



Management Response to the Midterm External Evaluation of the joint WSM/CM-MC, ACV-CSCi, BIS-MSI programme 2022-2026 on decent work and the right to social protection

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The midterm evaluation assesses the impact of shrinking civic space on the joint programme WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI 2022-2026 concerning decent work and the right to social protection. The purpose of this midterm evaluation is twofold: (1) joint learning and (2) joint decision-making. The evaluation focuses on the question: are the programme objectives still achievable in the changing context (i.e. shrinking civic space) ? It examines the validity of the first assumption in the Theory of Change (ToC) under changing socio-political contexts.

Although the joint WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI 2022-2026 programme covers many countries and regions in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia, the scope of this evaluation includes the following countries for WSM: Belgium, Peru, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Indonesia and Benin. For ACV-CSCi, data were collected in Brazil, the Philippines, Indonesia and the DRC, with limited online interviews in Haiti and Niger. For BIS-MSI, online interviews were conducted in Burkina Faso and Burundi. This brings the total number of countries covered by this evaluation to 11.

At the level of the partners in the joint programme, we will take account of the **validation of the joint programme's assumption, which recognises that trade unions and social movements play an essential key role in inclusive and sustainable governance and for a democratic society**. The 'shrinking space' context is a key element to be taken into account in the construction of the new 2027-2031 joint programme and with the Belgian Coordination Platform for Decent Work. In Focus Up's view, this context further confirms the importance of supporting trade unions and social movements in building democratic governance with political and economic players.

To achieve this conclusion, the **new ToC 27-31 of the WSM, LCM-ANMC, ACV-CSC and BIS-MSI joint programme** will strategically integrate, with the support of HIVA, the lessons and achievements of the midterm evaluation (including adaptation to the context and enhanced risk management).

The FocusUp report highlights the fact that civil society makes a counterbalance and really makes a difference. The report shows that despite the difficult context (which is not new) partners carry out relevant strategies to address the risk of shrinking space. This is a confirmation that we need to continue enhancing the key role of civil society. As the next step in the evaluation process, this managerial response seeks to explore how strategies identified in diverse national settings can be consolidated and systematized to strengthen the resilience and effectiveness of partner organisations (in Belgium and in the continents). The report represents also a momentum in the joint programme, highlights the seriousness of shrinking civic space trends, not only for decent work actors but for civil society as a whole. That is why WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI will look for opportunities for sharing the MTE results with the Belgian cooperation sector and other strategic allies and, by doing so, try to add another building block to the defence of democracy.

Recommendations	Agree or disagree	Management Response: If “Agree”, actions for integration. If “Disagree”, reason for rejecting the recommendation.
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p><i>CSOs including trade unions, which contribute to democratic governance, are the only organizations that still offer a counterweight to authoritarian tendencies and shrinking civic spaces. As this report has shown, they have developed strategies to still achieve their objectives. It is therefore important to continue international support through partnerships/programs with CSOs including trade unions</i></p>	Agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI strongly agree with this recommendation, noting the chapter 8 on the success stories, CSOs including Trade Union have concretely proven their role and contribution to counterweight the troublesome constatation of the FocusUp midterm evaluation that authoritarian tendencies and shrinking civic spaces are posing a real and present danger in our fight for social justice and equality. WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI confirm the continuity of the joint DGD 22-26 programme and the strengthening in the new joint DGD 27-31 programme of strategies to support the role of civil society actors in sustainable inclusive governance and within the context of shrinking civic space. WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI continue to strengthen the support for civil society by working towards offering additional support and collaboration opportunities to partner organisations at national, continental and international levels, in terms of mutual learning, financial support, networking and building alliances.
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p><i>One of the strategies of CSOs including trade unions was to continue to strengthen their internal capacities, governance and organizational strength. It is therefore important to continue (and even enlarge) programmes that support capacity and organisational strengthening.</i></p>	Agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI strongly agree with this recommendation. Taking the examples put forward in the FocusUp midterm evaluation of how CSOs including Trade Union have implemented a mix of relevant strategies to weigh significantly in on the agenda setting on different levels, it has been validated that capacity and organisational strengthening are needed to achieve this. Mutual organisational capacity development efforts by WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI and their partner organisations will be included as a key principle in the new ToC 2027-2031 and operationalised through pathways of change that enable civil society actors to achieve the results and impact of the programme. WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI point out that this recommendation may be implemented in support to recommendations n°6 (production for evidence-based advocacy) and n°8 (use of data-driven methodologies for policy implementation and monitoring).

