



Independent evaluation of ILO's strategy for Technical Cooperation 2010-2015

(October 2015)

The ILO's core standard-setting mandate is operationalized through technical cooperation (TC). This evaluation analyses the overall performance of the ILO's TC in the context of its intended normative and development results, with the aim to inform the preparation of the forthcoming Development Cooperation Strategy. The evaluation found that bringing the ILO closer to the field is of vital importance to raise effectiveness. As conditions become more diverse among member States, the shifting nature of demand requires added, diversified and targeted capacity at country and subregional levels. Yet, the ILO is facing contradictory pressures, forcing it to cope with zero real growth of its regular budget.

Some key findings

- **National stakeholders highly value the substantive role of ILO.** Member States see ILO's value-added related to economic growth and transformation, source of technical expertise and repository of knowledge and comparative experience on labour issues. Technical Cooperation (or development cooperation as referred to in the field) is the principal channel for member States and constituents to access this knowledge and expertise.
- **The majority of ILO development cooperation projects are too short, often due to donor requirements or restrictions.** Most ILO projects reviewed less than three years' duration. This limited design coherence, given that projects cannot deliver the intended results within such timeframes; and the achievement of outcomes and impacts largely occurs once a project is complete.
- **Among constituents, there is widespread satisfaction with effectiveness of ILO development cooperation activities** as they generally deliver intended outputs at the expected professional level, reinforcing and complementing work on international labour standards. However, this perception is tempered by the limitation of small interventions on national impact, meaning other stakeholders must implement changes at scale. However, the limited capacity of ILO country teams means it is hard to influence larger donors or development banks, particularly where there is no country office.
- **Several donors reported negative experiences with the efficiency of ILO TC, particularly**

Create diverse and targeted capacity to cope with shifting demand and budget constraints.



at the start-up stage (mostly due to delays in recruitment or procurement), often resulting in project extensions. Some DC project personnel, in countries lacking a country representative, were strongly critical due to the lack of authority over recruitment, procurement and financial management.

- **Project sustainability needs improvement.** Development cooperation projects often target sustainability through follow-up phases of the same activity. Reliance on second phase funding faces more challenges, due to waning traditional donor funding. There is narrow understanding of “capacity development” which is sometimes equated with training. Focus on national legal, policy and/or strategy changes has been successful in ensuring some form of sustainability.

Some key recommendations

- **The forthcoming Development Cooperation Strategy should be outward looking.** It should: focus on development objectives that implement ILO's international labour standards; emphasize results at the level of outcome and impacts; and include realistic budgets for raising relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of technical cooperation.
- **ILO should carefully assess how it can best meet the development cooperation (DC) priorities** of different categories of countries based on demand and how to structure the expertise to support clusters with similar development conditions.
- **ILO should continue to deepen the use of decent work as the core of its brand,** building on the expected inclusion of the concept under the new sustainable development goal (SDG 8).
- To maximize ownership and sustainability, **the principle emphasis of ILO's DC should be on national programmes.** Regional programmes should ideally be applied only where they address cross-border issues.
- In order to achieve scale for impact, **the ILO should actively mobilize resources at country level, moving beyond traditional official development assistance (ODA)** to government resources, international financial institutions (IFIs), the private sector and related combinations in a way that does not compromise its independence or perspective.
- **ILO should enhance its approach to building communities of practice around priority issues** in different categories of countries to enhance knowledge management. They should

The new DC Strategy should be outward looking, linking to SDGs and other partners.



aim to transcend regions, going global across the Organization.

- **ILO's staff mobility policy should be rolled out providing strong professional and financial incentives** linked to the number of field positions staff members have served in as well as their performance, with senior staff positions being filled by staff with extensive field experience.
- **ILO must urgently address the perception that its support costs are higher than those of other agencies.** A dedicated study to review actual administrative and technical support costs by ILO, benchmarked against other agencies of the UN system, NGOs and bilateral agencies should be undertaken.
- **ILO must make a concerted effort to reduce time lags in project start-up.** Consideration should be given to establishing a pool of pre-screened project personnel who can be tapped quickly without extensive re-interviewing. Overall, ILO needs to distribute sufficient authority to each level of the system to achieve its objectives, whilst ensuring clear accountability.

VOICES FROM CONSTITUENTS

"We encourage ILO to promote country ownership through duly engaging members both in the implementation of a programme, as well as in designing of a programme. We like to emphasize on a balanced approach in allocation of resources for activities, establishment, and human resources while designing and implementing development cooperation programmes for better results."

VOICES FROM ILO STAFF

"Constituents play an extremely important role in the sustainability of ILO TC projects and programmes. Capacity development is very essential. I also think we should not forget the extremely important role of gender and gender-focused interventions in order to ensure sustainability in the longer term, especially in marginalized areas."

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