



Subregional tripartite workshop on promoting social dialogue and decent work in the railways sector

Livingstone, Zambia, 22 – 24 August 2023

► Introduction

This document is the result of the discussions at the Subregional tripartite workshop on social dialogue in the railways sector, held in Livingstone from 22 to 24 August 2023. The objective of the workshop was to identify main opportunities and challenges for promoting social dialogue in the railways sector in selected countries of the sub-region (Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe); and to exchange best practices and experiences with a view to contributing towards a sub-regional and national building blocks on promoting a safe and sustainable railways sector through social dialogue.

The railways sector provides one of the most energy efficient modes of transport for both freight and passengers. The sector is critical to developing sustainable supply chains, energy transition policies and ensuring passenger mobility. It plays a key role in transporting people and goods, facilitating trade and tourism, and creating sustainable economic growth. The sector is a major employer in several countries.

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. Free, independent, strong and representative employers' and workers' organizations, together with trust, commitment and respect by the governments for the autonomy of the social partners and social dialogue outcomes are key conditions for effective social dialogue.

Social dialogue comes in various forms and levels according to national traditions and contexts, including in the form of cross-border social dialogue in an increasingly complex globalized economy. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to organize and strengthen social dialogue. However, collective bargaining remains at the heart of social dialogue. Consultations, exchanges of information and other forms of dialogue between social partners and with governments are also important.

All ILO Member States have the duty to adopt, implement and effectively enforce national laws and regulations to ensure that fundamental principles and rights at work and ratified international labour Conventions protect and are applied to all workers in the railways sector, taking into account their obligations under other international labour standards.

The workshop had 20 representatives from the above-mentioned countries nominated by invited workers, employers and Governments, as well as 18 observers. Women represented 44 per cent of overall participants. During the two and a half days, and taking as a basis the [Manual on social dialogue in the railways sector](#), participatory approaches were used to support interactive tripartite social dialogue, including through group exercises both by constituent group and by

represented countries. This approach allowed participants to share their experiences and learn from each other, while identifying key policy priorities for advancing social dialogue for decent work in the sector.

Furthermore, in collaboration with the Livingstone Railways Museum, a brief field visit was organized to the Museum and to the Victoria Falls railways bridge. The workshop closed with the discussion and agreement on Building blocks for advancing decent and sustainable work in the railways sector through social dialogue in the sub-region.

► Building blocks for advancing decent and sustainable work in the railways sector through social dialogue

The following building blocks were discussed and agreed on at the subregional tripartite workshop on social dialogue in the railways sector. They identify key areas for promoting social dialogue towards a safe and sustainable railways sector, in the countries represented at the workshop: Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

1. Social dialogue for decent work in a safe and sustainable railways sector

- Effective social dialogue in all its forms, with freedom of association and collective bargaining at its heart
- Strengthening workers' and employers' organizations, including training and capacity-building in social dialogue and negotiation skills
- Involvement of parties in decisions of concern to them and adequate representation and recognition in governance and management structures
- Effective social dialogue as prerequisite for safe and sustainable railways systems

2. Social and labour protections

- Decent living wages and working hours
- Equal pay for work of equal value, including solid contractual arrangements and sound employment relationships
- Decent working conditions and protections, which include on-time payments of wages, benefits and pensions
- Enhance the attractiveness and retention of workers in the sector, in particular for women and youth
- Equal opportunities and non-discrimination for all in the male-dominated railways sector, and combatting violence and harassment at work in line with the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)

3. Occupational safety and health

- A safe and healthy working environment includes a railways safety culture based on compliance with and enforcement of procedures, and involvement of all concerned
- Safe access to inclusive and decent sanitation and welfare facilities
- Adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), including geared towards the specific needs of women
- Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards as fundamental principles and rights for all railway workers
- Negotiated and respected rest and leave systems
- Harmonization of prevention measures
- Union involvement in accident and incident investigations and reporting
- Technical standards ensuring the provision of safety training, safety tools and international standards
- OSH committees including elected representatives in every workplace with full employer recognition and representation of women workers

4. Training and skills

- Inclusive skills development and training for decent and sustainable work
- Training, reskilling and upskilling responding to technological, climate and structural change
- Skills certification and international harmonization of certificates, diplomas and recognition of prior learning
- Allocation of adequate financial training resources

5. Financing, structural change in ownership and operations

- Adequate and innovative financial investment for recapitalization and sustainability in partnership
- Transparency in sharing information on changes in ownership and/or operations from the outset
- Effective consultation and engagement of all parties concerned, in particular directly affected parties
- Protection against discrimination in (re-)classification of workers

6. Policy coherence and awareness raising

- Coherent and aligned policy frameworks and their implementation, including among relevant ministries and public entities in the sector
- Duly implemented and enforced coherent and effective laws, regulations and policies

- Effective enforcement and compliance policies and practices, including labour administration and inspection and mutual accountability
- Awareness raising and dissemination of information on rights and obligations
- Decent work country programmes as guidance
- Political will and commitment

7. International labour standards, fundamental principles and rights at work, and legal frameworks

- Ratification and effective implementation of international labour standards, in particular, but not limited to, the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)
- Duly implemented and enforced coherent and effective laws, regulations and policies
- Respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work for all and ensure freedom of association and collective bargaining and a safe and healthy working environment free of discrimination

► Next steps and way forward

Participants are encouraged to disseminate the outcomes of the workshop and report back to the relevant regional bodies and national authorities, as well as relevant sectoral stakeholders in their respective countries and promote through advocacy and social dialogue (including collective bargaining) the implementation of the approaches outlined in the Building blocks, including through national and regional action plans and sectoral platforms. Through a follow up mechanism, participants may report to the ILO, at regular intervals, the result of the deliberations and promotion of the these Building blocks at the national and regional levels.

The ILO should continue working with the tripartite constituents to explore opportunities to support the implementation of the Building blocks, build capacity for them to engage in effective social dialogue, including through identifying opportunities for development cooperation activities.