



International
Labour
Office
Geneva

Independent evaluation of the ILO's field operations and structure 2010–2016

September 2017

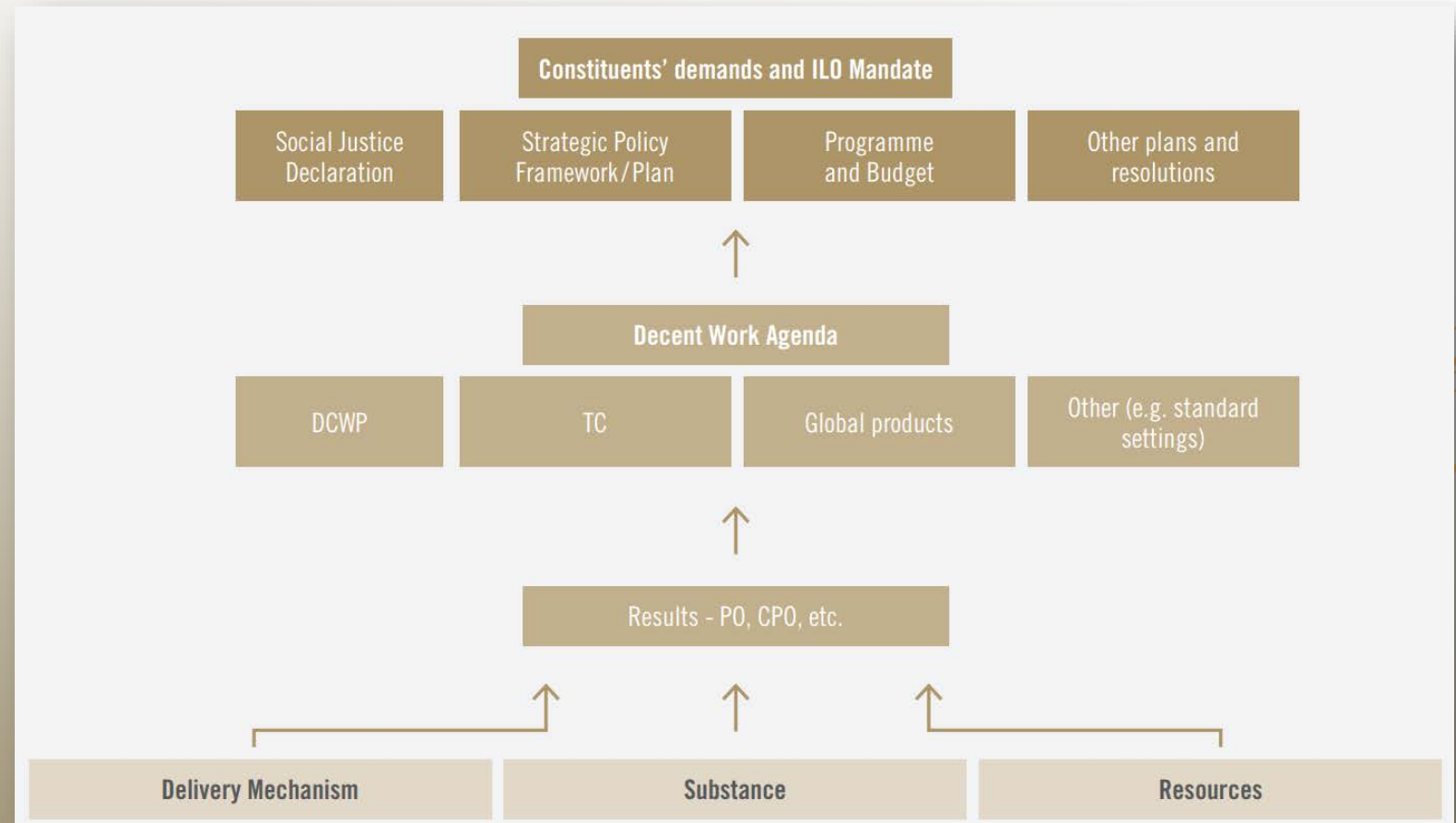
EVALUATION
OFFICE



INTRODUCTION

The ILO's field structure – through five regional offices, more than **40 country offices**, and over **600 programmes** and projects in more than **100 countries** – is the main delivery mechanism for services and support to constituents.

