



Minimum Wages: Statistical Input for Minimum Wage Setting and Monitoring/Analysis

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Capacity Building Workshop on Work Statistics,
Working time, Informality and Wages statistics
For SADC Social Partners
Johannesburg, South Africa
October 6th – 9th October 2015

Department of Statistics



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Who receives wages – and who does not?

- **Who receives wages?**
 - All those in an employment relationship with an employer.
 - For example: Employees and casual wage workers.
- **Who does not receive wages?**
 - All those who have no employer, but work for themselves or in their family business.
 - For example: Self-employed small farmers, street vendors or unpaid helpers in a family business.



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Review: What are wages?

- Remuneration received by workers from their employer in exchange for their labour.
 - 1st concept: **Wage rates** are expressed as a wage per hour, day or month.
 - 2nd concept: **Earnings** or **total wage** paid at the end of the month or week, incl. all overtime, bonuses and other pay elements.



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What are minimum wages?

- Minimum wages are defined as the lowest level of wages that employers are permitted by law to pay to their workers.
 - **Minimum wages always refers to the wage rate (NOT earnings or total wage)**: minimum wages are set per hour, day or month and always refer to a specific working time.
 - If an employer pays less than the minimum wage, he or she breaches the law and faces punishment.
 - Even if the worker has agreed to be paid less than minimum wage, employers can still be punished.

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Minimum wage is a redistributive tool with both benefits and costs

- If established at an adequately high level, minimum wages can help
 - increase the earnings of the lowest paid workers
 - reduce the number of “working poor”
 - reduce the gender pay gap
 - reduce wage inequality
- If set too high, minimum wages can have an adverse effect, possibly
 - contributing to price inflation
 - reducing employment or limiting its growth
 - becoming a burden for small and medium-sized enterprises



ILO C131 Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970

- In 1970, the International Labour Organization adopted the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention No.131, as well as a Recommendation (No. 135)
- Ratifying Member States commit to establish a system of minimum wages which “covers all groups of wage earners” against “unduly low wages”.
- It is possible to exclude some groups from coverage, subject to justification. E.g. Youth benefitting from on-the-job training
- Total ratifications: 52 out of 181 Member States, from all regions
- Once established, minimum wages have the force of law
- Most employees should benefit from the protection of the minimum wage although exceptions are possible
- Employers organizations and workers organizations should be fully consulted (not just informed)
- Minimum wages should be adjusted “from time to time”



C131 Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970

Both social and economic factors should be taken into account when setting the MW level. Article 3 states:

“The elements to be taken into consideration in determining the level of minimum wages shall, so far as possible and appropriate in relation to national practice and conditions, include

- (a) **the needs of workers and their families**, taking into account the general level of wages in the country, the cost of living, social security benefits, and the relative living standards of other social groups;
- (b) **economic factors**, including the requirements of economic development, levels of productivity and the desirability of attaining and maintaining a high level of employment.”



Minimum wages and wages: Case of Cambodia

- In 2014, the minimum wage was US\$ 100 per month (for full-time work) in the garment sector.
 - This means that the wage rate for the base wage must be at least US\$ 100 per month.
 - Many workers have a base wage of more than US\$ 100.
 - It does not mean that total monthly wages need to be at least US\$ 100.
 - Most workers earn more than US\$ 100 per month when overtime pay and bonuses are added.
 - A few workers earn less than US\$ 100 per month because they did not work the full month.

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Cambodia Example 1: Akara, garment worker

- Akara has a base wage of US\$ 100 per month
 - She came to work all 26 working days.



- This is Akara's payslip:

Base wage (26 days)	\$ 100.00
Overtime, 28 hours at 150%	\$ 20.19
Overtime, 0 hours at 200%	\$ -
Position and skill bonus	\$ 4.00
Transport allowance	\$ 7.00
Attendance bonus	\$ 10.00
Seniority payment	\$ 11.00
Trade union dues	\$ -0.25
Total wage	\$ 151.94



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Cambodia Example 2: Davi, garment worker

- Davi has a base wage of US\$ 105 per month.
 - She missed 8 working days (without good reason) and came to work on 18 days.



