ILO Evaluation Policy (2017)

I. Purpose, concepts, rules and use of evaluation within the Organization

Introduction: Rationale for a revised policy
in a changing international context

1. Inspired by internationally accepted norms and standards, the first ILO Evaluation Policy was adopted in 2005 in an effort to strengthen the evaluation function. The policy and its implementation were independently evaluated in 2010, a process which resulted in an improved and independent function. A time-bound evaluation strategy was introduced to operationalize the policy, in which progress made towards its outcomes was reported on a yearly basis to the Governing Body in the annual evaluation report.

2. The evaluation function was again independently evaluated in 2016 to assess its overall performance since 2011. This *Independent evaluation of ILO's evaluation function 2011–2016* (ILO, 2017) noted the substantial progress made in establishing an independent evaluation function equipped with highly structured systems and processes, in addition to delivering good quality evaluations. It highlighted the need to establish an integrated evaluation planning system, improve the use of evaluation findings and enhance evaluation methods better to capture the ILO's normative mandate and tripartite structure. Its recommendations were to address these issues and simultaneously bring the evaluation function into line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the revised United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (UNEG, 2016).

3. The evaluation policy builds on the previous policy, the recent independent evaluation of the evaluation function and an extensive consultation process involving staff and constituents. It is an aspirational document that ambitiously encourages the ILO's evaluation function to transition to the highest level of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) evaluation maturity matrix. [1]

Objective of the new evaluation policy

4. Evaluation is expected to promote accountability and learning. Evaluation aims to understand why – and to what extent – intended and unintended results were achieved. Evaluation can inform planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting and can contribute to evidence-based policymaking and organizational effectiveness. [2]

5. The new evaluation policy aims to:

■ reinforce knowledge-generation sharing of the ILO's substantive work, and the processes, approaches and institutional arrangements for implementing such work;

■ strengthen the complementarity between evaluation and other oversight and monitoring functions within the Office;

■ clarify standards for engaging constituents in evaluation; and

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[1] JIU classifies the ILO's evaluation function in its top cluster, signifying that the Evaluation Office (EVAL) is transitioning to level 4 of its maturity matrix. *Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system* (JIU/REP/2014/6), p. 20.

[2] United Nations Evaluation Group: *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (UNEG, 2016), p. 10

■ clarify the division of responsibilities in the ILO for carrying out an evaluation. [3]

6. The evaluation policy and its implementation are guided by internationally accepted norms and standards, such as the UNEG *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (UNEG, 2016) and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC) principles for evaluation of development cooperation. [4] The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the associated resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work with emphasis on results-based management provide further overall guidance. Developments in the United Nations system will be considered in the use of the policy.

A shared vision for the evaluation culture within the ILO

7. A sustained, expanding institutional culture of mutual accountability, ownership, transparency and quality improvement is a strong vision shared by the ILO Governing Body and the Office. An evaluation culture to use evaluation for better performance, effectiveness and learning in the pursuit of the Decent Work Agenda is at the core of this commitment. It is critical for members of the Governing Body, as well as external partners, to be fully confident that evaluation functions in the Office are systematically fulfilled in a transparent, independent, reliable, credible and professional manner. A theory of change will be used to elaborate on the vision and mission to advocate, guide and demonstrate the role of evaluation within the ILO.

Definition of evaluation

8. The ILO adopts the definition of evaluation established by the United Nations Evaluation Group. [5] Evaluation should not be confused with implementation monitoring and reporting, audit, inspection, investigation or assessment of individual performance. Although it takes the form of data-based analysis, evaluation is not academic research as evaluation focuses on assessing the value or results of action actually taken for a specific purpose.

Implementation of the evaluation policy

9. The Evaluation Policy is an aspirational document that sets out principles for evaluation. A time-bound evaluation strategy that is aligned with the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2018–21 identifies outcomes and targets through which the policy will be implemented. Relevant Internal Governance Documents System (IGDS) circulars related to the Evaluation Office's (EVAL) role and the evaluation policy guidelines will be updated as required in order to be

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[3] The policy does not cover the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin, which is subject to its own internal evaluation procedures.

