



International Labour Organization

The ILO: What it is. What it does.



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History and structure of the ILO

The ILO has been one of the most successful multilateral agencies in fulfilling its mandate. If there is one lesson from eight decades of ILO history, it is that renewal, change and adaptation have been vital to its success. Born at a fleeting moment of hope, it has lived through the Depression and survived war.

Conceived by and for the industrial countries in 1919, the ILO moved swiftly and creatively to accommodate a massive increase in membership in the two decades following the Second World War. In the period of the Cold War, it maintained its universality while insisting uncompromisingly on its basic values. The end of the Cold War and the acceleration of globalization have compelled the Organization to rethink once again its mission, programmes and methods of work.



ILO Headquarters, Geneva



The first International Labour Conference was held in Washington in October-November 1919. Six conventions and six Recommendations were adopted (including Convention No. 1 on the duration of the work day).

An ILO History: Labour is not a commodity

The roots of the ILO

A universal organization, the ILO has its roots in the social matrix of nineteenth-century Europe and North America. It is in these regions where the Industrial Revolution began, generating extraordinary economic development, though often at the price of intolerable human suffering and social unrest. The idea of international labour legislation arose early in the nineteenth century as a result of ethical and economic concerns over the human cost of the Industrial Revolution. Outstanding industrialists such as Robert Owen and Daniel le Grand supported such progressive social and labour legislation. And by the latter part of the nineteenth century, organized labour had become a new force in the industrialized countries demanding democratic rights and decent living conditions for working people.

Humanitarian, political and economic motives for international labour standards lead to the foundation of the ILO:

The initial motivation was humanitarian. The condition of workers, more and more numerous and exploited with no consideration for their health, their family lives and their advancement, was less and less acceptable. This preoccupation appears clearly in the Preamble of the Constitution of the ILO, where it is stated, “conditions of labour exist involving...injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people.”

The second motivation was political. Without an improvement in their condition, the workers, whose numbers were ever increasing as a result of industrialization, would create social unrest, even revolution. The Preamble notes that injustice produces “unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled.”

The third motivation was economic. Because of its inevitable effect on the cost of production, any industry or country adopting social reform would find itself at a disadvantage vis-à-vis its competitors. The Preamble states that “the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries.”

These arguments were written into the preamble to the 1919 Constitution, which opens with the affirmation that “universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice.” These ideals were further clarified in the Declaration of Philadelphia, in 1944. They remain truer than ever in today’s age of globalization, and still provide the ideological basis for the ILO.

Nearly a century of intellectual debate and initiatives from outstanding personalities, voluntary associations, governments and social and political movements are the prehistory of the ILO. In the last decades of the 19th century the call for international regulation of the world of work became stronger throughout the industrialized world. A very significant result of this intellectual fermentation was the creation, in 1901, in Basel of the International Association for the Legal Protection of Workers. At a national level, the social laws of the German government were another forerunner of protective labour legislation in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

In 1905-06 Switzerland organized technical and diplomatic conferences in Bern, resulting in the adoption of the first two international labour Conventions, one regulating night work by women and the other eliminating the use of white phosphorus in the match industry.

During the First World War, several international meetings of trade unions took place supporting the initiative of outstanding trade union and labour leaders to include in the future peace treaty a social chapter providing for international minimum labour standards and an International Labour Office. The sacrifices made for the war effort by the working masses also called for compensation.

The ILO Constitution was written between January and April 1919 by the Commission on International Labour constituted by the Treaty of Versailles. The Commission was composed of representatives from nine countries, Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States, under the chairmanship of Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labour (AFL). It resulted in a tripartite organization, the only one of its kind bringing together representatives of governments, employers and workers in its executive bodies. The ILO Constitution became Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles. The authors of the British text – which the Commission used at its draft – were Harold Butler and Edward Phelan future Directors of the ILO.

From its earliest days the Organization developed a personality quite distinct from the rest of the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations between the two world wars. While the League got up and running with considerable difficulty, the ILO was soon in full swing, with an exceptional first Director, Albert Thomas, a Secretariat engaged in interactive dialogue with labour ministers, and an International Labour Conference overflowing with energy. In 1919-20 alone, nine Conventions and ten Recommendations were adopted.

The ILO up to World War II

During its first forty years, the ILO devoted the bulk of its energies to developing international labour standards and ensuring their application. During the twenty-year period from 1919 to 1939, 67 Conventions and 66 Recommendations were adopted.

Originally, standards focused on working conditions: the first Convention in 1919 dealt with hours of work, the famous eight-hour day and the forty-eight hour week.

In 1926, the International Labour Conference set up a supervisory system on the application of standards, an important innovation which still exists today. It created a Committee of Experts composed of independent jurists to examine reports produced by governments on the application of Conventions they had ratified. The Committee presented its own report to the Conference each year. Its mandate has since been broadened to cover reports on unratified Conventions and Recommendations.

In 1932, having assured the ILO's strong presence in the world for thirteen years, Albert Thomas died. His successor, Harold Butler, was soon faced with the problems of mass unemployment caused by the Great Depression. During this period, workers' and employers' representatives confronted each other on the subject of the reduction of working hours, without any appreciable results. In 1934, under the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the United States, which did not belong to the League of Nations, became a member of the ILO.

The Declaration of Philadelphia

In 1944, the International Labour Conference, meeting in Philadelphia, USA, adopted the Declaration of Philadelphia, which redefined the aims and purpose of the Organization.

The Declaration embodies the following principles:

- Labour is not a commodity.
- Freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress.
- Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere.
- All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity.



Edward J. Phelan, Director of the ILO, signing the Declaration of Philadelphia on 17 May 1944 at a special meeting with President Roosevelt in the White House. He is accompanied by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Walter Nash, President of the Philadelphia Conference, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and Lindsay Rogers, Assistant Director of the ILO.

In August 1940, the situation of Switzerland, in the heart of a Europe at war, led the new Director, John Winant, to move the Organization temporarily to Montreal, Canada.

In 1944, delegates to the International Labour Conference adopted the Declaration of Philadelphia which, annexed to the Constitution, still constitutes the Charter of the aims and objectives of the ILO. The Declaration anticipated and set a pattern for the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

From technical cooperation to active partnership

After the Second World War a new era dawned for the ILO. The election of the American David Morse as the Director-General of the ILO in 1948 coincided with the renewed development of the ILO's work on labour standards and the launch of its technical cooperation programme.

Conventions after the Second World War focused on human rights (freedom of association, elimination of forced labour and discrimination), as well as on more technical labour issues. In 1948 the major Convention (No.87) on freedom of association was adopted, giving full recognition to the right of workers and employers to organize freely and independently. A special tripartite Committee on Freedom of association has dealt with more than 2000 cases during the last five decades to promote the full application of this most fundamental democratic right in the world of work.



Juan Somavia,
Director-General

During the twenty-two year period of David Morse's leadership, the number of member States doubled, the Organization took on its universal character, industrialized countries became a minority of members compared to developing countries, the budget grew five-fold, and the number of officials quadrupled.

In 1969, while it commemorated its 50th anniversary, the ILO was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Presenting the prestigious award, the President of the Nobel Prize Committee stated that "the ILO has had a lasting influence on the legislation of all countries", and was "one of the rare institutional creations of which the human race can be proud". In 1970, Wilfred Jenks was elected Director-General. He was one of the authors of the Declaration of Philadelphia and a main architect of the special procedure for examining complaints of violations of freedom of association.