- This is Davi's payslip:

Base wage ($[\$105/26]*18$)	\$ 72.69
Overtime, 26 hours at 150%	\$ 19.68
Overtime, 0 hours at 200%	\$ -
Position and skill bonus	\$ -
Transport allowance	\$ 7.00
Attendance bonus	\$ -
Seniority payment	\$ -
Trade union dues	\$ -0.25
Total wage	\$ 99.12



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Cambodia Example 3: Phat, rice farmer

- Phat is a rice farmer.
 - She works 6 days a week, often long hours.
- This is Phat's income and expenditure:

Sales of rice harvest	\$ 120.00
Fertilizer	\$ -7.00
Seeds	\$ -5.00
Pay for helper	\$ -10.00
Total self-employed income	\$ 98.00

- *She does not earn a wage!*



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Issue 1: Time units

- Countries use different time units:
 - Minimum wage can be set per **hour** (Germany), per **standard working day** (Philippines), per **week** (Malta) or per **month** (Cambodia).
- Workers and employers need clarity on how to convert different rates, for example:
 - Hourly rate = monthly rate / (26 days * 8 hours)
 - Hourly rate = daily rate / 8 hours
 - Weekly rate for 48 hours = 6 x rate for 8 hours
 - Weekly rate for 44 hours = 5.5 x rate for 8 hours
 - Monthly rate = weekly rate * 52 weeks / 12 months (???)

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Issue 2: Base pay and other pay elements

- Minimum wages generally refer to the base pay.
 - Malaysia: Minimum wage was set at 900 Ringgit per month, workers kept their entitlements to bonuses.
 - A monthly wage of RM 700 + RM 250 bonus does NOT comply with new minimum wage order!
 - Restructuring of wages (e.g. RM 900 + RM 150 bonus) requires agreement between employers and unions.
- Some countries set mandatory allowances.
 - Cambodia (2014): Base wage of \$100, plus \$7 for transport and housing and \$10 attendance bonus.
 - **Attention**: Overtime pay is calculated on the base pay, NOT the total pay package.

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MW setting: Need clarity on time units and the components that are included

- When setting minimum wage, we need to keep a few key points in mind:
 1. We need clarity about the time unit (e.g. 8 hours a day) and how to convert this into other time units (e.g. hour or month).
 2. We need clarity about what components the minimum wage includes and excludes.
 - Usual approach is to set minimum wage for base pay (excluding other elements).
 - This usually means that workers' existing entitlements to bonuses and other pay elements remain unaffected by a new minimum wage.

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Basic elements of MW Policy

Basic elements of minimum wage policy (102 countries) ILO-TRAVAIL database: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/travmain.home>

What does the legislation say?

- **Institutional setting**: National minimum wage versus sectoral minimum wage
- **Degree of consultation of the social partners**: no consultation versus consultation with social partners or collective bargaining
- **Criteria of adjustment**: social criteria, economic criteria
- **Frequency of adjustment**: not specified versus once a year or less frequently
- **Coverage**: everybody is entitled to be paid at least the minimum wage versus sectors (e.g. services) or workers (e.g. domestic, migrants, etc) are excluded



Minimum wage legislation will provide clues on statistical indicators to select

- Minimum wage legislation will usually define the criteria, scope of coverage, and any particular wage rates for defining or adjusting the MW
 - These elements will serve as tips regarding:
 - statistical indicators which will be used
 - sources of data which should be used
 - lack of data, quality of data issues
 - resources and time frame (modeling impact of MW change vs. more basic solutions)



Among the most common indicator used (for needs of workers & their families): Basic Needs and Price data

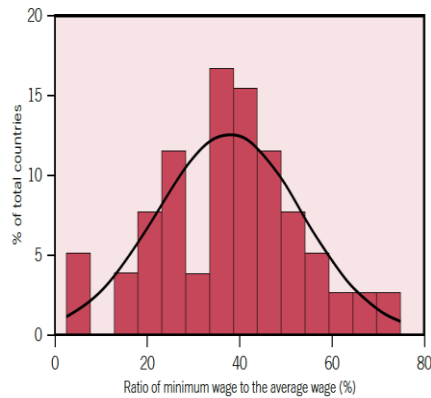
- **Needs of workers and their families**
 - Elements of **Basic Needs** (linked to poverty line)
 - Basic basket (including food & non-food goods & services)
 - Household size
 - Income earners by household (full time)
 - Steps:
 - Calculate basic needs (according to HH size)
 - Compare against MW Minimum
 - Calculate the difference
 - **Prices**: adjust MW according to movements in the Consumer Price Index



