

SOCIAL PROTECTION SECTOR

Overview of knowledge-sharing initiatives

1. Knowledge sharing is seen from different perspectives. They relate to processes which require Office-wide knowledge sharing; exchanging and sharing information and knowledge within technical units and across the Sector; knowledge-sharing with other technical units and the field on specific technical issues; products which support knowledge sharing with constituents, including databases and internet-based learning platforms; and collaborative work and knowledge sharing with other organisations and agencies. Examples of these are noted below. In addition, several areas where knowledge-sharing can be improved within the Sector and in the field are also suggested.

2. Knowledge sharing is seen within the context of the “knowledge function of the ILO”¹ which highlights its role “to generate, promote and disseminate information and knowledge” as central to its internal working. This underscores the importance of organisational learning and creating a learning infrastructure that captures collective knowledge that ensures institutional continuity and innovation and the achievement of our strategic objectives and the improvement of our means of action.

3. While there is often a conceptual distinction between information dissemination and knowledge sharing², we recognise that the two are linked and, in several instances, information that is disseminated are anchored on or are results of knowledge sharing such as in the case of examples of good practice and lessons learned. Colleagues interpreted “knowledge sharing” very broadly. The different knowledge sharing initiatives carried out are also inter-related and complementary. Knowledge-sharing at different levels – unit/team, within the Sector, field structure, other technical departments, constituents, other organisations and agencies (in some cases, including donors) – were noted although some of the initiatives aim simultaneously at several levels.

Outcomes and processes which require office-wide knowledge sharing

4. The development of DWCPs and passing them through the quality assurance framework (QAF), results-based management, resource linking and SMM implementation planning, mainstreamed strategies, infocus initiatives, and an increasingly programmatic and thematic approach to technical cooperation are contributing towards knowledge sharing.

¹ ILO: *Decent Work* - The Report of the Director-General to the 87th Session of the ILC (1999), p. 67-70.

² See, for example, Joint Inspection Unit: *Knowledge management in the United Nations system*, Geneva, 2007, para. 14. The report also notes that there is no common definition of knowledge management or knowledge-sharing.

5. Mobilising and sharing expertise and experience through the infocus initiative on the informal economy. The Social Protection Sector and the Employment Sector are jointly responsible for implementing the infocus initiative on the informal economy, colleagues are sharing knowledge on the tools available in their respective areas. An extensive inventory (grill) of the tools in Sectors 2 and 3 is in its advanced phase. The grill describes the title of the tool (internet link, if available), type of tool, a short description, geographical coverage, and contributing units. A working definition of the types of tools is annexed to the inventory form. The inventory/grill will then be forwarded to the other Sectors and the field for them to include their respective tools. In parallel, a list of databases has been established including those of Sectors 1 and 4, STAT, Turin and the Institute. These include tools, activities and publications. Colleagues continue to share their experience and expertise on interventions and the tools that can be used, including discussions on what constitutes a “tool”, a term often used, but not defined in the Office. The inventory will be regularly updated. This initiative is extremely useful especially in planning interventions and developing integrated approaches.

6. Sharing expertise and information in making HIV/AIDS and the world of work a crosscutting concern in technical programmes. Focal points from different technical departments and the regions and national project coordinators participate in the design, implementation and assessment of strategies and interventions. For example, there is close collaboration with NORMES as well as with national project coordinators and international labour specialists in the field on laws and practices. In addition, the e-workspace, an interactive web-based knowledge sharing and communications tool (noted below), is easily accessible, flexible and adaptable to meet evolving issues. An example of practical application that is now being put into effect is the use of the e-workspace in the process of developing a Recommendation on HIV/AIDS as requested by the Governing Body.

Knowledge sharing at department and branch-levels

7. Technical units organise regular staff meetings to share experience and information. For example, in the Social Security Department, there are regular co-ordinator meetings, technical briefings of staff, an annual technical meeting of staff (including field specialists), monthly float file, wide circulation of mission reports, and annual delivery report. In TRAVAIL, meetings are organised monthly not only to keep all staff members informed of the main initiatives in the different areas of work covered, but also to show the linkages between them and to identify synergies and opportunities for joint work.

