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**Decent Work: Universality and
Diversity**

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Decent Work: Universality and Diversity

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Preface

This Discussion Paper is part of a set of special studies on Decent Work commissioned under the Education and Outreach Programme of the International Institute of Labour Studies. The Programme seeks to develop pedagogical materials on social and labour policies for the promotion of Decent Work. The project output is addressed to officials in government, trade unions and employers' organizations as well as to the academic and policy community interested in the well-being of all in the world of work.

The special studies focus on each of the four dimensions of Decent Work: Rights at Work, Employment, Social Protection and Social Dialogue. Together they explore in depth the concepts, typologies and indicators pertaining to the different dimensions of Decent Work. For the purpose of preparing the studies, the Institute has secured the services of scholars with specialization and teaching experience in the core disciplines of the ILO.

The Institute wishes to thank Dharam Ghai for having prepared the present paper dealing with Decent Work: Universality and Diversity. Other Discussion Papers brought out under the series are by Martin Godfrey: *The Employment Dimensions of Decent Work*, Sarosh Kuruvilla: *Social Dialogue for Decent Work* and Ashwani Saith: *Social Protection: A Development Perspective* and Bob Hepple: *Rights at Work*.

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Introduction

The ILO Director-General Juan Somavia introduced the concept of decent work, in his first report to the International Labour Conference in June 1999, in the following words:

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human rights (ILO, 1999, p.3).

Since its formulation in 1999, ILO has undertaken a considerable number of conceptual, empirical and operational studies on the decent work paradigm. The studies have comprised an elaboration of models, strategies and policies; the development of indicators and indices on decent work; empirical investigation of interrelationships among different components of decent work; and promotion of decent work approaches at the country level.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an analytical introduction to the concept and substance of decent work. It draws upon the research carried out by ILO to address a number of questions that are often raised in discussions on decent work. What is the intellectual contribution of the decent work paradigm in the ILO context? Is the concept of decent work applicable only to countries with a certain economic structure and institutional configuration, or is it valid across countries with different development levels, economic structures and socio-economic institutions? Can the different country situations be grouped into typologies or models of decent work sharing common characteristics?

What are the goals and main features of the various dimensions of decent work? Are the different components interrelated, and if so, in what ways? Is there an appropriate sequencing of steps that need to be taken to achieve the goals of decent work? Is it possible to develop indicators and map the performance of decent work in different countries? It is of course not possible to give definitive answers to all these questions but their discussion illuminates some crucial dimensions of the goals and strategies of decent work.

Two cross-cutting themes also receive some attention in the paper. The first concerns the ways in which gender issues fit into the concept and policies of decent work. The second relates to how accelerating globalization in the last two decades affects efforts to attain the objectives of decent work.

The structure of the paper reflects the sequence of issues raised above. The discussion on the intellectual contribution of the decent work paradigm is followed by a consideration of the universality of its goals and a typology of models of decent work. The paper then discusses the goals and features of the four decent work components namely, rights at work, employment, social security and social dialogue. This leads to an analysis of the interrelationships among the decent work components. The paper concludes with a discussion of indicators and measures of decent work performance.

1. The contribution of the decent work concept

The decent work concept reflects both continuity and innovation in ILO thinking on work-related issues. At a minimum, it may be regarded as a device to capture in a simple and succinct manner the essence of ILO's mission and areas of work. Since its foundation in 1919, ILO has

The author is indebted to A. V. Jose for detailed comments on an earlier draft. Thanks are also due to Philippe Egger and Eddy Lee for their suggestions.

focused its efforts on promoting rights at work, employment, social security and industrial relations. This is reflected not only in its thematic reports, policy advice, training and operational activities, but most of all in the numerous Conventions and Recommendations the Organization has promulgated over the past 85 years. These labour standards provide the legislative framework for policies relating to all four components of decent work in countries around the world.

But the intellectual contribution of decent work goes beyond giving an elegant expression to ILO's objectives and areas of work. Substantively, it lies above all in providing a unified framework for its major areas of work. Without this framework, it is all too easy and tempting to treat ILO efforts in the four areas in a separate and self-contained manner. This indeed has been the general practice in the functioning of the Office for most of the time. The decent work framework draws attention to the relationships between its different components in at least three distinct ways.

First, it points to the different domains of operation of these components. For instance, rights at work pertain primarily to the domain of norms and legislation, although their implementation depends heavily upon adequate capacity, institutions and resources. Likewise, social dialogue is in the first instance a matter of providing a suitable legislative and institutional infrastructure. In contrast, the achievement of employment and social security objectives requires substantial real resources, in addition to an enabling policy and institutional environment. The different domains of decent work components thus bring together questions relating to rights at work, voice and representation, and human security and employment. Their differential demands on scarce resources are pertinent to the formulation of plans to achieve decent work goals.

Second, the decent work framework exposes and invites an analysis of the complementarities and trade-offs among its different components. For instance, does social security have an adverse effect on the volume of employment? Does social dialogue lead to higher productivity and improved remuneration? Is there a conflict between the quality and quantity of employment? What is the impact of collective bargaining on the volume of employment? The decent work framework seeks to provide policy and institutional options that optimize the synergy among its different components.

Last, the decent work paradigm provokes questions about its universality and particularity. A criticism that has been leveled against ILO's traditional work on standards, employment, social security and industrial relations is that it is based on the model of industrial market economies and is applicable at best only to the formal sectors in other countries, thereby excluding large swathes of their economies and working people. The overall approach and terminology of the decent work framework lends itself more easily to analysis of structural and institutional diversity, thus facilitating a universalistic approach to the world of work. The next section elaborates on this point.

2. *The decent work paradigm*

The decent work paradigm is in principle applicable to all working people in all societies. The objectives of decent work are valid across the full spectrum of institutional and developmental diversity. Working people in all societies desire freedom of association and oppose discrimination, forced labour and child employment in hazardous and harmful situations. They wish to participate through social dialogue in decision-making affecting their work and lives, both at the level of the enterprise and the nation and at regional and global levels. Likewise, all people and all societies desire work in conditions of dignity and safety and with adequate remuneration. Finally, a modicum of social and economic security in work and life is a universal aspiration.

Thus the objectives of decent work are of universal aspiration. But the institutional and policy framework for achieving these objectives must necessarily depend in each country and region on its history and traditions, the level and distribution of resources, the economic and social structure, the stage of development and a host of other specific circumstances. While each country needs to formulate its own decent work policies in the light of these specificities, it may be useful for purposes of discussion to group countries into a few categories whose members share some distinctive socio-economic characteristics.

One such categorization, drawing upon a classification by international agencies, divides countries into three groups or “decent work models”. These may be described as the “classical model” comprising industrialized countries; the “transition model” consisting mainly of countries that have transformed or are in the process of transforming from communism to a market economy; and finally, the “development model” incorporating developing countries. While there is quite considerable diversity within each category, the developing country group is quite exceptional in this respect. It may therefore be more illuminating to divide this group further into semi-industrialized and least developed sub-categories.

