

# Foreword

The International Labour Organization is concerned with the human condition of work, starting from the principle that “labour is not a commodity” as set out in the ILO’s Constitution. Respect for the dignity of work is consistent with and essential for sustainable development. The centrality of work to people’s lives as a source of well-being, security, identity and a pathway to progress, as well as to societies and to economies, requires the quantity and the quality of work to go hand in hand.

These fundamentals are distilled in our goal of promoting social justice through decent work for all.

The ILO’s work as a whole contributes to building frameworks within which economic processes can generate prosperity with equity in national life. This requires both national action and an enabling international environment. The organization has sought to do its part through the development of a normative framework supported by advocacy, institution building, technical programmes and research. It combines these and brings its strong normative function into its development cooperation programme centred on the world of work.

The decent work approach is applicable at all levels of development and in the formal and informal economy, the threshold of decent work advancing in keeping with the possibilities of a given society. Decent work that can support decent lives according to specific national contexts and challenges is for many the sustainable route out of poverty.

Through our development cooperation programme we put the approach into practice. This Report illustrates through stories, pictures, facts and figures from our development cooperation programme, how the ILO’s mandate and approach translate into results that

contribute to better lives for people through the world of work in a variety of circumstances.

Our programme is structured around the four “inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive” strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda: the promotion of **rights at work**; **employment**, **social protection** and **social dialogue** with gender a cross-cutting theme. These have provided the basis for nineteen concrete outcomes which are the foundation of the ILO’s Programme and Budget and its results architecture.

In 2009 as the impact of the global economic crisis took hold, the International Labour Conference adopted the Global Jobs Pact setting out policy responses based on the Decent Work Agenda. In 2010-11 the crisis provided the central arena for our work. In many countries it was also a period of great upheaval with unemployment, especially youth unemployment a core theme, along with a growing sense of growing injustice and human indignity.

These crises underscored the importance of all dimensions of the Decent Work Agenda – the imperative of jobs; the need to uphold the freedoms underpinning the fundamental principles and rights at work – freedom from child labour, forced labour, discrimination and the freedom to organize and bargain collectively; the multidimensional role of social protection – protecting, empowering and sustaining effective demand; and the importance of social dialogue in shaping balanced and just approaches.

In many instances our programmes were reoriented to respond to demands emerging from these crises – for example, action on industrial relations, social dialogue and collective bargaining; the revision of labour codes, support for labour administration and labour

inspection policies and programmes. Also important was action to strengthen the capacity of workers and employers' organizations so that, among other things, they could be better placed to help shape the policy directions for a better future.

Employment policy and programmes were of central importance. At the policy level, the ILO worked with countries to promote and advise on comprehensive and integrated approaches. One major avenue was to secure a better understanding of the impact of different policies on productive employment and decent work. At the same time the ILO worked with constituents and stakeholders on a range of programmes from employment intensive infrastructure development, the promotion of sustainable enterprises including cooperatives to the promotion of youth employment programmes.

The concept of social protection floors gained momentum in this period and, with ILO support, many countries moved towards expanded coverage. Two new standards were adopted in the field of social protection during this biennium - the HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010, (No. 200) and the Domestic Workers' Convention, 2011, (No. 189). These stimulated a number of requests for ILO support including to help countries improve their capacity to collect and produce reliable data, crucial for the development of effective social protection policies and programmes.

This publication can only present a snapshot of our action. Interested readers are invited to access more information at [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).

Yet, it must also be noted that for policies and programmes for the world of work, as well as other social, economic and environmental policies to have maximum impact – there must be integrated thinking and coherent approaches at operational and policy levels rather than relying on the sum of sectoral policies. It is a challenge for the multilateral system, as well as policy making at national, regional and international levels.

*Juan Somavia*  
Director-General



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*Decent work is the right not only to survive  
but to prosper and to have a dignified and  
fulfilling quality of life... We rely on the  
ILO to continue its struggle to make decent  
work a global reality.*

**Nelson Mandela**

# Introduction

## Decent work and social justice: why the ILO makes a difference

Decent work is central to everyone's well-being. In addition to providing income, work is the best route to broader social and economic advancement, strengthening individuals, their families and communities. Decent work means better, more inclusive growth, more equity and rights, less poverty and more stable development in economies, enterprises, workplaces, and ultimately in society.

*The ILO works in **183 member States** in promoting employment and sustainable enterprises, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue*

Decent work is a means to address the root causes of poverty and promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, empowering countries to protect incomes and provide social security; to formulate policies aimed

at increasing productivity, creating jobs and reducing vulnerability; and to eliminate human rights abuses such as child labour and forced labour.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) promotes a job-centred and rights-based approach to development. In doing so, the Organization emphasizes full and productive employment together with rights, representation and protection in the world of work as a means to reduce poverty.

The ILO's added value derives from the **three unique advantages** that are embedded in the Organization's institutional structure and reflected in its operational decent work approach:

- Its *tripartite constituency* – made up of governments and employers' and workers' organizations –

allows the ILO to bring together key actors of the real economy: labour and social affairs ministries, the private sector, and trade unions. This structure facilitates ownership of projects and programmes and brings a unique world of work perspective to the international development agenda;

- The ILO's body of *international labour standards* provides the world's most comprehensive normative framework regulating all spheres of social policy. The ILO's rights-based approach and standards are unique in many fields, including indigenous and tribal peoples and child labour, domestic workers and seafarers. The ILO also has one of the most thorough supervisory systems in the international system which keeps track of the implementation of ratified Conventions and brings good practices and violations to the attention of all member States;
- The ILO works through the *workplace*, an effective location to deliver development assistance to both the formal and informal economy.



