



International  
Labour  
Organization



# ► A self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions

## **SAM-SDI**

Booklet no. 1: Introduction



**A self-assessment method for  
social dialogue institutions  
SAM-SDI**

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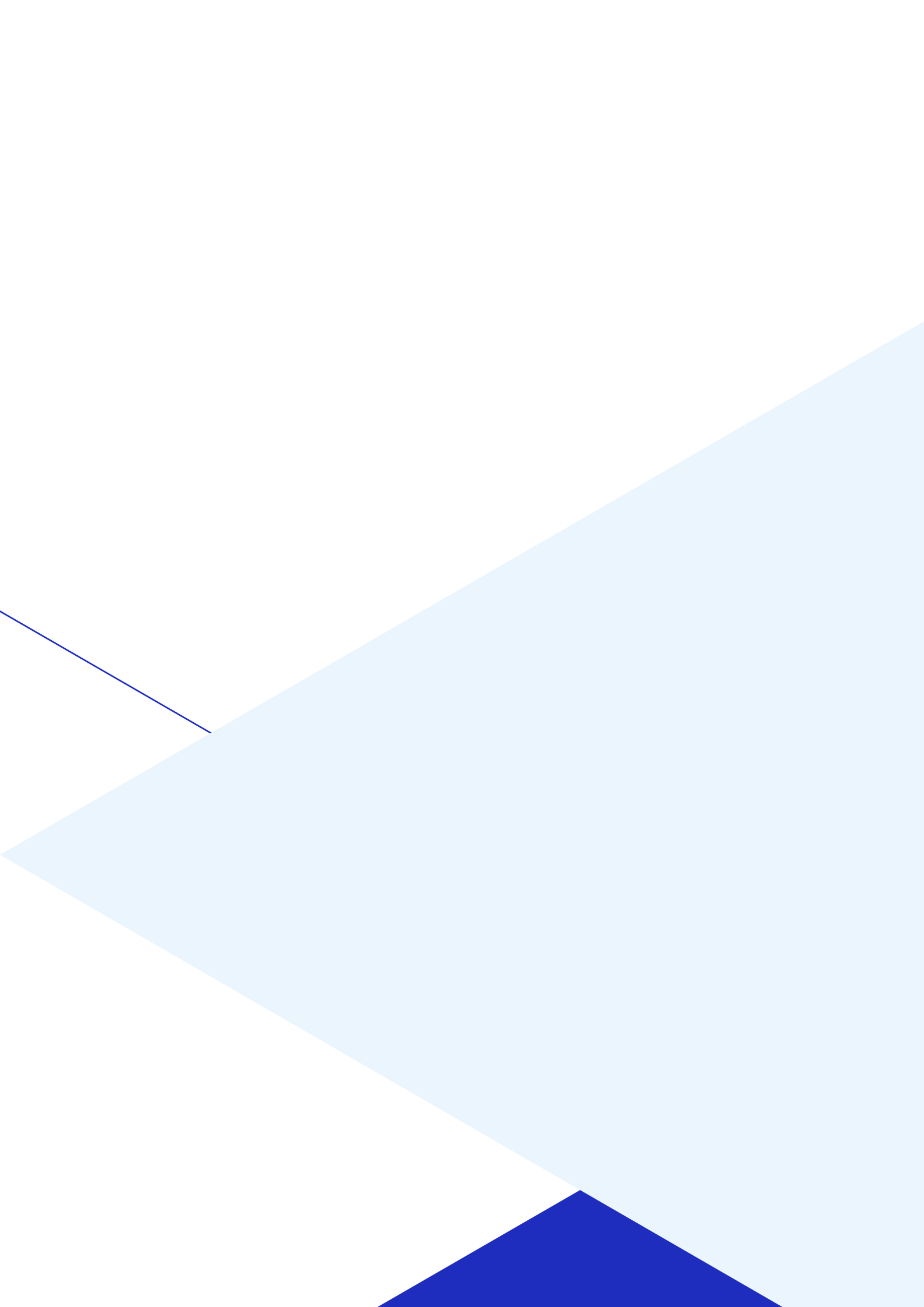
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# ► Foreword

This self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions has been developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in response to requests from member States for support to strengthen their national social dialogue institutions (SDIs). The method guides the social dialogue actors through a process to analyse the inclusiveness and effectiveness of their social dialogue institution, on the basis of which they can devise and implement an action plan to strengthen it.

The importance of social dialogue and tripartism to the mandate, structure and functioning of the ILO cannot be over-stated. The ILO is founded on the principle of tripartism, which involves cooperation through dialogue between governments, employers' and workers' organizations, on an equal footing and as independent partners, in all matters pertaining to the world of work. Social dialogue, based on respect for freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, has a crucial role in designing policies to promote social justice. It is a means to achieve social and economic progress. Social dialogue and tripartism are essential for democracy and good governance.<sup>1</sup>

Social dialogue institutions have a key role to play in the United Nations (UN) [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), including in the achievement of [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 16](#), which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice for all and *effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels* (emphasis added). Target 16.7 is to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Social dialogue is also an essential component of [SDG 8](#) to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, as well as of [SDG 5](#) on the achievement of gender equality.

In this context, the ILO has developed the present self-assessment method<sup>2</sup> through a collaborative and inclusive process, involving government, employer and worker representatives of SDIs in several countries, working with ILO officials drawn from a wide range of departments, including GOVERNANCE, ACT/EMP and ACTRAV, and field offices.<sup>3</sup> The project was supported by the Government of Sweden (Sida). The process of development of the SAM-SDI included two workshops organized in collaboration with the ITCILO in April and October 2019, "reality checks" of an early version of the method with members and secretariat staff of SDIs in Eswatini, India (Tamil Nadu) and Ireland in the summer of 2019, and an internal validation workshop held in Geneva in March 2020.<sup>4</sup>

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all the individuals and institutions that have contributed their time, energy and expertise to the project so far. The SAM-SDI remains work-in-progress. This first edition of the method will be rolled out and tested in or with a number of social dialogue institutions in 2021. Strong social dialogue institutions are expected to become more essential than ever as countries around the globe grapple with the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and seek to put in place and implement sustainable recovery plans. It is hoped that the lessons learned through the

<sup>1</sup> ILO (2018a). *Conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism*, International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> The SAM-SDI builds on ILO (2013a). *National tripartite social dialogue: An ILO guide for improved governance*, Geneva. This publication provides guidance on establishing and reinforcing institutional frameworks or mechanisms for tripartite social dialogue at the national level.

<sup>3</sup> See the acknowledgements for the full list of persons and institutions involved in the development of the SAM-SDI.

<sup>4</sup> The government, employer and worker representatives of SDIs (members of the task team) had been invited to submit their comments on the final draft prior to the validation workshop but did not participate in person.

application of the SAM-SDI will be used to improve the method in a future edition, as well as to determine the need among ILO constituents and SDIs for any complementary products or tools. We look forward to receiving feedback on the SAM-SDI from its users.



