



The Millennium Declaration, the MDGs and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda: Overview

The goal of **Decent Work for All** and the pledges in the **Millennium Declaration** go hand in hand. In this information folder, one brief for each of the eight **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) shows how the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, in a context of fair globalization, is essential for achieving these shared aims.

The briefs contain references [in brackets] and links to much more information about how decent and productive employment, social protection, rights at work and dialogue contribute to the MDGs. They are available in English, French and Spanish.

Decent Work Agenda for growth with equity

The **ILO Decent Work Agenda** strives for economic growth with equity through a coherent blend of social and economic goals. It has four elements:

Employment – the principal route out of poverty is productive work

Rights – without them, men and women will not be empowered to escape from poverty

Protection – social protection safeguards against poverty

Dialogue – the participation of employers' and workers' organizations in shaping government policy for poverty reduction is key.

The ILO's role and partners

Together with partners, the ILO's work aims at the "more peaceful, prosperous and just world" envisaged in the Millennium Declaration. It does this through policy advice, information dissemination, research, statistics, technical assistance, capacity building, standards and advocacy.

The ILO works closely with other multilateral organizations and civil society in support of the Millennium Declaration. The ILO's structure – comprising representatives of employers and workers as well as governments – brings together **vital allies** in the fight against poverty. Their participation in crafting a poverty reduction strategy buttresses its sustainability.

The ILO's unique experience in adopting international **labour standards through dialogue** involving governments, employers and workers has produced universal social norms, and methods of assisting in and monitoring their implementation. These standards form part of international human rights law and national legal systems.

The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs

The MDGs are based on the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000). The Declaration focuses on development and poverty eradication through peace and security, values and human rights, democracy and good governance. It identifies the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. Through it, UN Member States pledge to ensure greater coherence in policies across the international system. The Declaration builds on earlier international commitments, such as productive and freely chosen employment (World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995).

Progress towards the MDGs

Priorities relating to MDGs are increasingly mirrored in national poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) and in national budgets. The ILO stresses the importance of **country ownership** and of customizing the MDGs to national circumstances. For growth with equity, **decent employment and incomes** must be at the heart of economic and social policy.

The MDGs set time-bound and measurable targets. Regular reporting on progress towards targets set under each MDG occurs at the national, regional and international levels. Within the UN system, the ILO takes the lead in reporting on trends concerning –

- the rate of women's non-agricultural wage employment – Indicator 11, under Goal 3 on Gender Equality.
- the unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24 – Indicator 45, linked to Target 16, under Goal 8 on Cooperation for Development.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations, founded in 1919. It has 178 Member States.

"Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere."
ILO Constitution

The 8 MDGs

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

"Decent jobs that provide income empower the poor, especially women and younger people."

In larger freedom, United Nations Secretary-General's 2005 report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.



Decent Work and the Millennium Development Goals

With other UN agencies, the ILO is working towards improved indicators for employment, including its informal dimension.

Decent work and poverty reduction

The briefs in this folder illustrate how the ILO Decent Work Agenda contributes to all 8 MDGs in the global fight against poverty.

Goal 1 – halving the proportion of the world's people with income of under one dollar a day – and **Goal 8** – cooperation for development – are overarching goals towards poverty reduction. They, along with **Goal 7** on sustainable development, rely on decent work for their attainment.

Achieving **Goal 3** on gender equality is a condition for meeting all the MDGs. The brief on MDG 3 explains how gender mainstreaming is embedded in all of the ILO's work.

Decent work for parents, smooth school to work transition and the elimination of child labour are essential to attain the goal of universal primary education (**Goal 2**).

Social protection contributes directly to the health-related MDGs (**Goals 4, 5 and 6**), and other aspects of the Decent Work Agenda contribute indirectly.

Respect for rights at work sustains progress towards poverty reduction while reinforcing **democracy** and underpinning **peace**. Freedom of association and the elimination of forced labour, child labour and discrimination enable people to free themselves from poverty.

Effective **dialogue** between government, employers' and workers' organizations supports inclusive policy reform. Institutions that foster social dialogue support improved governance and social **stability** -- necessary conditions for achieving all of the MDGs.

Needed: A fair globalization

The Millennium Declaration notes that "the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people." On their own, neither the MDGs nor the elements of the Decent Work Agenda are sufficient to implement the Millennium Declaration.

"Decent work for all should be made a global goal and pursued through more coherent policy within the multilateral system." World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2004).

With the political will to make the Millennium Declaration, a fair globalization and decent work a reality, poverty *can* be vanquished.

"The guarantee of fundamental principles and rights at work ... enables the persons concerned to claim freely and on the basis of equality of opportunity their fair share of the wealth which they have helped to generate, and to achieve fully their human potential."

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998.

ILO, 4 route des Morillons, 1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland – <http://www.ilo.org/>