

Summary of Activities

ILO Action Programme on *Strengthening Social Dialogue in the Utilities Sector*

The utilities of water and electricity are fundamental for the development of modern societies and are a prerequisite for effective poverty eradication and to meeting many of the other Millennium Development Goals. Many developing countries are not yet able to provide equitable, reliable, universal access to water, sanitation and electricity.

The Conclusions adopted by the ILO Tripartite Meeting on Challenges and Opportunities Facing Public Utilities (Geneva, 19-23 May 2003) note that “the best way of addressing the issues in the utilities sector would be through national and regional activities.” Furthermore, the Resolution adopted by the Meeting requests the ILO to “facilitate national, regional and sub-regional meetings of the social partners to promote social dialogue in responding to the current challenges to public utilities in order to meet basic human needs in water and energy, and implement the UN Millennium Declaration” and, also, to “facilitate social dialogue by including municipal utility operators and local authorities in appropriate forums and by facilitating the dissemination of best practices and guidelines on the restructuring of utilities”.

The sectoral action programme seeks to implement this mandate through capacity building to strengthen social dialogue mechanisms at the enterprise level in selected developing and transition countries. ILO expertise in social dialogue will assist the social partners in developing joint strategies and actions to extend and improve the efficiency of these fundamental services. The AP is currently implemented in the three countries: Malawi, Nigeria and Peru. Experiences from these countries will serve as good practice examples for future action.

In March 2009, the Governing Body of the ILO authorized the Sectoral Activities Department to develop follow-up activities during 2010-11. What follows is a summary of the activities developed until December 2009.

Nigeria

The first meeting of the National Steering Group for this programme was held on 8 May 2008. The participants approved terms of reference for a study on the state of social dialogue in water and sanitation utilities, and another study on the state of social dialogue in the electric utilities in Nigeria. They also agreed that Professor Sola Fajana would perform the studies. They also agreed to hold a second meeting after the report was delivered to provide feedback. Under the agreed action plan, the ILO was expected to hold a workshop with wider participation from social partners to validate the reports, adopt its own conclusions and recommendations, and plan on how to implement those recommendations.

The second meeting of the National Steering Group, which included a broader workshop to validate Dr. Fajana's report, was held on September 15-16. It was attended by 37 persons representing the Federal Ministries of Labour, Power, and Water, as well as the National Electricity Regulatory Council (NERC), Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), FCT Water Board, and the unions and employers in both water and electricity sectors. The topics discussed were as follows:

1. Introduction to the ILO
2. Principles of Social Dialogue
3. Brainstorming on worker needs
4. Planning for social dialogue
5. Discussion on issues prior to social dialogue
6. Presentation of reports on social dialogue in the utilities
7. Suggestions by participants
8. Discussion of agenda for social dialogue
9. Implementing Social Dialogue
10. Discussion on proposal for social dialogue
11. Monitoring and Evaluating social dialogue

The social partners expressed interest in ILO support in carrying out the following activities to advance social dialogue in the utilities sector:

1. The workers group intends to hold a summit to define common interests and commitment to social dialogue.
2. The government representatives requested ILO support for an accelerated meeting of the National Labour Advisory Council which will focus on establishing ground rules for social dialogue regarding labour inspection, and for training on labour inspection as a means to enforce existing labour legislation.

As a follow up to the workshop, a [detailed report](#) was distributed among the participants, to help them discuss the objectives of the Action Programme with their colleagues.

Malawi

The first meeting of the National Steering Group for this programme was held on 13 May 2008 in Lilongwe. It was organized jointly by ILO Geneva (SECTOR) in collaboration with the ILO-Lusaka office and the support of the Malawi Ministry of Labour. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Federal Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development and Ministry of Energy, employers' and workers' organisations and officials from the ILO office in Lusaka and Geneva. The participants approved terms of reference for two studies on the water and electric utilities in Malaŵi, and agreed that Professor Winford Masanjala would perform the studies.

After the report was delivered, a second meeting of the NSG was held in 26 May 2009 to provide feedback, followed by a validation workshop with wider participation from social partners held on 27-28 May 2009, to make proposals for a plan of action. The social partners outlined their proposals to plan for social dialogue.

The third meeting of the National Steering Group was held on 24 September 2009 in Blantyre, preceded by workshops on 21-23 September with worker, employer and government representatives. The topics covered were the same as in the Nigeria meeting (see above). Based on the inputs from the three groups, the National Steering Group reached the following agreements:

1. The workers organisations will formulate a concrete proposal for social dialogue in the utilities.
2. The employers will support the workers' proposal
3. The Office of the President and Cabinet will consider the proposal, with the support of the Ministry of Labour.

The ILO will provide technical and other support to follow-up activities during the 2010-11 biennium.

As a follow up to the workshop, a [detailed report](#) was distributed among the participants, to help them discuss the objectives of the Action Programme with their colleagues.

Peru

Activities in Peru will concentrate on improving training in social dialogue mechanisms, aiming at improving worker participation in the management of municipal enterprises.

The first meeting of the National Steering Group for this programme was held on 4-5 December 2008. The participants approved terms of reference for a study on the state of social dialogue in water and sanitation utilities in Lima. They also agreed that the Lima SRO would select a consultant to perform the studies. They also agreed to hold a second meeting after the report was delivered to provide feedback. Under the agreed action plan, the ILO was expected to hold a workshop with wider participation from social partners to validate the reports, adopt its own conclusions and recommendations, and plan on how to implement those recommendations. The consultant, Juan Carlos Cortés-Carcelén, delivered his report on 11 December 2009.

The second meeting of the NSG and validating workshop for Dr. Cortés' report was held on 17-18 December 2009. The workshop was attended by 37 persons representing three government ministries, the municipality of Lima, two Worker federations, eleven unions representing water supply workers, and six water supply enterprises. The topics covered were

the same as in the Nigeria meeting (see above). The social partners agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding and a work plan to implement a mechanism of social dialogue in the water and sanitation sector, and expressed interest in receiving ILO support to carry out the following priority activities to advance social dialogue in the water and sanitation sector:

- a) Recruiting a facilitator who will engage the social partners and government in the implementation of the activities.
- b) Establishing a Technical Secretariat that would support the implementation of the work programme.