A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white top with a brown and black geometric pattern, is smiling at the camera. She is in a factory setting, with a blurred background showing other workers and machinery. A large teal rounded rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and date.

# Independent Evaluation of ILO's strategy to Promote Skills Development for Employment and Growth (2010-15)

October 2016

Evaluation Office - ILO

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRO

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1

### Objectives and scope

+ *Objectives*  
+ *Scope*

2

### Methodology

+ *Direct  
Observations*  
+ *Surveys and  
Interviews*  
+ *Desk reviews*  
+ *Limitations*

3

### Findings

4

### Conclusions

+ *Relevance*  
+ *Coherence*  
+ *Effectiveness*  
+ *Efficiency*  
+ *Impact*  
+ *Sustainability*  
+ *Recommendations*



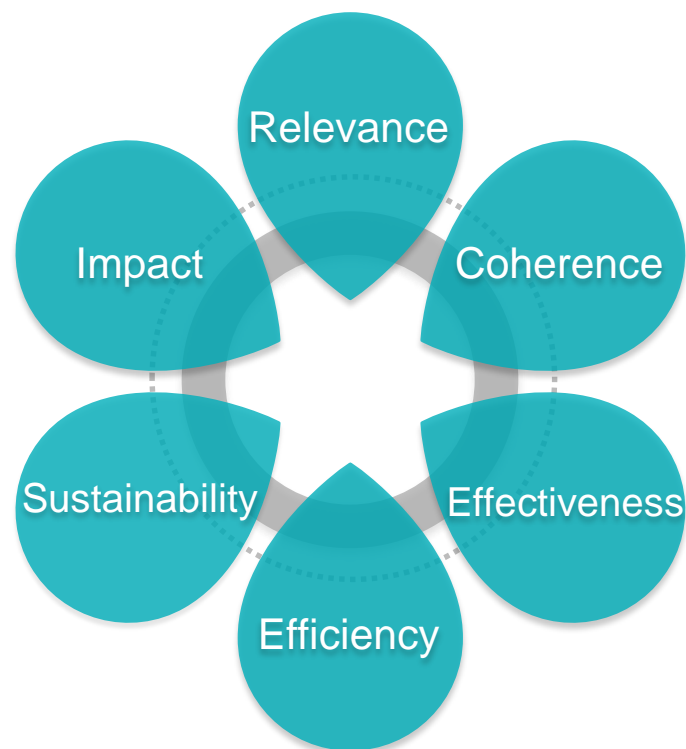
# Objectives and scope 1

# OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

In November 2015, the ILO's Governing Body mandated the Evaluation Office (EVAL) to conduct an independent High-Level Evaluation (HLE) of the ILO's strategy, programme approach, and interventions to promote skills development for employment and growth.

*The **purpose** of the evaluation is to provide an insight into the **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency** and **sustainability** of the skills-related work of the ILO*

- Although it focuses on the period from 2010-15 - that of the previous Strategic Policy Framework (SPF) - it also **looks forward**, aiming to inform the development of the next strategic framework and its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The **evaluation reviews the work of the organization as a whole**, not just that of the Skills Department (now called Skills and Employability Branch).
- The **ILO's contribution to global skills strategies**, its collaboration with multilateral partners, and its global knowledge sharing initiatives **are also considered**.





# Methodology

# 2

# METHODOLOGY



The evaluation is based primarily on qualitative research, **drawing on multiple sources of information:**

- document reviews analyses of financial and programmatic data
- key informant interviews with ILO constituents, staff and multilateral and bilateral partners
- direct observation from field visits and interviews in nine selected countries.