From the decent work perspective, the defining features of these models relate to the work status and sectoral distribution of their labour force or working population; the organization of the labour force into trade unions and other structured groups; and public expenditure and social security expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). The full relevance of these socio-economic features will become evident in our discussion on the goals and policies of decent work in the next section.

The classical model countries have a high proportion of their labour force in wage employment (typically 75 to 90 per cent); the great majority of the workforce is found in services (generally between 60 and 80 per cent) and industry (between 10 and 20 per cent). A relatively high proportion of workers are trade union members (typically between 25 and 50 per cent), but this proportion has declined considerably in most countries over the past two to three decades, due in part to the impact of sectoral changes in employment, technological advance and intensifying globalization.

Another feature of these economies is that public expenditure and social security expenditure represent a relatively high proportion of GDP – typically between 35 and 45, and 20 and 30 per cent respectively. But, as with union density, the proportion of overall government and public social expenditure has been declining in recent years in most countries – a reflection of the shift towards the privatization of social security and of budgetary pressures caused, *inter alia*, by growing global economic integration.

The European transition model countries, despite their relatively low per capita incomes, characteristically have a high proportion of their labour force in wage employment (typically between 70 and 90 per cent) and in industry and services (between 60 and 80 per cent). Likewise, a relatively high proportion of the labour force are trade union members (typically between 30 and 50 per cent). These proportions have of course declined sharply with the collapse of communism and are still in a state of flux. Again, we find that in relation to their per capita incomes, the proportion of government and social public expenditure is relatively high (between 30 and 40 per cent and 15 and 25 per cent for most countries). These unusual features of the transition model countries are for the most part legacies of their communist past. As these economies shift further from the communist patterns, they increasingly display features that are more typical of countries in their range of per capita income.

In the development model countries, a higher proportion of the labour force is found in “atypical” work situations: a relatively high proportion work as self-employed or family members, or in the informal sector – typically ranging between 30 and 50 per cent in semi-industrialized economies and 70 and 90 per cent in the least developed countries. The proportion of those in agriculture is also relatively high – in the range of 20 to 40 per cent and 40 to 70 per cent for the two sub-categories. Trade union density (the proportion of the

workforce organized in unions) varies between 5 and 15 per cent, with only a few countries showing much higher proportions. Finally, government and social security expenditures generally constitute a relatively low proportion of GDP – between 20 and 30 per cent and 5 and 10 per cent for the semi-industrialized economies and between 10 and 25 per cent and 2 to 5 per cent for the least developed countries.

Some observers have suggested flexibility of the economy and labour markets as another way of categorizing countries. This criterion cuts across the four-fold classification proposed above. Flexibility refers to the range and extent of regulations pertaining to wages, employment, working conditions, social security, trade unions and collective bargaining, and to the prevalence of resource allocation by administered or quantitative methods. The fewer the government regulations in these domains, the more flexible the economy. In recent decades, there has been a worldwide trend towards liberalization, deregulation and privatization resulting in greater flexibility in national economies. The expansion in the scope and intensity of globalization has been an important contributory factor to this trend. The relevance of the flexibility criterion for decent work, as well as the other socio-economic characteristics reflected in the typology of models proposed above, is brought out in the following section.

3. Goals and features of decent work components

In this section we look at the four components of decent work with regard to their objectives, content and relevance in different country situations and the ways in which they might be promoted.

a) Rights at work

Rights at work constitute the ethical and legal framework for all elements of decent work. Their objective is to ensure that work is associated with dignity, equality, freedom, adequate remuneration, social security and voice, representation and participation for all categories of workers. Rights at work form part of the broader agenda of human rights, which in turn derive from a long tradition with deep philosophic, theological and juridical roots. Human rights have been variously regarded as natural rights deriving from nature, as supernatural with divine ordination, as moral and ethical rooted in humanistic philosophy, and as legal entitlements based on national legislation and international agreements. Their content has also tended to vary according to different schools of thought and ideological trends, evolving from the classical rights to life, liberty and property to a wider notion embracing political, civil, cultural, social and economic rights. The Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights gave a powerful fillip to the human rights movement, endowing it with a universal meaning.

Evolution of rights at work

Rights at work have evolved through various phases in different countries starting with the industrialized world in the nineteenth century. Over time, they have expanded in content and geographical coverage. They now cover both the classical rights of freedom of association, non-discrimination and abolition of forced labour, as well as social and economic rights of collective bargaining, the provision of benefits on cessation of work, adequate remuneration, social security and safety and health at work. These rights resulted from prolonged struggles waged by trade unions, political parties and supportive movements as well as sympathetic individuals. They were facilitated by the establishment of the rule of law, increasing political franchise and related civil and political rights.

Some of the earliest rights related to the freedom to form trade unions, the abolition of forced and child labour, and the prohibition of work for women and children in dangerous and physically demanding occupations. This was the case for instance in the United Kingdom and some other European countries. A social right such as the retirement pension was pioneered by Germany, where it applied in the first instance to state functionaries. In the early twentieth century, and more especially after the Second World War, the social and economic rights expanded rapidly in the industrialized world as well as in communist and developing countries.

Countries have adopted different approaches to the promotion of workers' rights according to their legal traditions and dominant ideologies. In continental Europe with its Roman law tradition, the preference has been for incorporating these rights in constitutions or formal legislation. The Latin American countries have also followed this route to establishing rights at work. In the Anglo-Saxon countries with their common law tradition, emphasis has often been placed on case law and customary law. The state has shown a preference for a legal framework creating conditions for the main parties – workers and employers and their representatives – to conclude agreements on matters of mutual concern, including social and economic rights. Many other countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean influenced by the Anglo-Saxon countries have followed these approaches to establishing workers' rights.

Promotion of rights by international agencies

While the ultimate responsibility for creating and implementing rights at work rests with the national authorities, the international agencies have played an increasingly important role in this area. The UN Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have acted as landmark documents in the struggle for human rights. In addition, a whole series of conventions, norms and declarations on women, children, migrants and indigenous people and on other themes by the UN and specialized agencies, have played a critical role over the past 60 years in shaping the approach and content of human and workers' rights worldwide.

But it is the International Labour Organization, created in 1919, that has had the greatest impact on the corpus of rights at work throughout the world. Its work in this field has been the more effective and realistic because of its unique tripartite structure with its Governing Body consisting of member States and representatives of employers and workers. At its very first session in 1919, the ILO adopted two Conventions relating to child labour and hours of work. Over the past 85 years, the Organization has adopted 185 Conventions and 195 Recommendations covering all the issues of interest to workers and employers. These have included matters relating to employment, wages, hours and conditions of work, social security, industrial relations, multinational enterprises, health and safety at work, and many others. They have also provided protection to vulnerable groups such as migrants, women workers, indigenous people and children against hazardous occupations, exploitation and discrimination. Likewise, many Conventions and Recommendations have been promulgated to lay down standards for specific industries such as transport, maritime, mining, agriculture, textiles, printing, telecommunications and home-based work.