Among most common indicator (for Economic factors): Minimum wage as a percentage of mean or median wage

- Indicator provides information about the purchasing power of MW relative to that of other workers
- In developed countries, median wage is preferred
 - Ratio ranges from 35-60% of the median wage
- Worldwide, mean wages are more often used
 - Ratio ranges from about 35 to 45% of the mean wage

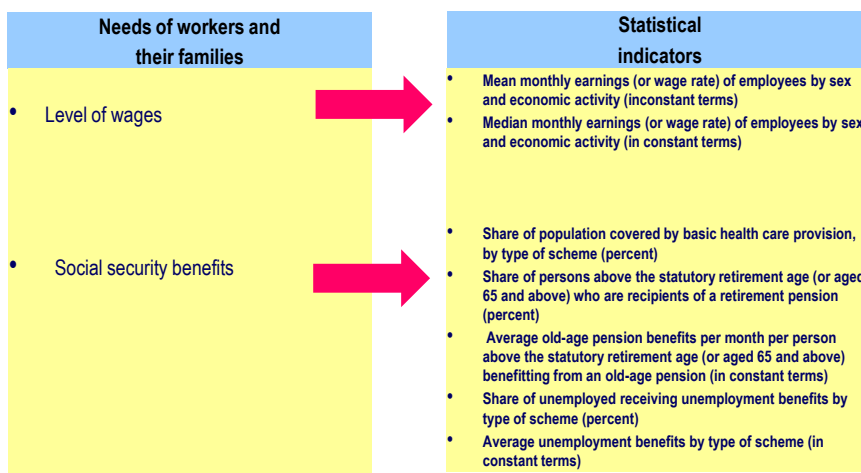
Figure 1. Minimum to average wage ratio for a selection of 75 countries.



Source: Belser and Sobeck. 2012. *At what level should the minimum wage be set?* International Journal of Labour Research. Volume 4, Issue 1.

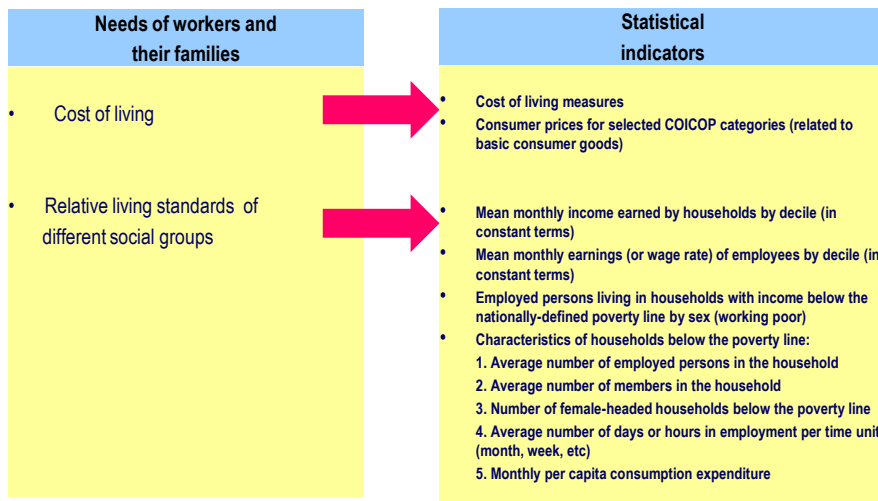


Statistical indicators which could be considered as inputs to fix initial levels of minimum wage (1)

