

Quick Facts

► High-level evaluation on the ILO's research and knowledge management strategies and approaches 2010-19

► Date: October 2020

► About the evaluation

This evaluation is the first evaluation to examine ILO's Research and knowledge management (RS&KM) strategies and approaches. It complements a number of internal oriented reviews of research and, in particular, of how knowledge management was carried out in 2010-2019. The end of the evaluation's period marked the ILO Strategic Plan 2018-21, the ILO's Programme and Budget 2018-19 and 2020-21, the Knowledge Strategy 2018-21, and, more recently, the Research Strategy 2020-21. These strategies and plans were the basis of the evaluation's forward-looking assessment in order to support the ILO in deciding its next steps.

Knowledge management refers to the complete process of identifying, developing, managing and sharing knowledge, including a range of knowledge products that include products and knowledge from research.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

Data was collected through:



Comprehensive document review



118 interviews



surveys administered to constituents (52 respondents) and ILO staff (358 respondents)





9 case studies by typology of approaches to RS&KM



Synthesis review of some 40 related project evaluations

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

 The immediate response to COVID-19 was a prime example of how the ILO's internal collaboration and teamwork in terms of RS&KM can be harnessed well in unique situations.

 Multi-dimensional and multi-project RS&KM initiatives are more likely to produce change, particularly when supported by a theory of change, including a targeted dissemination strategy in support of uptake and policy use.

KEY GOOD PRACTICES

ILO's research and knowledge development on the COVID-19 pandemic through the use of online collaboration and virtual tools.

Potential of Global Technical Teams (GTTs) to facilitate global collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

Use of evidence-based dialogue with the government, social partners and others; and research collaboration, where meaningful inclusion of constituents can lead to stronger results.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 RS&KM is relevant and often integrated in the design of ILO's results framework but there is inconsistent use of KM, and inconsistent quality of RS&KM across the Office with gaps on the One-ILO approach. Agenda setting often based on the Office structure (such as staff's workflow, demands from the ILO's regional and country offices and ILO departments, as well as donor). The understanding of RS&KM varies across the Office, compromising coherence in ILO's guidance at all levels.
- 2 ILO developed highly utilized quality and perceived relevant research, knowledge-sharing instruments and practical knowledge management processes. Research and knowledge development dimension of ILO's recent response to COVID-19 is emerging as a possible effective model.
- 3 There is a gap between the ILO's expectations on knowledge management and the resources committed to it, as well as a lack of strategic coordination, prioritisation and internal coherence in the structure and governance. Many RS&KM initiatives do not have a proper business case with dissemination plans and instruments to assess performance and use; or fully mainstreamed in the results framework. Lack of financial data also hinder assessment of efficiency.
- 4 Knowledge products were found more likely to produce change when anchored in a dialogue with constituents and decision-makers. There remains limited knowledge in the ILO about the usefulness and uptake of research and knowledge products, as well as limited accountability.
- 5 RS&KM outputs inform and influence international debates, global agendas and policy recommendations; Member States national strategies, policies and agendas, collective agreements. Outputs are used by workers' organizations for advocacy, promotion of decent work; by employers' organizations for learning and to inform technical studies.
- 6 Stronger sustainability prospects when contributing to capacity development and when outcomes have influenced national agendas and policies. There are continued funding and institutional challenges, with unclear prospects for sustainability.

LOOKING FORWARD, CONSTITUENTS WOULD VALUE:

- + More evidence-based country, regional and sectoral research.
- + Better infrastructure for collaborative and dynamic knowledge-sharing.
- + An improved database on standards.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ILO needs a long-term vision for research and knowledge management supported by a theory of change and a results-based framework.
- Adequate leadership is required to set strategic priorities based on knowledge needs reflecting demand of constituents with a governance structure and staffing capacity to support this.
- Knowledge management should be mainstreamed and operationalized throughout the Organization, building a safe, open learning culture.
- GTTs as ILO's cross-cutting technical practice should pool expertise to address constituents' most pressing challenges.
- A technology and information management infrastructure to be in place that facilitates knowledge-sharing and collaboration.
- The Research Department should contribute more systemic knowledge to the rest of the ILO and constituents.
- ILO should leverage its tripartite structure and international presence to tailor its RS&KM efforts to specific stakeholder groups.

QUOTES

► Voices from constituents

"Research must focus on specific country issues, policies and how it dovetails into the global context."

► Voices from ILO staff

"Very little research and strategies are intended for the internal purposes of the ILO for enhancing the ILO as a "learning organization."