Through its work over the past eight decades, the ILO has developed an impressive body of international labour law. This work has been characterized by a distinctive methodology and process. The first step usually consists of a general discussion on a thematic issue paper prepared by the Office. These discussions form the basis of a draft Convention or Recommendation that is scrutinized carefully by the tripartite constituency and legal experts. After adoption of the labour standard by the Governing Body and the Conference, the Convention or Recommendation must be incorporated into national legislation for it to have legal force. Once a country has ratified a particular labour standard, its compliance becomes subject not only to national judicial processes but also to ILO supervision and surveillance.

The states are required to submit periodic reports on their implementation of labour standards and the aggrieved parties can lodge complaints at the ILO, if in their judgement these standards have been violated. The ILO has established a Committee of Experts to examine the reports and consider the complaints. Separate machinery has been established for the Conventions relating to freedom of association. The ILO also has the possibility of sending experts to independently investigate a situation and report to the Governing Body.

Although there is provision for sanctions in the ILO Constitution in the event of persistent violation of ratified Conventions, this is resorted to only in extreme situations such as the practice of apartheid in South Africa or of forced labour in Myanmar. For the most part, compliance is secured through persuasion, pressure and shame. Thus the process is characterized by three features: achieving consensus through discussion, voluntary assumption of obligations with regard to labour standards, and compliance through persuasion and pressure, with rare recourse to sanctions.

Applicability and implementation of rights at work

Although no formal attempts have been made to rank rights at work by their importance, certain rights have been regarded as fundamental to the well-being of workers. The Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1998 may be considered as a statement of such rights. These relate to freedom of association and collective bargaining, forced and child labour, and discrimination at work. These rights are considered so basic that their acceptance is regarded as a prerequisite of ILO membership. Certainly, they form the core of the rights component of decent work.

Although rights at work embodied in ILO Declarations, Conventions and Recommendations are considered of universal validity and relevance, it is clear that their applicability is conditioned by political systems, economic structures and stages of development. For instance, in communist and authoritarian political systems where power is monopolized by an entity or an individual, it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve freedom of association, embodied for example, in representative and independent trade unions and employers' organizations.

Likewise, most of the rights at work assume an economic system where the bulk of the workers are wage employees. While, as noted above, this situation is approximated in developed countries, the developing and increasingly many transition countries display a more complex picture with a preponderance of workers in the self-employed, informal and home-worker categories. In the same way, some of the workers' rights, especially those pertaining to social security and adequate remuneration, may be more feasible in high income than in middle or low income countries.

The pattern of ratification and implementation of rights at work bears out to some extent the qualifications noted above. In this regard, it should be noted that the ratification of different Conventions is only a very rough index of the achievement of rights at work. The implementation of the provisions of ratified Conventions tends to vary a good deal by countries. While adequacy of resources and of institutional capacity are often the main explanations of such variations, the priority accorded by political authorities to the ratified Conventions, often reflecting the distribution of power among various social and economic groups, is also a key determinant of the performance of different countries.

b) Employment and Work

Employment is a vital component of decent work. Employment in the decent work paradigm refers not just to wage jobs but to work of all kinds – self-employment, wage employment and work from home. It refers to full-time, part-time and casual work and to work done by women,

men and children. For decent work to obtain, certain conditions must be satisfied. There should be adequate employment opportunities for all those who seek work. Work should yield a remuneration (in cash or kind) that meets the essential needs of the worker and the family members.

Work should be freely chosen and there should be no discrimination against any category of workers, such as women, migrants or minorities. Workers should be protected against accidents, unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, and excessively long hours of work. They should have the right to form and join representative and independent associations to represent their interests and engage in collective bargaining and in discussions with employers and government authorities on work-related issues. An essential minimum of social security also forms part of decent work. Some of these attributes of employment are discussed further under rights at work, social security and social dialogue.

Work that meets the above conditions is a source of dignity, satisfaction and fulfilment to workers. It motivates them to give their best efforts and furnishes a sense of participation in matters affecting their livelihood. It provides a propitious foundation for skills enhancement, technological progress and economic growth. It also contributes to harmonious working relations, political stability and the strengthening of democracy.

Diversity of employment situations

The employment situation varies sharply among different groups of countries. Often the major factor determining these differences is the level of development, or per capita income. But other factors can also be important such as the share of public sector expenditure and assets, and the amount and distribution of factor and resource endowments. For instance, countries with large public sectors often have a higher proportion of the labour force in wage employment. The relative importance and distribution of cultivable land and mineral resources can also have an important impact on employment structures, reflected in the relation between labour force and natural resources. For instance, countries where land is abundant and relatively evenly distributed are likely to have a higher proportion of the labour force in self-employment than those where land is scarce and the bulk of it is appropriated by large landlords or plantations.

Customary practices or legal regulations bearing on different sections of the population may affect their labour force participation. For instance, in many countries, social and legal constraints on women often confine them to working from home and reduce their opportunities in wage employment. Similar factors may affect the patterns of work of ethnic minorities or children.

Government economic and labour policies play a central role in influencing the pattern of work opportunities. Policies affecting the rate and pattern of economic growth, labour intensity of production and labour flexibility and mobility have an important impact on work opportunities and their distribution among different types of employment. Higher economic growth focused on labour intensive activities should generate greater employment opportunities than low growth dependent on capital intensive sectors and methods of production.

As noted above, a key difference among countries concerns the distribution of the workforce by status – wage employees, further broken down by formal and informal economy, part-time or full-time, self-employed and family members. Another important dimension relates to the sectoral distribution of employment in agriculture, industry and services.

The factors noted above affect the nature of the employment problem faced by a country. Analytically, one may distinguish between four main types of employment problems, encountered in varying degrees in most countries. The one most often referred to is the problem of open unemployment i.e. of unemployed persons looking for full-time or part-time jobs. This problem is found in all categories of countries – industrialized, transition and developing. Open unemployment gets worse during cyclical downturns, but it also has structural dimensions.

Exceptionally, most industrialized countries experienced nearly three decades of full employment in the post-war period. But in many countries, the open unemployment problem reappeared in the 1970s and in some has persisted over the past two to three decades with only limited periods of low unemployment rates.

Two groups of industrialized countries have been relatively successful in limiting unemployment – those with highly flexible labour markets and meagre unemployment and welfare benefits, and those with a tradition of strong unions, social dialogue and generous income support and welfare provisions. The former are usually characterized by relatively high income inequalities and absolute poverty, while the latter have succeeded in combining relatively egalitarian income distribution with active labour market policies. A third group of industrial countries have limited income inequalities and poverty through generous social security policies but at the cost of high and persistent levels of unemployment.

Many developing and transition countries also suffer from high unemployment rates, often concentrated in urban areas and among the youth. However, in the absence of unemployment benefits and other social security measures, the employment problem often manifests itself in “underemployment” in the informal sector. Unable to get jobs in the organized sector, people are forced to eke out a living in overcrowded petty occupations either working for informal enterprises or setting themselves up as hawkers and providers of casual services. Typically, they have low incomes and little real work.

The third type of employment problem, encountered mostly in poor countries, including the transition economies, is the opposite. In this situation people work for long hours but for extremely low returns, inadequate to meet the essential needs of their families. This is typical of small farmers, rural workers and employees of petty enterprises. Women are often overrepresented in this category. The problem is essentially one of low productivity caused by antiquated technologies and limited skills.