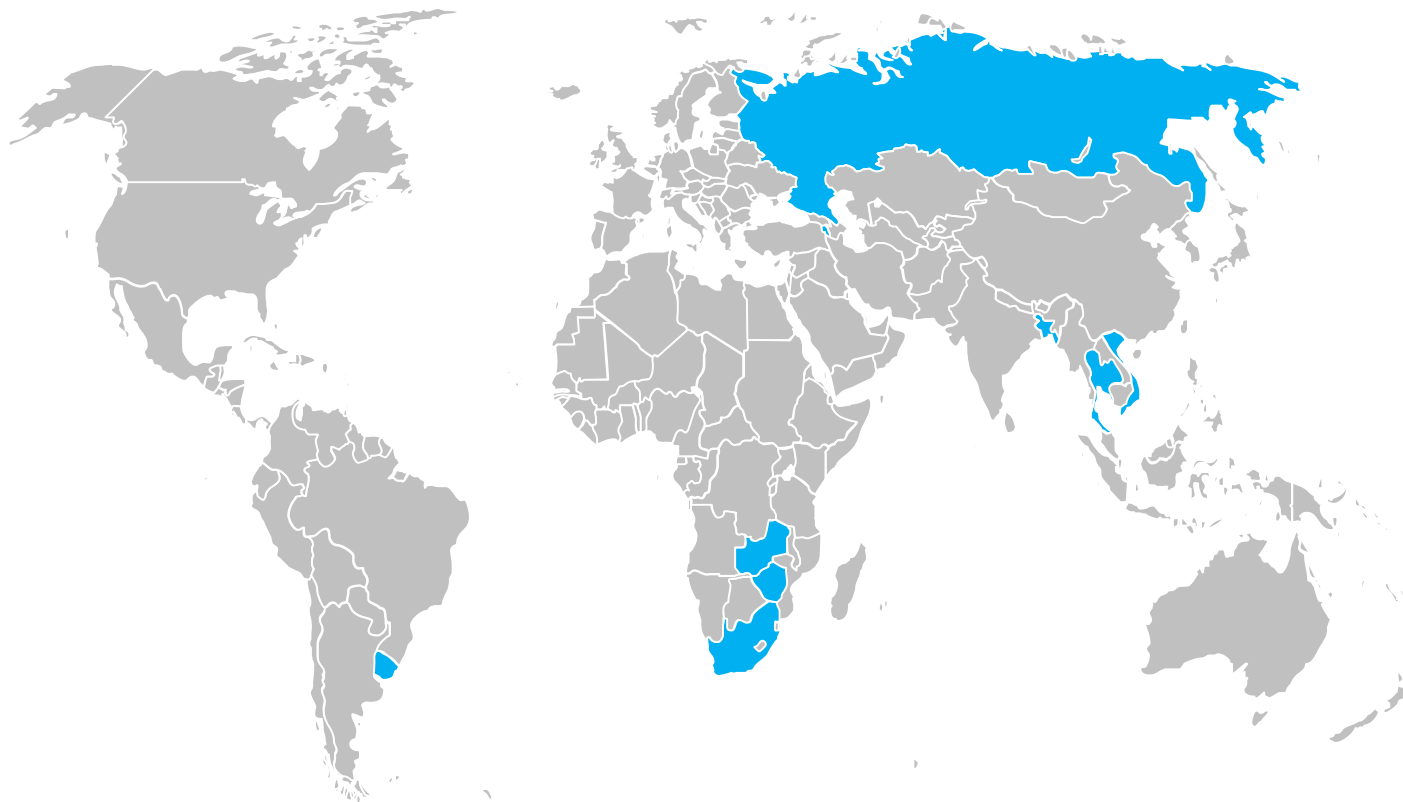
# METHODOLOGY — DIRECT OBSERVATION

## 181 people were interviewed

Including ILO staff, government officials, representative of workers and employer's organizations, NGOs, other multi-bilateral donors working on skills development.

## 9 countries were visited

Selection was based on geographic spread and the Extra-Budgetary Technical Cooperation (XBTC) resources that had been allocated and spent in the countries.