<p>Recommendation 3 <i>Continue to strengthen strategic (international) coalitions and (international) partnerships.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to support the partnership with key partners in the partner countries to strengthen legitimacy, negotiation power and increase international visibility. International partnerships can protect the CSOs including the TU's and their leaders and activists of being isolated or left behind when repressed/attacked by governments and employers. ➤ Continue and strengthen the cooperation with ITUC, incl. TUDCN and ITUC's regional organizations. ➤ Importance to use ILO's juridical instruments to continue putting pressure on governments to respect labor rights (ILO's Conventions, ILC's Committee on the Application of Standards, etc.) ➤ Continue to support and strengthen the INSP!R networks 	<p>Agree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI agree with this recommendation, underlying the current pressure on multilateralism and international cooperation. Even though the 3 core principles of inclusiveness, equality and solidarity are not always respected within these channels, participating in strategic international coalition and partnerships is a key strategy to fight the root causes of instability (poverty and inequality). The agenda of several international organisations is closely related to the thematic areas on which we focus our international partnerships. They provide not only with international legal frameworks (like ILO's labour rights standard setting), but also with a setting to strengthen policy coherence at international, regional (continental) and national levels. Furthermore, strategic international collaborations provide opportunities to better address the interconnectedness of humanitarian, development, and peace efforts in crisis-affected areas (triple nexus). Beside this, CSOs including Trade Unions have a longstanding approach to developing strategies, including cooperations at international level (like ILO, ITUC, INSP!R, AIM) to develop a social or other forms of institutionalized dialogue with the economic and public actors with the aim at countering challenges like authoritarian tendencies and shrinking civic spaces (see recommendation 1). In this context, international solidarity has proven to play a crucial role for social movement, particularly through the public and collective coordinated denunciation of acts of repression. The building principle of the next programme (ToC) will continue to be 'actor-based' and to take into account the various strategic stakeholders.
<p>Recommendation 4 <i>The shrinking civic space (level 1) could be included as important risk for the implementation of the programme. Risk and Risk management (strategies), for each of the partner countries and partners should be a key point of attention in the full programme cycle.</i></p>	<p>Agree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI agree with this recommendation, while emphasizing that most of it is already implemented: Shrinking civic space risks are included as important political risks for the implementation of the 2022-26 programme and are monitored on a regular basis. Nevertheless, the worsened shrinking civic space underlined by the midterm evaluation should be taken up as a key contextual evolution to be addressed in the next programme, and will be at the centre of building our strategies to counterbalance the negative evolutions of inclusive governance, with the aim to ensure the achievement of the next programme's objectives and their sustainability.
<p>Recommendation 5 <i>Strengthen decentralized and local approaches to promote social and institutionalized dialogue and continue to work on national levels (two-level approach).</i></p>	<p>Agree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI agree that the need to work on different level enhances the success rate of CSOs including Trade Union weighing in on the agenda setting and contributing to promote the 4 pillars of the ILO Decent work agenda. From experience we have learned that in fragile context, a one size fits all strategy does not apply. We would like to stress the importance of maintaining the well-balanced dynamic between a decentralized/local and national