**Vera Paquete-Perdigao**

Director, Governance and Tripartism Department

International Labour Organization

Geneva, June 2021



# Acronyms

|                  |                                                                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ACT/EMP</b>   | Bureau for Employers' Activities, ILO                                                 |
| <b>ACTRAV</b>    | Bureau for Workers' Activities, ILO                                                   |
| <b>AICESIS</b>   | International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions    |
| <b>CEACR</b>     | Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations            |
| <b>CFA</b>       | Committee on Freedom of Association                                                   |
| <b>CSO</b>       | civil society organization                                                            |
| <b>DIALOGUE</b>  | Social Dialogue and Tripartism Unit, ILO                                              |
| <b>ILC</b>       | International Labour Conference                                                       |
| <b>ILO</b>       | International Labour Organization/International Labour Office                         |
| <b>IOE</b>       | International Organisation of Employers                                               |
| <b>ITCILO</b>    | International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin                                       |
| <b>ITUC</b>      | International Trade Union Confederation                                               |
| <b>LDR</b>       | labour dispute prevention and resolution                                              |
| <b>M &amp; E</b> | monitoring and evaluation                                                             |
| <b>MGA</b>       | Mutual Gains Approach                                                                 |
| <b>NATLEX</b>    | ILO database of national labour, social security and related human rights legislation |
| <b>NGO</b>       | non-governmental organization                                                         |
| <b>NORMLEX</b>   | ILO information system on international labour standards                              |
| <b>SAM-SDI</b>   | self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions                               |
| <b>SDG</b>       | Sustainable Development Goal                                                          |
| <b>SDI</b>       | social dialogue institution                                                           |
| <b>Sida</b>      | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency                                  |
| <b>SWOT</b>      | strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats                                         |
| <b>ToC</b>       | Theory of Change                                                                      |
| <b>UN</b>        | United Nations                                                                        |

## ► Icons used in the SAM-SDI

To help users navigate the SAM-SDI, icons are used as explanatory devices throughout the method.

|                                                                                     |                          |                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|    | <b>Guiding questions</b> | To facilitate group discussions*                 |
|    | <b>Definitions</b>       | Definitions or explanations of concepts          |
|    | <b>Activities</b>        | To facilitate participatory and productive work* |
|   | <b>Examples</b>          | To illustrate different aspects of the SAM-SDI   |
|  | <b>Templates</b>         | To organize and record the results of the work*  |

\* Booklet no. 7 comprises a package of interactive templates as presented in the SAM-SDI booklets. The templates allow the results of the self-assessment to be recorded electronically on a continuous basis. The templates included in the first six booklets are not interactive and cannot be used in this way.

# The booklets

This version of the self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions (SAM-SDI) is presented as a series of seven booklets. These can be downloaded separately for use during the implementation of the self-assessment process.

The content of the seven booklets, each of which contains the information, guidance and tools necessary to implement all steps of the SAM-SDI, is outlined below.

## Booklet no. 1

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### Introduction to the SAM-SDI

The first booklet introduces the SAM-SDI and provides an overview of the six steps of the method. It explains key definitions and concepts underlying the method.

## Booklet no. 2

---

### Step 0: Taking the decision to carry out a self-assessment and getting ready

In Step 0, the social dialogue institution (SDI) is guided through a process to decide whether to implement the SAM-SDI and to make the necessary preparations for it.

### Step 1: Building an understanding of the history and context of the SDI

Step 1 includes activities to build a shared understanding among the assessment team members of the history and context of the SDI.

## Booklet no. 3

---

### Step 2: Assessing the inclusiveness of the SDI

In Step 2, the self-assessment team undertakes an in-depth examination of the inclusiveness of the institution by exploring five dimensions of inclusiveness. Based on this analysis, the team draws up initial objectives and proposals for action to enhance the SDI's inclusiveness.

## Booklet no. 4

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### Step 3: Assessing the effectiveness of the SDI

In Step 3, the self-assessment team undertakes an in-depth examination of the institution's effectiveness by exploring the underlying factors influencing five dimensions of effectiveness.

Drawing on this analysis, the team identifies initial objectives and proposals for action to enhance the SDI's effectiveness.

## ► Booklet no. 5

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### ► Step 4: Formulating the action plan

In Step 4, the self-assessment team elaborates an action plan to enhance the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the SDI. The draft report and action plan are shared with the concerned stakeholders and finalized in light of their feedback.

### ► Step 5: Implementing the action plan

Step 5 offers some practical tips and guidance to support the effective implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

## ► Booklet no. 6

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### ► Annexes

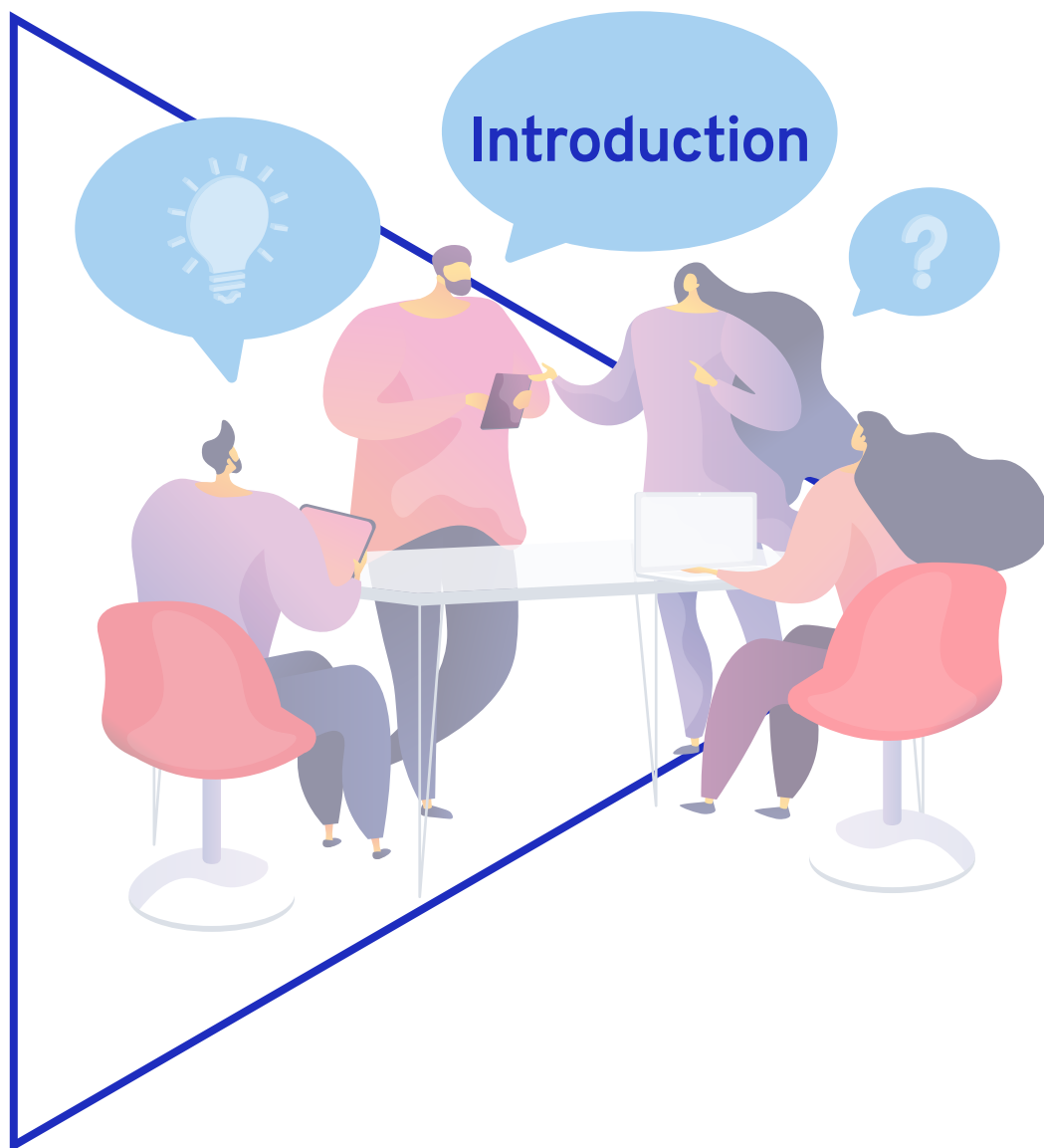
The annexes contain additional information and resources.

