The ILO Mandate and Programme of Work
Related to Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

ILO MANDATE, STRUCTURE AND LOCATION

The overarching theme for the 2014 SIDS conference is “The Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States Through Genuine and Durable Partnerships”. The ILO is unique within the UN system in having the concept of partnership enshrined in its Constitution and structure. The tripartite nature of the ILO, through which governments share responsibility with workers’ organisations and employers’ organisations, ensures that all activities are carried out in partnership with representatives of business, labour -- a key actor of civil society, and governments.

The overall mandate of the ILO is to promote decent work and social justice. These are central features of sustainable development. In the Barbados Outcome Document of August 2013, the SIDS highlighted the importance of several issues that are closely related to this ILO mandate. The ILO has a permanent presence in the SIDS with offices located in Fiji and Trinidad and Tobago. In Africa the ILO has permanent offices in Dakar, Antananarivo and Yaoundé that provide support to SIDS in the region. In addition, the ILO has project staff working in several of the SIDS.

ILO approach to supporting SIDS

- tackle high rates of unemployment; boost economic growth and eradicate poverty;
- improve skills and training; promote the green economy;
- enhance social protection and inclusion;
- improve the well being of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged;
- derive benefits from migration and prevent brain drain, and;
- implement effective trade policy.

Recent examples of ILO activities identified as priorities by the SIDS include:

Tackle High Rates of Unemployment, Boost Economic Growth and Eradicate Poverty (including a focus on youth employment)

Senior officials of youth ministries and departments, as well as leaders of national youth councils from thirteen Caribbean countries participated in the Regional Seminar on Youth Employment held in Saint Lucia in March 2012. This contributed to the design of national youth employment policies.

The staff of the Cooperative Division of the Ministry of Commerce and Trade, representatives of financial and non-financial cooperatives, self-employed persons and entrepreneurs benefited from a training workshop convened by the ILO for the Caribbean in March 2013.

The computerization of Departments of Labour is under way in Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The system was piloted in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia, and is geared towards the production of timely and reliable information on the labour market, employment challenges, their impact on those affected by the challenges.

A harmonized template for labour market analysis in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) was developed and tabled for adoption at the Meeting of Labour Commissioners of OECS in June 2013.
ILO activities in the Caribbean and Pacific SIDS

Technical support was provided by the ILO for the completion of Vacancy (Job Openings) Surveys in Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda.

In 2010, the Pacific Island Labour Ministers and social partners reached an agreement to support a jobs-led recovery by promoting decent work in the Pacific region by adopting the Port Vila Statement on Decent Work and its accompanying ‘Pacific Action Plan for Decent Work’. The main components of the Action Plan are: to improve the quantity and quality of employment through growth and increased job potential; to modernize labour legislation on the basis of International Labour Standards; to assist with reform of existing welfare structures and formal social protection systems with the aim to provide a social floor and facilitate labour market adjustment; and to strengthen dialogue and involvement of social partners in the implementation of short and medium term development strategies related to the Action Plan.

The ILO has supplied, in partnership with South Pacific Community (SPC), technical support and training on labour market survey and analysis methodologies. In Samoa, the ILO recently supported a school to work transition survey and a labour market survey that will provide important insights for new policies and programmes.

The ILO has assisted in the development of national Youth Employment Plans in Kiribati and Vanuatu. At the regional level, the desirability of a regional framework for youth unemployment has been discussed at two successive meetings of Pacific Forum Leaders (2011 and 2012). The ILO, in collaboration with a wide range of partner organizations, is currently finalizing the Pacific Youth Employment Strategies (PacificYES) as mandated by the Pacific Island Forum Leaders.

The ILO has introduced enterprise start-up and growth programmes such as Start and Expand Your business (SYB), which currently operate in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands.

Currently Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Samoa are receiving technical assistance from the ILO in formulating national employment policies. This work includes training on the need for and components of such policies support in compiling and analysing labour force surveys, preparation of situational analysis and employment diagnostics studies.

Improve Skills and Training

A review of the CARICOM Regional Strategy for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) was undertaken by the ILO in 2011 at the request of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat.

In Guyana, a 5-day training workshop on entrepreneurship education and curriculum implementation for instructors from the TVET Council resulted in the implementation of entrepreneurship training in the TVET curriculum.

In the Pacific, the ILO has been involved in entrepreneurship education in schools and technical and vocational institutions, providing teachers with training and teaching materials for a curriculum called, ‘Know About Business’ (KAB). In 2007 KAB was introduced in Papua New Guinea in partnership with the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC). Since then, approximately 29,000 young people have received training, 67 high schools have been involved and 300 teachers have gone through the ‘train the trainer’ programme. Similar projects have been rolled out in Fiji and Kiribati.
Promote the Green Economy

The ILO Green Jobs Programme has responded to requests by a number of SIDS to support their efforts to adapt to climate change and to identify pathways and programmes for low-carbon and environmentally sound but also socially inclusive sustainable development.