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Promote local-level engagement of organizations to foster social / institutionalized dialogue where local governments are more open to discussion.</i> ➤ <i>Support the capacity building of local leaders through the decentralization of training, empowering them to engage with local communities, companies or governmental bodies.</i> ➤ <i>Develop context-specific advocacy strategies, by promoting direct engagement with local employers for sector-specific agreements.</i> 		<p>(two-level) approached. Local-level actions, although targeted, can generate actions with a positive multiplying effect at the national level, inspiring broader reforms and strengthening the coherence of public policies. Trade Unions for example are national organisations, representing their members at local, company, sector, national and international levels, advocating for labour legislation that should preferably have an impact at all this levels - while striving for a LNOB principle. WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI complement the third bullet point of the recommendation by adding “local authorities” to the “local employers” as relevant actors to be directly engaged with for sector-specific agreements. This is particularly important when dealing with informal sectors of the economy.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 <i>Enhance research production for evidence-based advocacy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Encourage collaboration with universities and research institutions from global South and global North to generate gender sensitive evidence and data for social dialogue, and other forms of institutionalized dialogue and policy influence.</i> ➤ <i>Encourage and support the production and dissemination of technical studies that are innovative and unprecedented to support negotiation (social dialogue) and advocacy efforts.</i> ➤ <i>Support the collection of data to build surveys and questionnaires, especially in countries where access to data is difficult or data is unreliable.</i> 	<p>Partially agree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI agree that providing data supported evidence base cases and outcomes not only validates the work we do towards implementing the ILO DW agenda and eradicating the root causes of poverty and inequality, but also strengthens the professionalism, legitimacy and added value of negotiation whether it takes place through social dialogue or other forms of institutionalized dialogue. But, to be able to live up to the recommendation on the “support the production and dissemination of technical studies”, the cost and feasibility of this kind of investment during times of austerity will need to be assessed. WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI point out that there is a close link between this recommendation and recommendation n°2 and n°8. • This approach is already developed by some of partner organisations of the 2022-26 programme, but to be further supported in the programme 2027-31 according to financial feasibility, and may be facilitated towards joint research actions, for example with networks that also have this expertise, such as WIEGO, the ITUC/TUDCN, INSP!R, AIM etc. • Collection of data would best be done by specialised entities at national/local level.
<p>Recommendation 7 <i>Boost digital and media strategies for advocacy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Review the strategy of digital platforms (e.g. google workspace, Microsoft environment) in each country participating in the programme/intervention, to tailor it to country’s contexts, aiming to increase public awareness and support for CSOs including trade unions. Consider per</i> 	<p>Partially agree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI partially agrees with this recommendation aimed at boosting digital and media strategies for advocacy. It is globally relevant, but the first bullet point mixes two aspects that needs to be addressed more specifically and for both of which there is a strong concern to tailor them “to country’s contexts” and “per partner, per country” needs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Secure data and communication from government and private actors' surveillance: review the strategy of digital platforms (e.g. google workspace, Microsoft environment) in each country participating in the programme/intervention. This aspect goes beyond pure advocacy

<p><i>partner, per country whether it is necessary to secure data and communications so that they are protected from government surveillance and surveillance from private actors (e.g. proton.me and Threema)</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Support partners to develop social & solidarity economy media initiatives and media partnerships to counter misinformation and fake news, combating this practice and helping to increase the transparency of institutions.</i></p>		<p>considerations and tackles a critical point of organisational management of CSOs including trade unions. Moving from digital platforms like Google workspace or Microsoft environment to others (e.g. proton.me and Threema) represents a huge and long-term challenge that engages each organisation political autonomy and financial capacity. The programme 27-31 could indeed encourage a strategic reflection among all programme's partner (including WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI), but potential implementation of such kind of changes at partner organisations level will not be affordable according to budget constraints.</p> <p>b. Increase public awareness and support for CSOs including trade unions through digital and media strategies: using digital and media tools to increase public awareness and support for CSOs including trade unions is indeed a relevant strategy to strengthen the effectiveness of their political actions (e.g. social or other forms of institutionalized dialogue, advocacy, etc.). Nevertheless, this might not be the case in all national contexts, depending on the access of public opinions to digital and media materials. Therefore, this cannot be considered a one size fits all priority for all partner organisations.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p><i>Strengthen the role of CSOs including trade unions in policy implementation and monitoring.</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Support the use of data-driven methodologies for conducting social audits and tracking governance commitments.</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Support the development of policy-tracking dashboards to ensure government accountability on policy implementation and monitoring.</i></p> <p>➤ <i>Continue to support CSOs including trade unions in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of labor rights frameworks, with focus on vulnerable groups (women and youth for example).</i></p>	<p>Partially agree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI agree to the importance of CSOs including Trade Unions having a strong role in policy implementation and monitoring, but this however is a costly and timely exercise that requires not only human investments but also IT skills, where sourcing of for example relevant software programs can, not only have a huge initial investment cost but also the a regularly maintenance cost, knowing that data is most relevant if it is recent and can be applied to the contextual actuality. As for recommendation 7, considering constraints on financial, human and technical resources available, this cannot be considered a one-size-fits-all priority for all partner organisations. Once again, WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI point out that there is a close link between the recommendations 8, 2 and 6. For recommendation 8 to be put into action there is a need for strong, capacitated partners and (evidence based) data collection.