*Armenia*  
*Bangladesh*  
*Russian Federation*  
*South Africa*  
*Thailand*  
*Uruguay*  
*Vietnam*  
*Zambia*  
*Zimbabwe*

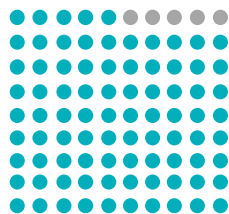
# METHODOLOGY — SURVEYS and DESK REVIEWS

*Two surveys were designed by the evaluation to capture the perspectives of a multitude of stakeholders*

## 1 ILO Staff and Constituents

This survey was sent to 238 people including ILO Staff, constituents and stakeholders.

- The response rate was 46.2%

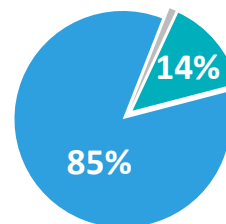


94.5% of the respondents reported that they were **involved in skills work** in one or more countries

## 2 IAWG on TVET

This survey was sent to members of the Inter-Agency Working Group on TVET.

- The response rate was 53.8%



14% said skills development was an **“important”** part of their work  
85% said it was **“very important”**

*Content analysis of specific issues was also conducted*

### DWCP analysis

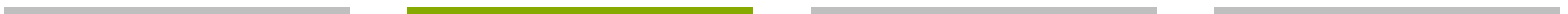
A classification of skills related activities from the DWCPs into intervention types was carried out to provide a more nuanced picture of the **demand for skills related support**.

### Implementation Reports analysis

A detailed analysis of all Country Programme Outcomes reported in the biennial **Implementation Reports** was also conducted.

## METHODOLOGY — LIMITATIONS

- **Lack of financial and reporting data** on the use of regular budget resources linked to outcomes meant that much of the work undertaken by headquarters on skills development is **not quantifiable**.
  - Thus the evaluation does not have the full set of data for assessing the efficiency of ILO work in this area.
  - This is an area of systemic concern to the organization
- **Staff turnover** between the period of 2010-15 also proved to be a limitation. Given that the ILO's skills development work is not confined to one department, **institutional memory is diffused across the organization and is often held by individuals**.
  - When these individuals leave, important information leaves them – especially historical knowledge of why particular decisions were made and why things were done in a particular way.
  - As often **no institutional records appear to have been kept**, the evaluation team asked some important questions for which no answers could be found.



A high-angle photograph of a woman and a young boy hanging laundry on a line. The woman, wearing a red shirt and a patterned sari, is on the left, holding a light blue cloth. The boy, wearing an orange shirt and dark shorts, is standing on a small blue stool on the right, also holding the cloth. Several other colorful cloths (red, orange, green, blue) are hanging on the line in the background. A small blue bowl is on the ground near the boy.

# Findings

3

# FINDINGS

- 1 There is a **lack of clarity about what the ILO's skills strategy actually is**
- 2 The skills “strategies” set out in each biennium’s P&B described **only some elements of the ILO's skills work**.
- 3 A “skills agenda” set out in key ILO Conventions and Recommendations seems to have driven much of the ILO’s work in practice, but **this agenda was not adequately reflected in the P&B's performance indicators**. This incoherence may have led to inconsistencies and errors in reporting.
- 4 Despite the deficiencies of the ILO’s skills strategy (as expressed in the P&B) as a means of guiding work in this area, the **ILO's approach proved in practice to be adaptable and responsive** to the differing needs of constituents.

## C O H E R E N C E

- 5 Although skills development work has clear synergies with other work of the ILO, the P&B processes in place at the time may have unintentionally created a **disincentive for collaboration and reinforced an organizational “silo” mentality** – though less so in the field.
- 6 Externally, the ILO’s work in skills is recognized as having a **unique value and being complementary to the skills activities** of its partners and constituents. In some cases, however, the different priorities of partners may conflict with the ILO’s.
- 7 The ILO’s **tripartite approach is seen as being relevant and appropriate** to skills work, but there may be a need to **strengthen links with other Ministries**.
- 8 The ILO’s work in skills (if not its “strategy”) aligns well with global strategies and, moving forward, **can make important contributions to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs).