From 1974 to 1989, Director-General Francis Blanchard succeeded in averting major damage to the ILO following a crisis triggered by the temporary withdrawal of the United States from the Organization (from 1977 to 1980). The ILO played a major role in the emancipation of Poland from communist dictatorship by giving its full support to the legitimacy of the Solidarnosc union based on respect for Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, which Poland had ratified in 1957.

Francis Blanchard was succeeded by Michel Hansenne of Belgium, the first Director-General of the post-Cold War period. He set the ILO on a course of greater decentralization of activities and resources away from Geneva under the Active Partnership Policy. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1998, marked a universal reaffirmation of the obligation, arising from the very fact of membership in the Organization, to respect, promote and realize principles concerning fundamental rights which are the subject of certain ILO Conventions, even if those Conventions have not been ratified. These rights include freedom of association, effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, effective abolition of child labour, and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. In turn, the Declaration contains a recognition of the responsibility of the ILO to assist its members in achieving these objectives.

In March 1999, the ILO's new Director-General, Juan Somavia, of Chile, subscribed to the international consensus on the promotion of open societies and open economies, as long as it "puts real benefits for ordinary people and their families into the equation". Mr. Somavia has worked to "modernize and help steer the tripartite structure to make ILO values prevail in the new global realities". He is the first representative of the southern hemisphere to head the Organization.

The International Labour Office is headed by a Director-General appointed by the Governing Body. Since 1919, the ILO has been led by:

Albert Thomas of France
(1919-1932)

Harold Butler of the United Kingdom
(1932-1938)

John Winant of the United States
(1939-1941)

Edward Phelan of Ireland
(1941-1948)

David Morse of the United States
(1948-1970)

Wilfred Jenks of the United Kingdom
(1970-1973)

Francis Blanchard of France
(1973-1989)

Michel Hansenne of Belgium
(1989-1999)

and by

Juan Somavia of Chile
March 1999 -Present



The ILO Headquarters
in Geneva, Switzerland

The ILO tripartite structure

Employers, workers and governments at work

The ILO has always been a unique forum in which the governments and social partners of its 177 member States can freely and openly discuss experiences and compare national policies. Its tripartite structure makes the ILO unique among world organizations in that employers' and workers' organizations have an equal voice with governments in shaping its policies and programmes.

The ILO encourages tripartism within member States as well, by promoting a social dialogue which involves trade unions and employers in the formulation and, where appropriate, implementation of national policy on social and economic affairs, and a host of other issues. Each member country has the right to send four delegates to the International Labour Conference, two from the government, and one each representing workers and employers, each of whom may speak and vote independently.

The International Labour Conference meets in June every year, in Geneva. Delegates are accompanied by technical advisors. Besides the government delegates, the Cabinet Ministers responsible for labour affairs in their countries also generally attend the Conference and take the floor. Employer and worker delegates can express themselves and vote independently of their governments. They may well vote against their government representatives, as well as against each other.

The Conference provides an international forum for discussion of world labour, social problems and international labour standards, and sets the broad policies of the Organization. Every two years, the Conference adopts the ILO biennial work programme and budget, which is financed by member States.

Between annual sessions of the Conference, the work of the ILO is guided by the Governing Body, comprising 28 government members, and 14 worker and 14 employer members. This executive council of the ILO meets three times a year in Geneva. It takes decisions on action to give effect to ILO policy, prepares the draft programme and budget, which it then submits to the Conference for adoption, and elects the Director-General.

Ten of the government seats are permanently held by states of chief industrial importance (Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States). Representatives of other member countries are elected by the government delegates at the Conference every three years, taking into account geographical distribution. The employers and workers elect their own representatives in separate electoral colleges.

The International Labour Office in Geneva is the permanent secretariat of the International Labour Organization, its operational headquarters, research centre and publishing house. Administration and management are decentralized in regional, area and branch offices. Under the leadership of a Director-General, who is elected for a five-year renewable term, the Office employs some 2,500 officials and experts at its Geneva headquarters, and in more than 40 field offices around the world.

Regional meetings of the ILO member States are held periodically to examine matters of special interest to the regions concerned. The work of the Governing Body and of the International Labour Office is aided by tripartite committees covering major industries, and by committees of experts on such matters as vocational training, management development, occupational safety and health, industrial relations, workers' education, and special problems of certain categories of workers (young workers, women, the disabled, etc.).

From the outset, the ILO paid particular attention to the maritime sector, whose work is by its nature international in scope. Through a Joint Maritime Commission and special Maritime Sessions of the International Labour Conference, it has adopted a large number of Conventions and Recommendations dealing with issues affecting seafarers.

For further information on the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body please contact:

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The ILO in social history

1818

The English industrialist Robert Owen requests protective measures for working people and the formation of a social commission, during the Congress of the Holy Alliance in Aachen, Germany.

1831-34

Two successive "canut" revolts at the Lyon silk mills are bloodily suppressed.

1838-59

The French industrialist Daniel Le Grand takes up Owen's ideas.

1864

Founding of the first Workers' International in London.

1866

The first International Workers' Congress demands international labour legislation.

1867

Publication of the first volume of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*.

1883-91

Adoption in Germany of the first social legislation in Europe.

1886

350,000 workers go on strike in Chicago demanding an eight-hour work day – the movement is brutally repressed ("Haymarket Riot").

1889

Founding of the Second International in Paris.

1890

Representatives of 14 countries meet in Berlin and formulate suggestions which will influence national legislation in matters of work.

1900

The Paris Conference creates an international association for the protection of workers.

1906

The Bern Conference adopts two international Conventions reducing the usage of toxic white phosphorus in the fabrication of matches and forbidding night work by women.

1914

War breaks out in Europe, preventing the adoption of further Conventions.

1919

Birth of the ILO. The first International Labour Conference adopts six Conventions, the first of which limits working hours to eight per day and 48 per week.

Albert Thomas becomes the first Director of the ILO.

1925

Adoption of Conventions and Recommendations on social security.

1927

First session of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions.

1930

A new Convention aims at the progressive abolition of forced and compulsory labour.

1944

The Declaration of Philadelphia reaffirms the fundamental objectives of the Organization.

1946

The ILO becomes the first specialized agency to be associated with the United Nations.



The ILO receives the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969

1948

Election of David Morse as Director-General of the ILO, adoption of Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, emergency manpower programme for Europe, Asia and Latin America.

1950

The United Nations Enlarged Programme of Technical Assistance gives new impetus to cooperation with developing countries.

1951

Convention No. 100 provides for equality of pay for men and women for work of equal value. The Governing Body, acting jointly with ECOSOC, creates a Commission and a Committee to examine complaints of violations of freedom of association.

1952

Convention No. 102. The International Labour Conference adopts Social Security (minimum standards) Convention.

1957

Convention No. 105 prescribes the abolition of forced labour in all its forms.

1958

Convention No. 111 provides for the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation.

1960

The ILO creates the International Institute for Labour Studies.

1966

Inauguration of the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin.

1969

The ILO receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

1974-89

Large-scale development of technical cooperation activities under ILO Director-General Francis Blanchard.

1989

Representatives of the Solidarnosc union utilize the recommendations of an ILO Commission in their negotiations with the Polish government. Michel Hansenne becomes Director-General of the ILO.

1991

The ILO adopts a new strategy in the struggle against child labour (ILO-IPEC programme).

1992

The International Labour Conference approves the new policy of active partnership – the first multidisciplinary team is established in Budapest.

1998

The Conference adopts the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: freedom of association, abolition of child labour, elimination of forced labour and discrimination.

1999

Juan Somavia of Chile becomes the first ILO Director-General from the southern hemisphere. The Conference adopts a new Convention concerning the prohibition and immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

2002

Convention No. 182, which calls for immediate action to ban the worst forms of child labour, is ratified by over 100 states, the fastest ratification in the history of the ILO. Launch of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.



