**Multi-paper Session: Evaluation in Latin America:**

**current situation and new challenges in early 21st century**

**Factors to consider in Independent evaluations of ILO-IPEC Projects in Latin America**

**in the early 21st century**[[1]](#footnote-1)

Draft version (not for quotation)

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**1. Introduction**

There is current interest in thinking the perspective of evaluation from Latin America. Among various milestones, it can be named the AEA 2012 New Directions for Evaluation number about Latin America voices[[3]](#footnote-3), the recent Webinars developed under the framework of Evalpartners to exchange experiences between the African and Latin American Evaluation Networks, Afrea and RELAC; and more recently a RELAC virtual discussion group[[4]](#footnote-4).

The region is currently in post-conflict and post-dictatorship stage. Public knowledge feeding into citizens’ agency represents a recent entry into democratic possibilities. From earlier, at least from the decade of 1960-70, participatory methodologies have been developed and applied in Latin America, coming from the “Educacion popular” approach and later from the Participatory Rural Appraisal. Various techniques have been used also for evaluation. Also , it should be named the systematization, an approach that complements the evaluation process and have had a significant development in the region.

From the government side the introduction of results oriented planning and evaluation in various countries (i.e. Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Peru; among others) has introduced the need for accountability and efficiency and effectiveness measurement [[5]](#footnote-5). Also we have initiatives for building an evaluation culture in government and the society through public institutions like CONEVAL in Mexico and Sinergia in Colombia (among others), plus the generation of national and regional evaluation networks, as has been said above. All these elements are central to explain the current situation of the evaluation field in the region.

This paper intent to contribute to this trend by discussing some key current factors identified during the rollout and implementation of independent evaluations of projects and programmes managed by the International Labour Organization-International Programme for the Elimination of Child labour (ILO-IPEC). These evaluations[[6]](#footnote-6) have been managed by the independent Evaluation and Impact Assessment section (EIA) of ILO-IPEC.

The factors to be discussed have been subjectively selected by the author based on his experience as evaluation manager in EIA since January 2011, taking on account their potential contribution to the analysis of the cultural dimension of evaluation in Latin America.

EIA is a central unit of IPEC, working from ILO-IPEC HQ in Geneva. It is responsible for management of the whole evaluation process for mid-term and final evaluations of all IPEC projects that requires them according to the ILO evaluation policy.

During the project design, EIA review the evaluability of the project, particularly the approach on M&E and the provision of a 2% of the project budget for independent evaluation (mid-term and/or final evaluations). Only projects for USD 1 million and over go through at least one independent evaluation.

The evaluation process is highly consultative and consists of the following steps:

1. Consultation to all stakeholders (i.e. national and local government, workers and entrepreneurs organizations, civil society organizations, project staff, IPEC HQ, etc.) on inputs regarding the preparation of evaluation TORs and selection of potential evaluators.
2. EIA formulates the evaluation TORs draft version.
3. Consultation of draft TORs among stakeholders.
4. Inclusion of any comments in the final version of the TORs and circulation among stakeholders of the final TORs.
5. Development of the evaluation by two evaluators (one international and one national). It includes the following phases:
6. Desk review and interviews with stakeholders outside the country/ies to be evaluated
7. Field work in the country (interviews at the country capital city for national stakeholders, visit of a sample of project location –observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.)
8. Stakeholder workshop at national level at end of the field phase (and when feasible previous stakeholders workshops in project regions within the country) to share initial findings and conclusions and recommendations for validation and complement data collection.
9. Preparation of draft evaluation report
10. Circulation by EIA of the draft evaluation report for comments by stakeholders (data adjustment, make explicit different points of view not reflected in the report, etc.)
11. Inclusion of comments by the evaluation team
12. Completion of final report and circulation among stakeholders
13. Post-evaluation workshop (after evaluation report final version has been produced) with national and local stakeholders (preferably lead by national government) to discuss implementation of evaluation recommendations.

This workshop is done without the presence of the evaluators. It is presented as a project initiative to strengthening integration and ownership of the evaluation outcome.

1. Management response to the evaluation report by project team
2. Promote the use of evaluation report by reflecting it in new projects design, good practices documentation, strategic reviews, etc.
3. **Child labour concept[[7]](#footnote-7)**

In this section, we introduce briefly the concept of Child Labour, just to give some context to the discussion that we are going to have below. For more precise information, you can consult [www.ipec.org/childlabour](http://www.ipec.org/childlabour).

Considerable differences exist between the many kinds of work children do. Some are difficult and demanding, others are more hazardous and even morally reprehensible. Children carry out a very wide range of tasks and activities when they work.

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. The term “child labour” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling.

Whether or not particular forms of “work” can be called “child labour” depends on the child’s age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries. The answer varies from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries.