Recent reforms have aimed at further decentralization of ILO's activities and strengthening the field structure as an effective mechanism for supporting constituents.



1. Objectives and Scope

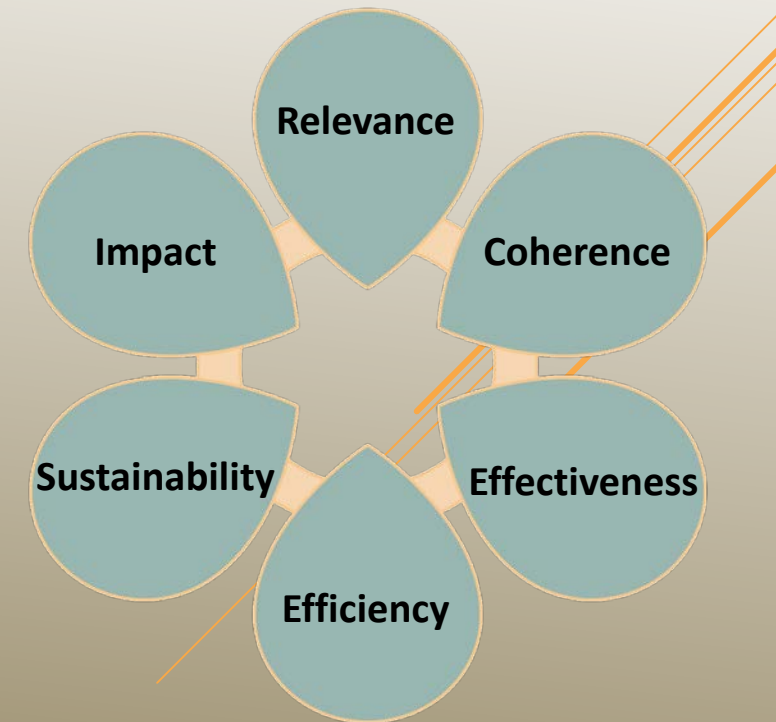


OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

In 2011, the Governing Body (GB) decided to commission an evaluation of the ILO's field operations and structure (FOS). The evaluation was postponed on account of an internal review in 2013, which led to further reform in 2014 on the basis of a **40 initiatives action plan**. The results from these processes ushered in a new field operations structure in 2015.

The report did not evaluate how far objectives, principles and programmes are being achieved, but rather evaluated the extent to which steps taken to improve the support services to the field and tripartite constituents have had an effect during the **2010–16 period**.

This evaluation is forward looking in assessing if the field structure is fit for purpose, given the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) in particular but also the 2030 Agenda, and ongoing reform in the UN development system in view of the SDGs.