ILO member States

Afghanistan	Costa Rica	Israel	Niger	Switzerland
Albania	Côte d'Ivoire	Italy	Nigeria	Syrian Arab Republic
Algeria	Croatia	Jamaica	Norway	Tajikistan
Angola	Cuba	Japan	Oman	Tanzania, United
Antigua and Barbuda	Cyprus	Jordan	Pakistan	Republic of
Argentina	Czech Republic	Kazakhstan	Panama	Thailand
Armenia	Denmark	Kenya	Papua New Guinea	Timor-Leste,
Australia	Djibouti	Kiribati	Paraguay	Democratic
Austria	Dominica	Korea, Republic of	Peru	Republic of
Azerbaijan	Dominican Republic	Kuwait	Philippines	Togo
Bahamas	Ecuador	Kyrgyzstan	Poland	Trinidad and Tobago
Bahrain	Egypt	Lao People's Democratic	Portugal	Tunisia
Bangladesh	El Salvador	Republic	Qatar	Turkey
Barbados	Equatorial Guinea	Latvia	Romania	Turkmenistan
Belarus	Eritrea	Lebanon	Russian Federation	Uganda
Belgium	Estonia	Lesotho	Rwanda	Ukraine
Belize	Ethiopia	Liberia	Saint Kitts Nevis	United Arab Emirates
Benin	Fiji	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Saint Lucia	United Kingdom
Bolivia	Finland	Lithuania	Saint Vincent and	United States
Bosnia and	France	Luxembourg	the Grenadines	Uruguay
Herzegovina	Gabon	Macedonia, former	San Marino	Uzbekistan
Botswana	Gambia	Yugoslav Republic	Sao Tome and Principe	Vanuatu
Brazil	Georgia	Madagascar	Saudi Arabia	Venezuela
Bulgaria	Germany	Malawi	Senegal	Viet Nam
Burkina Faso	Ghana	Malaysia	Serbia and	Yemen
Burundi	Greece	Mali	Montenegro	Zambia
Cambodia	Grenada	Malta	Seychelles	Zimbabwe
Cameroon	Guatemala	Mauritania	Sierra Leone	
Canada	Guinea	Mauritius	Singapore	
Cape Verde	Guinea-Bissau	Mexico	Slovakia	
Central African	Guyana	Moldova, Republic	Slovenia	
Republic	Haiti	Mongolia	Solomon Islands	
Chad	Honduras	Morocco	Somalia	
Chile	Hungary	Mozambique	South Africa	
China	Iceland	Myanmar	Spain	
Colombia	India	Namibia	Sri Lanka	
Comoros	Indonesia	Nepal	Sudan	
Congo	Iran, Islamic Republic	Netherlands	Suriname	
Congo, Democratic	Iraq	New Zealand	Swaziland	
Republic	Ireland	Nicaragua	Sweden	



Millennium priorities: The ILO programme and budget

The ILO has now shifted to a strategic focus in planning its biennial budget. Four strategic objectives guide the ILO programme and budget:

- To promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work
- To create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income
- To enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all
- To strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

InFocus Programmes

Under each strategic objective, a number of international focus programmes ("InFocus") of high priority, relevance and visibility, concentrate and integrate activities for maximum impact and coverage.

The InFocus programmes related to the four strategic objectives are:

- Promoting the Declaration
- Eliminating child labour
- Crisis response and reconstruction
- Skills, knowledge and employability
- Boosting of employment through small enterprise development
- Safety and health at work and the environment
- Socio-economic security
- Social dialogue, labour law and labour administration



Decent work – the heart of social progress

"The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity." – ILO Director-General Juan Somavia

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Decent work should be at the heart of global, national and local strategies for economic and social progress. It is central to efforts to reduce poverty, and a means for achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. The ILO works to promote decent work through its work on employment, social protection, standards and fundamental principles and rights at work and social dialogue.

In each of these areas, people throughout the world face deficits, gaps and exclusions in the form of unemployment and underemployment, poor quality and unproductive jobs, unsafe work and insecure income, rights which are denied, gender inequality, migrant workers who are exploited, lack of representation and voice, and inadequate protection and solidarity in the face of disease, disability and old age. ILO programmes aim to find solutions to these problems.

Progress towards decent work calls for action at the global level, mobilizing the principal actors of the multilateral system and the global economy around this agenda. At the national level, integrated decent work country programmes, developed by ILO constituents, define the priorities and the targets within national development frameworks. The ILO, working in partnership with others within and beyond the UN family, provides in-

depth expertise and key policy instruments for the design and implementation of these programmes, for the building of institutions to carry them forward, and for the measurement of progress.

Promoting decent work is a shared responsibility of the ILO's constituents and the Office. In the tripartite ILO, the decent work agenda incorporates the needs and perspectives of the governments, employer's and workers' organization that constitute the ILO, mobilizing their energy and resourcefulness, and providing a platform for constructing consensus on social and economic policies.

International Labour Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work





The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

In June 1998, the International Labour Conference adopted the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, reaffirming the commitment of the Organization's 176 member States to respect the principles concerning four categories of fundamental rights at work, and to promote and realize their universal application.

The impetus for the Declaration drew upon concerns in the international community about the processes of globalization and the social consequences of trade liberalization. Support for the role of internationally recognized labour standards in social development was expressed at the UN World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995). The Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Singapore (1996) marked a renewed commitment to internationally recognized core labour standards, and identified the ILO as the competent body to deal with and set such standards, while rejecting the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes.

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and its follow-up

The ILO Declaration marked a reaffirmation of the Organization's member States willingness to "respect, to promote and to realize in good faith", the principles concerning the rights to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

This Declaration on fundamental rights at work underscores that all member countries have an obligation to respect the fundamental principles involved, whether or not they have ratified the relevant ILO Conventions.

The Declaration also recognizes the obligation of the Organization "to assist its Members in response to their established and expressed needs in order to attain these objectives", by making full use of its resources, including mobilizing external resources and encouraging the support of other international organizations.

The Declaration "stresses that labour standards should not be used for protectionist trade purposes, and that nothing in this Declaration and its follow-up shall be invoked or otherwise used for such purposes; in addition, the comparative advantage of any country should in no way be called into question by this Declaration and its follow-up".

The International Labour Conference established a follow-up to the Declaration, contained in an Annex to the Declaration itself. The first part of the follow-up is an annual review of countries which have not ratified one or more of the Conventions relating to the four categories of fundamental rights, to be carried out once a year under arrangements established by the Governing Body.

The second part provides for a global report to be produced annually on one of the four categories of fundamental rights. Each area is examined in turn and covers the situation in both those countries which have ratified the relevant Conventions and those which have not. The first global report for the year 2000 focused on freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Subsequent reports cover, or plan to cover, the elimination of forced labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in employment.

InFocus Programme

Promoting the Declaration

This programme has a threefold purpose:

- To raise awareness of the Declaration within countries and regions, as well as at the international level
- To deepen understanding of how these fundamental principles and rights reinforce development, democracy and equity, and help empower all women and men
- To promote policies which implement these principles and rights in practice in the development conditions of each country

The follow-up to the Declaration is promotional in nature and will provide a new avenue for the flow of information on economic and social development needs relating to these rights and principles, thereby assisting in the design, implementation and evaluation of targeted technical cooperation programmes.