## R E L E V A N C E

## FINDINGS

- 9 Results were reported against P&B indicators in programme Implementation Reports, though the **evaluation team had concerns about the accuracy and validity of some results.**
- 10 Based on the evaluation's field visits, the **ILO's skills work was regarded as relevant and effective** by its constituents and stakeholders, but there is much more work that needs to be done.
- 11 The ILO has engaged with UN partners and other development actors in the skills field and this work appears to have been **well coordinated and complementary.**

### EFFECTIVENESS

12 ILO work in the area of skills development seems generally to be efficient and cost-effective, but **data limitations do not currently allow a detailed analysis.**

13 A number of **constraints to operational efficiency and effectiveness** were identified through the survey

### EFFICIENCY

14 Based on the site visits, ILO's skills work has had **some impact on policy development, institutional capacity and the extension of training opportunities** to certain groups. Impact on the countries' ability to align training supply and demand is not yet evident in practice, but the logic of the reforms seem sound in this respect.

### IMPACT

15 Staff and stakeholders perceive the ILO skills work as having had a **sustainable impact on extending access to training systems and services.**

### SUSTAINABILITY



Conclusions

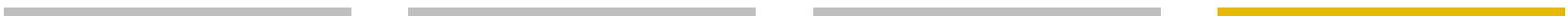
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## CONCLUSIONS — RELEVANCE

Although some of the skills work done by the ILO in the period found no natural home among the SPF performance indicators, in all other respects, the **activities and approach were relevant and appropriate**. In the countries visited in the evaluation, constituents were supportive of the ILO's tripartite approach although further links may need to be strengthened beyond the traditional ILO partner ministries.

- Although the skills development work has clear synergies with other work of the ILO, the P&B processes in place at the time may have unintentionally created a disincentive for collaboration and reinforced an **organizational “silo” mentality**, but activities converged well in the field.
- ILO was seen as a natural leader in the area of skills work by surveyed stakeholders and the recognition by the G20 in asking the ILO to take the lead to develop the G20 Training Strategy has placed **ILO as a global influencer** in skills development work.
- ILO has worked in a coordinated and complementary way with its partners in the skills field. Given the demand and needs for skills work however, more guidance may be needed on organizational priorities including geographical focus.

Overall rating: **SATISFIED**



## CONCLUSIONS — COHERENCE

The **coherence** of action implemented in the field and the strategy expressed in the biennial P&Bs **was poor and did not adequately describe the full range of activities** that ILO was engaged in to support constituents.

- The incoherence may have led to *inconsistencies* and *errors* in reporting.
- Country offices might have been forced into a difficult choice of either adhering strictly to the SPF (in the process maximizing resource allocation, but inadequately responding to constituent needs and to the “skills agenda”) or adjusting its reporting to fit better with the global results framework.

There is a **lack of clarity** about **what the ILOs skills strategy actually is**; although staff and constituents cited a range of policy documents there was no consensus.

ILO activities were seen to harmonise with the strategies of other development agencies and UN partners and, moving forward, can make important contributions to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Overall rating: **DISSATISFIED**



## CONCLUSIONS — EFFECTIVENESS

Performance was examined through the lens of the Strategic Policy Framework.

- Of the five indicators linked to outcome 2, three were not met and two on youth employment and employment services were exceeded.
- The evaluation team had concerns about the accuracy and validity of some of the reported results.
- In the countries visited, some of which had large technical cooperation portfolios, major successes were achieved but were not entirely reflected in the implementation reports.
- Generally, activities in the field visit countries took gender concerns into its implementation but this was not systematic. Gender was not thoroughly reflected in the reporting of results.

Staff and constituents interviewed had a favourable view of the effectiveness of the ILO's skills work. Despite some deficiencies of the strategy as a means of guiding work, the ILO's efforts in practice proved to be adaptable, responsive and effective in meeting the differing needs of the constituents.