2. Methodology



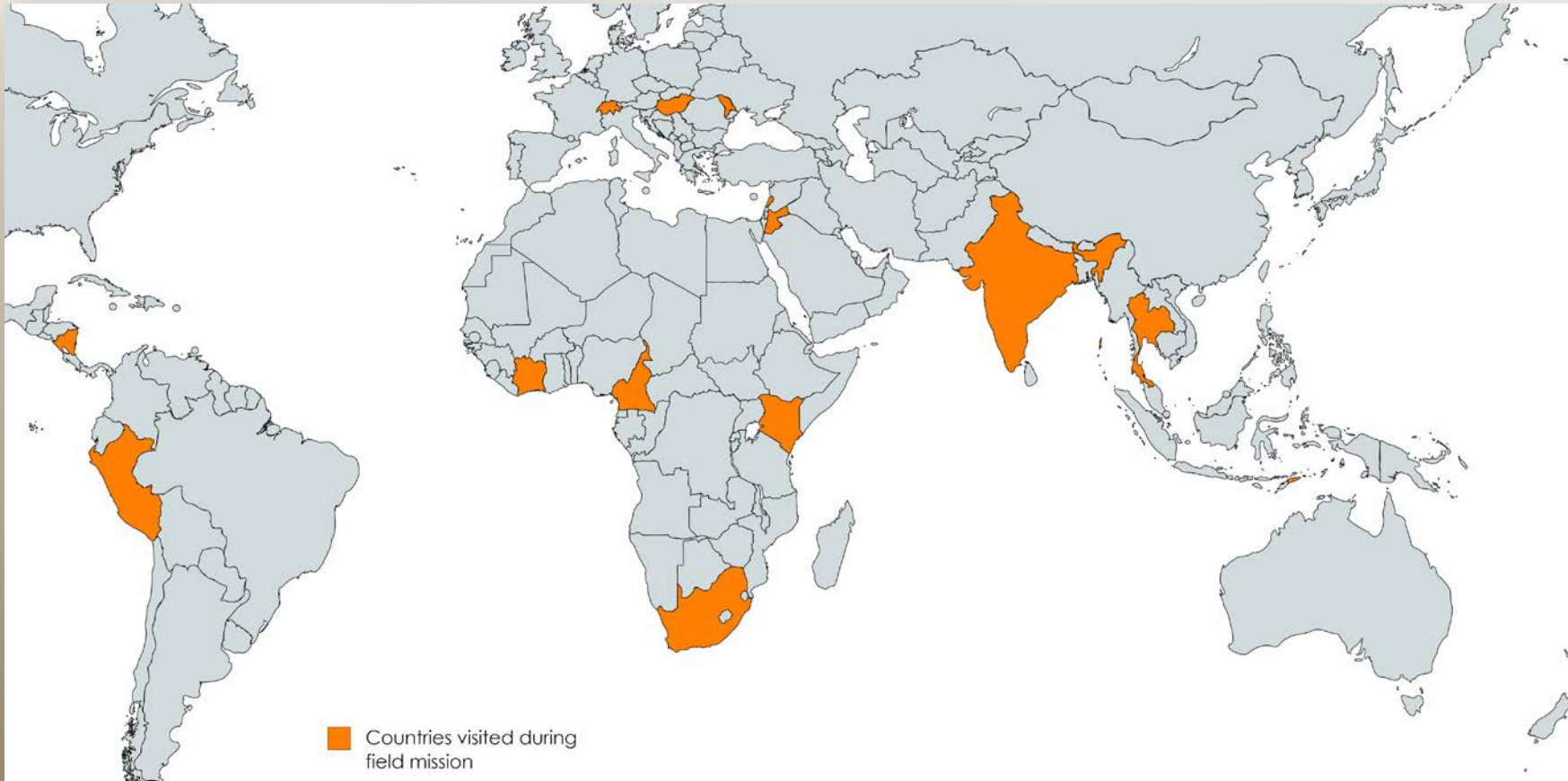
METHODOLOGY



The evaluation used a mixed-method approach in order to determine the extent to which the results expected from the reform of the FOS were achieved, including:

- ❑ Extensive document reviews
- ❑ Interviews at headquarters: **351 interviews**, of which **36% were female** interviewees
- ❑ Interview and focus groups: Field missions to **14 countries** in five ILO regions
- ❑ Online survey of ILO and constituents: **513 responses**, of which **120 were ILO staff** and **393 were constituents**
- ❑ Stakeholders were consulted on methodology and findings, and provided feedback on the draft report

METHODOLOGY – COUNTRY CASE STUDIES



Selection criteria:

- ❑ All five regions
- ❑ Countries with two types of ILO representation
- ❑ Two additional countries in each region were selected

METHODOLOGY

- ✓ **Summary:** The evaluation used a mixed-method approach in order to determine the extent to which the results expected from the reform of the FOS were achieved. A Theory Of Change and logical framework was developed as the basis for the evaluation
- ✓ **Evaluation Criteria:** relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, human rights and gender, and equality and diversity