Technical cooperation in the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

Technical cooperation is one of the primary tools for translating the fundamental principles and rights at work into practice, thus ensuring that social progress accompanies economic growth. Set up in 1999, the ILO InFocus Programme on Promoting the Declaration spearheads new types of technical cooperation projects and is involved in identifying, designing and raising funds for the projects. This technical cooperation is funded largely through bilateral funds, and is run with the assistance of the relevant technical services provided by the Office, both at its headquarters and in the field. Assistance ranges from advising on legislative reform and training government officials, to strengthening the capacity of the tripartite partners (i.e., governments, and employers' and workers' organizations). Almost all projects include consideration of gender and development issues, and involve tripartite cooperation.



International labour standards

What are they?

The core labour standards reflected in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work represent only a part of the Organization's standard-setting activity. Since 1919, the ILO and its tripartite structure, encompassing governments of member States and employers' and workers' organizations, have built up a system of international standards in all work-related matters.

These ILO standards take the form of international labour Conventions and Recommendations. ILO Conventions are international treaties, subject to ratification by ILO member States. Recommendations are non-binding instruments – often dealing with the same subjects as Conventions – which set out guidelines orienting national policy and action. Both forms are intended to have a concrete impact on working conditions and practices around of the world.

By the end of June 2003, the ILO had adopted over 180 Conventions and over 190 Recommendations covering a broad range of subjects: freedom of association and collective bargaining, equality of treatment and opportunity, abolition of forced and child labour, employment promotion and vocational training, social security, conditions of work, labour administration and labour inspection, prevention of work-related accidents, maternity protection, and the protection of migrants and other categories of workers such as seafarers, nursing personnel or plantation workers. More than 7,000 ratifications have been registered so far.

International labour standards play an important role in the elaboration of national laws, policies and judicial decisions, and in the provisions of collective bargaining agreements. Whether or not a country has ratified a particular Convention, the standards provide guidance for the operation of national labour institutions and mechanisms, and good labour and employment practices. Thus, international labour standards have an impact on both national law and national practice, which goes well beyond simply adapting legislation to the requirements of a ratified Convention.

ILO supervisory mechanisms

The application of international labour standards is subject to constant supervision by the ILO. Each member State is required to present periodically a report on the measures taken, in law and practice, to apply each Convention it has ratified. At the same time, it must send copies to employers' and workers' organizations which also have a right to submit information. The Governments' reports are first examined by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, a body of twenty eminent figures in the legal and social fields who are independent of governments and appointed in their personal capacity. The Committee submits an annual report to the International Labour Conference, where it is closely examined by the Conference Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, a tripartite committee of government, employer and worker members.

In parallel with these regular supervisory mechanisms, employers' and workers' organizations can initiate contentious proceedings, called "representations", against a member State for its alleged non-compliance with a Convention it has ratified.

If the representation is judged receivable by the ILO Governing Body, it appoints a tripartite committee to study the question. This committee subsequently submits a report containing its conclusions and recommendations to the Governing Body.

Moreover, any member country can lodge a complaint with the International Labour Office against another member State which, in its opinion, has not ensured in a satisfactory manner the implementation of a Convention which both of them have ratified. The Governing Body has the option to establish a Commission of Inquiry to study the question and present a report on the subject. This process may also be set in motion by the Governing Body itself or following a complaint by a delegate to the International Labour Conference. If necessary, the Commission of Inquiry formulates recommendations on measures to be taken. If governments do not accept these recommendations, they may submit the question to the International Court of Justice.

Freedom of association:

Special supervisory mechanisms

A special procedure in the field of freedom of association was set up by the ILO in 1950. It is based on complaints submitted by governments or by employers' or workers' organizations against a member State even if it has not ratified the relevant Conventions. This is possible because, by becoming a Member of the ILO, a State has to comply with the principle of freedom of association laid down in the Constitution of the Organization itself. The machinery set up in this field comprises two different bodies.

ILO fundamental Conventions

No. 29 **Forced Labour Convention, 1930**

Requires the suppression of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms. Certain exceptions are permitted, such as military service, convict labour properly supervised, emergencies such as wars, fires, earthquakes.

No. 87 **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948**

Establishes the right of all workers and employers to form and join organizations of their own choosing without prior authorization, and lays down a series of guarantees for the free functioning of organizations without interference by the public authorities.

No. 98 **Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949**

Provides for protection against anti-union discrimination, for protection of workers' and employers' organizations against acts of interference by each other, and for measures to promote collective bargaining.

No. 100 **Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951**

Calls for equal pay and benefits for men and women for work of equal value.

No. 105 **Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957**

Prohibits the use of any form of forced or compulsory labour as a means of political coercion or education, punishment for the expression of political or ideological views, workforce mobilization, labour discipline, punishment for participation in strikes, or discrimination.

No. 111 **Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958**

Calls for a national policy to eliminate discrimination in access to employment, training and working conditions, on grounds of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, and to promote equality of opportunity and treatment.

No. 138 **Minimum Age Convention, 1973**

Aims at the abolition of child labour, stipulating that the minimum age for admission to employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling.

No. 182 **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999**

Calls for immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which include slavery and similar practices, forced recruitment for use in armed conflict, use in prostitution and pornography, and any illicit activity, as well as work which is likely to harm the health, safety and morals of children.



One is the Fact-finding and Conciliation Commission, which requires the consent of the government concerned. The Commission's procedure is comparable to that of a Commission of Inquiry and its reports are published. Six such commissions have been established.

The second of these bodies is the Committee on Freedom of Association. This tripartite Committee is appointed by the Governing Body from among its own members. Since it was first established, the Committee on Freedom of Association has dealt with more than 2,150 cases covering a wide range of aspects of freedom of association: arrest and disappearance of trade unionists, intervention in trade union activities, legislation not in conformity with freedom of association principles, and so on. The Committee meets yearly in March, May and November.

Indigenous rights

The ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), and the earlier Convention No. 107 of 1957, are the only two international Conventions covering this traditionally disadvantaged and vulnerable category of people. The objective of ILO action in this area is the adoption by member States of policies and programmes to reduce poverty among indigenous peoples, increase their access to development, improve their terms of employment, and strengthen their bargaining and organizational capabilities.

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Eliminating child labour

Today, throughout the world, nearly 250 million children work, many full-time. They do not go to school and have little or no time to play. Many do not receive proper nutrition or care. They are denied the chance to be children. For most of them, tomorrow will be much the same, as well as the day after tomorrow, and the day after that.

Tens of millions of these children are victims of the worst forms of child labour.

- Work in hazardous environments, where they are exposed to toxic chemicals, dangerous machinery, or extreme heat.
- Use in illicit activities such as drug trafficking, prostitution, or the production of pornography.
- Trafficking or being forced into slavery or slave-like conditions.
- Being forced to take part in armed conflicts.

Child labour is the most widespread abuse of children in the world. In this first decade of a new century, combating child labour must be among humanity's highest priorities.

There is a solid foundation for action to build upon, from experiences accumulated by a growing number of countries in the 1990s. During that decade, the world awoke to child labour, primarily because of rising public support for children's rights, and an expanding concern about fair labour standards and decent work for adults in the global economy.

Just a decade ago, research on the causes and effects of child labour was thin. Field project work on child labour was hard to find, and the reform of national policies and laws on child labour was proceeding slowly. Many countries with serious child labour problems were denying its very existence.

Broad international support for ILO child labour Conventions

Since then, there has been a sea change in attitudes toward child labour, especially its worst forms. This has been most evident in the outpouring of international political support for the eradication of abusive child labour, best demonstrated by the rate of ratification of ILO Convention No. 182, which calls for immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

More than 130 countries, a clear majority of ILO member States, have ratified the ILO Convention, by far the fastest pace of ratification in the history of the ILO. The growing support for the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), now ratified by more than 120 countries, provides further confirmation of increased worldwide awareness of the child labour issue. Together, the ratifications of these Conventions are clear and quantifiable indicators of the rapidly expanding global will to place child labour high on the international action agenda.