Overall rating : **SOMEWHAT SATISFIED**



## CONCLUSIONS — EFFICIENCY

A comprehensive assessment of the efficiency of the ILO's skills work **would require data that the Office cannot currently provide**, including the cost of all resources used to undertake specific skills activities, information on how these activities are linked to outputs and how they contributed to the achievement of outcomes.

- An examination of expenditure on skills by countries raised some questions about relative return on investment, but from observations made in the field there was **no conspicuous signs of inefficiency** – in fact, some had achieved quite a lot with very limited resources.
- The field visit country sample explicitly included countries where much work was reported to have been done with little funding and the evaluation was able to confirm that this was the case.
- Survey results showed, among other things, that **the Office perceives itself to be efficient**. A number of constraints to operational efficiency and effectiveness were however also identified through the survey including access to technical expertise, the time required for internal decision making, and funding including adequate access to both financial and human resources.

Overall rating: **SOMEWHAT SATISFIED**



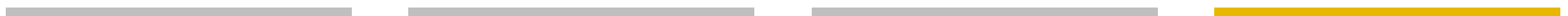
## CONCLUSIONS — IMPACT

In terms of the ultimate goal as expressed in the SPF (the “Position to be reached by 2015: Over 30 member States have aligned training supply and demand, extended access to training”), there were no data available on the number of countries that were assessed as having reached this position.

The countries visited had undertaken activities that relate to the goal, constituents in these countries were generally satisfied and survey data suggested that staff and stakeholders believe that the organization had made a difference.

When questioned in the field, however, staff and stakeholders were often unable to present any evidence of impact, especially in respect of “aligning supply and demand” through training system reform.

Overall rating: SOMEWHAT SATISFIED



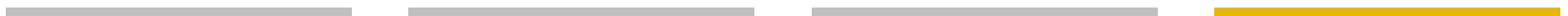
## CONCLUSIONS — SUSTAINABILITY

The potential for sustainability in policy development and training system reform is naturally greater than that of more community-based approaches that pilot delivery mechanisms.

The latter, however, offer a more visible immediate result for beneficiaries and the evaluation saw cases where the sustainable results for individuals were good, even if the sustainability of the intervention was questionable.

Staff and stakeholders perceived the ILO skills work as having had a sustainable impact on extending access to training systems and services, but the field visits did not uncover much hard evidence of this.

Overall rating: **SOMEWHAT SATISFIED**



## CONCLUSIONS — SUMMARY

 **Relevance** and **Coherence** received respectively the highest and lowest ratings

RELEVANCE

Satisfied

COHERENCE

Somewhat Dissatisfied

EFFECTIVENESS

Somewhat satisfied

EFFICIENCY

Somewhat satisfied

IMPACT

Somewhat satisfied

SUSTAINABILITY

Somewhat satisfied

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Enhance coherence between the **Programme and Budget**, **key policy documents** and the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) by mapping key skills development activities to the indicators in the strategic plan 2018–21 and the Programme and Budget for 2018–19.

2

Ensure that **adequate technical support** is available for **areas of growing demand** and consider the need to target specific skills-related activities in priority regions or countries.

3

Clarify the **full scope of the skills agenda** and communicate this to ILO offices and constituents. Develop tools and guides that support offices and constituents to **better integrate skills activities** more effectively into the full range of development interventions.

4

Encourage **innovation** in the ILO's skills work by allocating funds to develop and test new models.

5

Enhance the **capacity of tripartite partners** to participate in the ILO's skills work and ensure all relevant ministries are effectively engaged in identifying and addressing skills priorities.

6

Improve the **systems** in place to **review and assess the results reported** in the implementation reports and improve the capacity of the ILO's systems to report on the allocations of Regular Budget (RB) resources to outcomes.

7

Improve **institutional record keeping** to ensure that important information is not lost when key staff leave the Office.