## ► Booklet no. 7

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### ► Templates and guiding questions

Interactive versions of the templates, guiding questions and activities of the SAM-SDI are provided in the final booklet. The forms allow the results of the self-assessment to be recorded electronically on a continuous basis. This will help users of the SAM-SDI to put together the outcomes of their work in a clear and concise way, and facilitate the drafting of the report on the self-assessment.







# Introduction

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# ► Introduction

## ► Why did the ILO develop the self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions (the SAM-SDI)?

---

In 2019, the International Labour Conference (ILC) reaffirmed the central importance of social dialogue in its Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. The Declaration states that social dialogue, including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation, provides an essential foundation of all ILO action and contributes to successful policy and decision-making in its member States.<sup>5</sup> It calls for the use of “strong, influential and inclusive mechanisms of social dialogue” to address all fundamental principles and rights at work.<sup>6</sup> Faced with the rapid and profound transformations currently affecting the world of work, inclusive and effective social dialogue is now more necessary than ever. Social dialogue empowers governments and the social partners<sup>7</sup> to be drivers of change and strong advocates for solutions to address the many challenges and opportunities they are facing.

The majority of the 187 member States of the ILO have SDIs with general competence.<sup>8</sup> Many have additional, specialized social dialogue mechanisms dealing with specific issues, such as employment, social security, wage-setting or ILO-related matters.<sup>9</sup> The mandate, composition, functioning, technical capacities and influence of these institutions vary widely. In some countries, they continue to demonstrate their value in influencing the direction of social and economic policy, including in the context of the COVID-19-induced crisis of 2020-21.<sup>10</sup> However, in others, they have been side-lined, thus undermining the trust of the social partners and threatening the sustainability of policy reforms.<sup>11</sup> There is, therefore, a pressing need to enhance the role, capacity and influence of many of these institutions.<sup>12</sup>

This need was recognized in the [Conclusions](#) concerning social dialogue and tripartism adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2018. In those Conclusions, the Conference calls upon the ILO to build the capacity of its constituents and social dialogue institutions to “enhance

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<sup>5</sup> ILO (2019a). *ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*, International Labour Conference, 108th Session, Geneva. para. II.B.

<sup>6</sup> ILO (2019a). para. IV.C.(iii).

<sup>7</sup> The term “social partners” refers to representative organizations of employers and of workers.

<sup>8</sup> Around 85 per cent of countries have an SDI with general competence. ILO (2018b). *Social dialogue and tripartism*, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva. para. 57.

<sup>9</sup> The Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), ratified by 153 member States as of September 2020, requires countries to operate procedures which ensure effective tripartite consultations with respect to specific matters regarding the activities of the ILO.

<sup>10</sup> ILO (2013b). *Social dialogue*, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, Geneva; and ILO (2020a). “The need for social dialogue in addressing the COVID-19 crisis”, Geneva.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, ILO (2020b). “Peak-level social dialogue as a governance tool during the COVID-19 pandemic: Global and regional trends and policy issues”, Geneva.

<sup>12</sup> The ILO policy framework for tackling the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis acknowledges the critical role of social dialogue. Pillar 4 of the framework, entitled “Relying on social dialogue for solutions”, calls for the strengthening of social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour relations institutions and processes.

the effectiveness and inclusiveness of mechanisms and institutions for national tripartite social dialogue between governments and the social partners, including in relation to areas pertaining to the future of work and the SDGs” as well as to “seek to achieve equal representation of women and men in social dialogue institutions at the national and international levels”.<sup>13</sup>

It is in this context that the ILO, with the support of the Government of Sweden (Sida), embarked on the development of the SAM-SDI in partnership with representatives of social dialogue institutions and experts from around the world.

## ► What is the SAM-SDI?

The SAM-SDI is a tool to enable the members of a social dialogue institution (SDI) to undertake an in-depth self-assessment of their institution and devise an action plan to enhance its inclusiveness and effectiveness. It guides users through a series of steps, with the aim to identify and understand the factors that influence the institution’s inclusiveness and effectiveness, on the basis of which they draw up an action plan to address any identified weaknesses and build on the strengths.



### ► What is social dialogue?

Social dialogue refers to all types of negotiation, consultation or information-sharing among representatives of governments, employers and workers, or between those of employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.<sup>14</sup>

The SAM-SDI is called a “method” because the assessment process follows a series of interlinked steps, rather than comprising stand-alone modules or sections which can be applied independently of each other. The SAM-SDI follows a logical sequence from beginning to end, which should normally be applied in its entirety. However, within each step, there is flexibility for the SDI to adapt the method to its particular situation. In addition, each SDI may determine a timeframe for undertaking the self-assessment in light of its preferences, resource availability or other pertinent factors.

The SAM-SDI is designed for use by the members of an SDI and its secretariat to assess their own institution; it is not a tool for an external assessment or evaluation of an SDI by a third party, such as an independent consultant or academic. However, as applying the SAM-SDI (for the first time, at least) may prove quite challenging in light of the different steps and assessment techniques involved, it may be helpful for the SDI to call on the services of a neutral facilitator to guide it through the exercise. The ILO field offices or headquarters may be requested to provide such facilitation.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> ILO (2018a), para. 5(d) and (i).

<sup>14</sup> ILO (2013a), *op.cit.*, para. 15.

<sup>15</sup> For further guidance on the use of a facilitator for the SAM-SDI, refer to [Step 0, section 2.1](#).

## ► Why should a social dialogue institution undertake a self-assessment?

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The ultimate goal of the SAM-SDI is to enable countries to achieve more socially just and economically sustainable policy outcomes by strengthening the contribution of social dialogue institutions to national policy-making processes. Evidence shows that policies developed through social dialogue, with the engagement of representative organizations of employers and workers alongside governments, deliver better, fairer and more sustainable outcomes than those conceived unilaterally by the government or imposed by an international institution without proper consultation with the concerned domestic actors.<sup>16</sup>

By undertaking and acting on the results of the self-assessment, the SDI should be able to enhance its inclusiveness and effectiveness. This will, in turn, increase the institution's public legitimacy, reputation and impact, thereby demonstrating its value to the government, the social partners and the public at large.

The process of applying the SAM-SDI will itself benefit the institution, by helping to foster an internal working culture that favours frank and open conversations based on mutual respect.