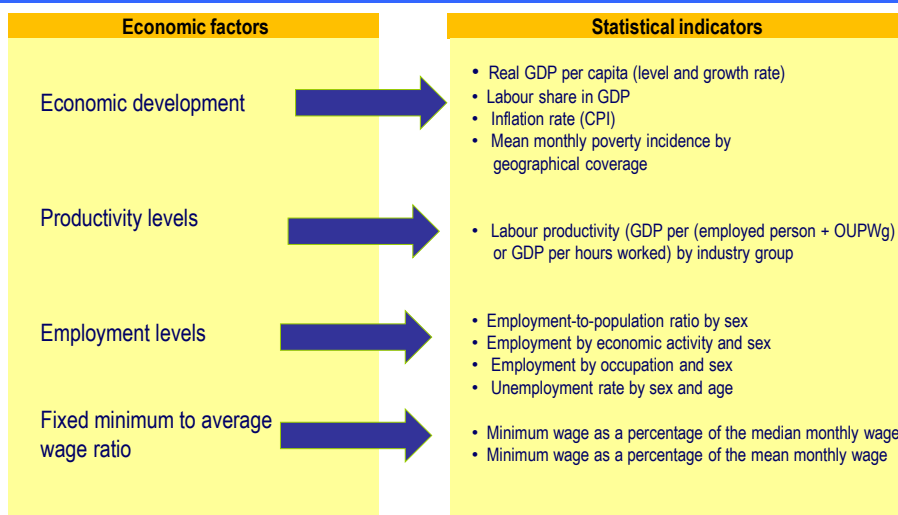




Statistical indicators which could be considered as inputs to fix initial levels of minimum wage (2)



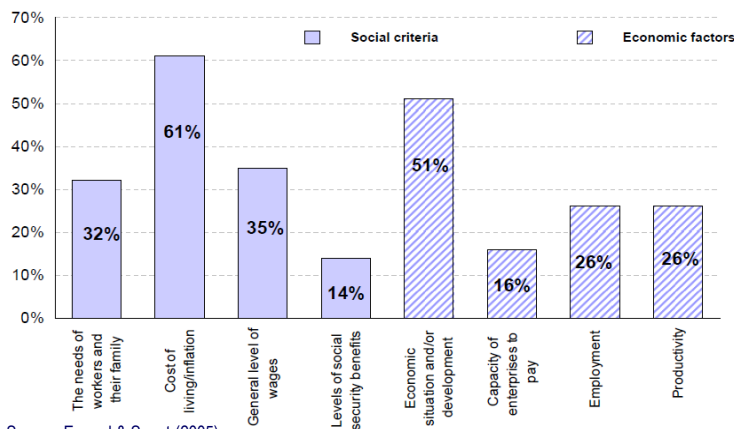
Statistical indicators which could be considered as inputs to fix initial levels of minimum wage (3)





The legislation usually provides for both social and economic criteria to be used to adjust the level of the minimum wage

Criteria used to adjust the minimum wage (in %)



Source: Eyraud & Saget (2005)



Inflation/Cost of Living and Needs of workers rank highest among specific criteria selected to set/adjust the Minimum Wage in the SADC region

SADC Region: Criteria used to set or adjust the minimum wage by country, latest information available in ILO-TRAVAIL database (downloaded September. 2015)

% of countries that selected the criterion:	
Capacity of employers to pay	= 26.7%
Inflation and/or cost of living	= 53.3%
Economic development	= 33.3%
Level of employment	= 40%
Level of wages and incomes	= 40%
Needs of workers and their families	= 46.7%
Productivity	= 26.7%
Social security benefits	= 20.0%