The fourth type of work problem and possibly the most serious, concerns the excessive working hours for home-based women workers. The work load consists not only of household duties – bringing up children, cooking and looking after the sick and the aged – but also of fetching water and wood, and engaging in some income-generating activities within or outside the household to meet cash needs for food, clothing or medicines. The heavy work load takes a serious toll on health and generates excessive stress. In terms of numbers and gravity, this is far and away the most serious “employment” problem in the world, though seldom recognized as such.

Employment promotion

An effective employment strategy needs to be based on the integration of a host of economic and social policies. This is not only because of the multiple dimensions of work but also because employment is affected by an extensive range of macro- and micro-economic policies. These include macro-economic stability, trade and exchange rate policies, agricultural and industrial development and technology, credit, labour market, training and education policies, to mention some of the more important areas.

While appropriate domestic policies still play a crucial role in generating full and productive employment, the global environment has become increasingly important in determining growth and employment prospects. If the world economy is in recession, it is extremely difficult to follow successful employment policies, especially for smaller countries, which are ever more dependent upon the world market for economic growth and employment promotion. This brings out the vital importance of coordinating macro-economic policies at the global level, especially on the part of major economic players, to maintain high levels of aggregate demand and to pursue counter-cyclical policies.

Given the diversity of employment problems in different countries, it goes without saying that each country needs to fashion its own specific employment promotion policies. In some countries, the primary area of focus may be increasing the productivity of small farmers through such measures as security of tenure, access to credit, new technologies, improved marketing and better transport. In other countries, the priority area might be raising the productivity of the non-farming informal sector through better credit, marketing and training in business management. For other countries again, the primary bottleneck to productive employment expansion might be a labour force lacking appropriate skills or poor physical infrastructure – transport, power and communications.

In practically all countries, there is a need to devise women-friendly employment and work policies. These can comprise a wide swathe of social and economic policy. In some countries, it is necessary to combat legal and cultural barriers to women working outside the home. Almost everywhere, there is a need to eliminate open or disguised discrimination against women workers in recruitment, remuneration, promotion and training. Beyond that, states and enterprises must seek to adapt working conditions to the specific needs of women workers, including hours of work, crèche facilities and adequate maternity leave. There is also a need for a package of policies supportive of the efforts of women's groups engaged in income-generating and productivity-enhancing policies. As emphasized above, many women are overburdened with household and outside work. Their overwhelming need is for measures that will reduce the work burden, improve working conditions and increase productivity and remuneration.

While each country needs to devise its own policies to respond to the specificity of its employment problems, there are some general policy stances that seem relevant to a wide range of developing countries. There is increasing recognition of the importance of macro-economic stability and the use of market forces for sustainable growth and efficiency in resource allocation. Through its impact on the rate of growth, the volume of investment is an important determinant of the expansion of employment opportunities. Equally important is the labour intensity of the pattern of growth. A labour-intensive industrial and export-oriented strategy can be quite important for countries with appropriate factor endowments.

Small and medium enterprises generally use more labour per unit of output than big ones. An agrarian structure with a more even distribution of land and water provides more employment opportunities than one where land and related resources are concentrated in a few hands. A strategy based on infrastructural development – irrigation, roads, power, and improvement of the rural and urban environment – can make a significant contribution to employment creation. Similarly, policies that stress the provision of primary health care, literacy and basic education and elementary social security on a universal basis can generate appreciable employment opportunities for an educated labour force.

c) Social protection

The purpose of social protection is to provide security against a variety of contingencies and vulnerabilities. These include ill-health, maternity needs, accidents, unemployment, destitution, extreme economic fluctuations, natural disasters and civil conflicts. A sound social protection strategy should also address the needs of vulnerable groups such as orphaned or abandoned children, single mothers, female-headed households, widows, old persons in need and the disabled. Social protection policies should thus aim to reduce suffering, anxiety, insecurity and material deprivation. They should promote health, confidence and a willingness to accept technical and institutional innovations for higher productivity and growth.

The above definition of social protection goes beyond the more limited notion of security for work-related situations in at least two ways. First, the coverage of protection extends beyond the workers and even their family members to embrace vulnerable and insecure persons

outside paid employment and indeed the labour force. Second, the contingencies and vulnerabilities are redefined beyond the conventional insecurities identified in the ILO Conventions on Social Security to include destitution, extreme economic fluctuations and natural and human catastrophes. This more comprehensive definition of social security has the advantage of covering the full range of vulnerabilities of all members of society, not just those of limited sections of the population, who are often among the more privileged groups in some countries.

The conceptually more adequate notion of social protection does not imply of course that all countries are in a position to design and implement the requisite policies and measures. The items and levels of social protection furnished to the population will naturally depend upon their past traditions, stages of development and resource mobilization. But starting with a more comprehensive definition of social protection should at least enable countries to make choices on priorities through a consideration of the entire spectrum of contingencies, hopefully through a democratic process.

Strategic elements in social protection

Historically, the responsibility for providing social security has devolved upon a variety of institutions such as families, clan members, charitable institutions, employers and local and central authorities. Even now the coverage of social protection in most societies is assured through these institutions, although the relative importance of each entity varies a good deal from one country to another and over time. In general, the more economically advanced a country, the greater the responsibility assumed by public authorities. In the poorer countries, the most important sources of institutional support for social protection continue to be families, community groups and charitable bodies.

In designing its social protection strategy, a country needs to address at least three interrelated issues: the coverage of social protection in terms of items and individuals; the organizational and institutional means of providing social protection; and arrangements for financing social support. With regard to the first issue, the list of contingencies and vulnerabilities is quite extensive, as seen above. Even the richest countries may find it difficult to finance all the potential items of social protection. It is therefore necessary to make choices through democratic means about priority items to be covered. The level and range of support provided can of course be increased over time with economic progress. The choices made by countries reflect their political traditions, the intensity of social solidarity, the level of development and institutional means for delivering social protection.

In rich countries, the problems of absolute destitution have been largely overcome. The emphasis of social security policies is therefore on mitigating work-related risks by providing unemployment benefits, pensions for the retired, compensation for victims of accidents, maternity leave, children's allowances, and health insurance. Welfare policies have also been designed to cater for the specific needs of vulnerable groups and those living in poverty. Changing work patterns, family structures and demographic profiles, together with intensifying globalization, have led to a critical evaluation of past social policies. The debates have focused mostly on the level of benefits and the balance between public and private means of financing.

In most developing countries, especially the low income ones, social protection policies must perforce focus on ensuring survival, relieving destitution and mitigating livelihood risks. Their needs can be grouped into three categories. The first comprises basic needs such as access to adequate nutrition, primary health care, primary education, clean water, sanitation and shelter. The second category relates to contingencies such as sickness, accident, death of the principal breadwinner, disability, old age, and the needs of vulnerable groups such as orphaned or abandoned children and widows. The third category includes natural disasters and civil conflicts that can result in massive destruction of property, livelihood and sources of support.

Apart from the identification of priority needs and of individuals and groups suffering from deprivation, social protection strategies must set up an institutional framework for the delivery and financing of social policies and measures. Social security may be financed through public resources or through voluntary or compulsory private contributions or a mixture of the two. The balance between the two alternative methods of financing social protection in a country evidently depends upon historical traditions, political forces and the structure and level of development of the economy. But their economic and social effects are profoundly different.