The ILO has a strong technical cooperation programme to back up the member States' political will.

The ILO-IPEC Programme

The ILO InFocus Programme on Child Labour (IPEC) has grown together with the political movement against child labour. From one donor government and six programme countries in 1992, IPEC today works on the ground in 80 countries, drawing support from some 30 donors and working on interventions of increasing size.

IPEC's aim is the elimination of child labour worldwide, emphasizing the eradication of the worst forms as rapidly as possible. It works to achieve this in several ways: through country-based programmes which promote policy reform and put in place concrete measures to end child labour, and through international and national campaigning intended to change social attitudes and promote ratification and effective implementation of ILO child labour Conventions. Complementing these efforts are in-depth research, legal expertise, data analysis, policy analysis and programme evaluation carried out in the field, and at the regional and international levels.





IPEC participating countries

(countries which have signed a Memorandum of Understanding):

Since 1992: Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Thailand, Turkey

Since 1994: Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Tanzania

Since 1996: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Sri Lanka, Venezuela

Since 1997: Benin, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Senegal, South Africa

Since 1998: Madagascar, Mali, Uganda, Paraguay

Since 1999: Albania, Burkina Faso, Mongolia, Haiti

Since 2000: Ghana, Jamaica, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Romania, Togo, Yemen, Zambia

Since 2002: Colombia, Ukraine



IPEC Donors

Since 1991: Germany

Since 1992: Belgium

Since 1995: Australia, France, Norway, Spain, United States

Since 1996: Canada, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom

Since 1997: European Commission, Italian Social Partners Initiative, Switzerland

Since 1998: Austria, Finland, Japan, Japanese Trade Union Confederation (RENGO), Poland

Since 1999: Sweden, Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid

Since 2000: Hungary, Ayuntamiento de Alcalá de Henares

Since 2001: New Zealand

Since 2002: Republic of Korea, Cocoa Global Issues Group (CGIG), Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Foundation (ECLT), Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)





IPEC Associated countries

(Countries associated with IPEC through their participation in various national, regional or inter-regional activities.)

Africa: Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe

Arab States: Syria, West Bank and Gaza

Asia: China, Vietnam

Europe: Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation

Latin America and the Caribbean: Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Guyana, Surinam, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay

For IPEC, it is not enough merely to remove children from the workplace. The ILO and its partner organizations are working to provide a growing number of ex-child labourers with the opportunity for education, rehabilitation and proper health care and nutrition. IPEC is also working to prevent at-risk children from becoming victims of child labour, as well as to provide their families with alternatives for earning an income or finding a job.

IPEC's approach to the problem is firmly based on partnerships among all relevant sectors of society. Right now, IPEC is working actively with thousands of partners throughout the world, from national governments to local agencies, from multinational corporations and employers associations to small businesses, from international trade union federations to local unions, and from international organizations, especially UNICEF and the World Bank, to rural charities. All of them are committed to the struggle against child labour.

The most promising trend for the coming decade is the expressed desire by a number of countries to completely eliminate, over a defined period of time, all incidences of the worst forms of child labour. This has prompted the ILO to develop "time-bound programmes" to eradicate the worst forms in a period of ten years or less.

This is an ambitious effort based on a strong political commitment by the governments involved. The initiative is closely linked to poverty alleviation and universal basic education. It relies on the establishment of innovative partnerships with employers, workers and civil society. It involves rapid response measures for prevention, withdrawal and rehabilitation of victims of the worst forms of child labour. And it provides viable alternatives for family income.

These developments give reason for hope. But the challenge of child labour in the world today is enormous and the continuing abuses remain intolerable. Therefore, the ILO child labour programme is campaigning for universal ratification of Convention Nos. 182 and 138, and, for those countries which have ratified them, strong integration of their principles into national laws, policies and priorities.

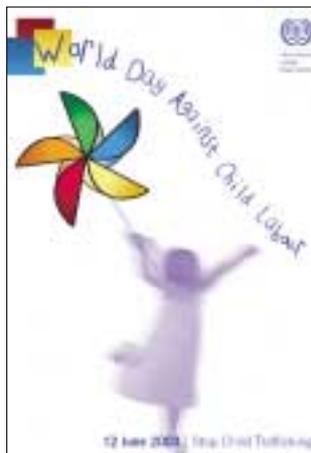
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Decent employment and income opportunities

The number of unemployed and underemployed workers around the world has never been higher. The number is increasing, as growth in all of the world's major economies has slowed in the new millennium, and a further increase in joblessness cannot be excluded. In 2002, some one billion workers – one third of the third world's labour force – remained unemployed or underemployed. Of this total, some 180 million workers were actually seeking or available for work.

The ILO has a distinctive role to play in mitigating the adverse social effects of the global economic crisis. Employment creation is already the first political priority worldwide; it must also become the first economic priority. Without productive employment, the goals of decent living standards, social and economic development and personal fulfilment remain illusory.

Apart from its direct responses and activities, the ILO, as the lead agency in the field of employment, is playing its part in various joint activities with international financial institutions and other UN agencies.



Employment strategies

Employment promotion is a high priority for the ILO. It carries out research and contributes to the global dialogue on effective employment strategies, while ILO advisory services and technical cooperation activities are an important means of supporting quality employment generation at the national level.

Citing the urgent need to deal with a growing worldwide jobs crisis, the Global Employment Forum, held at the ILO in November 2001, launched a ten-point plan aimed at reversing mounting unemployment and poverty due to the dual impacts of global recession and the terrorist attacks of September 11. The Global Agenda for Employment, adopted by some 700 world political and economic leaders meeting at the Forum, seeks to mitigate a stunning reversal in the global economy which threatens to plunge some 24 million people into joblessness, and millions more into poverty.

Aimed at creating jobs and alleviating poverty, the Global Agenda for Employment seeks to place employment at the heart of economic and social policies through promoting the major forces for dynamic growth, such as trade, technology, and entrepreneurship, and managing these forces well through macroeconomics and labour market policies. The agenda will provide a framework for the ILO to build partnerships within the multilateral system, and to work at the regional and national levels with governments and social partners to promote productive employment.

The **World Employment Report** (WER) is the ILO's flagship publication in the employment field. The 2001 WER found that, despite the communications revolution taking place in the world, increasing numbers of workers are unable to find jobs. Many have difficulty gaining access to the emerging technological resources needed to ensure productivity in an increasingly digitalized global economy. The report also found that, given its different speed of diffusion in wealthy and poor countries, the information and communications technology (ICT) revolution is resulting in a widening global "digital divide". The report says that unless this is addressed urgently, the employment aspirations and productivity potential of millions of workers in scores of developing countries cannot be realized.

Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), another wide-ranging reference tool, explains and analyses data on the world's labour markets. Harvesting vast amounts of information from international data repositories, and regional and national statistical sources, KILM examines 18 key labour market indicators, allowing researchers to compare and contrast between countries and within regions across time.

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Poverty and Investment Strategies

The employment potential of infrastructure development is vast, but is often not realized. An equipment-intensive approach, frequently used by foreign contractors, may be necessary for airports, motorways or heavy bridges, but for local infrastructure employment-intensive alternatives are available, which have shown their efficiency, and offer major advantages.

The Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) has helped more than 40 ILO member States develop sustainable employment through infrastructure projects and large-scale programmes. The operational strategy aims at improving access of labour-based contractors to public tenders. Simultaneously, it combines job creation with decent working conditions.