[4] UNEG: *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (2016); Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC): *Evaluating Development Co-operation – Summary of Key Norms and Standards* (2010); OECD/DAC: *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management* (2002).

[5] "An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders." UNEG: *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*, (2016) p. 10.

in line with the policy. Procedures for any waivers from the policy will be outlined in the policy guidelines.

Integrating evaluation with results-based management

10. The ILO results-based management system is delivered through a medium-term strategic plan and a biennial programme and budget. The Office will ensure that the cycles for major programme evaluations are synchronized with the different stages of planning, programming and budgeting cycles.

11. Evaluation findings and recommendations will be used during the preparation of programme and budget proposals to link budget decisions more closely to expected outcomes. Particular emphasis will be placed on how programme managers use evaluation information to improve performance indicators and targets, which are used to monitor the contribution of specific activities to objectives and outcomes.

12. The Office is committed to having adequate *monitoring and reporting capacity* so as to strengthen and facilitate the extent to which the ILO's work can be evaluated. An enabling environment for evaluation requires:

   ■ a logical framework and results framework for planning and project documents exist in order to track and report on progress made against milestones and targets based on the systematic application of the theory of change approach;

   ■ comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems and staff capacity with minimum requirements for organizational units and projects based on size and nature of the area of work, which are in line with thresholds set by the evaluation strategy or policy guidelines;

   ■ institutional incentives for staff to engage in evaluation activities and to use and learn from evaluations.

13. The ILO evaluation function will focus on supporting complementary activities that will enhance the extent to which projects can be evaluated in a manner that does not undermine its independence. These include appraising proposed project designs at the formal appraisal stage related to capacity for evaluation, including plans for integrating baseline measures and resourcing activities so as to assess innovative and pilot work in a critical manner.

II. *Guiding principles of the ILO Evaluation Policy*

Key evaluation principles

14. The Office is committed to ensuring the independence, credibility, utility, impartiality, transparency and independence of evaluation through adherence to the following six core principles:

   ■ *Adherence to international good practice.* The ILO Evaluation Policy will be consistent with internationally accepted evaluation norms, standards and good practices, and will be harmonized with the UN family in the context of results-based management approaches.

   ■ *Upholding the ILO mandate and mission.* The ILO evaluation approach and methods will reflect the Organization's tripartite structure and focus on social justice, and its normative and technical mandate.

   ■ *Ensuring professionalism.* Evaluations will be managed by staff with the necessary evaluation management competencies and training, and will use ILO quality standards for evaluation management. Evaluations will be undertaken by qualified technical experts and evaluators; they will combine technical and evaluation experience and competencies with the appropriate skills set. Evaluators will adhere to the highest

ethical and technical standards, apply methodological rigour and respond to all criteria of professionalism, impartiality and credibility, including the responsible handling of confidential information.

■ *Transparency and learning.* Evaluations will be conducted using a transparent process involving stakeholders as required to ensure factual accuracy and full ownership. Evaluation findings and recommendations will be disseminated to constituents, donors, the ILO and other agencies and partners concerned, in order to inform decision-making processes and support organizational learning.

■ *Independence of process.* The ILO will ensure separation of evaluation management and implementation responsibility from line management functions for policies, programmes and projects, and will select evaluators from a wide and diversified pool according to agreed criteria for the purposes of avoiding any potential conflict of interest.

■ *Gender equality and non-discrimination.* Evaluations will ensure that there is appropriate consideration of gender and non-discrimination issues in their design, analyses and reporting, while also addressing UNEG gender-related norms and standards.