A system based largely on private financing has a minimal impact on the existing patterns of income distribution. Thus by definition, the scope and level of social protection enjoyed by different individuals and families will vary enormously. In particular, the poorer and the most vulnerable groups will be unable to meet even their essential needs such as adequate nutrition, basic health care, primary education and access to shelter, water and sanitation. Universal access to these services can only be ensured through public financing. Furthermore, in most countries, public financing of social protection services is, in combination with a progressive tax system, one of the most effective instruments of income redistribution and poverty reduction.

The extent of public financing is constrained by three factors. First, the level of development of a country, represented for instance by its per capita income, places limits on the resources that can be mobilized through taxation. Second, the political opposition to heavy taxation on the part of affluent and powerful groups sets further limits on a country's taxable capacity. Third, the disincentive effects of excessive taxation are an effective deterrent to ambitious social security schemes. In many cases, even if the resources could be mobilized, the limited institutional and technical capabilities of the public sector may constrain the effectiveness of its social policies. However, it is worth stressing that the public financing of a service or benefit does not imply public sector delivery or implementation. It is perfectly possible and is indeed quite common for voluntary and charitable bodies, community organizations and even the private sector, to deliver the services that are paid for by public authorities.

As noted earlier, in many rich countries, the past two to three decades have seen a reduction in the share of GDP devoted to social protection expenditure. There has also been a trend towards increased private financing of social security items such as pensions and health care. This is a general reflection of the trend towards neo-liberal policies. Many factors have contributed to these shifts in social protection expenditure, including the resistance to high rates of taxation, real or perceived inefficiencies in the public provisioning of social services and the pressures exerted by more intense competition associated with the quickening pace of globalization.

Similar trends have been visible in many developing countries. Apart from the global influences mentioned above, many of these countries have suffered from declining or negative growth since the 1980s, increasing debt burdens and growing budgetary imbalances. There is, however, growing consensus now about the importance for human well-being and sustained development of universal access to basic services and benefits. There is also increasing realization that these services can best be provided on a universal basis by a strengthened public sector.

There have been attempts in many developing countries to increase access to health, pensions and disability benefits as well as loans and credit through voluntary and community-based schemes. While such initiatives have made a positive contribution to social security coverage, their reach is inevitably limited. For effective universal access to basic services and benefits, there is no feasible alternative to state leadership in planning, financing and ensuring their implementation, even if the responsibility for their organization and delivery is shared with other institutions such as communities, local authorities, voluntary agencies or the private sector.

d) Social dialogue

Social dialogue provides voice and representation to participants in the production process. It is a means for them to defend their interests, to articulate their concerns and priorities and to engage in negotiations and discussions with other actors in the production system and with the public authorities on social and economic policies. It serves to empower the weaker partners in the economy and to bring about a better balance of bargaining power in the market place. Social dialogue can thus be a vital element in a representative and participatory democracy.

Diversity in work situations and priority concerns

Much of the literature on industrial relations focuses on the situation in economically advanced countries where the bulk of the labour force work as wage employees in the formal sector. Even in these countries the importance of the self-employed, the informal sector, part-time and casual employees, especially among women workers, and the unemployed, has tended to rise in most countries over the past 25 years. The classical system of industrial relations deals with the structures and methods of collective negotiations between the unions and the employers' organizations. There is a place for government intervention under certain conditions to facilitate negotiations or prevent economic damage resulting from strikes and lockouts. Typically, there is also provision for tripartite bodies to discuss social and economic policies, especially those relating to the production system.

For most of its existence the ILO has been primarily concerned with helping countries with the establishment and development of such systems of industrial relations. Although present in some form in most countries of the world, it should be stressed that this system of industrial relations is only one method of social dialogue, although the most important and the most discussed and written about. It is important to recall that it does not incorporate the majority of the world's workers, most of whom remain without institutional representation. Even within the framework of the dominant model, there is considerable diversity among countries on the coverage of workers and employers, centralization and coordination between their organizations, the collective bargaining systems and the role played by their respective organizations both in the production process and in social and economic policy-making in the tripartite councils.

A more general framework of social dialogue should accommodate the diversity of production systems and of organizational arrangements of the participants in these systems. As brought out in the preceding sections, in low income countries the predominant forms of employment comprise self-employment in farming and other sectors, home-based work and wage employment in the informal economy. A good deal of this work is carried out on a seasonal, part-time or casual basis. Many of the workers lack autonomous and representative organizations to articulate their interests and engage in collective bargaining and consultations on matters affecting their livelihood. But all over the world, new forms of organization have emerged to cater to the specific interests of workers in the non-formal sector.

These interests cover both direct livelihood issues as well as broader questions of social and economic policy. While wage earners in the informal economy, women workers and part-time and casual employees share most of the concerns of their fellow workers in the formal economy, the specificity of their situation may call for different priorities, different forms of organization and different ways of meeting their needs. For instance, women workers may give priority to flexible hours which make it possible to combine paid work with domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. They also need maternity leave and children's allowances as well as child care facilities. Women working from home are interested in rates of remuneration but also in arrangements for credit, raw materials, equipment, training and marketing. Most workers in the informal economy work for small enterprises with complex arrangements for apprenticeship

and compensation and hours of work. All these need to be reflected in their organizational arrangements and negotiation priorities.

The self-employed sector exhibits vast diversity in most countries, ranging from highly paid professionals to hawkers plying their trade in overcrowded streets. In agriculture, the differences are equally striking, ranging from large prosperous farmers to insecure tenants working their tiny holdings. Once again these differences must be reflected in the nature of organizations and the agenda for negotiations. For instance, independent professionals may have a special interest in tax provisions, while “entrepreneurs” in the tiny informal sector are more concerned with government regulations affecting their activities. They need credit facilities and assistance with improving their technical skills, and the design and marketing of their products. Large farmers are likely to press for better prices for their products and access to new technology and better roads, while share-croppers and tenants may be concerned with security of tenure, crop sharing arrangements and access to credit.

Diversity of organizations and social dialogue

A large variety of organizations has emerged to cater to the specific needs of atypical workers and employers. Trade unions have been, and are still, the most important organization for wage employees. They pioneered the principles and forms of organization that have continued to influence all organizations of workers. These include democratic representation, autonomous organization, accountability to members and non-discrimination. The trade unions have historic achievements to their credit in promoting the bargaining power of workers, improving their remuneration and working conditions and ensuring their participation in work-place decisions and in national economic and social policy.

Cooperatives are another tried form of democratic organization with a long history in many countries. Unlike the trade unions, cooperative members jointly own enterprises and provide common services such as marketing, credit and training. However, like the unions, cooperatives are based on the principles of democratic representation, accountability and autonomy. Cooperatives are to be found in all sectors – agriculture, industry and services. They may concern direct production or services such as trade, marketing and credit. Cooperatives can consist of single enterprises, or a federation of enterprises spread across or even beyond a country. Membership may be drawn from a given locality or from across the country. Apart from the direct production or service function, cooperatives engage in consultations and negotiations with other enterprises and public authorities on such issues as taxation, credit, transport, marketing and purchase of goods and services.