EIIP's approach involves technology that makes optimal use of labour, while ensuring cost-effectiveness and safeguarding quality. Through local-level organisational, participatory planning and contracting systems, it provides people with work as well as a voice. What's more, it can fight poverty in the longer term through investments that provide jobs and basic services such as roads, water and sanitation systems, drains, housing, schools and health centres.

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Skills development

InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability

Education and training are crucial to ensure sustainable economic and social development. Investment in the skills and employability of workers contributes to the improvement of productivity and competitiveness, and the social goals of equity and inclusion.

The ILO InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability (IFP/SKILLS) seeks to promote greater investment in skills and training so that men and women have enhanced and equal access to productive and decent work.

Through advocacy, knowledge development and services to ILO constituents, the Programme promotes the improvement of training policies and programmes worldwide, with a special emphasis on training strategies which support the integration of groups which may be disadvantaged in the labour market.

Key areas of work of IFP/SKILLS

- Identifying new approaches to human resource training and development (draft revision of the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150)).
- Promoting youth employment and training policies (contributions to the UN/ILO/World Bank Youth Employment Network).
- Promoting enhanced training policies and programmes in the informal sector (preparation for the General Discussion at the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, on employment and human resource development in the informal sector).
- Developing strategies for the integration of people with disabilities in the labour market (development of a Code of Practice for managing disability in the workplace).
- Providing technical advisory services for the improvement of training policies and programmes.
- Strengthening the role of public and private employment services in job counselling and placement.
- Improving skills development policies for older workers (contributions to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, April 2002).

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InFocus Programme

Investing in Knowledge, Skills and Employability

In most countries, both private and public sector investment in human resource development remains inadequate. The InFocus Programme on Investing in Knowledge, Skills and Employability deals with the ways in which increased investment in human resource development can help support employment growth. It pays particular attention to the training needs of vulnerable groups of workers, including those in the informal sector.





Job creation and enterprise development

Sustained enterprise growth is essential to employment creation. The ILO works towards the creation of sustainable, decent jobs in all types of enterprises, with a particular focus on small and group-based enterprises, and the upgrading of microenterprises in the informal sector, an area which generates most new jobs worldwide.

Management and Corporate Citizenship

The ILO helps build the support systems and managerial competencies which enable enterprises to boost productivity and competitiveness, and to promote good corporate citizenship. This includes assisting the social partners and enterprises in pursuing the “high road” to productivity and competitiveness, an approach involving action at a tripartite, multi-sectoral and enterprise level. Socially sensitive enterprise restructuring is also encouraged.

In light of societies’ increasing expectations of business, activities are undertaken to help enterprises pursue “Total Responsibility Management” (TRM), a holistic management framework for meeting many economic, environmental and social concerns.

Enterprises are encouraged to view international labour standards as good managerial practice. The ILO also provides managerial training and technical assistance in order to enhance an enterprise’s human and social capital.

The ILO is one of the core agencies supporting the Global Compact. The Compact is a platform for advocacy and learning, with participating businesses encouraged to adopt and implement various “universal principles” into their strategic vision and daily practices, and to share their experiences with others. Four of the nine universal principles of the Global Compact are based on the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Cooperatives

Within the UN system, the ILO is responsible for the largest and most diversified programme for the promotion of cooperatives. Viable and self-reliant cooperatives formed by producers, consumers, workers and business people worldwide have demonstrated their enormous potential for creating and consolidating employment opportunities, empowering people, providing protection and alleviating poverty.

The ILO technical assistance programme for cooperative development focuses on policy and legal advice, capacity-building through human resource development, poverty alleviation through self-help, alternative delivery mechanisms for social services, and a special regional programme for indigenous and tribal peoples.

A new Recommendation on the Promotion of Cooperatives (discussed at the June 2002 International Labour Conference) is designed to form the conceptual basis for ILO technical cooperation activities in this field.

InFocus Programme

Small enterprise development

ILO activities to support small enterprises are implemented through the InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment through Small Enterprise Development. The programme aims at expanding job opportunities in small and microenterprises by supporting programmes to increase access to cost-effective support services, and to create a favourable legal and regulatory environment. It also pays special attention to improving the quality of jobs in small enterprises and to ensuring that gender concerns in small enterprise development are mainstreamed. In addition, the Programme promotes the networking and representation of small enterprises to ensure that they can influence the political and economic decision processes which affect them.

The InFocus Programme helps member States implement the provisions of the Recommendation on job creation in small and medium-sized enterprises, adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1998. It makes available the ILO’s experience in the design and implementation of small enterprise development programmes in such areas as entrepreneurship training through the “Start and Improve Your Business” methodology.

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Social Finance for Decent Work

Local Economic Development

Local economic development (LED) is a participatory process which encourages social dialogue and public-private partnerships in a defined geographical area. LED enables local stakeholders to jointly design and implement a development strategy which fully exploits local resources and capacities, and makes best use of the area's comparative advantages.

The LED Programme in the Cooperative Branch implements technical assistance projects in several regions of the world. This includes the establishment of local economic development agencies, which provide local communities with a variety of support services, including finance. The LED approach has been particularly successful in post-crisis situations.

Financial instruments and institutions help create jobs and reduce the vulnerability of the working poor. They complement policies that target the labour market. Decent work recognizes the role of the financial sector for social justice. It advocates alliances with financial institutions, particularly those that combine social and financial goals.

A good illustration of this is microfinance, a strategy that provides savings, insurance and loans to help the working poor and their families gain financial security and cope with risk.

The Social Finance Programme provides services to ILO constituents in the following four areas:

1. Integrating financial and social policies, through:
 - Building partnerships with central banks.
 - Initiating debt swaps for microfinance.
 - An analysis of the social costs and benefits of financial sector policies.
2. Creating a conducive environment for investment and employment, through:
 - Improving the performance of guarantee funds and other risk-sharing mechanisms between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and banks.
 - Improving property-rights documentation, registry management and judicial procedures in firm insolvency.
 - Building capacity in mutual guarantee associations (MGAs) to reach out to more artisans.

3. Reducing the vulnerability of the poor, through:

- Linking migrant worker remittances to micro-finance and productive investments.
- Combating debt bondage with alternative sources for emergency loans.
- Crediting child allocations and other transfer payment to savings accounts held in a countrywide network of local banks.

4. Strengthening the capacity of the social partners to inform, advise and help their constituents, through:

- Salary deduction schemes for consumer and housing loans.
- Protection against worker indebtedness,
- Worker banks.
- stock-ownership.
- Wage guarantee funds.
- Pension funds and socially responsible investment.

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Recovery and reconstruction

Crises produce devastating effects on societies, particularly in poor, vulnerable countries. Armed conflicts, natural disasters, financial and economic downturn and difficult political and social transitions destroy socioeconomic infrastructure, the very means of production, natural and human resources, and vast numbers of jobs. The magnitude, pervasiveness and alarming upward trend of such human tragedies demands a special ILO focus.

The InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction (IFP/Crisis) is the ILO response to the above trend. It tackles the challenges posed to Decent Work by crises, operating through a combination of knowledge development, technical and policy guidelines, advocacy, capacity building and rapid-response interventions in the field. It aims to facilitate the revival of livelihoods and the socioeconomic reintegration of diverse crises-affected groups, promote the reconstruction and development of their countries and reduce the occurrence and adverse impact of future crises.