Country	Capacity of employers to pay	Inflation and/or cost of living	Economic development	Level of employment	Level of wages and incomes	Needs of workers and their families	Productivity	Social security benefits	Other provisions
Angola		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Botswana		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Take into account the desirability of eliminating discrimination between the sexes in respect of wages for equal work, all other relevant matters
Democratic Republic of Congo		Yes				Yes			There are no statutory provisions stipulating criteria to be applied when minimum wage rates are set or adjusted identified.
Lesotho									
Madagascar		Yes	Yes			Yes			
Malawi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Mauritius	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Mozambique									The legislation does not set forth which criteria the Government has to take into account when setting the minimum wage.
Namibia									There is no national minimum wage in Namibia. The legislation provides that minimum wage rates may either be set by the government in Wage Orders that are made by a Wage Commission or in collective agreements. The Wage Commission has not yet been established. All minimum wage rates are currently set in collective agreements.
Swaziland									No provisions imposing criteria for consideration when setting the national minimum wage identified.
South Africa	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes			(i) conditions of employment; (ii) the possible impact of any proposed condition of employment on the health, safety or welfare of employees; and (iii) other relevant information made available to the Commission.
Tanzania	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			No criteria are prescribed in relation to any of the minimum wage setting procedures.
Tanzania									(a) articles 22 and 23 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania; (b) any applicable Convention or recommendation of the International Labour Organization, whether or not the United Republic of Tanzania is a signatory to the convention; (c) all representations and other information submitted to it; and (d) any other relevant matter.
Zambia									No statutory criteria identified.
Zimbabwe									No statutory provision establishing criteria by which the Minister shall determine the minimum wage rates identified.



Inflation/Cost of Living and Needs of workers rank highest among specific criteria selected to set/adjust the Minimum Wage in the Americas region

Americas Region: Criteria used to set or adjust the minimum wage by country, latest information available in ILO-TRAVAIL database (downloaded Oct. 2011)										
	Country	Capacity of employers to pay	Inflation and/or cost of living	Economic development	Level of employment	Level of wages and incomes	Needs of workers and their families	Productivity	Social security benefits	Other provisions
Capacity of employers to pay = 17.2%	Antigua and Barbuda		YES	YES	YES				YES	YES
Inflation and/or cost of living = 62.1%	Argentina		YES	YES			YES			YES
	Bahamas									YES
	Belize									YES
	Bolivia									YES
Economic development = 51.7%	Brazil		YES				YES		YES	
	Canada		YES							YES
Level of employment = 27.6%	Chile									YES
	Colombia	YES	YES			YES	YES			YES
Level of wages and incomes = 17.2%	Costa Rica		YES	YES		YES	YES			YES
	Cuba			YES						YES
Needs of workers and their families = 58.6%	Dominican Republic	YES	YES				YES			YES
	Ecuador		YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES	
	El Salvador		YES	YES			YES			YES
Productivity = 13.8%	Grenada				YES					YES*
	Guatemala	YES	YES				YES			YES
Social benefits = 13.8%	Guyana				YES					YES*
Other provisions = 72.4%	Haiti		YES	YES			YES			
	Honduras		YES	YES	YES		YES			YES
	Jamaica /a	YES	YES				YES			YES
	Mexico		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES			YES
	Nicaragua			YES			YES			
	Panama		YES	YES	YES		YES			YES
	Paraguay		YES			YES	YES	YES		YES
	Peru	YES		YES			YES	YES		
	Trinidad and Tobago		YES	YES	YES	YES			YES	
	United States									YES
	Uruguay			YES			YES			YES
	Venezuela		YES	YES						YES

*Conditions of employment taken into account.

a Factors considered: inflation data, interests of workers, ability of employers to pay, factors affecting the circumstances of employment and remuneration of various categories of workers.

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In 46% of countries worldwide government sets the minimum wage following consultation or recommendation of a specialised body

Graph 9: Minimum Wage-Fixing Mechanism by Region, 2012

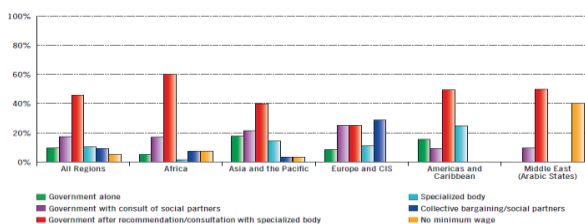


Table 9: Minimum wage-fixing mechanisms by Country & Region, 2012

Region	Government alone	Government upon consultation of the social partners	Government following the recommendation/consultation of a specialized body	Specialized body	Collective bargaining/social partners	No minimum wage
Africa	Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe	Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Malawi, Morocco, Rwanda, Seychelles, Zambia, Zimbabwe ¹¹	Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa*, Sudan*, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia*, Uganda, Zambia ¹²	Ghana	Eritrea, Namibia	Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea

In Africa:

- Most countries (60%) have legislation requiring recommendation or consultation with a specialised body.
- In 17% of countries, governments should directly consult with employers and worker organisations.