## ► Which social dialogue institutions can apply the SAM-SDI?

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Social dialogue happens in different ways and at various levels, from the local to the international level. It may occur in formal institutional settings or through relatively informal mechanisms. The SAM-SDI is targeted mainly at tripartite social dialogue institutions operating at the national or state/provincial levels, which have a broad mandate in economic and social policy.<sup>17</sup> The method is nonetheless suitable for application by social dialogue institutions of differing size, composition, mandate and resource availability. It is necessary for the SDI to have been operating for several years and to have acquired some practical experience upon which the assessment can be based; it is not appropriate for use by newly-established institutions which are in the very early stages of development.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Fraile (2010). *Blunting neoliberalism: Tripartism and economic reforms in the developing world*, ILO and Palgrave Macmillan; Papadakis, K. and Y. Ghellab (eds.) (2014). *The governance of policy reforms in southern Europe and Ireland: Social dialogue actors and institutions in times of crisis*, ILO, Geneva; and Guardancich, I. and O. Molina (eds.) (2017). *Talking through the crisis: Social dialogue and industrial relations trends in selected EU countries*, ILO, Geneva.

<sup>17</sup> The SAM-SDI is not intended for use by bipartite structures or mechanisms set up specifically for collective bargaining purposes.

<sup>18</sup> The SAM-SDI may nonetheless provide food for thought for a new institution when considering how best to accomplish its mandate.



## ► Key definitions

**Tripartism** is the model of labour market governance on which the ILO is founded and which it promotes through all its work. Tripartism refers to the interaction between governments, employers and workers (through their representatives) as equal and independent partners to seek joint solutions to issues of common concern. Tripartism is embedded in the [ILO Constitution](#) and reflected in the tripartite composition of its governance bodies (the [International Labour Conference](#) (ILC) and the [Governing Body](#)). Tripartism requires the views of each constituency to be given equal consideration in any forum and recognizes the distinct role and contribution of each party.

A **tripartite social dialogue institution** includes representatives of the ILO's three constituent groups (governments, employers' and workers' organizations).<sup>19</sup>

The ILO also promotes **bipartism** for sound and harmonious labour relations at various levels. Bipartism refers to the interaction between employers or their representative organizations and workers' organizations, without the involvement of the government.<sup>20 21</sup> A **bipartite social dialogue institution** includes representatives of employers and of workers.

Some countries have chosen to establish institutions or mechanisms for broader dialogue (also known as civil dialogue) which involve, in addition to government and the representative employers' and workers' organizations, other actors representing specific interests and/or independent experts.<sup>22</sup> A [resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue](#), adopted by the ILC at its 90th Session in 2002, sheds light on the relationship between the social partners and civil society organizations. It emphasizes that "the social partners are open to dialogue and that they work in the field with NGOs that share the same values and objectives and pursue them in a constructive manner". The Resolution goes on to recognize that "forms of dialogue other than social dialogue are most useful when all parties respect the respective roles and responsibilities of others, particularly concerning questions of representation".

<sup>19</sup> Many countries in all regions have established national tripartite social dialogue institutions: for example, the High Labour Council in Chile, the Economic and Social Council in Croatia, the Council of Economic and Social Agreement in the Czech Republic, the Indian Labour Conference, the Labour Advisory Board in Uganda and the National Council for Social Dialogue in Tunisia, to name just a few.

<sup>20</sup> Collective bargaining, a form of bipartite social dialogue, is defined in the [Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 \(No. 154\)](#). See the glossary of terms in [Annex 1](#) for the definition.

<sup>21</sup> Bipartite social dialogue may in some instances involve representatives of the government, where the State is the employer, and of public sector workers, for example in health or education.

<sup>22</sup> For example, participants in the Economic, Social and Labour Council of the Republic of Korea include representatives of youth, women, non-regular workers and small and medium-sized enterprises alongside the main tripartite constituencies; the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) of South Africa includes representatives of Business, Labour, Government and a Community constituency; membership of the Social and Economic Council (SER) of the Netherlands encompasses the social partners and independent (or "Crown") members – whose role is to protect the general good – on an equal footing; and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) of Ireland comprises representatives of business and employers' organizations, trade unions, agricultural and farming organizations, community and voluntary organizations and environmental organizations, as well as heads of Government departments and independent experts.

## ► Conceptual framework of the SAM-SDI

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### 1. Preconditions for effective social dialogue

The ILO has identified four preconditions for effective social dialogue:

- respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- independent, strong and representative employers' and workers' organizations;
- the political will and commitment of all parties to engage in good faith dialogue;
- an enabling legal and institutional framework.

Unless and until these preconditions are in place, any social dialogue institution will struggle to function effectively. These principles are therefore fundamental to the SAM-SDI and should be kept in mind throughout the assessment process.

### 2. ILO standards relating to social dialogue

Of particular importance for social dialogue are the [Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 \(No. 87\)](#) and the [Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 \(No. 98\)](#), both of which are fundamental, or human rights, Conventions. Most ILO standards call for the involvement of the social partners in their implementation, and usually require consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers at the national level. A number of standards focus specifically on tripartite social dialogue, in particular the [Tripartite Consultation \(International Labour Standards\) Convention, 1976 \(No. 144\)](#), its accompanying [Tripartite Consultation \(Activities of the International Labour Organisation\) Recommendation, 1976 \(No. 152\)](#), and the [Consultation \(Industrial and National Levels\) Recommendation, 1960 \(No. 113\)](#).<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Understanding the role of tripartite social dialogue in policy-making

Policy-making typically involves a series of steps:

- agenda-setting (selecting the policy priorities requiring attention);
- policy formulation (consideration of alternative policy responses);
- decision-making (selection of the preferred policy option);
- policy implementation (putting the policy into practice); and
- monitoring and evaluation (assessing results and impact, which may inform further adjustment of the policy).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> An overview of the key provisions of these and other standards of particular relevance to tripartite social dialogue can be found in [Annex 2](#).

<sup>24</sup> The concept of the policy cycle was developed by Harold Lasswell in the USA in the 1950s. For further explanation, see, for example, Savard, J.-F. with the collaboration of R. Banville (2012). "Policy Cycles" in L. Côté and J.-F. Savard (eds.), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Public Administration*,

► Figure 1: The policy cycle



In an ideal scenario, tripartite social dialogue should occur at each step, giving the whole policy process greater legitimacy based on a process of political exchange and negotiation. In reality, however, social dialogue may occur with a greater or lesser degree of intensity, or even not at all, at the different stages. The extent and intensity of social dialogue depend on many factors, including the prevailing political, social and economic conditions, the level of trust between the social partners, the political will to engage in social dialogue and the national culture and traditions.

The role of social dialogue in policy-making differs widely between regions and countries. There is no blueprint or “one-size-fits-all” for social dialogue. The specific mechanisms or institutions in a country must correspond to national circumstances, needs and priorities. However, tripartite social dialogue institutions must *always* provide for the participation, on an equal footing,<sup>25</sup> of independent social partners alongside the government.