The unique approach of IFP/Crisis is based on speed, flexibility of response, and integrated/multidisciplinary work, which matches the special context of emergencies. The Programme operates in close strategic partnership with other relevant international, regional and national agencies and institutions within and outside the UN system, as well as with the media. It also relies on a network of focal points in ILO technical departments and external specialists, allowing swift, closely adapted responses to crises.



InFocus Programme

Crisis Response and Reconstruction

This programme concentrates on the situations which emerge in the wake of natural or man-made crises such as war, crop failure, macroeconomic fluctuations or climatic disaster. Maintaining income levels under these circumstances generally requires a combination of programmes adapted to the needs of different target population groups. To assure reconstruction and income sustainability, such interventions, often short-term in nature, need to be linked to longer-term investment in production capacity – an area in which the ILO has built up a solid technical capacity.

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Gender promotion and gender equality

Gender equality

Gender equality is a key element of the ILO agenda of Decent Work for All Women and Men, and along with development, is one of the two cross-cutting issues of the four strategic objectives of Decent Work. Gender Equality is also a shared policy objective of the ILO Programme and Budget 2004-05. The ILO approach to gender equality is to mainstream gender concerns in all its policies and programmes. This includes gender-specific interventions based on gender analysis, which may target only women or only men, or women and men together.

The mandate of the Bureau for Gender Equality, which reports directly to the Director-General of the ILO, is to promote equality for all women and men in the World of Work. The Bureau acts as advisor, catalyst, advocate and communicator for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all ILO policies, programmes and activities. This includes coordinating the implementation of the ILO Action Plan on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming.

Current activities of the Bureau include monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the shared policy objective on gender equality, overseeing the Office-wide Gender Audit, supporting the ILO gender network and managing the ILO Gender Equality Tool website for information sharing and enhancing knowledge.

The Bureau's role and responsibilities include facilitating the establishment of institutional mechanisms for incorporating a gender perspective throughout ILO's sectors, departments, programmes and field offices as they plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their work. The Bureau advises on sensitization and capacity-building programmes for ILO staff. It promotes efforts to develop gender-sensitive guidelines, indicators and tools for gender analysis and planning. It also advises constituents on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

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More and better jobs for women

The International Programme for More and Better Jobs for Women forms part of the ILO strategy for achieving gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development. The objective of the Programme is to expand employment opportunities for women, while enhancing their conditions of employment and eliminating gender discrimination at work. The Programme focuses especially on the needs of poor and vulnerable women, and aims to demonstrate that women's economic empowerment also benefits their families, communities and societies.

Operating at both international and national levels, the Programme promotes an integrated approach based on capacity-building, policy analysis, awareness-raising and targeted practical interventions, which addresses the many inter-related problems faced by women within and beyond the workplace. It also aims to raise awareness on issues of family responsibilities, maternity protection and sexual harassment. Another critical area of concern is women's participation in decision-making and management including the promotion of women entrepreneurship, where perhaps the most intractable inequalities persist. Most women continue to be subject to occupational segregation, and few break through the "glass ceiling" separating them from top-level management and professional positions.

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Multinational enterprises

It is increasingly recognized that foreign direct investment by multinational enterprises can make a significant contribution to development through the transfer of technology and modern management practices and by strengthening the capacity of developing and transition countries to produce goods and services that meet global standards. Today, some 50,000 multinational enterprises and their 450,000 affiliates employ over 200 million people throughout the world. Their impact is felt in virtually every facet of industry, trade, services and business activities. How multinational enterprises manage their operations thus has repercussions on the world of work worldwide.

In 1977 the ILO's Governing Body adopted the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy to guide and inspire the conduct of multinational enterprises and how they relate to host governments and employers' and workers' organizations. The principles of the Declaration reflect good policy and practice in such areas as employment, training, conditions of work, safety and health, and industrial relations. As part of its follow-up activities, the ILO undertakes periodic surveys to obtain information from ILO member States on how the Declaration principles are being implemented. The Declaration is also regularly revised to ensure its continued relevance.



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Social protection for all

Access to an adequate level of social protection is recognized in the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia (1944) and in a number of international labour standards as a basic right of all individuals. Yet, in many countries, reality falls far short of the ideals of the Declaration. The ILO does all it can to enable countries to extend social protection to all groups in society and to improve working conditions and safety at work.





Enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social security systems

More than half of the world's population is excluded from any type of formal social security protection. In many countries conventional forms of social protection do not work as they should. Such insecurity breeds fear, impoverishment and socially irresponsible behaviour, while preventing people from realizing their potential as workers and members of society.

Economic and social security in the twenty-first century

The ILO Programme on Economic and Social Security in the Twenty-first Century recognizes that, while excessive security can induce passivity, adequate economic and social security is essential for productive work and human dignity in the global economy of the future. The Programme addresses five questions:

1. Why do individuals and social groups lack decent social security?
2. How can innovative social security schemes launched in member countries complement or replace traditional and well-established systems?
3. How can the governance and coverage of social protection programmes be improved?
4. What are the constitutive elements of social security?
5. How can we reconcile the flexibility needs of the labour market with adequate social protection?

InFocus Programme

Economic and Social Security in the Twenty-first Century

A keyword over the last decade was "insecurity". In developing countries, the vast majority of people have long faced chronic insecurity, but even in industrialized countries many people feel anxious and uncertain of their entitlements in society and in work. The ILO seeks to identify the factors which undermine security and the policy options which can fortify it, paying particular attention to schemes in low-income countries and communities, and to the specific needs of women.

Continuing the trend of the past few years, a substantial proportion of the economically active population will be working in informal activities in which they will need fall-back systems of social protection. And a growing number of people will have flexible working lives, change work status more often, develop more skills from time-to-time, and move in and out of the labour force at various times of their lives. The challenge for policy-makers, and employers' and workers' organizations, is to ensure that national policies integrate flexibility and social security.

Reforming and developing social security systems

The ILO has designed three related action programmes to develop social security systems worldwide:

- Reforming and developing social security systems
- Improving the governance, management and operation of social security schemes
- Creating safety nets through social assistance, poverty prevention and the extension of social protection

The ILO has developed a framework for the design of sustainable social security schemes, including their reform and extension. ILO activities aim at helping member States to improve and expand the protection they provide to all members of the community across the full range of contingencies: basic income security, health care, sickness, old age and invalidity, unemployment, employment injury, maternity, family responsibilities and death.

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Labour protection: Conditions of work and the working environment

Security and productivity through safety and health at work

Work-related accidents and diseases continue to be a serious problem in both developed and developing countries. The ILO estimates that workers suffer 270 million accidents every year. There are at least 335,000 fatal injuries caused by accidents at work. Further avoidable suffering is caused by 160 million cases of occupational disease. Taking accidents and diseases together, the global estimate of work-related deaths amounts to 2 million per year, and this is probably an underestimate.

International concern and awareness of the importance of the problem remains surprisingly modest. Action, especially in developing and “transition” countries, is hampered by inadequate knowledge and information.

ILO action in the field of occupational safety and health pursues a two-pronged approach. It creates alliances and partnerships by launching pilot activities which can be used by governments, the social partners and other groups in advocacy campaigns. Secondly, the ILO programme supports action at the national level through direct technical assistance, with the primary focus on hazardous occupations. This includes the development of management tools, monitoring and information services designed to prevent occupational accidents and diseases, and to protect the health and welfare of workers and the environment.

The International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre

The International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre (CIS) is a worldwide service dedicated to the collection and dissemination of information on the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases. The Centre is assisted in its work by more than 120 national institutions around the world.

CIS also publishes the ILO **Encyclopaedia of Occupational Safety and Health**. With over 1,000 articles in the 4th edition (1998), the Encyclopaedia is the worldwide authoritative source of information on all aspects of safety and health at work.

