

SECTOR Note

Local Economic Development and Decent Work in Construction: ILO Responses

With the worldwide trend towards decentralization, the role of local authorities in promoting local economic development and decent work has become prominent. This is particularly notable in the construction sector, where local authorities exert considerable influence for example through policies which regulate the local building practices and/or through procurement. Nevertheless, information and knowledge about their potential for promoting decent work in the sector is still poorly understood. Publications on decent work have not acknowledged the potential role of local authorities but instead have largely focused on the private sector. In addition, many development and aid agencies have not explored the full potential of such an approach despite the debate launched by the United Nations Habitat II Conference held in Istanbul in 1996.

While a number of local authorities have been pro-active in implementing good practices related to decent work, many others still do not have the knowledge necessary to do so. Considering this, the Sectoral Activities Branch of the ILO in partnership with the University of Geneva launched an action-research project (2005-2007), which aims at providing knowledge to reduce the gap between the two sets of local authorities. The project is funded by the Geneva International Academic Network.

The project not only analyses how the construction industry could make an important contribution (in both the formal and informal sectors) to employment generation and the quality of work, but also examines in what way local authorities could play an important role in such a process, with case-studies from Africa and Latin America.

The research findings will be presented as a manual, including a set of criteria and guidelines, to facilitate its practical use. The manual will include policy-relevant recommendations for decision-makers (local, national, donors, international organisations, NGOs). The findings of the research project will also be disseminated in networks of local authorities in order to generate and sustain the implementation of good practices. For more information see <http://www.ruig-gian.org/>.

In parallel to the aforementioned project, the Sectoral Activities Branch has joined hands with other units and produced a publication on ILO's urban strategy, which includes many references to the role of local authorities and the construction industry. Such a strategy was presented at the III World Urban Forum which took place in Vancouver in June 2006.

The Sectoral Activities Branch is also carrying out a study on the local dimension of social dialogue in the construction sector, to be later applied in some pilot countries of the [Construction Action Programme](#).