# The Decent Work Agenda

## Creating jobs

Building societies and economies that generate opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, skills development, job creation and sustainable livelihoods.

## Extending social protection

Promoting both inclusion and productivity by ensuring that women and men enjoy working conditions that are safe, allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family and social values, provide adequate compensation for lost or reduced income, and permit access to adequate social security.

## Promoting social dialogue

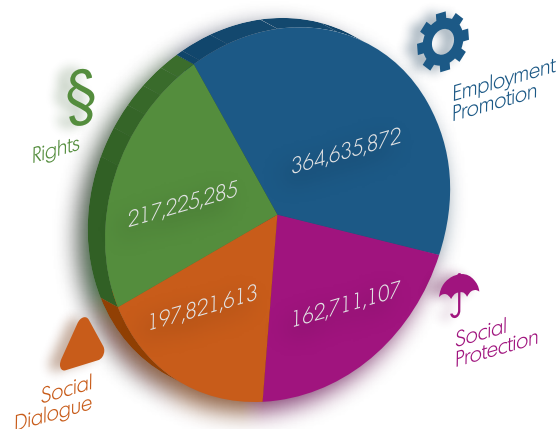
Creating efficient labour market institutions and effective and independent employers' and workers' organizations, enabling strong engagement from all sides in increasing productivity, managing labour relations, and building cohesive societies.

## Guaranteeing rights at work

Ensuring that economic development goes hand in hand with social development and respect for the rights of all workers, including those in the informal economy.

The ILO's programme targets 19 Outcomes, organized under the four strategic objectives. The work of the ILO is framed through a biennial Programme and Budget. It contains specific indicators, milestones and targets for each outcome.

Distribution of Expenditures  
by Strategic Objective (in US Dollars)

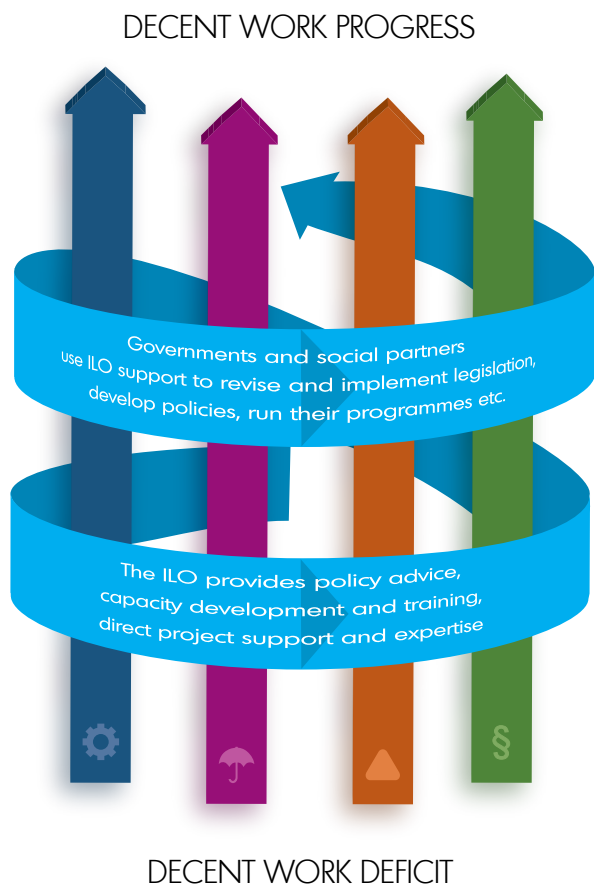


## Ownership, results and accountability

Country ownership and accountability rely on the ILO's tripartite approach to development. At the country level the ILO's work is guided by Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) developed jointly with government, employers' and workers' organizations. The DWCPs build on the national development priorities and set out the ILO's contribution to overall United Nations assistance to a country.

ILO's constituents are essential partners in ensuring that development efforts result in jobs and equitable working conditions for people working out of poverty. Employers' organizations offer access and engagement by the private sector, without which no development process can be sustainable. Trade unions are membership-based and ensure that the voices of workers are heard in the formal and informal economy.

A typical ILO intervention model to achieve results is the following:



## Capacity development

Capacity development is at the core of the ILO's work. Strengthening institutional, governance and human capacities, the ILO builds strong government institutions and employers' and workers' organizations.

A good example is the the International Training Centre of the ILO, which delivered close to **1,000 training programmes** worldwide in 2010 and 2011, enhancing the skills of close to 11,000 female and 15,000 male participants from more than 190 countries.

Sri Lanka

*“Decent work is about fulfilling your dreams and providing a livelihood for you and your family – but it’s also about giving good employment opportunities to others.”*

Nuwan Kumara, 25, Kegalle

Kumara used to work as a three wheeler driver. This was not an ideal job for him. “I worked too long hours and with little pay,” he says. With the help of the ILO he was able to start his own business, producing and selling broomsticks and other kitchen utensils. “I always wanted to be my own boss. I received training on marketing and good business practices like book-keeping and business planning. This has helped me develop and expand my business.” Kumara is planning to expand his business by hiring two workers and buying additional production equipment.