Other forms of organizations have emerged to cater to other categories of workers and employers. There has been an explosive growth of informal economy entrepreneurs, stimulated above all by the expansion of micro-credit schemes. Informal economy operators have come together to form their own organizations to negotiate with governments, suppliers, credit institutions and marketing and trading firms. These organizations give members an opportunity to participate in formulating common stands on these issues. They also provide an opportunity to launch joint schemes such as credit and savings programmes, health and life insurance and other types of mutual help activities.

Women workers are especially active in such ventures. In addition, women entrepreneurs and workers have formed their own organizations in different sectors. These cover all sectors and services. Typically, they are multipurpose organizations combining production with trading, and credit and savings with social insurance and social services such as family planning, nutrition, child care, literacy and training. Again there is enormous variation in their size ranging from a few members to hundreds of thousands, although most are relatively small. The organizational structures exhibit considerable variety. Some are quite informal, with no written constitution or regular meetings. Others, mostly large ones, have elaborate structures,

providing for general assemblies, executive committees and autonomous management of different enterprises and services.

Community organizations bringing together producers or workers from a given area, rural or urban, have a long history in some countries. The members may be organized around economic activities or social projects. Generally, such organizations seek to combine economic, social, cultural and political roles in representing the interests of their members. In rural areas, peasants or farmers' associations are widespread in all countries. In some there may be separate organizations of tenants, share-croppers and workers.

Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of voluntary agencies working directly with small producers, and workers in unorganized sectors. Although they are not organizations of producers or workers, they play an important role in organizing them, furnishing material or advisory assistance and representing their interests in negotiations with local, national and international bodies, and with other enterprises. They have been important in promoting organizations of peasant farmers, informal sector operators and women workers and entrepreneurs.

Promoting social dialogue

Organizations of enterprises and workers are a vital part of a full-fledged and participatory democracy. They provide a channel for their members not only to work together on immediate issues affecting their businesses and livelihoods, but also to interact with other segments of society on issues of broader concern. They facilitate consultations with public authorities on a wide range of social and economic questions. Governments can play a vital part in promoting such organizations by providing an enabling environment and a suitable policy framework.

The single most important requirement is the existence of effective freedom of association for all citizens to form organizations of their own choosing. This in turn requires not only a suitable legal framework but also its full implementation in terms of appropriate procedures and facilities at all levels, as laid down in the ILO Conventions on freedom of association. Governments can also do much to ensure the autonomy, representativity and accountability of such organizations.

Further, they could create institutions and mechanisms such as tripartite bodies, national economic and social councils and planning commissions with full representation of all significant organizations of workers, enterprises and voluntary agencies. It is particularly important to ensure that women in all their roles, including domestic responsibilities, are fully represented in these bodies. This should contribute to improved policy-making and implementation and a more effective representation of the interests of the weaker and vulnerable segments of society.

4. Decent work components: Interdependencies and priorities

The four components of decent work influence each other in a myriad of ways. This section looks at these interdependencies and potential complementarities and at the conflicts between them. The essence of the decent work approach is to maximize the synergies among its different elements and find policy and institutional options to overcome conflicting relationships and constraints.

Illustrations of interdependencies

Rights at work affect all aspects of work. For instance, rights to a minimum wage and a healthy working environment affect the form and volume of employment. The right to freedom of

association and collective bargaining has consequences for the degree and pattern of social protection. It also affects the nature and substance of social dialogue.

Social dialogue provides a vehicle for negotiations on rights at work such as social security, minimum wages and conditions of work. Social dialogue also makes it possible to influence the implementation of these rights, as well as to monitor achievement. Collective bargaining has an obvious impact on the structure, level and conditions of employment. It also provides a forum for negotiations on the form and content of social security. Tripartite and broader forms of social dialogue involving governments, enterprises, workers and civil society agencies exercise an influence on all dimensions of decent work through their impact on macro-economic and other key social and economic policies.

Employment levels and status affect social security in obvious ways. High levels of remunerative employment obviate the need for certain types of social security. The content, delivery and financing of social security are influenced by the proportion of the labour force in different work categories. The latter also have an impact on the form of worker and enterprise organization and mode of negotiations. Employment levels and remuneration affect the content of collective bargaining. They also affect the ability of workers to negotiate on a range of issues pertaining to rights at work.

The links between social protection and the other components of decent work are self-evident. The coverage and benefit levels of social security affect employment through their impact on labour supply, investment levels, productivity and worker response to change and innovation. They also influence the bargaining power of workers in social dialogue and their ability to secure other rights at work.

These interdependencies are brought out graphically in figure I.

Complementarities or conflicts

While there is general agreement on the interdependence between elements of decent work, there are sharp differences of views on their nature and direction. Broadly speaking, two distinctive schools of thought have tended to hold opposing views. With some oversimplification, these might be described as neo-classical and institutional schools. The former holds that state and other interventions in the free functioning of market forces, unless designed to correct market failures, lead to inefficiencies in resource allocation and hence to slower growth, wage and employment expansion and material progress for workers and enterprises. The institutionalists, on the other hand, maintain that apart from correcting market failures, interventions that establish rights at work, collective bargaining, tripartite consultations, minimum wages and social security, contribute to political and social stability, reduced economic inequalities and higher productivity, innovation and risk-taking.