#### 4. A conceptual framework for understanding institutional inclusiveness and effectiveness

The assessment approach used in the SAM-SDI is based upon two key concepts: inclusiveness and effectiveness. These aspects of an SDI were highlighted by the ILC in 2018 when it called on the ILO to strengthen the capacity of social dialogue institutions.<sup>26</sup> While these concepts are often referred to in relation to social dialogue, neither of them is defined in any ILO instrument

<sup>25</sup> The expression “equal footing” means that the voices of all three parties carry equal weight in the discussions and the views of any one party do not dominate those of the others.

<sup>26</sup> ILO (2018a), *op. cit.*, para. 5(d): “enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of mechanisms and institutions for national tripartite social dialogue between governments and the social partners, including in relation to areas pertaining to the future of work and the SDGs”.

or official document; nor are there other internationally agreed and applicable definitions on which to draw.<sup>27</sup>

The SAM-SDI does not propose specific definitions of inclusiveness and effectiveness.<sup>28</sup> Instead, in this section, it sets out:

- ▶ A set of *operational dimensions* of inclusiveness and effectiveness. These dimensions aim to capture the key aspects of each concept and will provide the basis for the self-assessment process.
- ▶ A *tentative conceptual framework*. Drawing on the academic literature, the framework aims to help build an understanding of how the concepts of inclusiveness and effectiveness relate to the performance and ultimate impact of the SDI.

### 1) The operational dimensions of inclusiveness and effectiveness

As the objective of the SAM-SDI is to enhance the inclusiveness and effectiveness of an SDI, it is essential first to understand, more precisely, what these concepts mean in a practical or operational sense.<sup>29</sup>

In the absence of ILO or other internationally agreed definitions, the approach taken in the SAM-SDI is to propose a number of “dimensions” of inclusiveness and effectiveness, which seek to capture certain important aspects of each concept. It is not claimed that all dimensions necessarily apply to each and every SDI nor that, taken together, they cover every possible aspect of an inclusive or effective institution. Nonetheless, the dimensions are derived from good practice in SDIs around the world and are believed to be relevant to most institutions.

A brief explanation of the meaning of each dimension is provided in the figures below. Further explanation is given in [Step 2](#) (for inclusiveness) and [Step 3](#) (for effectiveness) of the SAM-SDI.

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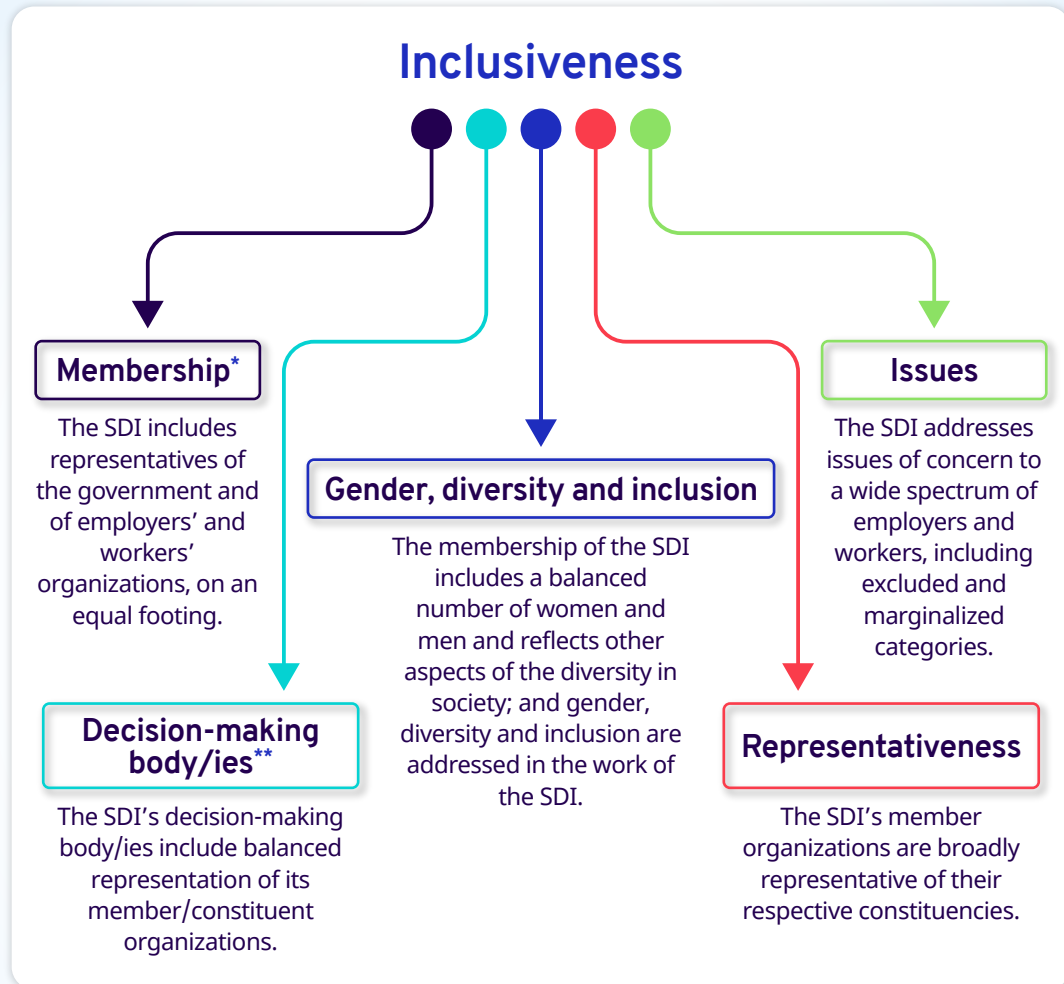
<sup>27</sup> There are, nonetheless, generic dictionary definitions. For example, inclusiveness is defined as: “the practice or policy of not excluding any person on the grounds of race, gender, religion, age, disability, etc.”; and effectiveness as: “the quality of being effective”, with effective defined as “successful in producing a desired or intended result”.

<sup>28</sup> The authors do not deem it appropriate or necessary to propose such definitions in the absence of extensive consultation with ILO tripartite constituents.

<sup>29</sup> For a more in-depth, theoretical exploration of the concept of effectiveness in relation to SDIs, see: Guardiancich I. and O. Molina. (2020). *The effectiveness of national social dialogue institutions: From theory to evidence*. ILO, Geneva.