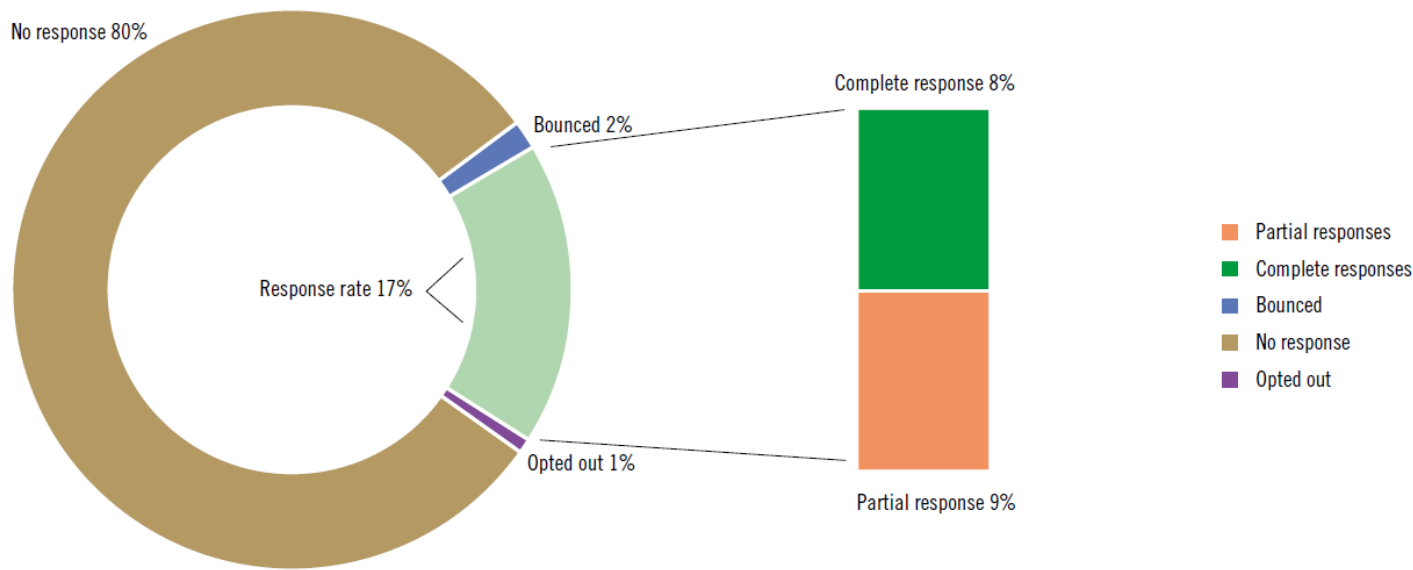
This evaluation is part of a trilogy that started with the evaluation of ILO's technical cooperation (2015) looking at the modality of implementing capacity development; and upcoming ; and the forthcoming evaluation on ILO's capacity development that will look at the strategies, approaches, outcomes and achievements on capacity development ILO wide.

METHODOLOGY - SURVEYS

A survey was designed by the evaluation to capture the perspectives of a multitude of stakeholders

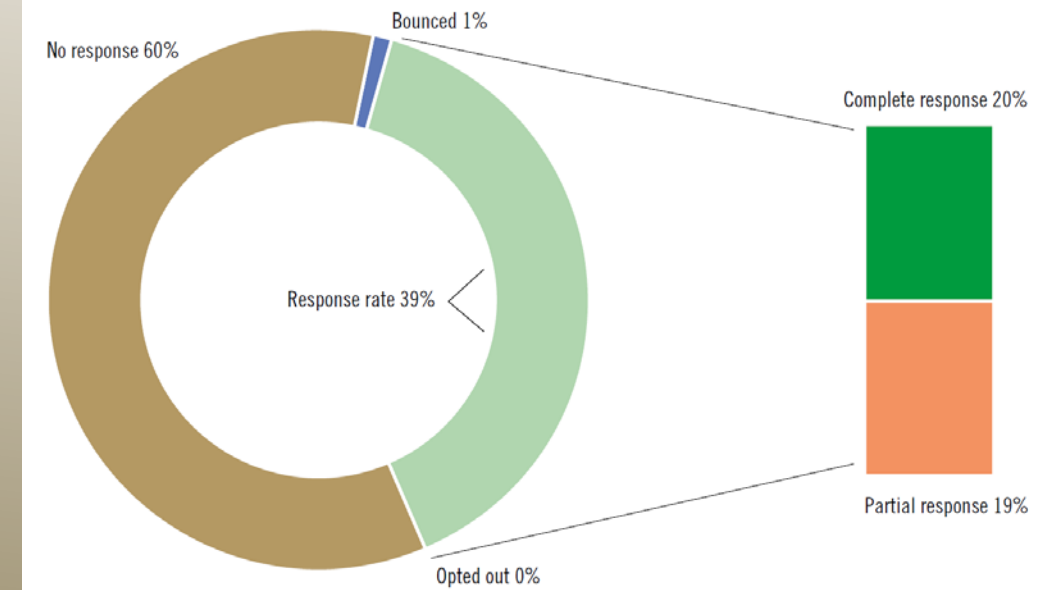
393 Constituents responded to the survey