<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p><i>Continue and deepen the HRDD/CSDDD approach in Belgium and the continents and reflect on using it as a model for internationalization supporting the role of CSO's and TU's</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to lobby for accurate implementation HRDD/CSDDD at Belgian and European level. ➤ Develop capacities on HRDD (Human Rights Due Diligence) /CSDDD (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive) at the Belgian level and all stakeholders (CSOs including TU) at continental level. ➤ Encourage linkage, (international) networking among stakeholders in the global value chains. 	<p>Agree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The engagement of WSM, ANMC-LCM and ACV-CSC will indeed need to be strengthened through a renewed internationalisation strategy for the programme 2027-31, to be designed and carried out in cooperation with ACV-CSCi, with a view to fostering the integration of the continental (Africa, Latin America, and Asia) and the Belgian component of the programme. HRDD/CSDDD approach for global value chains will be a reference model to develop this renewed strategy, while thematically this strategy may be broaden to include other issues as well, depending on the priorities identified with relevant stakeholders during the identification phase of the programme 2027-31 (e.g. care economy).
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Recommendation 1		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
<p>1.1 In developing the new joint programme 2027-2031, special attention will be taken by WSM, ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi and BIS-MSI to incorporate recommendation 1 in the design of our joint theory of change. The pathways of change should/will reflect our contribution to democratic governance through building partnership programs and collaborations.</p>	<p>2025-2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme Programme cell of each organisation

Recommendation 2		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
<p>2.1 Reflection on strategies for strengthening partners' internal capacities, governance and organizational strength, will take place in the joint programme technical PMEAL cell to insure an alignment with global PMEAL approach as to be put forward by the next programme joint ToC.</p> <p>a. The WSM Capacity Development approach is based on the principle of 'learning by acting together'. The approach will evolve towards mutual capacity development involving partners from all continents (including Belgium).</p> <p>b. For trade unions, the mutual capacity building we will work on together with our partner organisations will evolve, using in particular the TUOC developed by ITUC.</p>	<p>2026-2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme PMEAL cell of each organisation

Recommendation 3		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
3.1 The main strategic stakeholders will be taken into account in the TOC of the new 2027-2031 programme, e.g. DGD, EU, Enabel, ITUC-Global, ILO, AIM... etc... as it is for the current joint programme 2022-2026.	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme Programme cell of each organisation
3.2 The Decent Work Agenda (use of the normative framework) will remain the key reference framework in the joint programme and the new 2027-2031 Decent Work CCS and makes it possible to use the ILO's normative framework to monitor actions, particularly in relation to the government and employers.	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme Programme cell of each organisation Coordination Platform Decent Work
3.3 The building principle of the programme (ToC) will, as is for the current joint programme 2022-2026, continue to be 'actor-based' and will take into account the various strategic stakeholders.	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme Programme cell of each organisation