Principles for evaluation approaches at the ILO

15. The ILO evaluation function is committed to *enhance further evaluation value through methods specific to the ILO Decent Work Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) context. Evaluation approaches, methods and frameworks will be participatory, people-centred, inclusive of human rights and gender equality, and adapted to the ILO's specific mandate and context, but with due consideration of UN system-wide developments and approaches. Evidence from ILO research and the ILO Committee of Experts' observations, as relevant, should be included in evaluation, as appropriate.

16. To support organizational learning, the evaluation function will consider tools such as selected impact evaluations and meta-studies, to assess the Office's development effectiveness and impact of its work. This includes its contribution to decent work and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

17. Evaluations within the ILO will be conducted in the most effective and efficient manner. This will include the clustering of evaluations of projects and programme activities under identical or similar themes, programme frameworks and locations, provided that funding agreements, timing, specific focus and the nature of activities allow it. This will be guided by established principles and approaches to clustering of evaluations. This approach, if pursued consistently, will enable evaluations to be more strategic and cover broader performance issues, such as the contribution to the Decent Work Agenda and SDGs.

III. *Evaluation types and responsibilities*

18. *Independent evaluations* and reviews are managed by EVAL or independent ILO officials, overseen by EVAL and carried out by EVAL officers or external independent evaluators. *Internal evaluations* are managed by ILO staff, with the support of consultants or qualified ILO officials following a formalized evaluation process. *Self-evaluations* or reviews, as managed and conducted by ILO line management, are not independent but all contribute to the ILO's organizational learning. *External evaluations* are evaluations of ILO activities that are commissioned, managed and implemented by entities external to the ILO (mostly by donors) to fulfil their own accountability purposes. Findings from these evaluations can be useful for the ILO, but cannot replace ILO organizational learning and accountability needs.

19. Independent strategy and policy evaluations, Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) evaluations and selected thematic evaluations are considered to be *centralized evaluations*.

These are independent evaluations that are managed and coordinated by EVAL. *Decentralized evaluations* include thematic evaluations (other than those managed by EVAL), project evaluations, impact evaluations, joint evaluations and internal reviews, which also include self-evaluations. Their resourcing is primarily the responsibility of departments and regions. Mandatory independent decentralized project and joint evaluations are managed through the evaluation management system established and overseen by EVAL, based on a network of certified evaluation managers, departmental evaluation focal points and designated evaluation officers at the regional level. *Interim or mid-term evaluations* are carried out during implementation, *final evaluations* upon completion of a programme or project, and *ex-post evaluations* sometime after completion to allow for a particular focus on long-term achievements and sustainability.

Strategy and policy evaluations

20. Evaluations of ILO strategies and policy outcomes will be designed to assess their effectiveness and impact. Within the frameworks provided by the relevant strategic planning and programming documents, such as the strategic plan, the programme and budget and cross-cutting drivers, these high-level evaluations will focus on continued relevance, as well as on how to improve efficiency, effectiveness, potential for impact and sustainability of the associated strategies. Evaluations can focus on specific outcomes of the ILO results framework or an institutional strategy or approach. Each year, EVAL will propose topics to the Governing Body and conduct a minimum of two evaluations of this type.

Decent Work Country Programme evaluations

21. DWCPs are the main vehicle for delivery of ILO support to countries, and represent the distinct ILO contribution to UN country programmes. The ILO supports independent evaluations of DWCPs to provide its national and international partners with an impartial and transparent assessment of the ILO's work in these countries. These evaluations are a means of validating the achievement of results and the ILO's contribution towards national development objectives, decent work and related country programme outcomes, as set out in the programme and budget. DWCP evaluations can be clustered around subregions and also organized as cluster evaluations that cover development cooperation (DC) activities and projects. Each year, EVAL will conduct at least one evaluation of this type, with the aim of increasing their number as clustering and integration of project evaluations in the ILO become more of an established practice. Regions will conduct country programme reviews as required for management and learning purposes.

