



7. Ensure environmental sustainability

The environmental challenges facing the earth affect social and economic development and the world of work. Environmental degradation is linked to unsustainable production and consumption patterns that undermine the livelihoods of the working poor. However, environmental protection and regeneration are also potential sources of employment and income. Thus sustainable development must start with work.

Sustainable development through decent work

The ILO aims to strengthen the social pillar of sustainable development and its integration into the environmental and economic pillars. In the Johannesburg Declaration (2002), States pledged to “increase income-generating employment opportunities, taking into account the ...ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work”. The ILO has developed the Global Employment Agenda (GEA) [12] within its Decent Work Agenda (rights, employment and incomes, social protection and social dialogue). One of the GEA’s core elements is the promotion of “sustainable development for sustainable livelihoods.”

Globalization and sustainable production

“It is through work, [...] in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, that people can rise out of poverty, earn a decent living and relate to society and the environment in a truly sustainable way.” ILO Director-General, 2002.

To achieve MDG 7, jobs must be environmentally sustainable, and policies more coherent.

The contribution of social dialogue

To be sustainable, governmental environmental and social policies require the participation of employers and workers [39].

The ILO acts by –

- strengthening social partners' participation in national poverty reduction strategy (PRS) processes (see MDG 1) and their awareness of sustainable development issues;
- integrating sustainable development issues into trade union work [71];
- introducing labour issues in the UNEP/UNIDO-led National Cleaner Production Centres, [72] which provide environmental and social services to enterprises;
- value chain analyses on interactions between producers, suppliers, global buyers and local consumers;
- capacity building in labour-based environmental services, irrigation and construction;
- the promotion of the labour principles enshrined in the UN Global Compact. [73] The Compact brings together companies, UN agencies and civil society around principles concerning labour, the environment, human rights and governance, [74] including the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. [7]

World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization

In its 2004 report, *A Fair Globalization – Creating opportunities for all* [1], the Commission called for “greater coherence between economic, social and environmental policies”. It also advocated “a sustainable path of development which provides opportunities for all, expands sustainable livelihoods and employment [...] and reduces disparities between people”.

The environment at work

Workplace accidents can lead to major environmental disasters. The ILO [37] promotes safe and healthy working conditions and environments through –

- international labour standards on occupational health and safety (OHS);
- awareness-raising and the development of national OHS and environment strategies, including through tripartite advisory mechanisms;
- the extension of labour inspection;

Target 9

Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Indicators

- 25. Proportion of land area covered by forest
- 26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area
- 27. Energy use (metric ton oil equivalent) per \$1 GDP (PPP)
- 28. Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita) and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons)
- 29. Proportion of population using solid fuels

Target 10

Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water

Indicators

- 30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural
- 31. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural

Target 11

By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Indicators

- 32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure



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- the development of compatible OHS and environmental management systems;
- workplace assessments – environmental, occupational and social – in cooperation with UNEP and trade union federations.

Chemical substances and pesticides can pollute air, water and land, affecting farmers, workers, businesses, consumers and the land. The ILO [75] assists in developing **codes of practice** and systems for the sustainable use, handling and disposal of toxic and hazardous substances, e.g. in the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

The ILO takes part in the Inter-Organization Programme on Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC). An ILO/IMO Committee with the Basel Convention Secretariat promotes the reduction of cross-boundary waste problems.

Relevant international labour standards [8]

- Employment Policy Convention, 1964, (No. 122) and Recommendation, 1984, (No. 169);
- Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142) and Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195)
- Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention (No. 148) and Recommendation (No. 156) , 1977
- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
- Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162) and Recommendation (No. 172) , 1986
- Chemicals Convention (No. 170) and Recommendation (No. 177) , 1990
- Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174)
- Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)
- Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)
- Job Creation in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189)
- ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work [7]

Sustainable economic sectors

The ILO supports Goal 7 in several key sectors [76] by promoting –

- environmentally responsible **agricultural practices**;
- **sustainable tourism** that promotes rural and indigenous community initiatives while preserving natural resources [77];
- codes of practice on **forestry** to improve working conditions and environmental protection;
- rights and better working conditions in small-scale **mining**;
- standards to prevent large-scale disasters in the **oil and gas** industries;
- improved working conditions and safe working hours **on board ship** as ways to protect the marine environment;
- the joint ILO/IMO/FAO revised Document for Guidance on Training and Certification of Fishermen includes a code of conduct for sustainable **fisheries**.