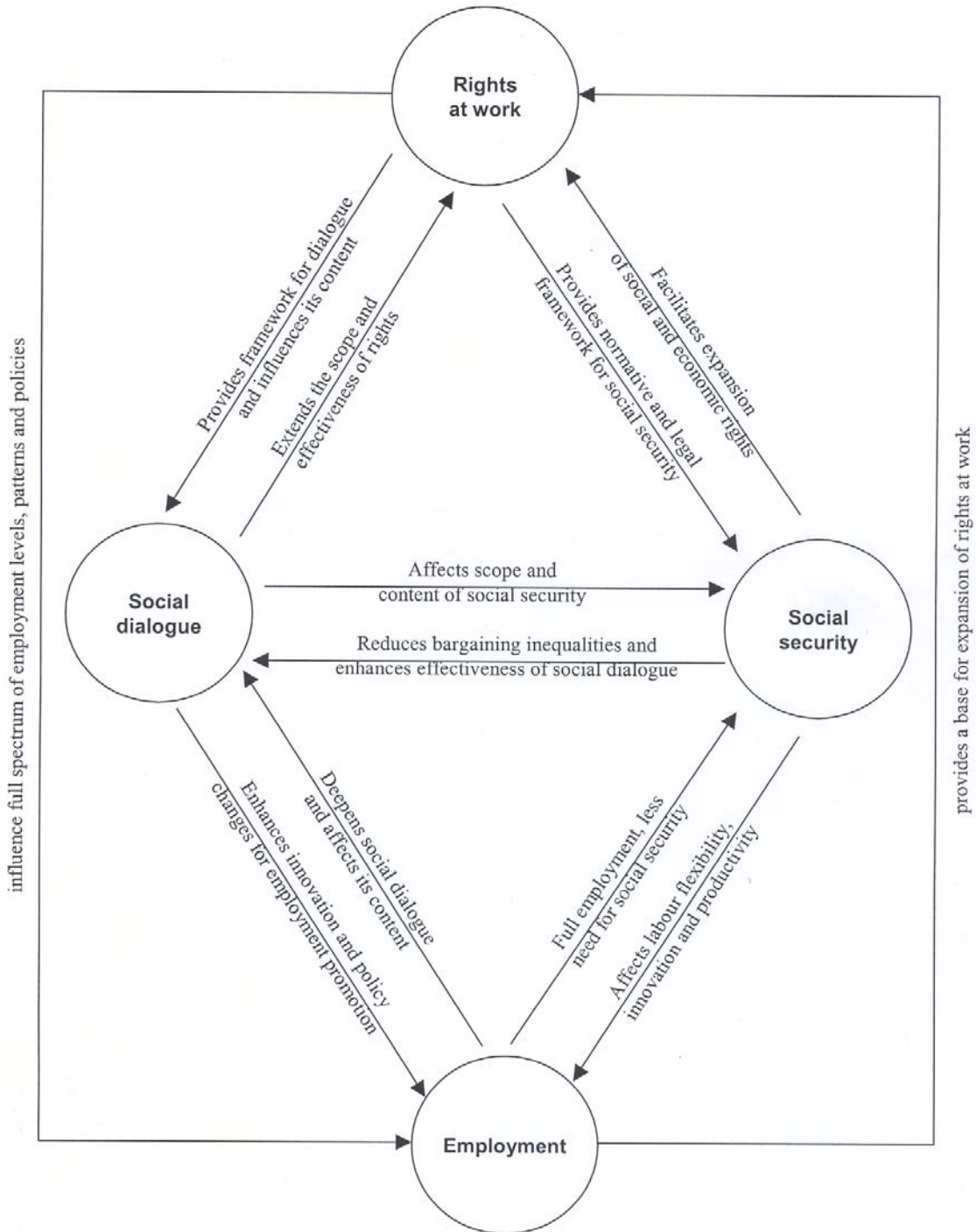
In concrete terms, adherents of the neo-classical school argue, for instance, that interventions such as minimum wages, social security financed through taxation or levies on enterprises, and collective bargaining have an adverse impact on growth, employment and wages because of disincentive effects on investment, savings, innovation and risk-taking. Some of these measures such as unemployment benefits and welfare payments also tend to exacerbate unemployment.

The institutionalists contend that state interventions tend to mitigate economic fluctuations and help maintain economic activity and employment at high levels. Minimum wages and social protection serve to improve worker productivity through improved nutrition, better health and greater security. Trade unions, collective bargaining and tripartite consultations provide a mechanism for worker participation and information sharing, thus increasing mutual trust, sense of responsibility and motivation for better work. All this should lead to fewer conflicts, higher productivity and better quality of work. Income security during

periods of unemployment enhances workers' receptiveness to technological change and acts as an incentive to the acquisition of new skills.

Figure I

Interdependence between rights at work, employment, social security and social dialogue



In the context of developing countries, both the preceding arguments are somewhat modified to take into account their economic and social differences. Many economists argue, for instance, that the setting up of minimum wages and the operation of trade unions and collective bargaining have particularly negative economic and social effects because they apply only to a small minority of the labour force. They distort the economies, accentuate inequalities among the working people and hold back investment and job creation. The establishment of social security schemes under these conditions has a similar negative impact, according to them, further eroding the competitive position of developing countries in an increasingly integrated global economy.

Institutional economists, on the other hand, argue that precisely because of extreme underdevelopment and mass poverty, the state has to play a more important role in relieving destitution, overcoming structural barriers to growth and building institutions, including trade unions and market systems, and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation. This requires a more active state role in regulating monopolies, promoting nascent industries, encouraging social institutions and providing security for the vulnerable groups.

The contrasting positions taken by the two schools of thought have not been fully resolved by empirical research. Those in favour of free markets, including flexible labour markets, have pointed to the superior economic performance of countries with fewer state interventions and labour standards such as Australia, Chile, Hong Kong, New Zealand and the United States. They also hold up the impressive economic performance of the South East and East Asian countries, and of China, Vietnam and now India, as examples of economic reforms spurring rapid growth, employment generation and poverty reduction.

Other scholars draw the opposite conclusion from the same data set. They attribute the superior economic performance of most Asian countries to a carefully thought-out policy of active state intervention in a variety of areas. They further point to the excellent social and economic performance of countries such as Austria, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the Nordic group. Their success has resulted from combining free market policies with extensive social security and active labour market policies, supported by institutional cooperation between strong trade unions, employers' organizations and the public authorities. These researchers also point to the relatively poor performance of most African and Latin American countries since they initiated free market policies in the 1980s.

More specific research, investigating for example the impact of minimum wages, of collective bargaining systems and of core labour standards on investment, growth, employment and poverty reduction, has yielded mixed results. It is difficult to draw any clear-cut conclusions. Evidently a great deal depends upon the nature and extent of state interventions and labour standards, the manner in which they are introduced and the social, economic and institutional features of the countries concerned. There is, however, widespread agreement that respect for fundamental civil, political and social and economic rights, including core labour standards, is essential for human dignity and indispensable for political stability and sustainable and equitable development. The essence of the decent work approach is precisely to overcome potential trade-offs and constraints through institutional innovation, raising the capabilities of the working people and promoting social dialogue among the major social and economic groups and between them and the state authorities.

5. Indicators and patterns of decent work performance

The discussion so far has focused on the conceptual and analytical aspects of decent work. But what has been the pattern of decent work performance among countries and over time? Are there any distinctive patterns of decent work performance displayed by different countries? This section addresses these issues.

Indicators for evaluating performance

Decent work performance is measured by indicators relating to its different components. Indicators provide information on the extent to which a specified objective or outcome has been achieved. However, it is rarely possible to devise an indicator that measures “perfectly” a given objective or outcome. Because of conceptual and data limitations, indicators can at best give an approximate estimate of performance in a given domain.

Ideally, indicators should provide a direct measure of the specified objective. For instance, if the objective is a healthy population, the indicator should give information on the number or proportion of people who are sick. As this information is seldom available, recourse may be had to indirect measures such as life expectancy. Often it is difficult to give a precise meaning to a general objective. For instance, one of the attributes of decent work is remunerative employment, but the term “remunerative” must first be defined before a suitable indicator to measure it can be developed. Often it is more difficult to obtain a direct measure, so an indirect measure may have to be used. For instance, the nutritional status of children may be measured directly by intakes of various food nutrients, or indirectly (and more easily and cheaply) through weight or height for age. The accuracy and comparability of data are other issues that must be considered when selecting and using indicators.

There is rarely one single indicator of the desired outcome, and a combination of several may give a more accurate measure of a specified objective. Thus, the degree of gender discrimination in employment may be captured by wage differentials, opportunities for training, prospects for promotion and gender division of skills and responsibilities. Moreover, the indicators may be either quantitative or qualitative: for instance, quantitative indicators of social security may relate to the proportion of people receiving different types of benefits, while qualitative indicators concern the quality and effectiveness of services. Thus, in order to obtain an accurate picture it may be necessary to combine several indicators into an overall indicator or index.