Thematic evaluations

22. Thematic evaluations assess specific aspects, themes and processes, and can also focus on specific sectors, issues or schemes. Thematic evaluations provide a means for ILO technical programmes and regions to explore the effectiveness and impact of particular approaches in depth. These evaluations can draw on lessons learned at the project level, both inside and outside the ILO, and focus on themes that have significance beyond a particular project. ILO technical programmes are normally responsible for conducting and resourcing such thematic evaluations on a scheduled basis, with support from EVAL.

Impact evaluations

23. Impact evaluations aim to assess the "positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended".[6] An impact evaluation is usually distinctive in its focus, conceptually and

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[6] OECD/DAC: op. cit., 2002.

methodologically, in determining the form and level of attribution that can be given to specific factors, including policies, programmes or interventions. Impact evaluations in the ILO are primarily for knowledge building on effective policy interventions and under the responsibility of technical departments. EVAL provides an impact evaluation framework with guidance, and ex-post quality appraisals and exchange of experience through a community of practice.

Joint evaluations

24. Joint evaluations are evaluations foreseen in joint project/programme documents or donor agreements. They may satisfy ILO evaluation requirements. According to the OECD/DAC, joint evaluations can help overcome attribution problems in assessing the effectiveness of programmes and strategies and the complementarities of efforts supported by various partners, as well as the quality of coordination of development cooperation.

Project evaluations

25. Independent project evaluations assess DC projects and programmes as a means to deliver ILO outcomes to constituents at the programme and budget and DWCP levels. They consider the project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of outcomes, and test underlying assumptions about contributions to broader developmental impacts. Project evaluations have the potential to:

   ■ improve project performance and contribute towards organizational learning;

   ■ help those responsible for managing the resources and activities of a project to enhance development results from the short term to a sustainable long term;

   ■ assess the effectiveness of planning and management for future impacts;

   ■ support accountability aims by incorporating lessons learned in the decision-making process of project stakeholders, including donors and national partners.

26. Requirements for project-level independent, internal evaluations and self-evaluations are established by EVAL, reviewed on a regular basis and reflected in its evaluation policy guidelines. These evaluations are based on a project's budget-size threshold, reflecting levels of investment risk of the ILO, and on duration, reflecting needs and opportunities for adjustment. Such requirements will also include compulsory evaluability reviews for high-value projects in their start-up phase. Resources for conducting project-level evaluations will continue to be included in project budgets, based on established criteria set out in the evaluation policy guidelines, and to ensure that evaluations are considered an integral part of project implementation.

IV.   Evaluation governance in the ILO: Institutional framework, roles and responsibilities

The evaluation agenda and programme of work

27. The ILO's evaluation function will integrate planning for evaluations at all levels to:

   ■ build a robust evidence base to support high-level evaluations;

   ■ allow for integrated budgets and more strategic evaluations, including clustering of evaluations whenever effective and efficient, to minimize the number of evaluations and provide broader strategic findings, results and impact;

   ■ ensure a link and complementarity between evaluative studies, knowledge documentation and relevant research.

28. ***Centralized evaluations:*** To ensure evaluations are timely, issue-oriented and results-focused, EVAL will propose to the Governing Body each year, in conjunction with its submission of the annual evaluation report, a proposed rolling programme of evaluation work for major independent evaluations, particularly at the strategy and policy levels.

29. ***Decentralized evaluations:*** Mandatory evaluations, whether independent or internal, will be part of an integrated planning and scheduling process maintained and overseen by EVAL, based on funding agreements and approved programme and project documents. Department directors and regional directors, through the Partnerships and Field Support Department (PARDEV), are responsible for ensuring that provisions for evaluations are made in the project budgets as per the Evaluation Policy. Directors and regional directors are responsible for ensuring that evaluations under their administrative authority are completed in line with the schedule. Evaluation activities that lie outside mandatory requirements are managed by departments and regions.