➤ The response rate was **17%**



120 ILO staff members responded to the survey

➤ The response rate was **39%**



METHODOLOGY - LIMITATIONS

- ✓ The online surveys obtained response rates of **17 per cent** and **39 per cent** for constituents and staff, respectively. Both these surveys were administered in a narrow time window, which may have depressed response rates slightly; however, given the large sample size for the **constituents' survey (2,255)**, a **response count of (393)** is fairly large.
- ✓ The methodology did not permit a thorough analysis of the extent to which the reform has led to improved results in terms of implementation of the DWCPs or UNDAFs.
- ✓ In the course of this HLE, a number of areas for further and more detailed analysis were identified, some of which are mentioned in the report. While this was not a limitation in the sense that the evaluation budget responded to the scope and focus of the evaluation that emerged from the scoping phase, it does suggest that further resources and time would have enabled such further data collection and analysis to have been done, enhancing the assessment of ILO's FOS for further organisational learning and improvement.

3. Findings



FINDINGS – OVERALL PROGRESS ON REFORM

In general, good progress has been made on the 2014 “Field Operations and Structure and Technical Cooperation Review: Implementation Plan”, although the pace has been somewhat slow. Of the 40 initiatives in the Implementation Plan, the evaluation found that 78 per cent were either complete or in progress.

Key initiatives in the plan notably not completed or with “unknown status” included: a portfolio of services to constituents as per typologies of countries; policy or guidance on the ILO’s operations in non-resident countries; strengthening multilateral and regional partnerships; and significant progress on functional and geographical mobility.

- ✓ To implement the reform of the FOS, the organization in 2014 set out a plan to produce output leading to outcomes, taking into account the 2013 review of the field operations and structure. It is based on a series of outputs and actions in four areas:

- ☐ Improving ILO’s Strategic Management and Programming

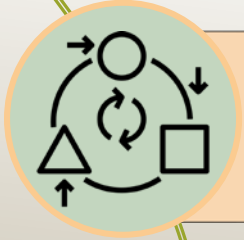
- ☐ Enhancing Quality Services to Constituents

- ☐ Investing in ILO People

- ☐ Presence and Partnerships

FINDINGS - RELEVANCE

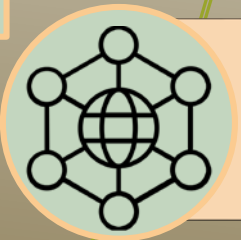
RELEVANCE



There was widespread agreement among tripartite constituents that the ILO's mandate and work are highly relevant, useful and increasingly important but that the current FOS is not always fully aligned with current and future needs.



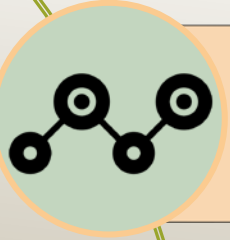
The FOS should facilitate the provision of higher levels of technical expertise that is more focused on knowledge generation and better aligned with the needs of different countries, such as middle-income countries.



Increased normative work, with more emphasis being placed on regional and subregional entities, is needed with the ILO's capacity-building efforts being more directed to supporting constituents to implement policies and regulations.

FINDINGS - COHERENCE

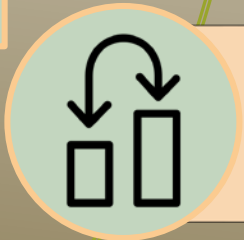
COHERENCE



The level of coherence of the field structure varies. There are wide disparities in the number of countries covered by each regional office (RO), Decent Work Technical Support Team (DWT) and by each country office (CO), as well as in the office architecture.