Source: Working conditions laws report 2012: A global review. ILO, Geneva 2013.

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What are the main methods for initially fixing the minimum wage?

- In many countries difficult to know how the MW was initially set
- Often the result of bargaining between trade unions, employers' organizations and government based on labour market statistics and economic conditions
- Globally two **main methods** for setting the initial rate:
 - Based on cost of living
 - Based on wage statistics



Method 1: Using cost of living to initially set the MW (1)

- **Aims to determine a rate that will cover the basic needs of workers**
- Particularly relevant for poorer developing countries with low wages and high poverty rates
- Most straightforward method
- Statistical issues:
 - Need to define the composition of a basket of goods/services that reflect a reference living standard (e.g. minimal quantity and quality standards of food, clothing, health care and shelter)
 - Availability and reliability of statistics on cost of living
 - Data sources: Household income and expenditure surveys (e.g., monthly per capita consumption expenditure), CPI/Cost of Living surveys



Method 1: Using cost of living to initially set the MW (2)

Key issue with the method: how to implement it?

- Does one consider a worker the sole wage earner of a household?
- What is an average family size?
- Women's increasing participation in the labour market challenges the one-wage-earner-per-household idea.
- However, there are growing numbers of single-headed households (working poor associated with these)
- Price of goods/services and standard of living differ between areas of a country: should these be considered? (Effects on internal migration)



Method 2: Using wage statistics to initially set the MW

- **Aims to determine a rate based on the lowest and average wage rates**
- Less relevant for developing countries characterized by low wage rates that don't meet basic needs
- Method used by the Netherlands to set the MW in 1968
- Advantage: Simplicity of calculation
- Key statistical issues on measuring wages for this purpose:
 - Geographical coverage (total national or urban only?)
 - Concept of wages used (wage rates or earnings? gross or net?)
 - Usual versus actual wages
 - Wages time unit (monthly, weekly, hourly?)
 - Working time coverage (full-time vs. part-time)
 - Job coverage (all jobs or main job?)
 - Sources of data: Establishment survey; Labour force survey.
- Potential problems:
 - Availability of reliable statistics on wages paid (lowest wages)
 - Wages, especially lowest wages, should truly reflect basic needs of workers and their families



Countries may consider combining Methods 1 & 2

- Where lowest wages **do** cover basic needs of workers and their families, countries may consider combining Methods 1 & 2
- In this case, reliable, timely statistics on cost of living and wages will be needed as a technical starting point for bargaining.



Example of a (needs based) poverty wage approach

- A.K.Ghose (1997) proposed a MW for India defined to ensure each member of the household of an unskilled casual labourer has a consumption level equivalent to the national poverty line:

$$MW = P (1 + ned) / wemp$$

where: MW = minimum wage; P= poverty line expenditure per person per month; ned = number of non-earning dependents per worker; wemp= number of days of wage employment that a casual labourer is likely to find in a month.



Absolute national MW vs. differentiated MW rates

- National MW: would serve as a minimum wage floor of all employees working in the national territory irrespective of sectors, geographic or administrative regions, occupations, sex, age, etc.
- However, provincial governments or other authoritative bodies could be permitted to set a minimum wage floor higher than the national MW if allowed by national legislation
- Coverage/scope of MW legislation:
 - National/Federal
 - Occupational rates
 - Sectorial rates (agriculture, services, etc)
 - Regional rates (rural, urban, etc.)
- Minimum wage levels for specific categories of workers according to MW legislation:
 - Disabled workers
 - Domestic workers
 - Piece rate workers
 - Trainees/apprentices
 - Youth workers

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Worldwide, minimum wage rates are set at two main levels: at the national level (45%) and at the national level by sector or industry (43%).

Graph 10: Minimum Wage-Fixing Levels by Country and Region, 2012

In Africa:

- A vast majority of countries set minimum wages nationally by sector and/or occupation (55%).
- Almost a third set the minimum wage at the National level (30%).
- A very small minority of countries (6%) set wages regionally by sector/occupation.

