

Joining forces across the Atlantic: the knowledge sharing process between the Regional Office for LAC and the Employment Sector

A new beginning is taking place in the relationship between the ILO team in Latin America & the Caribbean and the Employment Sector in Geneva. Some years ago coordination was poor and cooperation was insufficient. Today there is a renovated spirit of collaboration, a mechanism to facilitate knowledge sharing and an agreed plan of action for 2007-08.

What has changed? First, there is now a stronger management commitment on both sides. The Regional Director and the Executive Director have made of improved headquarter-region cooperation a priority. Second, a formal mechanism of coordination through a system of focal points has been established with clear responsibilities for the officers in charge. Last but not least, the UN reform process and the increased demand for inter-agency cooperation on the ground, create additional incentives for deeper partnerships between the region and headquarters.

Key milestones in the evolution of the knowledge sharing process include:

- a) *Knowledge management responsibilities.* The sector as well as the region has appointed a focal point in charge of spurring collaboration and information/knowledge sharing. This mechanism became operational towards the end of 2006 and is complemented with a system of lead coordinators in each of the focus countries in the region;
- b) *Organizing scattered information.* One of the first products is the systematic mapping of technical cooperation activities, tools and research initiatives, including those of the Turin Centre in the region. Mutual learning is taking place through various means, including knowledge sharing workshops, virtual forums, joint missions and joint planning;
- c) *Sharing of knowledge and institutional performance.* In practice this renewed partnership has positively impacted ILO's performance; it contributed, for instance, to the successful organization of the Tripartite Caribbean Employment Forum (October, 2006), the conclusions of which were endorsed by the Council for Human and Social Development of CARICOM.

Despite progress made some challenges remain. Language and a deep-seated tradition of self reliance can be, in some cases, significant obstacles. A more effective use of information and communications technology systems could also expand the potential of this collaborative effort.