Constituents, staff and donors expressed concerns that the offices serving a large number of countries are unreasonably overstretched.



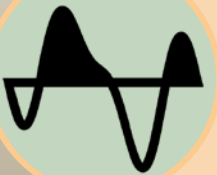
There is no apparent systematic approach for addressing ILO's representation in Non-Resident Countries (NRCs), which also results in varying levels of demand being placed on DWTs and country offices. The inequities were greatest for Africa and the Arab States.

FINDINGS - EFFECTIVENESS

EFFECTIVENESS



The FOS followed the Organization's priorities and outcomes, and showed a general improvement in the services delivered at the country level as reflected in country programme outcomes (CPOs), Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) and UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), although this was relatively slow and had major regional variations.



The number and level of achievement of CPOs, as measured by outcome-based workplans, have improved over time, particularly when the 2014–15 biennium is compared with 2016–17. While DWCPs have witnessed improvements in quantity and quality (except for gender responsiveness in CPOs), there are significant regional differences.



For the most part, constituents are satisfied with the technical support received. Satisfaction levels were lower among staff than constituents, with concerns among those in the field that the FOS does not yet provide a fully effective and efficient enabling environment to carry out their work.

FINDINGS - EFFICIENCY

EFFICIENCY



With regard to efficiency, no significant increase in resources for field operations or in the flow of resources from HQ to the field in either the regular budget (RB) or from extra-budgetary sources was observed over the period.



The number and level of achievement of CPOs, as measured by outcome-based workplans, have improved over time, particularly when the 2014–15 biennium is compared with 2016–17. While DWCPs have witnessed improvements in quantity and quality (except for gender responsiveness in CPOs), there are significant regional differences.



Increased staff mobility was a major expectation of the reforms. Although a staff mobility procedure is in place, there is minimal evidence of staff movement in practice, although some differences and variations between regions and departments were observed.

FINDINGS – IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY

IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY



Staff capacity will continue to be an important variable in the sustainability of the FOS. If further restructuring takes place with more responsibilities coming to the field, an adequate level of support needs to be provided, including to the senior management of regional offices, DWTs and COs.



The decrease in management and administrative positions, delays in filling core positions, the increasing number of mandates, and the number of countries without ILO representation, all pose challenges for the sustainability and impact of the ILO's work.

FINDINGS — INTERNATIONAL LABOR STANDARD, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GENDER EQUALITY

International labor standard, human rights, and gender equality



The ILO's efforts on decent work and International Labour Standards (ILS) is clearly embraced by constituents, the wider UN system and the donor community.