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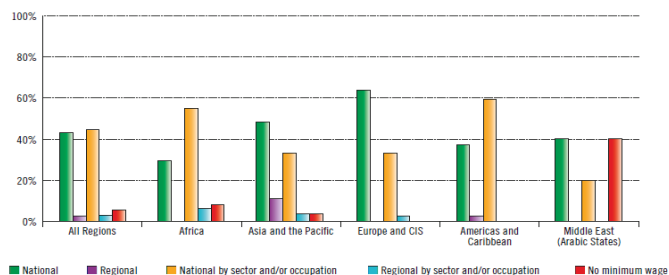


Table 10: Minimum wage-fixing levels by country and region, 2012

Region	National	Regional	National by sector and/or occupation	Regional by sector and/or occupation	No minimum wage
Africa	Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Libya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia*, Sudan, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe		Angola*, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius**, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda	Kenya, Mali, Namibia*	Cape Verde, Eritrea*, Ethiopia*, Guinea

Source: Working conditions laws report 2012: A global review. ILO, Geneva 2013.



Periodic adjustments to the MW: Examples of Methods (1)

- A key problem for many countries today
- Adjustment procedure depends on the type of consultation process in place, criteria applied and statistics used
- Globally, there are four key methods of adjustment (with different levels of decision-making, independence, number of MW categories and rates)
- Method 1. Example: Netherlands
 - Adjustments based on estimated **wage increases** following public and private wage negotiations held during the year (**MW indexed to changes in the wage rate**)
 - Not necessarily automatic: depends on **employment level** and **unemployment rate**
 - Consultations take place between Government officials and the Social Economic Council (not a tripartite body), but Government decides whether to freeze MW or increase it

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Periodic adjustments to the MW: Examples of Methods (2)

- Method 2. Example: France:
 - Adjustment made following a 2-percent increase in **inflation**
 - Each July, Government evaluates increases in **economic growth** for a possible MW adjustment
 - Government consults with National Committee on Collective Agreements (includes Employers' and Workers' representatives) , but opinion is not binding
 - Any MW increase must ensure purchasing power (PP) of the MW not be less than half the total increase in the **PP of the average hourly wage**

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Periodic adjustments to the MW: Examples of Methods (3)

- **Method 3. Example: Republic of Korea (similar procedure in UK)**
 - Specialized body (Minimum Wage Council) comprised of equal numbers of workers', employers' and independent observers prepares a proposal on MW adjustment
 - Council supported by a technical secretariat which obtains/analyses **necessary statistics (cost of living, wage and income levels, and productivity)**
 - Minister of Labour has the authority to accept/reject the proposal, but may not modify it



Periodic adjustments to the MW: Examples of Methods (4)

- **Method 4. Example: Mexico (similar procedure in Costa Rica and Japan)**
 - Specialized committee decides on MW increases autonomously
 - Committee president chosen by the Head of State; equal number of workers' and employers' representatives
 - Technical secretariat obtains **necessary statistics (state of the economy, changes in cost of living, employment and unemployment rates, wage levels)** which substantiate the MW adjustment decision
 - In Costa Rica: decision on MW for different categories of workers is based on available data and on consultations with workers and employers
 - In Japan: MW set in each of the country's 47 regions. MW increases commonly reflect wage increases in small enterprises.



Key Issues in Monitoring and Analysis of MW

- **Key issues in monitoring/analyzing the MW, impact on:**
 - Average and median wage levels
 - Incidence of poverty
 - Income distribution
 - Employment levels
 - Working time (hours of work)
 - Labour productivity
 - Informal sector (including spillover effects)



