

Toolkit for mainstreaming employment and decent work

After the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations General Assembly and the Ministerial Declaration of the High-Level Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2006, the decent work agenda was reinforced. The Ministerial Declaration underscores the significance of full and productive employment and decent work for all as an end in itself and as a means to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including poverty eradication and other key development objectives. It consequently requested the whole multilateral system, including the UN Funds, Programmes and Agencies, the International Financial Institutions and the WTO, to mainstream the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all in their policies, programmes and activities.

In order to assist the member organizations of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in this endeavour, the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the CEB decided to develop a Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work. The ILO has been asked to take the lead in developing the Toolkit in collaboration with interested organizations and in consultation with all members of the HLCP. Paragraph 36 of the Ministerial Declaration adopted by ECOSOC encouraged all agencies "to collaborate actively in the development of the Toolkit to promote decent work that is currently being developed by the ILO".

A first proposal for the Toolkit was submitted by the ILO to the 2006 Fall Session of the HLCP. The HLCP welcomed the approach taken and requested the finalization of the Toolkit in consultation with HLCP/CEB member agencies. A second version was produced in consultations with different agencies and it was circulated to all CEB-member agencies for further comments and adjustments, before being submitted for final review to the Spring Session of the HLCP last 20-21 March 2007 in Rome. The HLCP welcomed and endorsed the Toolkit and it was endorsed by the Executive Heads of all member agencies at the CEB Session, hosted by the ILO in Geneva last 20-21 April 2007. Moreover, the ECOSOC, during its July 2007 session, recently adopted a resolution urging the UN system and the International Financial Institutions to collaborate in using, adapting and evaluating the application of the toolkit, along with a three phased approach in action plans to promote the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all.

The Toolkit strives to be a lens that the agencies could look through to see how their strategies, policies, programmes and activities are interlinked with employment and decent work outcomes and how they can enhance these outcomes by taking full account of the implications of their strategies, policies, programmes and activities for employment and decent work, while devising them and when advising and assisting countries and constituents in their adoption and implementation. The toolkit, which will be continuously refined, aims to promote coherence and capture synergies for enhancing the role of the CEB-member agencies in the promotion of decent work for all

through their own action at the global, regional and country level. Thus, it is undoubtedly a key instrument for knowledge-sharing within the system and, between the multilateral system and its constituencies. As such, it is addressed primarily to the staff of the CEB-member agencies at headquarters and in the field. More specific audiences can be identified for future versions of the Toolkit, tailored for particular areas of application. The indirect beneficiaries of the application of this Toolkit by CEB member agencies, and of its future extensions, will in fact be the national constituents and target groups of each and every organization, and ultimately the people of the world who have the legitimate aspiration of a fair chance to a decent job.

The overall objective of the Toolkit is to mobilize synergies and to enhance the employment and decent work impact of CEB-member organizations as a contribution towards a system-wide coherent approach to the implementation of the World Summit Outcome. As part of the effort to realize the goal of "One UN", the Toolkit with its website is also a means to share knowledge more efficiently and systematically, to identify policy synergies, to avoid overlaps, to promote policy dialogue, and thus to focus interagency cooperation around a shared international development agenda. By fostering policy coherence in the advice provided to our respective constituents, it improves overall efficacy.

The next steps in this process will be: monitoring and evaluation of institutional self-assessment, capacity-building and awareness-raising in agencies, pooling of relevant tools and resources, joint development of policies and operational tools, branching out with tailor-made versions of the toolkit such as sector-specific, cluster-specific, country-focussed toolkit, thematic toolkits, development and test application at the country level.

These steps illustrate the potential of the Toolkit for generating a virtuous circle of exchange and interactions between the CEB-member agencies that would help to achieve policy coherence at the international level, also fostering better coherence at the national and local level.