Workshops and seminars – contributing to office-wide debates

8. To share findings and recommendations of research projects and policy advisory services, technical units participate or jointly organise with other departments workshops and seminars organised for ILO staff. For example, TRAVAIL recently organised a panel discussion with the Gender Bureau on decent working time, and with the INSTITUTE on the effects of labour market deregulation on job quality.

Databases and internet linkages

9. It is clear that technology greatly enhances the sharing of knowledge both within and outside the ILO.

Web-based learning and information exchange platforms: Some examples -

- CIARIS (on social exclusion)
- GESS (extension of social security)
- GIMI (micro-insurance)
- On-line management and knowledge-sharing tool “Community Zero” of USDOL projects links all project staff with the management team in Geneva. The 104 members of the “community” are recording a monthly average of 8000 page views.
- The e-workspace is an interactive web-based knowledge-sharing and communications tool set up to link the management team in HQ with colleagues in the field (ILO/AIDS field focal points and USDOL National Project Co-ordinators) and ILO colleagues interested in HIV.

On-line Databases. All the units have established databases covering, for example: laws, best practice, country profiles, data and surveys, which are regularly updated. Some examples:

- National legislation on minimum wages, working time and maternity protection
- National legislation relating to HIV/AIDS
- Profiles on good practice on protecting migrant workers
- Social security enquiry database
- CIS/DOC database – analysis of OSH literature worldwide (65,000 items); Directory of OSH institutions; CIS Centre News
- LEGOSH – legislation on OSH
- CIS Glossary (5-language OSH terminology);
- ILO Encyclopedia on OSH

- ILO/AIDS has widened the scope of its knowledge-gathering and -sharing through the inclusion of some HIV/AIDS related keywords to ILO databases such as LABORDOC and the CIS. Similarly the ILO/AIDS website is able to offer a 24-hour news service on HIV and the world of work through the World Labour News search engine to which the Office subscribes.

10. Through departmental/programme websites working papers, tools, fact-sheets, and selected publications, are made available free-of-charge.

Knowledge sharing through the production of fact-sheets, policy papers, textbooks and participation in conferences

11. Products include fact sheets and information notes on the outcomes of research on various dimensions of conditions of work, data sheets on chemical safety, policy papers and briefs on social security issues and series of working papers on labour migration, quantitative textbook series on social security. Newsletters – ILO/AIDS newsletter and recent launch of departmental newsletter “Campaign Update” by SECSOC

Knowledge-sharing with other organisations

12. Knowledge-sharing is a key ingredient of collaborative arrangements, partnerships, or establishing networks to further or complement common interests and goals. Some examples:

- ILO is a cosponsor of UNAIDS, and is recognized as the lead agency for the world of work. ILO/AIDS has a UNAIDS liaison unit which serves both internal and external knowledge sharing. A primary aim is to ensure that the ILO mandate is clear to the other UN Cosponsors and that ILO comparative advantage in the world of work is reflected in UNAIDS’ policies and activities. As a Cosponsor, ILO/AIDS participates in a number of thematic inter-agency task teams (IATTs) addressing youth, gender, and education. Within the IATTs, ILO routinely shares information on its activities with other Cosponsors with the aim of developing guidance for global and country level. The ILO also has a number of reporting responsibilities requiring systematic information-gathering on main activities and areas of work. The exercise facilitates internal and external knowledge sharing. Under the UNAIDS’ United Budget and Workplan (UBW), the ILO reports regularly on its programme and project activities, both at HQ and in the Field. The ILO has mechanisms such as the Global Coordinator and UNAIDS Focal point, who represent the ILO in key UNAIDS meetings, the UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsors Organizations,

and the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board. The ILO also undertakes joint publications and joint activities with other UN cosponsors.

- SafeWork collaborates with WHO in different technical areas (e.g. chemical safety). It also collaborates with ISSA especially with regards to the Global Congress on Occupational Safety and Health.