Improving the lives of slum dwellers and access to water

In developing regions, 43 per cent of the urban population live in slums. They endure poor water, sanitation and health services, with little employment or security of tenure. Informal work often takes place in substandard dwellings. Improvements require investment in infrastructure and public services and the creation of decent, productive employment.

Pro-poor construction and infrastructure works. Employment-intensive and local resource-based approaches are socially desirable and economically justified for many infrastructure works.

The earth's population, around six billion people, is projected to rise to nine billion by 2050.

Sustainable development calls for improved living conditions without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the earth's carrying capacity, and for integrated action in economic, environmental and social development.

Between 1990 and 2000, the world had a net reduction of 2.4 per cent in its forest areas.

The **Kyoto Protocol** calls for reduced carbon dioxide emissions, the main source of greenhouse gases and global warming.

The **1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)** adopted the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, a global plan for achieving sustainable development.

The **World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002)** reconfirmed the Rio commitments and stressed the link between the environment and employment

The Johannesburg **Plan of implementation and Declaration** highlight the ILO contribution to sustainable development through employment, fundamental rights at work, workplace health and safety and workplace solutions to HIV/AIDS.



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The ILO [24] –

- promotes infrastructure using local labour, resources and skills, while ensuring respect for rights;
- provides training and support to informal workers in construction industries, focusing on health and safety. [20]

Local partnerships for small enterprise development. The ILO works through –

- local public-private partnerships and pro-poor procurement, making contracting accessible for small-scale enterprises, while improving access to services and ensuring adequate labour standards; [16]
- community contracting between community groups and local government; this can benefit slum dwellers through community empowerment, job creation, and partnership development; [34]
- assistance to create an enabling legal framework for the formalization of enterprises, strengthened business security, market opportunities, access to financial services and protection of workers; [78]
- policy guidance, technical assistance and advocacy to improve job quality and promote association building.

WEHAB - Water and sanitation, Energy, Health, Agriculture and Biodiversity – are priority action areas set by the UN Secretary-General.

MDG 7 is linked to the MDGs on health, since human waste contaminates rivers and groundwater.

UN HABITAT's Global report on human settlements 2003 calls for urban development policies to address the challenge of improving the lives of slum dwellers, including through employment.

ILO publications relevant to MDG 7

- *Policies for small enterprises: Creating the right environment for good jobs.* ILO, 2004.
- *Working out of Poverty.* ILO, 2003. [3]
- *Raising awareness of forests and forestry. Building bridges between people, forests and forestry.* ILO, 2003.
- *Cities at work.* ILO, 2001.
- *Sustainable Agriculture in a Globalized Economy.* ILO, 2000.
- *Trade Union Actions to Promote Environmentally Sustainable Development.* ILO, 1999.
- "Environment and the world of work: An integrated approach to sustainable development, environment and the working environment". ILO, *Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety*, 4th ed., vol. II, 1998.
- *Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Programmes: Labour policies and practice.* ILO, 1998
- *Trade Unions and Environmentally Sustainable Development.* ILO Discussion Booklet/Training Material.
- *Using ILO Standards to Promote Environmentally Sustainable Development.* ILO Discussion Booklet/Training Material.
- *Environment and the World of Work.* ILO, International Labour Conference, 77th Session, Geneva, 1990.

Blue text and numbers in brackets [...] are linked to websites. See attached list of reference materials.

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