Reporting on evaluations to the Governing Body

30. Results from high-level evaluations are submitted to the Governing Body through the Programme, Financial and Administrative (PFA) Section of the meetings. An annual evaluation report is submitted to the PFA Section of the Governing Body to provide an overview of the performance of the evaluation function in the ILO, covering all levels and types of evaluations, including evaluation activities throughout the Office. Drawing on centralized and decentralized evaluations as well as synthesis reviews and meta-studies, the annual evaluation report will also expand on the Organization's efficiency and effectiveness in delivering the Decent Work Agenda, while highlighting selected organizational lessons and governance issues. The annual evaluation report will also cover management follow-up on evaluations and list completed and ongoing evaluations.

The Evaluation Advisory Committee for oversight of evaluation use

31. The Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) is established in line with good practice to provide a mechanism to oversee the use, implementation, follow-up to lessons learned and recommendations resulting from ILO evaluation activities. Its objective is to promote institutional follow-up on independent evaluation findings and accepted recommendations, and to provide pertinent information and advice to the Director-General on progress made by the Office.

32. The scope of its functions includes all independent evaluations with particular emphasis on strategy and outcome evaluations, country programme evaluations and major thematic evaluations. The EAC may also consider feedback on follow-up plans and actions taken in relation to a selected number of large development cooperation projects of particular strategic importance.

Evaluation at the regional and departmental levels

33. *Regional and departmental evaluation networks* support the planning and implementation of evaluation activities for development cooperation projects. At the regional level, the network comprises designated evaluation officers at the regional offices to support the planning and implementation of evaluation activities with help from certified evaluation managers. Reporting lines and responsibilities of the designated evaluation officers will be reviewed to ensure the highest possible level of independence and impartiality of evaluations undertaken in the regions. The establishment of regional advisory bodies, based on the model of the central EAC, can improve evaluation follow-up and regional learning on systemic issues.

34. At the department level, the network comprises designated departmental evaluation focal points to support the planning and implementation of evaluation activities with help from

certified evaluation managers. EVAL provides technical guidance and assistance to the network and maintains final oversight to ensure quality and independence. The ILO's incentive system for staff engagement in evaluations will be reviewed to encourage participation in evaluations and use of evaluation results. This will include a review of job descriptions and performance appraisals based on identified evaluation competencies and clear reporting lines for staff carrying out specific roles and responsibilities in the evaluation process.

35 EVAL will provide final oversight of the evaluation of decentralized projects through appropriate quality control. Annual or biannual ex-post quality assurance reviews of independent mandatory project evaluations will be continued and expanded to include a sample of internal evaluations within resource levels and available capacity.

Structure and role of the Evaluation Office

36. EVAL ensures coherence and focus in the use of evaluations within the Office. EVAL is mandated to manage the evaluation function and ensure proper implementation of the Evaluation Policy. EVAL's structure and methods of operation are designed to protect its functional independence.

37. The Director of EVAL reports directly to the Director-General. The incumbent should have qualifications and experience in evaluation, the related fields of strategic planning, basic and operational research and knowledge management, and should have excellent management and leadership attributes. Those criteria will be applied each time a new Director of EVAL is recruited.

38. EVAL is responsible for devising policies, setting operational guidelines and conducting quality control of evaluations for projects, programmes, partnerships and strategies. It also manages high-level evaluations. With support from the EAC, EVAL is accountable for the systematic monitoring of follow-up to recommendations, which have been accepted by management, and then reporting on such follow-up to the Governing Body. EVAL is expected to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field of evaluation theory and methodologies. EVAL is also expected to participate in internal and external networking as part of an effort to enhance the policy and practice of evaluation in the ILO.