Capacity building workshops on Green Jobs were held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2012. Subsequent policy support culminated in a draft of a Green Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises and Cooperatives (2013 to 2016). The draft policy was completed in 2013.

At the request of the government of Mauritius, the ILO supported the development of its Sustainable Island Strategy, ‘Maurice Ile Durable’ (MID), notably through its working group on the Economy and Employment. Several research papers and a Green Jobs Assessment study were undertaken in 2011 and 2012. An action plan on green jobs was drafted at a national Green Jobs conference convened by the Minister of Labour and a policy on green jobs was adopted in the MID strategy.

Through the Partnership for Action on a Green Economy, the ILO plans to develop a green jobs strategy with the government of Barbados in 2014.

Enhance Social Protection and Inclusion

A task force for the review of national policies on the employment of people with disabilities was established in both Bermuda and Saint Lucia following training and capacity-building workshops conducted in both countries in 2013.

In 2013, the ILO provided support for the analysis of the gaps in the legal framework related to HIV/AIDS in the world of work in Trinidad and Tobago. The analysis and emerging recommendations will guide the development of initiatives by the Ministry of Labour for the improvement of the legal and policy framework for the protection of human rights at work of persons living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

The National Insurance Services of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines underwent an actuarial valuation in 2011 with a peer review conducted by the ILO as a means of ensuring the appropriateness of the methodology utilized, and the use of reliable data.

Professional staff of the National Insurance Board of Trinidad and Tobago (NITT) benefitted from an ILO-organized seminar for social security professions in November 2010. The seminar addressed policy issues, social security financing, the role of social security, social assistance and social protection schemes in the construction of a Social Protection Floor as well as new trends in social security development.

In May 2012, the ILO delivered presentations on the ILO Recommendation on the Social Protection Floor at a seminar convened by the Caribbean Centre for Money and Finance in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Among the themes discussed were global developments in pension schemes, pension reforms in the region, the sustainability of private pensions, social security schemes after retirement and the governance of pension funds.

Across the Pacific Island Countries, the ILO has played an instrumental role in establishing national provident funds. The ILO receives requests from such institutions to undertake actuarial analysis and assist with the design of schemes to extend coverage to new fund members (unprotected workers and their families). Currently the ILO is launching new initiatives in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to expand the social security coverage of existing schemes.
**Improve the Well-being of the Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged**

Workers’ organizations in the Caribbean representing domestic workers have benefited from ILO support through the establishment of a regional network to campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention 189 as well as mobilize and organize domestic workers in the Caribbean.

Under the ILO’s Occupational Safety and Health and Environment Programme implemented during the period 2011-2013, 240 safety and health officers and inspectors in the Caribbean were trained and are better equipped to reinforce OSH standards.

Caribbean labour inspectors and safety and health officers have benefited from training specifically targeting the improvement of workplace safety and health through effective OSH inspection. For example, tripartite constituents in Saint Lucia and Saint Maarten were the beneficiaries of training in safe work in the hotel and hospitality industry. Participants of various backgrounds from the mining sector in Guyana and Suriname received training in workshops specifically targeting prevention of safety and health hazards in small-scale mines in 2012 and 2013.

The Safety and Health at Work Act was proclaimed in Barbados in January 2013. OSH labour legislation was reviewed and drafted in Antigua and Barbuda (Occupational Safety and Health Bill), Belize (Safety and Health Bill), and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Occupational Safety and Health Bill).

Since 2008 the ILO has implemented a child labour elimination project called TACKLE-tackling child labour through education. In Fiji and Papua New Guinea, the TACKLE project has supported governments, social partners and civil society develop National Action Plans (NAP) by identifying priority outcomes for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. In addition, technical support was provided to countries in the Pacific region on request, including coordinating child labour rapid assessments in Kiribati and Tuvalu, supporting child labour mini programmes in Samoa and Vanuatu and conducting sub-regional training workshops on reporting on child labour conventions as well as social dialogue as a powerful tool in eliminating child labour.

The ILO has supported the development and implementation of HIV workplace policies at the national and enterprise level across the Pacific. This work has been undertaken in Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Island, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to develop HIV and AIDS workplace policies and programmes.

Persons with disabilities represent a significant group in the Pacific region. In 2011, the ILO conducted national workshops on disabilities and inclusion in Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu. At the Pacific Islands Forum Disability Ministers’ Meeting in 2013, the ILO presented a paper highlighting the rights and business cases for ensuring that people with disabilities (PwD) enjoy equality of opportunity and treatment in vocational rehabilitation, training and employment.

Gender inequality is a pervasive feature of Pacific labour markets. Across the Pacific, the ILO promotes gender equality through the ratification of fundamental conventions, especially the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111). As part of the Pacific law reform efforts, the ILO is working with constituents to ensure that the removal of discrimination in the workplace in all forms is a central part of these labour law reform efforts. In addition to the legislative work, attention is increasingly given to develop national capacities to implement these laws.