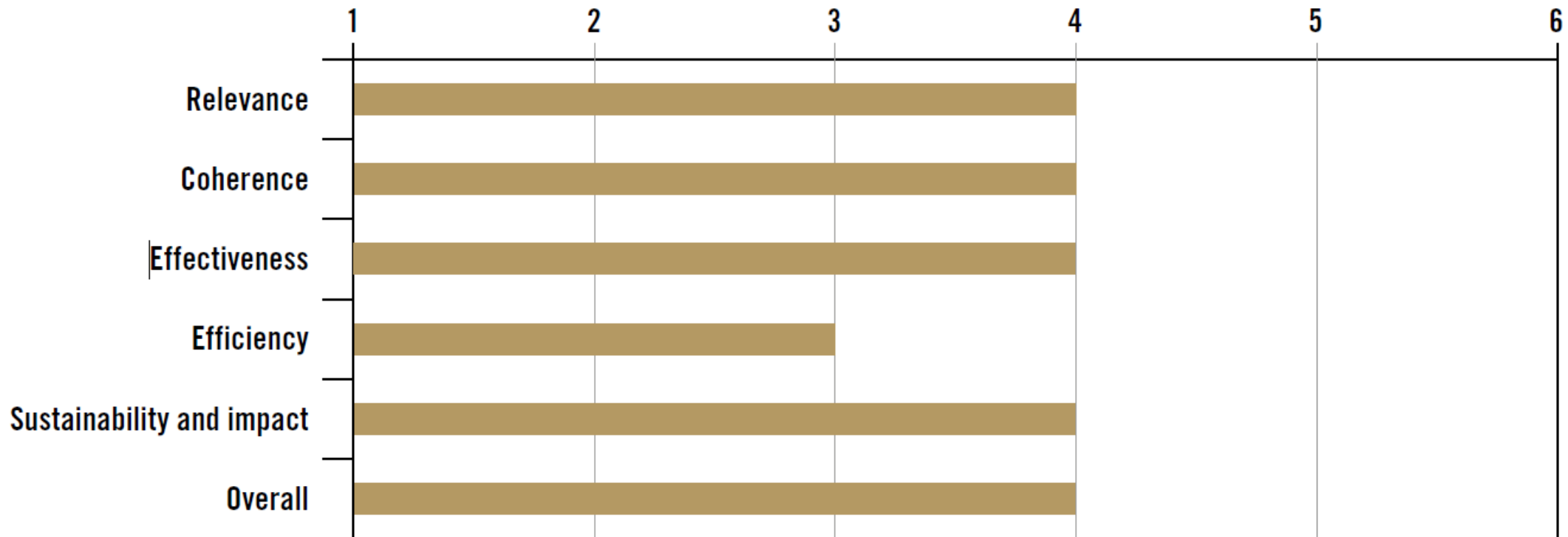
There are increasing demands for these services especially in the context of greater market liberalization.



Dedicated financial and staffing resources for the ILO's work on gender have generally declined over the review period, but the demand for ILO expertise and the opportunities for resource mobilization have been on the increase, particularly in the context of SDG 8 on decent work and SDG 5 on gender equality.

FINDINGS – SUMMARY RATINGS

The report provides a rating of the *OECD/DAC evaluation criteria* **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact** and **sustainability**.



Scale 6 = Highly satisfactory; 5 = Satisfactory; 4 = Somewhat satisfactory; 3 = Somewhat unsatisfactory; 2=Unsatisfactory; 1 = Highly unsatisfactory

4. Conclusions



CONCLUSIONS

Results in ILO outcomes are evident

1

The reform and improvement of the FOS are beginning to show results, although progress varies by region and type of outcome.

Participation in the UN System Country Teams around reform

2

The evaluation shows that ILO has been increasingly effective in participating in the UNDAF process, where SDG 8 is usually included and the role of the ILO is specified. The ILO's normative role is more important than ever, but there still needs to be a balance between normative and operational work.

Resources for the FOS and decentralisation

3

Redeployment of posts to the field has taken place within the existing resources, mostly in the P&B for the current and next biennium. More flexibility in financial and human resource management is needed for decentralization efforts to lead to decisions at the field level.

A supply rather than demand-driven system

4

Provision of technical support appears to be driven more by supply than demand, including where donor resources are available. There does not appear to be a systematic process for determining demand at country or regional levels although the process of developing DWCPs partly serves this purpose.

CONCLUSIONS

5

Proximity versus critical mass

To increase the consistency of ILO's delivery of services, there is a need for a more coherent approach to the configuration of the field structure. Related to this is the distribution of technical support and the extent to which specialists should be clustered in larger teams or more dispersed amongst the countries served.

6

Transparency around reform

In the field, there is low awareness of the reform efforts despite high interest, with the pace of reform generally perceived to be slow.

7

The Tripartite structure at field level

The effect of the FOS reform on the functioning of the tripartite system varies by region and type of country. Improvement of the future effectiveness of the FOS requires more strategic partners to accomplish a larger mandate on the basis of the traditional tripartite structure.

8

Delivering services in countries where there is no ILO office

Evidence suggests that the ILO is less effective in countries lacking a resident designated ILO official. This is a major factor in determining whether or not the ILO is an effective partner in all UNCTs. Disparity in the number of countries covered by offices in the field needs to be addressed to ensure quality and equitable delivery of services

CONCLUSIONS

The connection between headquarters and the field

9

It is still mostly a one-way connection between HQ and the field. Knowledge management and communication systems need to be improved in the context of a culture of sharing to make the work of the FOS more effective.