Some analysts have proposed a three-fold classification of indicators: input indicators (policy variables), process indicators (institutional variables), and outcome indicators (data on the effectiveness of those policies and institutions). The different types of indicator are then combined into an overall index of the different components of decent work and of decent work as a whole.

The construction of an index raises questions about the weight to be given to different indicators, and also the formula to be used for combining qualitative and quantitative indicators. Similar but more acute problems arise when synthetic measures are derived by combining indicators from different domains. The Human Development Index developed by the United Nations Development Programme is an example of such a synthetic indicator combining indicators of health, education and income.

Decent work indicators

Any attempt to develop decent work indicators involves a decision on the choice of categories for decent work. The simplest approach – followed here – is to treat the four components of decent work as separate categories with sub-categories added as appropriate. A different approach used by some analysts is to classify decent work into eleven measurement categories: employment opportunities, acceptable work, adequate earnings and productive work, decent hours, stability and security of work, balancing work and family life, fair treatment in employment, safe work environment, social protection, social dialogue and workplace relations, and the economic and social context of decent work.

Another attempt at constructing indicators views decent work from the perspective of security. Indicators are developed for seven types of security – labour market, employment, job,

work, skill reproduction, income and representational. Decent work is then measured at three levels – the macro (national), meso (enterprise) and micro (individual). The indicators developed under these two approaches have been included, when appropriate, in the list below which follows the original four-fold categorization of decent work. Some of them overlap, offering alternative measures. No attempt is made here to evaluate the suitability of these indicators for different country situations, including the availability and quality of data. Some of the items in the selected reading list given at the end of the paper deal at length with these issues.

The rights at work component may refer to all rights, including those covered in other decent work components – employment, security and social dialogue. But it is more convenient to discuss here the core rights that have been incorporated in the Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. As seen earlier, these refer to child labour, forced labour, discrimination in employment and freedom of association and collective bargaining.

For child labour, the proposed indicators include the proportion of working children in different age categories (if possible by number of hours worked), the school enrolment rates of children, children not in school by employment status and children in hazardous work. For forced labour, there are no readily available indicators. A picture of the extent and gravity of the forced labour problem in a given country may, however, be built from the reports prepared by various organizations such as the ILO Committees on Labour Standards and on Freedom of Association, the ICFTU, Amnesty International, Freedom House and other human rights bodies. All such reports in the end depend upon information collected nationally through a variety of means such as interviews, testimonies, surveys and in-depth research in specific localities.

Discrimination at work may be based on race, colour, sex, language, political opinion or social origin. Indicators on discrimination may be illustrated with reference to gender. These comprise the ratification and enforcement of ILO Conventions on discrimination and equal remuneration; the female labour force participation rate or employment-to-female working age population ratio; the unemployment rate; differences in earnings (and other benefits); occupational segregation by sex; and female share of employment in managerial and high level administrative posts. While information on gender indicators is available for many countries, there is a great scarcity of data on ethnic, racial or linguistic minorities. This makes it difficult to develop any worthwhile indicators on discrimination against them in the labour market.

Indicators on freedom of association comprise ratification and enforcement of ILO Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; the proportion of workers in trade unions or similar organizations; information on freedom of association contained in country reports by ILO and other international bodies and human rights organizations.

The **employment** component of decent work comprises opportunities, remuneration and conditions of work. The indicators relating to opportunities include the ratification and observance of relevant Conventions; labour force participation rate; employment-to-working age population ratio; the unemployment rate; youth unemployment rate; share of wage employment in non-agricultural labour force; excessive working hours; time-related underemployment rate; and job insecurity. Adequacy of remuneration may be measured by percentage of workforce earning less than the minimum wage or than one-half of the median rate; and proportion of workforce living in poverty. Indicators on conditions of work include observance of relevant Conventions; fatal occupational injury; incidence of sickness among workers; and labour force inspection.

Indicators on **social security** include ratification and implementation of relevant Conventions; proportion of workers covered against main contingencies and receiving benefits in respect of sickness, unemployment, old age, maternity, disability etc; adequacy of benefits received under these heads; public social security expenditure as proportion of GDP; public expenditure on needs-based cash income support as proportion of GDP; and levels of

deprivation in specific areas such as nutrition, health, education and poverty among vulnerable groups.

Indicators on **social dialogue** include ratification and observance of ILO Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; proportion of workers covered by collective bargaining agreements; participation in workplace decision-making; and participation by workers, employers and civil society organizations in national policy-making bodies.

Patterns of decent work performance

The indicators given above may be used for constructing indices of performance for individual categories or for decent work in its entirety. In both cases, it is necessary to specify a methodology for giving values and weights to indicators to arrive at indices for individual categories or for decent work as a whole.

It is clear that different patterns and results of performance may be obtained depending upon the indicators and the valuation methodology used. The different attempts that have been made to measure decent work performance use different indicators and valuation systems, and they do not cover the same number of countries. It is therefore not surprising that they do not yield exactly similar results. On other hand, there is a good deal of overlap in their results. Often the same groups of countries come at the top and at the bottom of the performance tables. The methodology used and the results yielded by the various attempts to measure decent work performance may be consulted in the list of publications provided below.

Without listing the countries by patterns of performance, it may nevertheless be useful to make some general remarks on the results yielded by these studies. First, there appears to be a relatively high correlation between decent work performance and income per capita. Higher income countries perform better than lower income countries on decent work, but there are exceptions to this. Some countries with low incomes score high marks on decent work performance and vice versa. Among the high income countries, those pursuing social democratic policies appear consistently to top decent work league tables.

Similar results are obtained from regressions between decent work and the Human Development Index (HDI). This index was developed by UNDP and combines measures of longevity, education and income per head. As with per capita income, there are countries with low HDI and high decent work performance and vice versa. According to one study at least, the differences in performance with regard to different decent work categories are smaller in high than in low income countries.

Summary

This paper has sought to discuss a few of the analytical issues posed by the decent work paradigm. The first point relates to the theoretical and conceptual contributions made by the paradigm. We have argued that its principal contribution consists in providing a unified framework for analysis of work integrating issues of rights, the quality and quantity of employment, social security and voice and representation. This framework clearly reveals potential complementarities and conflicts among the different components of decent work, thus throwing light on the complex issues of priorities and sequencing in attaining decent work objectives. The paper also proposes a typology of models to take account of country diversity with regard to decent work concepts and policies.

The paper then discussed the four components of decent work, focusing on their objectives and policies for advancing rights at work, opportunities for remunerative employment and access to social security and for strengthening social dialogue. The last section of the paper focused on decent work indicators and performance. It discussed the nature and type of indicators, difficulties encountered in the choice of indicators, the construction of

indices of decent work and of its components, and the use and results of such indices in mapping the patterns and performance of decent work in different countries.

A distinguishing feature of the discussion throughout the paper is the attempt to relate these issues to diversity among countries in their economic structure, institutional configuration and stage of development. This brings out the universality and richness of the decent work paradigm.

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