Recommendation 4		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
4.1 Shrinking civic space should (will) be taken up as a key point to monitor and building our strategies to counter weigh. This will therefore be taken up by WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi & BIS-MSI in our internal risk management processes, with special attention to our risk registers. The process of adapting to risk is continuous (not just in terms of planning) and takes place at the level of national and international partners and networks.	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme Programme cell of each organisation Coordination Platform Decent Work
4.2 Mitigation actions will be refined in the 2027-2031 programme, with actions differentiated according to context and national or continental level.	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme
4.3 The concept of resilience for partner organisations facing the risks of shrinking civic space will be introduced in the next programme as a quality marker to assess the capacity and organisational strengthening (see recommendation n°2).	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme

Recommendation 5		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
<p>5.1 In both the development and implementation of our interventions for 2027-2031, the interlinkage between national and local level (two-level approach) decisions/policies will be analysed, taking care that no negative correlation occurs between the two-levels.</p> <p>For example: Within the framework of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC), pursue advocacy and training at the national level while continuing to negotiate with FOSAs (<i>formation sanitaire</i>) at the local level (agreement between mutual health organizations and FOSAs). The same logic can apply, in some national contexts, to the trade union work, for example on minimum wage negotiation.</p>	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme

Recommendation 6		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
<p>6.1 The new programme will develop knowledge management to support evidence-based advocacy and negotiations (social dialogue and other forms of institutionalized dialogue) based on the collection of 'good practices' (for example, INSP!R's monitoring unit or the follow-up and documentation of urgent appeals, ITUC's monitoring on Worker Rights' violations, case studies on transition from informal to formal economy at the ILO).</p>	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme The continental cells WSM-BSD team
<p>6.2 Objective data will be used to refine the strategies for each of the partner countries and partners for responding to the shrinking space (continuation of the midterm evaluation), as a contribution to recommendation n°4 (inclusion of shrinking civic space (level 1) as important point of attention for Risk and Risk management strategies). We will continue developing links with academic institutions/research centres/independent researchers in the Global south.</p>	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme

Recommendation 7		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
<p>7.1. Reflect on a potential strategy of the Joint programme actors and partner organizations for raising awareness on the necessity to secure the use of Digital platforms (those who are really sensitive – risk management), including on feasibility issues (budget and HR available).</p>	2026-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme
<p>7.2 The possibility of a specific mapping of each partner's (digital and media) need and good practices in the field of securing data and communication from government and private actors' surveillance shall be investigated. This exercise should at least lead to a joint learning trajectory based on an exchange of experiences and good practices among programme's partners.</p>	2026-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme

7.3 Support the partners who define it as a priority need to develop social & solidarity economy media initiatives and media partnerships to counter misinformation and fake news, combating this practice and helping to increase the transparency of institutions and spread these good practices within the programme.	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme • WSM-BSD
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Recommendation 8		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
8.1 The role of the CSOs will be strengthened through methodologies to support their contribution to the policy implementation and policy-tracking cycle. For example, INSP!R will set up a monitoring unit on the right to social protection at local and global level (in Nepal and Senegal). This type of support can also be provided to partners with the support of ITUC, RIPESS and WIEGO, depending on their thematic and methodological expertise.	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme
8.2 The monitoring of the labour rights framework, will be strengthened via participation in the work and processes of the ILO and other UN and EU bodies, and through synergies within inter-union cooperation at national level and ITUC at regional level.	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme

Recommendation 9		
Key action(s)	Timing	People in charge
9.1 The internationalisation approach will be included in the vision of the 2027-2031 programme by articulating actions based on a thematic approach between Africa, Asia, Latin America and Belgium/Europe. The process of building the new programme is part of the internationalisation process.	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme • WSM/ ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi
9.2 The HRDD theme will be monitored along with other themes that will be implemented in line with the internationalisation strategy of WSM/ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi.	2027-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical PMEAL cell of the joint programme • WSM/ ANMC-LCM, ACV-CSCi