10

International labour standards, human rights and gender

ILO's work on International Labour Standards is clearly embraced by constituents, the wider UN system and the donor community. There are increasing demands for these services especially in the context of greater market liberalization. This demand extends to furthering work with regional and sub-regional bodies, particularly to increase the harmonization of labour laws. Stakeholders are unanimous that gender is an important element of the ILO's work. However, gender specialists in the field are stretched both geographically and technically.

5. Recommendations



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Undertake a systematic field operations demand inventory

The ILO should ensure this as part of a systematic exercise wherever this is not yet being done, taking into account regional planning exercises, so that a plan can be made defining the technical staffing requirements to meet national needs and feed this into regional plans and P&B exercises. This exercise should be complemented by the development of a portfolio of ILO services, reflecting cross cutting policy drivers such as gender equality and discrimination and according to country typologies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Improve decentralization efforts towards more agility of administrative decision-making at the field level

Improvement of the FOS in a period of zero RB resource growth should be addressed through an appropriate and staged decentralisation process; taking into account the recommendation on demand inventories and country typologies for support services, combined with a continued plan to increase the deployment of posts/resources from headquarters to the field for both technical and management/administrative functions. In addition, administrative procedures for management of resources should be further modified to improve agility while maintaining accountability, for decision-making about use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Review configuration of the field structure using established models

While the field structure is basically sound, there are a number of adjustments that can be made to make it more effective and address several problems identified in the evaluation. This is related to standardization of modalities for ILO resident representation in NRCs, adjusting responsibilities for DWT and CO coverage where there are inequities, and enhanced management support whenever required for Directors of DWT and COs. Priority for additional support should be given to combined DWT/COs and COs where defined thresholds for the number of countries served, size of team and budget expenditure are met.

There should be a review of existing models of field structures from DWT to DWT/COs to COs to NRCs, identifying the key functions, requirements and challenges. Principles for assessing the coverage and capacity needed should be established with a process for assessing which model to apply under what circumstance and in line with the portfolio of services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Improve results-based management reporting at field level

While results in an RBM context are available for central reporting, they currently do not provide a clear basis for indicating the extent to which services provided by the FOS are leading to the expected results. To improve the process, regional and COs should ensure that expected results, activities and output for the office are clearly defined at all levels and reflected in cascading work plans and reports. This will necessitate more systematic sex-disaggregated data collection and monitoring procedures, including of DWT and CO missions. It will also require changing how CPO results are reported, including a process/mechanism to better reflect work on multiple CPOs, as well as participation and work undertaken with UNCTs, and subregional and regional bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Improve staff incentives and mobility to equip field staff with right competencies.

A key factor in ensuring that the FOS reform works is addressing recurring human resource concerns of field staff, particularly staff mobility; caps on national staff grades; human resource procedures and conditions that take into consideration the situation in the field; and increasing national staff connections to the broader ILO family. The incentive-based staff mobility policy is not yielding significant movement, and further consideration should be given to phasing in a mandatory component with progressive targets for its implementation. The ILO also needs to do more to become an organization of choice to better attract and retain national talent. There should be systematic application for awarding grades beyond NO-B given the increasing demands upon, and strategic importance of, national staff. Further attention should also be directed to providing national staff with more access to training, mentoring, research and networking opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Improve communications functions for policy influencing

The ILO's communications function at the field level needs to be elevated to the twenty-first century level. The ILO needs to improve its storytelling via media that are now the most relevant to target audiences, particularly through digital and social media. By not doing so, it is missing out on opportunities for raising resources and influencing decision-makers. Each office should aim at having a dedicated (or part-time) qualified CO communications position, and media competencies should be required for Directors and developed in technical specialists through systematic media training. Increased internal communication is needed about the field reforms and progress made. The current webpages are useful, but need updating and promotion

CONTACT US

ILO Evaluation Office

Email: eval@ilo.org

Web: www.ilo.org/eval

Follow us:



ILO_EVAL



ILO_EVAL



ILO Evaluation



ILO Evaluation