► Figure 2: The five dimensions of institutional inclusiveness

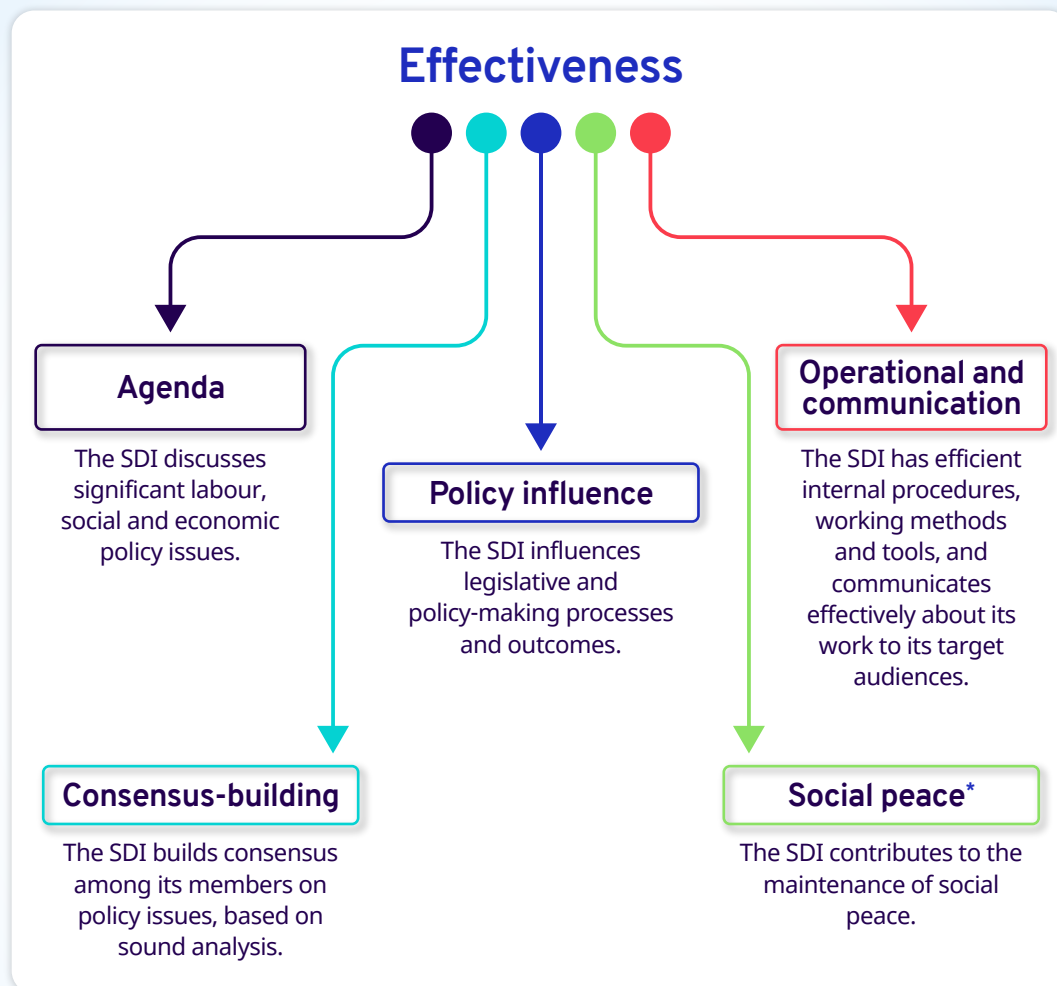


\* The SAM-SDI acknowledges the existence of institutions with a broader membership, including other civil society groups or organizations; such broader dialogue goes beyond tripartite social dialogue as embodied and practised by the ILO. The SAM-SDI similarly acknowledges institutions with a narrower membership in which the government is not represented or is only indirectly represented.

\*\* Relevant only for those SDIs which have a separate decision-making body or bodies (distinct from the plenary).



► Figure 3: The five dimensions of institutional effectiveness



\* The social peace dimension seeks to capture the role of the SDI in maintaining an overall harmonious industrial relations environment and defusing tensions between labour market actors. This dimension applies as well to those SDIs which have a specific mandate for dispute prevention and resolution. Guidance for the assessment of specialist labour dispute resolution bodies (which the SAM-SDI does not specifically target) is available in: ITCILO (2013). *Labour dispute systems: Guidelines for improved performance*, Turin.

## 2) A preliminary conceptual framework for the SAM-SDI<sup>30</sup>

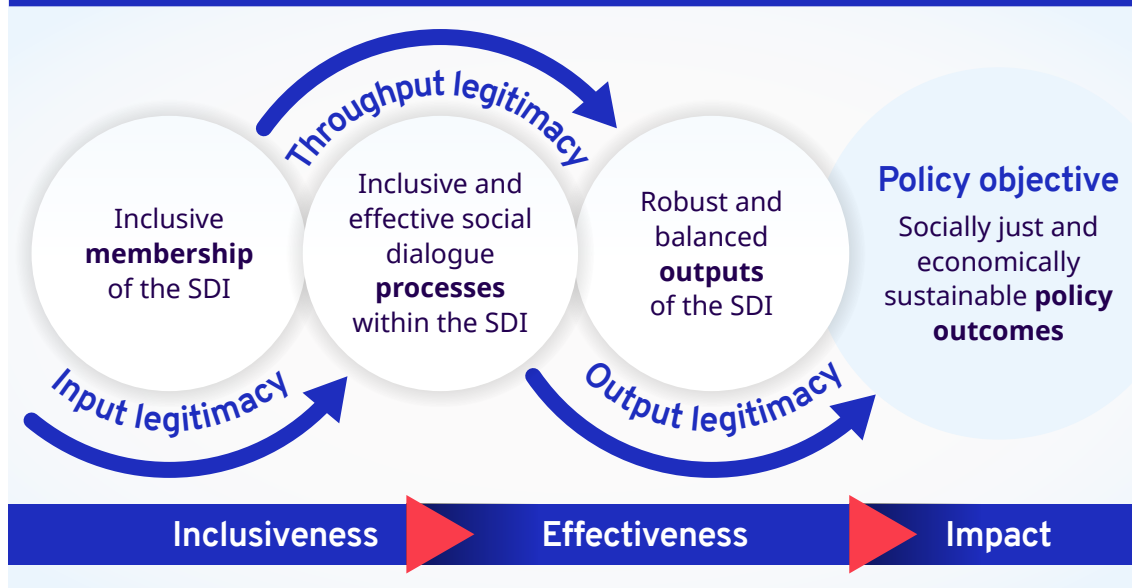
Having outlined the scope of the dimensions of inclusiveness and effectiveness, it is important now to build an understanding of the relationship between, on the one hand, these key aspects of an SDI and, on the other hand, the achievement of more socially just and economically sustainable policy outcomes - which is the ultimate objective of the SAM-SDI. The basic premise underlying the SAM-SDI is that by enhancing its inclusiveness and effectiveness, the SDI will be able to increase its contribution to the achievement of that desirable policy objective.

In order to understand this relationship between the SDI and the ultimate policy objective, the notions of “input”, “output” and “throughput” legitimacy are relevant. These notions have been proposed in the academic literature as normative criteria to evaluate the political legitimacy of democratic institutions.<sup>31</sup> While input legitimacy focuses on the “who” of decision-making, output legitimacy addresses the “what” and throughput legitimacy the “how”.

Figure 4 presents the conceptual framework as a flow chart, showing how the inclusiveness and effectiveness of an SDI relate to the input, throughput and output legitimacy of social dialogue, and how these characteristics contribute to the ultimate policy impact of the institution.



► Figure 4: A conceptual framework for the SAM-SDI



- The *input legitimacy* of social dialogue relates to the *inclusiveness* of an SDI – meaning which organizations participate in it, whether these organizations represent the voices of a broad spectrum of employers and workers, and whether they include the most appropriate government representation (the “who”). Hence, insofar as strong and representative social partners have the legitimacy to participate in social dialogue, an *inclusive* SDI increases the *input legitimacy* of social dialogue within the policy-making process.