1. **IPEC contribution to Child Labour elimination**

Child labour is a complex decent work deficit that must be challenged through a rights based decent work approach to economic and social development, emphasising the enabling as well as the human rights qualities enshrined in the ILO Conventions referred to this subject (i.e. 2138 and 182) and various ILO Declarations (i.e. 1998 and 2008)

The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), a programme of the International Labour Organization, is operational in over 80 countries. Its objective is the effective abolition of child labour, assisting member States in designing and implementing policies and programmes to prevent and eliminate child labour. IPEC works to enhance the awareness of member States, workers' and employers' organizations, the international community and a wide range of actors about the problem of child labour. It assists countries in implementing international labour standards on child labour and in taking the necessary comprehensive and integrated measures for sustained and effective action. The National Action Plan acts as the political frameworks that encompass the whole range of activities oriented to the elimination of child labour.

IPEC delivers technical and operational support to countries through its projects under integrated complementary strategies to target child labour:

* Legal framework and enforcement
* National capacities development, policies and mainstreaming
* Supporting the social partners in the “real economy”
* Targeted direct action (i.e. livelihoods schemes and social services)
* Evaluation and Impact Assessment
* Research
* Data collection and analysis
* External partnerships
* Advocacy, awareness raising and social mobilisation

4. **Reflection on IPEC evaluation in Latin America**

In this section, we will discuss some elements that influence the independent mid-term and final evaluation processes, as per IPEC recent experience. It is important to remark that, while we have chosen those factors that have been identified in the IPEC-EIA experience in Latin America; these are not necessarily unique to this region.

1. **Various grades of participation and understanding on the active involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process** (preparation, implementation, sharing of analysis, implementation of results)

As explained earlier, project stakeholders (in its more ample term) views have several opportunities to be heard before, during and after the evaluation is implemented by the independent evaluation team.

* Evaluation preparation phase

Regarding the preparation phase (inputs for TORs and review of draft TORs), it is interested to note that this is very appreciated by diverse stakeholders. On one hand, the consultation itself is value for some of them. On the other hand, it provides an opportunity to EIA to assure that views from all are considered.

While a legitimate process, it is clear from some of the comments received that some stakeholders are not well prepared to respond to the request. For example, the feedback about the evaluation is interpreted as an opportunity to request more material support or expansion of the project.

Regarding participation in the review of the draft version of the report comments are more limited. Usually they are limited to the donor, IPEC and very few national stakeholders. Those comments are more regarding clarification on some figure or date of a fact. In any case, there is a different perspective in government staff from more developed countries in the region (i.e. Brazil and Mexico) in which case their views are more analytical, even though still defensive (i.e. to assure the role of the office is considered in a positive manner).

There is a potential explanation or the absence of critical comments during the review of the draft report. Conclusions and recommendations are a ratification of what the project key stakeholders had in mind. So, the evaluation acts as a “validation” process. Hence, as there was agreement, no major comments are issued.

Hence, to promote participation from all stakeholders, special care should be taken in building capacities in evaluation culture; in particular clarifying what is an evaluation and the type of inputs that are requested.

This issue can be tackled through two ways: first place, by enhancing each actor evaluation process and objectives, working with stakeholders organizing them by subgroups (i.e. workers, local and community-based organizations, ONGs, etc.); and second, by working beyond an institution, or an evaluation process, to enhance an evaluation culture in the society.

Of course, these two entry points are not mutually excluded. It is clear that in the region, lot more is needed in terms of systematic promotion of evaluation culture. Having said that, it is also positive that several efforts are underway and there is an improvement in the evaluation culture in the region from 10 years ago.

* Implementation of recommendations

The evaluation report produces a number of recommendations[[8]](#footnote-8) that are shared through the circulation of the draft and final versions of the report. In addition, ILO requests that management produces a Management response, including actions by other stakeholders (even though ILO can not be accountable for them, the issue is to facilitate that these recommendations are considered by others).

Moreover, the implementation or adjustment of recommendations should be owned by national stakeholders, as project structures are temporal by default. To contribute to this points project evaluations are trying to include a as part of the process a post evaluation workshop with national and local stakeholders. This workshop will be lead by the national government representative, with project support. Its purpose is to discuss recommendations implementation, without the presence of the evaluators.

* **Some general observations**

This point is very relevant also regarding accountability and power. As the evaluation will communicate and validate points of view through its conclusions and recommendations, the possibility of all stakeholders to express the interest is central. As we have seen above, some actors could miss the opportunity. There is the need to adapt methodologies that make them inclusive from the evaluation preparation phase until analysis of recommendations.

**b) Difficulties to capture the project development and results from government stakeholders due to their high turnover**

Another element that can be seen as a serious obstacle for mid-term and final evaluations effectiveness is the high turnover in government staff. This turnover limits the data collection process in various ways. The evaluation team has to interview the old and current staff, as many times the current staff is not aware of relevant points as it s too new, or transference of information and functions was not fluid. The information may not be completed, if the former staff is not available. The former staff cannot participate in the stakeholders’ workshop where the findings are validated. There is a time issue (more time has to be invested in collecting information) and some information can be unavailable.