**Derive Benefits from Migration and Prevent Brain Drain**

The ILO collaborated with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International
Organization for Migration (IOM) on a number of national meetings and training seminars in Trinidad and Tobago. This collaboration resulted in the fostering of a broader perspective on migration issues not only in relation to the security, but also the social, economic and human rights dimensions. The discussions and consultations are being convened within the framework of the National Consultative Committee on Migration.

Labour migration has a long history in the Pacific and takes many forms. The ILO has supported interventions during pre-departure and re-integration that can support workers overall economic prosperity, initially focusing on Vanuatu. This work is now being expanded to Samoa, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

Currently in the Pacific, the ILO, UNDP and ESCAP are implementing a European Union funded project on mitigating the effects of climate change in the Pacific. A significant portion of this project is focusing on assessing the Pacific Island States migration policies, exploring regional frameworks and building a knowledge sharing platform for the region.

Implement Effective Trade Policy and Enhancing Good Governance

In 2010, employers’ and workers’ representatives from Caribbean countries benefitted from a series of workshops that focused on international trade negotiations, trade agreements and the Decent Work Agenda. The training workshops were organized by the ILO in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat with a view to enhancing the capacity of employers’ and workers’ organizations in the Caribbean to contribute meaningfully to discussions related to international trade negotiations and to understand and maximize the benefits of trade agreements.

The ILO supported a series of national workshops during 2013 with the aim of developing the capacity of employers to support the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) approach through wider understanding of and compliance with international labour standards.

The ILO developed and published two Guides on the CARIFORUM-European Community Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

Across the Pacific, many countries are recognizing the need to modernize their labour laws, policies and practices appropriate to their level of development and to realize international labour standards. Since late 2010, the ILO Office of Pacific Island Countries has provided technical assistance for labour law reform in Vanuatu, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu and Samoa. This has included attention to improving the implementation of the ILO’s Fundamental Conventions. Specific attention is placed on building the capacities of labour administrations and social partners to implement new labour and OSH inspection responsibilities.
**Future ILO activities**

**with special significance for SIDS 2014 -2015**

In preparation for the September 2014 conference in Apia, Samoa, the ILO has initiated a number of additional activities. Background papers are being prepared which review decent work and social justice in SIDS. These documents will be available in April 2014.

The ILO will initiate a new activity on sustainable migration in the Pacific and Caribbean SIDS. This will include research, discussion forums and policy development on the relationship between migration, the protection of migrant worker rights, skills development, remittances and economic development.

The ILO Youth Employment Programme (YEP) operates through a global network of specialists working in the technical departments across the ILO. The ILO participates in strategic partnerships including cross-country and global peer networks, inter-agency cooperation across the United Nations and other international organizations as well as collaboration with the private and public sectors at the international, regional and national levels. YEP also provides assistance to countries in developing coherent and coordinated interventions on youth employment. Country level support to SIDS on youth employment will focus on the following countries during the next two years: Cuba, Jamaica, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe and St. Lucia.

SIDS are often suppliers of seafarers and fishers for domestic ships but also for vessels flying the flag of other States. These ships and vessels often operate in the exclusive economic zones of SIDS under various access agreements and licensing arrangements. The ILO Maritime Labour Convention, the Seafarers’ Identity Documents Convention and the Work in Fishing Convention therefore should be ratified and fully implemented by such States to ensure decent conditions for their people working on the sea. During 2014, the ILO will be strongly promoting the ratification and implementation of these Conventions in the SIDS and providing training in respect of the Conventions.

The ILO Green Jobs Program has been active in several Caribbean countries and notably in Mauritius, by assisting governments and the social partners with employment assessments, policy development and capacity building on green jobs. With the assistance of ILO expertise, Mauritius has focused its current development strategy on increasing the proportion of green jobs from 6% of the total employment, to 10% by 2020. In the course of 2014, similar activities will be expanded to a number of other SIDS.

A major global priority is the implementation of a social protection floor. In the past, the ILO has assisted many SIDS in establishing elements of a publicly funded social security system. In the Caribbean, the ILO has assisted many States to establish contributory social insurance systems that cover most wage workers and some self-employed workers. The ILO is currently assisting a number of these States to extend coverage by setting up new tax financed programmes for vulnerable groups without a contributory capacity or through extending existing schemes to groups not covered because of their irregular earnings. Unfortunately, the vast majority of SIDS do not have tax financed social assistance or other elements of a social protection floor although there is a multiplicity of social safety net programmes that are donor-driven and limited over time. In 2014, the ILO will be intensifying its technical support for the implementation of national social protection floors as well as taking a central role in developing inter-agency social protection assessments tools. This is done in partnership with other UN agencies, the World Bank, regional banks and donor agencies.