The Office's disclosure policy for the dissemination of evaluation results

39. The ILO endorses the UNEG standard on disclosure policy and makes key evaluation products publicly accessible to bolster the Office's public accountability. Final evaluation reports are disseminated in accordance with the Office Directive *Classification of ILO Information Assets*, IGDS No. 456 (version 1). For independent project evaluations, all key project stakeholders – i.e. the donor, the national constituents and key national partners as well as ILO officials concerned – receive a copy of the finalized evaluation report. This is the responsibility of the evaluation manager and PARDEV. To ensure transparency and accessibility, all evaluation information is stored in the central repository of evaluation documentation, and is accessible through a web-based public platform using easily accessible means of dissemination, and targeted to specific audiences.

V.   *Financial resources for evaluation*

40. Within overall ILO programme and budget parameters, the Office secures regular budget funding for the core ILO Evaluation Function, to ensure that the Evaluation Policy and strategy can be implemented, as required, in response to the ILO level of activities. Funding for the evaluation of extra-budgetary activities will be guaranteed by including a dedicated amount for evaluation in project budgets. A more efficient and strategic use of extra-budgetary evaluation funds will be explored by integrating all budget sources and clustering

evaluations whenever strategically and procedurally possible. In addition, the establishment of an evaluation trust fund to pool evaluation funds for smaller projects will be considered. The overall aim will be to approach a combined evaluation expenditure of 1.5–2 per cent of total expenditures, as recommended in international evaluation standards.

VI. Use of evaluations in post-evaluation follow-up

Management response and follow-up to recommendations

41. The Office is committed to strengthening stakeholder engagement throughout the evaluation process to ensure that the evaluation's findings and recommendations are action-oriented. Thinking about the use of an evaluation should start at the planning stage rather than when the final report is submitted. Evaluations should, when applicable, be used beyond the individual programme or project they cover.

42. The Office promotes evaluation use and follow-up by using an interactive process that involves all stakeholders. This will require management to integrate evaluation results and recommendations into policies and programmes and conduct systematic follow-up to evaluation recommendations. More specifically, the Office undertakes that:

- centralized evaluations will use the management response mechanisms, with review by the EAC;

- all decentralized evaluations, whether independent or internal, should have a management response;

- implementation of management responses from decentralized evaluations should be systematically tracked, including over time, with an analysis of the level of implementation and use of management responses;

- EVAL's annual evaluation report should continue to provide the Governing Body with an overview of implementation of management responses from decentralized evaluations.

Evaluation as knowledge products

43. The Office will continue to produce knowledge products from evaluations, such as meta-studies, synthesis reviews, meta-analyses and think pieces. Knowledge dissemination may take the form of conferences, workshops, training sessions or seminars. Large projects may have a dissemination strategy as part of their monitoring and evaluation plan to target a specific range of clients. Evaluation reports are stored in a systematic manner and the knowledge generated in terms of lessons learned and from emerging good practices is made available through a web-based public platform.

VII. Framework for evaluation capacity development

44. In support of quality use of evaluation in the context of the SDGs and to further the evaluation culture, evaluation capacity will be built internally in the ILO and among constituents and, where appropriate, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

45. Training activities within the ILO will focus on evaluation management and internal evaluations with the overall aim of improving quality and increasing the pool of evaluation managers.

Constituent engagement

46. Enhancing evaluation capacity for constituents will focus on the inclusion of social partners in United Nations evaluation capacity development activities related to the SDGs and to enhance involvement of constituents in the evaluation process.

47. Subject to capacity and demand, tripartite constituents and other relevant stakeholders, will be included more systematically in evaluations (e.g. development of terms of reference, dissemination events) so as to strengthen interest in evaluation and facilitate the use of evaluation as a tool for social dialogue.

VIII. Conclusion

48. The Evaluation Policy will provide the Governing Body with consistent and coherent oversight and an organizational learning monitoring system for the Office's activities, and will enable the Office to reinforce the use of evaluation for improved planning, monitoring and performance measurement at the strategic, programme and project levels.

49. The Evaluation Policy and linked strategies will be evaluated by an independent evaluation team, after five years, to assess its impact on the functioning and performance of the Office.