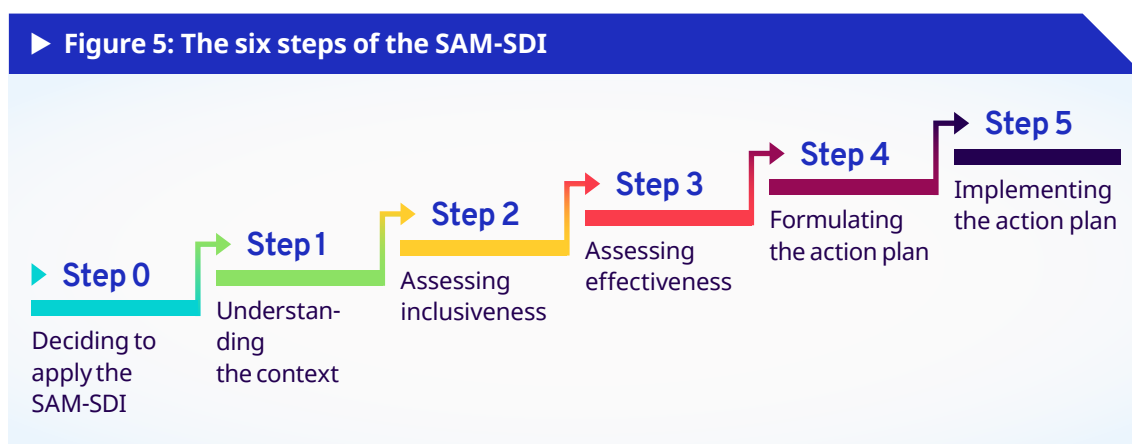
<sup>30</sup> This should be considered as a preliminary conceptual framework that may be subject to further elaboration in the future.

<sup>31</sup> For further discussion of these concepts in the context of democratic governance systems, see Scharpf, F. (2003). “Problem-solving effectiveness and democratic accountability in the EU”, MPIfG Working Paper 03/1; and Schmidt, V.A. (2013). “Democracy and legitimacy in the European Union revisited: Input, output and ‘throughput’”, *Political Studies*, 61(1), pp. 2-22.

- ▶ The *throughput legitimacy* of social dialogue relates to both the *inclusiveness* and *effectiveness* of an SDI. Throughput legitimacy refers to how the inputs made by the members of the SDI are transformed, by way of its internal processes and operations, into its policy or other outputs. This concerns, for example, how the agenda is set, how the SDI organizes its work and how its members interact with each other (the “how”). If an SDI gives equal consideration to the views of each constituency through inclusive and effective internal processes, in order to produce its outputs by consensus, the *throughput legitimacy* of social dialogue is enhanced.
- ▶ Finally, the *output legitimacy* of social dialogue relates to the *effectiveness* of an SDI and refers to the policy or other outputs it produces (the “what”). This concerns, for example, whether the SDI’s outputs are evidence-based, well presented, balanced and ultimately influence policy in the way that was intended.<sup>32</sup> Thus, when the policy or other outputs of an SDI meet certain predefined quality criteria and are influential in policy-making, the *output legitimacy* of social dialogue is high.

## ▶ A quick overview of the steps of the SAM-SDI

The SAM-SDI comprises six steps, as presented in Figure 5. Each step contains sub-steps which are illustrated in the SAM-SDI journey in Figure 6.



<sup>32</sup> The assessment of effectiveness does not extend to the policies eventually adopted and implemented, in terms of their substance and contribution to more socially just and economically sustainable policy outcomes. This would constitute an evaluation of the SDI’s impact, which is beyond the scope of the SAM-SDI.

## ► Step 0: Deciding to apply the SAM-SDI and getting ready

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This critical initial step involves decision-makers in the SDI, examining whether the right conditions are in place to proceed with the assessment. A “snapshot quiz” allows a quick self-assessment of the SDI as a contribution to the decision-making process. If the decision is to go ahead with the self-assessment, it is important to build the commitment of the SDI members to the process and its eventual outcome. Guidance is provided to help build an inclusive team to undertake the self-assessment and develop a work plan.

## ► Step 1: Building an understanding of the SDI’s history and context

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The team undertakes a number of preliminary activities to build a shared understanding of the history and context of the SDI. These include reviewing the objectives of the SDI, constructing a timeline of key milestones in its development and mapping the wider institutional environment in which the SDI operates.

## ► Step 2: Assessing inclusiveness

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The team conducts an assessment of the various dimensions of the institution’s inclusiveness, based on an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses against predefined benchmarks. This assessment forms the basis for the development of a set of objectives and activities to enhance the inclusiveness of the SDI.

## ► Step 3: Assessing effectiveness

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The team examines the different dimensions of institutional effectiveness. After first identifying specific results of the SDI related to each dimension, a series of guiding questions is provided to help the team build an understanding of the underlying influencing factors that contributed to those results. The team may wish to consult other leaders or members of the SDI, past or present, or external stakeholders or partners, to gain a broader perspective on the issues. Based on this assessment, the team identifies key objectives and activities to enhance the effectiveness of the SDI.

## ► Step 4: Formulating the action plan

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The team produces an action plan building on the outlines of objectives and activities formulated in steps two and three. The full action plan further develops and consolidates the provisional outlines, and includes additional details such as a timeline, allocation of responsibilities, budget and a monitoring and evaluation framework. Concerned stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the draft report and action plan, which are then finalized and disseminated.

## ► Step 5: Implementing the action plan

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Step five provides tips for the effective implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

► **Figure 6: The SAM-SDI journey**

► **Step 0: Taking the decision to carry out a self-assessment and getting ready**

1. Decide, through consensus, whether to apply the SAM-SDI
2. Select the assessment team
3. Devise a work plan and budget

► **Step 1: Building an understanding of the history and context of the SDI**

1. Review the SDI's objectives
2. Construct a timeline
3. Map the institutional environment

► **Step 2: Assessing the inclusiveness of the SDI**

1. Assess the five dimensions of inclusiveness using benchmarks
2. Identify objectives and action to enhance inclusiveness

► **Step 3: Assessing the effectiveness of the SDI**

1. Discuss the dimensions of effectiveness and adjust, if necessary, to the SDI
2. Identify examples of achievements and disappointments
3. Assess the five dimensions of effectiveness using guiding questions
4. Identify objectives and action to enhance effectiveness

► **Step 4: Formulating the action plan**

1. Develop the action plan
2. Hold a consultation to gather feedback
3. Finalize and disseminate the self-assessment report and action plan

