or interventions that have performed well;
- ✓ A clear cause-effect relationship is part of the source of an emerging good practice which has achieved marked and measurable results or benefits; and
- ✓ related strategies and practices can be linked to ILO policy goals, and are determined to be specifically useful for replication or up-scaling.

Those successful lessons adhering to this and other criteria, therefore, are presented as emerging good practices, and details of the substantiating criteria are filled in the templates provided to the evaluator. EVAL enters these good practices onto its knowledge sharing platform for perusal by all ILO officials. Additional criteria are shown below:

- An emerging good practice is any successful working practice or strategy, whether fully or in part, that has produced consistent, successful results and measurable impact.
- An emerging good practice implies a mapped logic indicating a clear cause-effect process through which it is possible to derive a model or methodology for replication.
- An emerging good practice can demonstrate evidence of sustainable benefit or process.
- An emerging good practice has an established and clear contribution to ILO policy goals and demonstrates how that policy or practice aligns, directly or indirectly, to the needs of relevant beneficiaries or targeted groups.

3. UTILIZING EVALUATION FINDINGS

Collaboration with PARDEV and the Approval Process: All new project proposals submitted to PARDEV for approval are required to indicate that a search has been conducted in *i-Track* for any relevant evaluations which may contain technical and administrative knowledge on the subject. For projects over US\$5 million, EVAL conducts an additional appraisal to ensure that this step is not over-looked. This collaboration between PARDEV and EVAL establishes an appraisal process that is self-reflective and which strategically incorporates institutional knowledge triangulated through independent evaluation.

Findings data for research and organizational learning: The full evaluation reports are made available to the Knowledge Gateway on the ILO public website. Summaries are available in *i-Track* and on the EVAL public website. The findings data sets are available in the EVAL *i-Track* database and are thematically coded, searchable and provide Excel management reports. This kind of information is useful raw data that can contribute to further analysis of cross-cutting administrative and technical concerns. Discussion round table groups are hosted by EVAL to discuss and consider further validation of emerging good practices.

All ILO officials have access to the *i-Track* database and the EVAL Knowledge Officer provides assistance in compiling data for customized ad hoc management reports. EVAL has provided thematic ad hoc reports containing lessons learned and emerging good practices to the discussion groups on the nine Areas of Critical Interest and the annual ILO Implementation Report. Data sets on recommendations have contributed to the high-level evaluation of the technical cooperation strategy as well as a source of project data for all other high-level and thematic evaluations.

Management Response Exercise: All independent evaluations must undergo a mandatory management response exercise. For **projects** this is initiated by EVAL and sent to line management. Line management must respond whether they accept the recommendation or not, and if so, report on action taken. Results on this exercise are reviewed for quality by EVAL and compiled for the Annual Evaluation Report presented to the Governing Body. Management response analysis also includes a review of tripartite constituent involvement. Excel templates containing the management response for projects is stored in EVAL.

For the **strategy or country/regional** evaluations, the recommendation response is presented to the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC)¹ by the responsible line management. All departments, stakeholders, and technical or administrative issues implicated in the recommendations are addressed and followed-up in the EAC quarterly meetings.

¹ An internal ILO document explaining the scope and mandate of the Evaluation Advisory Committee can be found in ILO Circular No. 245, Series 2 (2006).

Note on Evaluation Findings

Annex 1. Samples of recommendations, lessons learned and emerging good practices

Sample of Types of conclusions	Short statement for Executive Summary	Short statement plus Explanatory text for use in the body of the report
Recommendations:	Overall green jobs baseline data and information require strengthening.	Overall green jobs baseline data and information require strengthening. At the end of the project, information should be collected to strengthen baseline data for future phases by performing an end of project survey to determine how constituents and other project recipients benefited from the green jobs workshops. In addition, further data needs to be collected on number of enterprises and employees receiving training. Addressed to: ILO project staff – High Priority – No resources required.
Lesson learned:	Engaging non-traditional partners built collaboration with local resource persons.	Engaging non-traditional partners built collaboration with local resource persons. The project's strategy of engaging with non-traditional partners, for example, ministries and professional organizations related to the environment or to specific sectors, was an appropriate way to bring together local resource persons to build a broader understanding and commitment to green jobs. This helped widen the dialogue around green jobs and facilitated new partnerships. (More on this will be filled in by the evaluator in the LL Template)
Good Practice	The project's work on women's entrepreneurship demonstrated good practice in supporting credit to micro and small enterprise women entrepreneurs.	The project's work on women's entrepreneurship demonstrated good practice in supporting credit to micro and small enterprise women entrepreneurs. The project strategically supports credit to micro and small women entrepreneurs in Nampula, also increasing their capacities through the application of an integrated training package that has been shown to be useful and motivating for women micro and small entrepreneurs. The partnership with the cooperative allowed a viable integration between training for women and a reasonably sustainable financing of its projects through the cooperative's revolving fund. (More on this will be filled in by the evaluator in the GP Template)

Note on Evaluation Findings

Annex 2: Evaluation findings: processes, information systems and reports

Type of EVAL KM Product (publically available)	KM Product – made available in:				
	i-Track	EVAL KSP	EVAL Annual Report /Governing Body	Knowledge Gateway ILO Public Site	Ad hoc Management Reports – Meta studies
Independent Project Evaluation Reports	✓			✓	
• Coded by theme - technical/geographic	✓		✓		✓
• Summaries available	✓	✓			
• Recommendations put through a mandatory management follow-up	✓	✓	✓		✓
Independent Strategic/Country/ Thematic Evaluations	✓			✓	
• Coded by technical topic	✓	✓			✓
• Summaries available	✓		✓		
• Recommendations put through a mandatory management follow-up through the Evaluation Advisory Committee	✓	✓	✓		✓
Independently conducted meta-studies and quality appraisals	✓	✓	✓		
• Recommendations with management response followed-up by EVAL	✓		✓		✓
Evaluation Findings - cited in new Project Proposals (PARDEV & EVAL collaboration)			✓		
• New project proposals required to review and cite relevant evaluations					