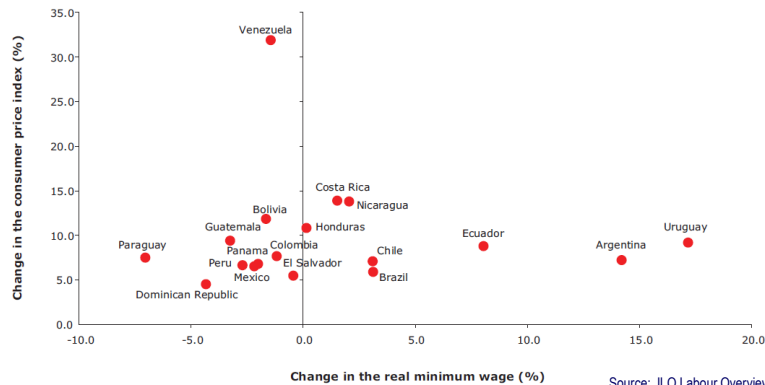
Population groups and context indicators to consider in monitoring/analyzing the MW

- **Worker groups potentially affected:**
 - Youth workers
 - Women workers and their households
 - Agricultural workers
 - Piece rate workers
 - Domestic workers
 - Child labour (if too low, may encourage child labour)
- **Context indicators to consider:**
 - Consumer price index movements
 - Cost of living changes
 - GDP growth and GDP per capita changes



The minimum wage should be analyzed against CPI changes

LATIN AMERICA (18 SELECTED COUNTRIES): INFLATION AND THE REAL MINIMUM WAGE, 2008 (Accumulated change, December to December)



Source: ILO Labour Overview
Latin America and the Caribbean 2008

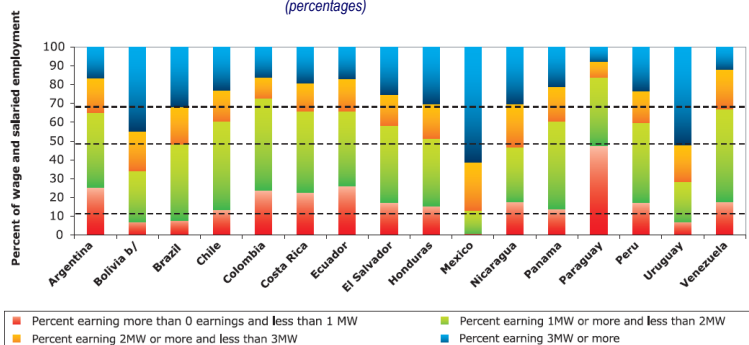
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Workers can be analyzed by categories of earners according to different MW multiples

LATIN AMERICA (16 COUNTRIES): PERCENTAGE OF WAGE AND SALARIED WORKERS WHO EARN DIFFERENT MULTIPLES OF THE MINIMUM WAGE IN URBAN AREAS, 2006 a/ (percentages)



Source: ILO, based on official information of the countries.

a/ Estimates exclude wage and salaried workers whose earnings were equal to zero; they also exclude wage and salaried workers who did not declare their earnings.

b/ Estimates for Bolivia are for 2005.

ILO Labour Overview Latin America and the Caribbean 2008

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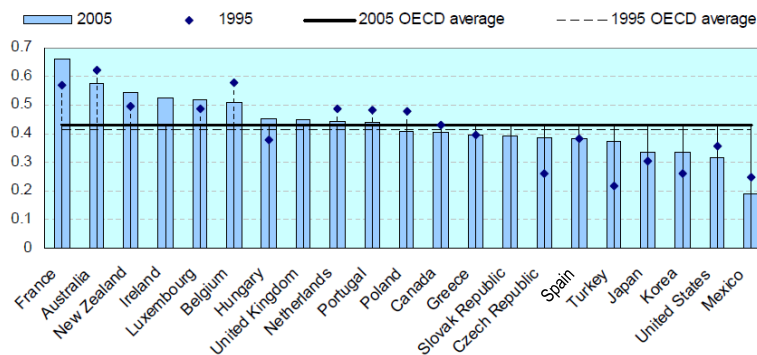
MW may be analyzed with changes in income inequality

BRAZIL: CHANGE IN THE REAL MINIMUM WAGE AND INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 1995-2007 a/
(Percentages)



Relatively similar countries fix the minimum wage at different levels

Ratio of minimum wage to median wage in selected OECD countries, 1995-2005.



Source: OECD (2007)



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- ILO TRAVAIL Database of Conditions of Work and Employment Laws (includes minimum wage information): <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/travmain.home>
- ILOLEX database, ratification of ILO conventions: <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>