► **Step 5: Implementing the action plan**

1. Monitor progress
2. Adjust implementation in light of progress



## ► Who is involved in each step of the SAM-SDI?

|                      | The stakeholders involved                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Step 0</b>        | <p>The <b>leaders</b> in the SDI,<sup>33</sup> who take the decision to undertake the assessment, nominate members of the assessment team and allocate resources to support their work.</p> <p>The <b>assessment team</b>,<sup>34</sup> which reviews/adapts the method and prepares the work plan.</p> <p>The <b>SDI members/plenary</b>, who may need to review and endorse the work plan.</p> <p>The <b>government</b>, if not represented in the SDI, should, at a minimum, be informed/consulted or, more likely, be represented in the self-assessment team.<sup>35</sup></p>                                                                                                    |
| <b>Step 1</b>        | <p>The <b>assessment team</b>, which undertakes an analysis of the SDI's context.</p> <p>The <b>leaders</b> in the SDI, who are kept informed of progress and provide guidance as necessary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Steps 2 and 3</b> | <p>The <b>assessment team</b>, which assesses the SDI's inclusiveness and effectiveness.</p> <p>Possible involvement of other <b>members of the SDI</b> and <b>its secretariat</b>, and of <b>external stakeholders</b>, as sources of additional information and insights.</p> <p>The <b>leaders</b> in the SDI, who are kept informed of progress and provide guidance as necessary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Steps 4 and 5</b> | <p>The <b>assessment team</b>, which produces a draft report on the assessment findings and a draft action plan.</p> <p>The <b>SDI members and secretariat, and other key stakeholders</b>, who review and provide feedback on the draft report and action plan.</p> <p>The <b>leaders</b> in the SDI, who endorse the final report and the action plan, and secure/ allocate resources for its implementation.</p> <p>The <b>government</b>, if not represented in the SDI, should be involved as deemed appropriate by the SDI leaders.<sup>36</sup></p> <p>The <b>SDI members and secretariat</b>, who are involved in implementing, monitoring and evaluating the action plan.</p> |

<sup>33</sup> The leaders in the SDI may be, for example, the members of the governing body, executive council, management committee, bureau or another internal governance structure. Representatives of the social partners should be involved in taking the decision in [Step 0](#) and throughout the subsequent self-assessment process.

<sup>34</sup> The composition of the assessment team is discussed in [Step 0](#).

<sup>35</sup> While the membership of the assessment team is at the discretion of the SDI leadership, the inclusion of a government representative is recommended. This is because the government usually provides funding for the SDI, has an interest in its effective functioning and is likely to be involved in supporting the implementation of the action plan.

<sup>36</sup> Again, the inclusion of a government representative is recommended.

## ► Further reading and resources

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ILO (1998). *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up*, Geneva.

Adopted by the ILC in 1998, the Declaration commits all ILO member States to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work, whether or not they have ratified the relevant Conventions. The fundamental principles and rights at work are: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

ILO (2011). *Promote tripartite consultation: Ratify and apply Convention No. 144: Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)*, Geneva.

This is a user-friendly guide to Convention No. 144 providing guidance on what it means, why it should be ratified and how to implement it in practice.

ILO (2013a). *National tripartite social dialogue: An ILO guide for improved governance*, Geneva.

This guide responds to the demand from ILO member States for technical support to establish or strengthen mechanisms for tripartite social dialogue at the policy level in line with international labour standards and good practice.

ILO (2013b). *Social dialogue*, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, Geneva.

This background report for the ILC's first recurrent discussion on social dialogue in 2013 sets out key concepts and definitions regarding social dialogue, provides an overview of trends, challenges and opportunities for social dialogue in a changing world, describes the ILO's action to support its constituents' needs and demands, and concludes with key observations and lessons learned.

ITCLO (2013). *Labour dispute systems: Guidelines for improved performance*, Turin.

This guide aims to assist practitioners working to establish, assess and improve systems and processes for the effective prevention and resolution of labour disputes. These processes are key to minimizing the occurrence and consequences of workplace conflict and they help strengthen social partnerships. The guide provides practical advice on the steps needed to revitalize an existing system or establish a new, independent institution, ensuring they operate efficiently and provide effective dispute resolution services.

ILO (2017). *Voice matters: Consultation (Industrial and National Levels) Recommendation, 1960 (No. 113)*, Geneva.

This is a user-friendly guide to ILO Recommendation No. 113 on consultation at the industrial and national levels, adopted in 1960. The guide, for use by governments, employers' and workers' organizations, provides practical information to help ILO constituents apply the Recommendation – including on the meaning of consultation, its aims and scope, the different forms it may take and its various possible outcomes. The guide includes examples of good practice in consultation and cooperation, drawn from ILO member States.

ILO (2018a). *Resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism*, International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva.

These conclusions adopted by the ILC in 2018 set out a framework for action on the promotion of the ILO strategic objective of social dialogue and tripartism. The framework includes guiding principles and a wide range of recommendations for action to be taken by ILO Members and the International Labour Office covering all forms and levels of social dialogue. The Governing Body of the ILO subsequently endorsed a [plan of action on social dialogue and tripartism](#) (2019-23) in March 2019.

ILO (2018b). *Social dialogue and tripartism*, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva.

This report (the background report for the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism at the 107th Session of the ILC) provides an overview of the global status of social dialogue in its various forms in 2018, the action taken by the ILO to respond to the needs of ILO constituents for support in this area and observations regarding the challenges and opportunities for social dialogue in a fast changing world of work.

ILO (2019a). *ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*, International Labour Conference, 108th Session, Geneva.

The ILO Centenary Declaration, adopted by the ILC in 2019, reviews the major challenges and opportunities for the future of work, ranging from technology to climate change, from demographic shifts to the need for new skills. It provides guidance for dealing with these pressing issues and a platform for cooperation between the ILO and other organizations in the international system. It is also a strong reaffirmation of the social justice mandate the ILO was given 100 years ago, and of the critical role of social dialogue and international labour standards in fulfilling that mandate.

ILO (2019b). *"Our story, your story"*.

As the ILO celebrates its 100th anniversary, embark on a journey through its past, present and future, and learn about the factors that have shaped the ILO, including tripartism and social dialogue.

ILO. *"Freedom of association: A guide for workers"*

Prepared by the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), this online guide provides an overview of the principles on freedom of association which have been established by the ILO supervisory bodies on the basis of the ILO's Constitution and its standards. It explains as well how ILO procedures and bodies can be used to secure and promote freedom of association in practice.

## Online self-paced courses

ITCILO (n.d.). *"Introduction to social dialogue and tripartism"*, International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin.

This module provides a basic understanding of social dialogue - what it is, who is involved, what the benefits are, how the ILO helps and the role played by specific ILO bodies.

ITCILO (n.d.). [“Social dialogue and industrial relations. A self-guided induction course”](#). International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin.

The objective of this self-guided induction course is to develop a basic knowledge and understanding of social dialogue, tripartism and industrial relations based on the relevant ILO standards.

ITCILO (2014). [eLearning module on social dialogue](#), International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin.

This eLearning Module is intended to develop a basic understanding of social dialogue - what it is, who is involved, what the benefits are – and provides information on the outcomes reached by the European social partners at the cross-industry level.





## Advancing social justice, promoting decent work

The International Labour Organization is the United Nations agency for the world of work. We bring together governments, employers and workers to drive a human-centred approach to the future of work through employment creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue.

## The self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions

The self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions (SAM-SDI) has been developed by the International Labour Organization to help constituents analyse and strengthen the inclusiveness and effectiveness of their social dialogue institutions.

The method is intended for social dialogue actors in all parts of the world and for institutions of various sizes, composition and mandate, and with different resource levels. It guides users through a series of steps, from taking the decision to undertake a self-assessment, through the process of assessing the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the institution to the development, implementation and monitoring of an action plan.

The method is flexible and may be adapted by each institution to suit its own particular circumstances, needs and priorities.

**Booklet number 1** contains an introduction to the SAM-SDI and an overview of the six steps the method entails. It explains key definitions and concepts underlying the SAM-SDI.

## ► Contact

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