This is probably a factor that we have to live with, but that has to be carefully considered in selecting persons to interview, schedule of the evaluation and how to present the data in the evaluation report. This reminds that the evaluation is not only a technical process, but also a political one.

Additionally projects could incorporate as part of their M&E system, more strong systematization activities, interviewing the officer that will leave a key position in government. This documentation will serve for the internal M&E and for the independent evaluations.

**c) Projects have had limited capacities to demonstrate credible and rigorous evidence of outcomes and impacts**

There is a point that is external to the independent evaluation process, but that has direct consequences for the quality and credibility of the evaluation report.

In the last 10 years, there has been an increasingly discussion about what constitute credible evidence. This is not the space to enter into this discussion. But, it is clear that an evaluation has to provide a judgement of the achievement (or likely achievement for mid term evaluations) of project results at outcome and impact level.

Theory-based approach evaluations have been used in IPEC to establish judgement by evaluators. In terms of techniques and sources, basically a triangulation of sources and techniques has been the way to strengthen validity of conclusions.

This approach is methodologically valid, but not necessary all key stakeholders find it enough solid to named credible. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the availability of data (i.e. more comprehensive data to be collected) that can facilitate the independent evaluation to generate conclusions that are considerate credible for all that have to feel satisfied with it.

IPEC, with EIA technical advice, has been developed since 2011 the Integrated/Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (IMES or CMES) that has as one of its purposes to contribute to credible evaluations through provide systematic data collected in a qualitative and quantitative rigorous manner to demonstrate results at outcome and impact level[[9]](#footnote-9).

In Latin America IPEC is implementing the IMES in two projects: one in El Salvador (that includes direct interventions on the field and work in policy level) and one in Ecuador and Panama (working only at policy level, as another project under the same donor implements a service delivery project).

**d) A particular methodology to evaluate multi-country projects needs to be developed from the project design (including estimating a specific budget), as this is a more complex project**

At global level, as well as in Latin America, IPEC has been developing and rolling out multi-country projects or programmes. There is a trend in some donors to move to this type of projects. This could be due to search for increase efficiency and increase impact, to promote scalability in a quick manner etc. In any case this implies more complex projects to evaluate through one independent evaluation.

This element has not been internalised by donors. Same rules than for country-based projects are applying when evaluations would require more staff and time (i.e. multicounty meetings, multilingual evaluations, etc.)

While models that combine country visits with country and regional stakeholders meeting have been considered, it has been clear that the evaluation approach should be lot more integrated in terms of the covered countries and the institutional framework of one project-various country. The evaluation of this kind of projects have demonstrated that the current budget rule in ILO (2% of the budget is allocated to independent evaluations) cannot be sufficient.

This is an area that needs to be re-thought from the project design to anticipate the evaluation model, in coordination with project regarding the IMES and organization of the mid-term and final evaluations.

**5. Conclusions**

1. **Not all stakeholders have a good understanding of what is an evaluation process and how their voices can be heard; there are opportunities in the preparation, implementation, and reporting, and even post reporting phases. But still more support is required to build an evaluation culture in all stakeholders, to guarantee inclusion of all voices during the whole process.**

This point is linked to accountability and power. There is the need to adapt methodologies that make all stakeholders more included, from the evaluation preparation phase until analysis of recommendations. The key point is to increase critical thinking linked to concrete realities, implemented projects.

1. **There are difficulties to capture the project development and results from government stakeholders due to their high turnover**

This is probably a factor that we have to live and carefully planned taking it on account. This reminds that the evaluation is not only a technical process, but also a political one.

1. **Projects have had limited capacities to demonstrate credible and rigorous evidence of outcomes and impacts**

This point is external to the independent evaluation process, but that has direct consequences for the quality and credibility of the evaluation report.

To answer this concerns IPEC, with EIA technical advice, has been developed since 2011 the Integrated/Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (IMES or CMES) at project level.

1. **A particular methodology to evaluate multi-country projects needs to be developed from the project design (including estimating a specific budget), as this is a more complex project that country based one.**

1. This document does not represent necessarily the ILO-IPEC view. I would like to thank, in particular, the critical review of Peter Wichmand, Head of EIA-ILO-IPEC. As usual, the paper is our solely responsibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Senior Evaluation Officer ([furman@ilo.org](mailto:furman@ilo.org)) at the Evaluation and Impact Assessment section, the evaluation function of ILO-IPEC. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kushner S. Et Rotondo E. Ed. 2012 Evaluation Voices from Latin America, New Directions for Evaluation, San Francisco Jossey Bass & AEA. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://noticiasrelac.ning.com/group/evaluar-desde-latinoamerica?commentId=3713302%3AComment%3A38046&xg_source=msg_com_group> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See footnote 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Mid-term and final evaluations of projects developed in the following countries are considered: Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Paraguay [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This section comes from www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. It is recommended to the evaluation team to focus in a maximum of 12 key recommendations to facilitate focus on central issues when recommendations to be operationalized. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In this 2013 AEA Conference on Saturday 19th, 10:45-11:30, [↑](#footnote-ref-9)