InFocus Programme

Safety and Health at Work and the Environment

The SafeWork Programme aims to create worldwide awareness of the dimensions and consequences of work-related accidents, injuries and diseases. It promotes the goal of basic protection for all workers in conformity with international labour standards, and enhances the capacity of member States and industry to design and implement effective preventive and protective policies and programmes. The primary focus is on hazardous occupations.

Conditions of work

Adequate working conditions are central to the achievement of long-term sustainable growth, good living standards and social harmony. Major ILO activities in this area include:

Maternity protection:

Many women suffer from unequal treatment in employment, as women, or specifically in relation to their reproductive role. Maternity protection at work is a crucial element in the struggle to achieve equality between men and women workers, as well as an essential element in the basic protection of women and children. The ILO was a pioneer in this area, and in the first year of its existence in 1919, adopted Convention No. 3 on maternity protection. By placing maternity protection on the agenda of the 1999 International Labour Conference, the Governing Body expressed confidence that the time was ripe for new international standards on this subject. Taking account of developments over the last 50 years, the Conference adopted a new, modernized standard on maternity protection with Convention No. 183 in 2000.

Violence at work:

The ILO has conducted studies on violence at work as a global problem and the use of personal work-related data collected about workers. The ILO Code of Practice on the Protection of Workers' Personal Data as well as the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165), provide important guidelines in these areas. Adequate working conditions which safeguard workers' dignity and equality are central to the achievement of long-term sustainable growth, good living standards and social harmony.



Changes in work:

The ILO has carried out research on changes in working time arrangements, the organization of work, employment and working patterns (including the effects of globalization), the informalization of work and technological change, and whether these changes have the potential to contribute to improvements in working conditions or threaten fairness and dignity at work, job and income security, equal treatment, and safety and health.

Work improvements in small enterprises:

Many countries, in their programmes for economic and social development assign an important role to the small-scale industrial enterprises. These have considerable potential for creating employment, developing a pool of skilled workers to meet the requirements of future industrial expansion, and promoting industry in rural areas. One neglected characteristic of the small-scale industrial sector is that it is often in such enterprises that the work is most difficult, accident rates are highest and conditions of work least favourable. ILO experience has shown that simple, effective, low-cost action can be taken to raise productivity while improving working conditions. Manuals for entrepreneurs and for trainers have been developed based on the training methodology, "Higher Productivity and a Better Place to Work" (commonly referred to as WISE, for Work Improvements in Small Enterprises).

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Labour inspection

In the labour inspection field, the ILO helps to establish efficient and effective labour inspection systems in member States to ensure compliance with labour protection laws. The ILO also helps to involve employers and workers in the efforts of labour inspection services, and to strengthen existing links between labour inspectorates and the competent bodies concerned with the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases. The aim is to combat illegal employment and prevent labour law violations in areas such as industrial relations, general conditions of work, the fight against child labour, occupational safety and health, etc.

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Protection of migrant workers

Some 90 million people work and live outside their country of nationality, and their numbers are growing rapidly in some regions because of worsening imbalances in incomes and employment opportunities. Arrangements for managing migration which have proven effective in the past, such as the conclusion of bilateral agreements, no longer cover much of the current migration situation. A large share of contemporary migration is organized by profit-oriented commercial agents and takes place under clandestine conditions.

The objective of the ILO in this area is to protect the fundamental employment rights and freedoms of migrants. Of particular concern are women migrants, who are often in low-skilled occupations in sectors not effectively covered by national labour standards, and vulnerable to various forms of exploitation. ILO activities in this area include the promotion of Conventions on migrants, policy advice to countries of origin and countries of employment on migration, assessment of the impact of globalization on new forms of migration, technical cooperation in support of reducing emigration pressures and channelling migrants' savings for investments and employment. In April 1997, the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Future ILO Activities in the Field of Migration recommended guidelines for appropriate national legislation and to protect migrant workers recruited by private agents.

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“AIDS and HIV affect people at all levels of society,” says Juan Somavia, ILO Director-General, “but they have a profound impact on workers and their families, enterprises, employers and national economies.”

Mr. Somavia presents the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work to UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

Fighting substance abuse

Currently, there are well over 50 million drug-dependent persons in the world, and between 12 and 15 per cent of adults drink at levels hazardous to themselves and others. In the workplace, the abuse of drugs and alcohol contributes to accidents, absenteeism, theft, lower productivity and job loss. The **Code of Practice on the Management of Alcohol and Drug-related Issues in the Workplace** (1995), is the cornerstone of the ILO's substance abuse programme, and several of its key concepts have been integrated into the Declaration of the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction, unanimously endorsed in June 1998 by the Twentieth Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The ILO's emphasis on primary prevention in recent years has increased the role and involvement of the ILO's constituents in supporting enterprise-based activities, and has coincided with the growing recognition that workplace programmes are valuable not only for workers and enterprises but also for addressing drug and alcohol problems at the community and national levels.

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The ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

At least 23 million workers aged 15 to 49 are infected with HIV. AIDS threatens fundamental rights at work and undermines efforts to provide women and men with decent and productive work. It is cutting the labour force and reducing the viability of enterprises. The epidemic also strikes the most vulnerable groups in society, including women and children, exacerbating existing problems of inadequate social protection, gender inequalities and child labour.

The ILO response to HIV/AIDS

The ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work (ILO/AIDS), was established in November 2000. It builds on the ILO's strengths and existing structures, and collaborates with its tripartite constituents to promote workplace prevention, to combat discrimination, and to mitigate the social and economic impact of the disease. Its main areas of action are advocacy and awareness-raising, policy guidance and standard-setting, and strengthening the capacity of the social partners through technical cooperation.

The ILO has adopted a pioneering Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work. This establishes the principles of workplace practice, provides guidelines for developing policies at enterprise, community and national levels, and suggests concrete responses to HIV/AIDS at the workplace. It is a consensus document, adaptable to a range of situations, and provides the basis for social dialogue on a difficult and sensitive issue.

The Programme's objectives are being integrated into the work plans of all relevant sectors of the ILO, from social security, and safety and health, to gender equality and child labour. Activities include the development of training manuals and communication materials to guide the application of the Code, and assistance with the reform of employment laws to address HIV/AIDS in a number of countries. A technical cooperation programme has been launched, and projects developed for countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The ILO is one of eight cosponsors of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

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Strengthening tripartism and social dialogue

Fair terms of employment, decent working conditions, and economic and social development for the benefit of all, can only be achieved with a broad-based effort and the consent of workers, employers and governments.

“Strengthening Tripartism and Social Dialogue”, is one of the ILO’s four Strategic Objectives. It aims to concentrate and reinforce the Organization’s support for the role and activities of the ILO tripartite constituents, and especially their capacity to engage in, and to promote, the use of social dialogue.

The ILO helps governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations to establish sound labour relations, adapt labour laws to meet changing economic and social needs, and improve labour administration.



Strengthening social dialogue

The InFocus Programme on Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration (IFP/DIALOGUE) is designed to promote the benefits of social dialogue, both as an end in itself, and as a means of action essential for the success of all of the ILO's Strategic Objectives. It encourages the use of social dialogue at all levels by ILO tripartite constituents.

The objective of the programme is to strengthen and use legal frameworks, institutions, machinery and processes for social dialogue and its institutions in ILO members States.

Particular emphasis is given to identifying factors and good practices which improve the image and effectiveness of tripartite constituents, and help make them more representative. The Programme promotes the use of social dialogue through an advocacy campaign, and provides practical demonstrations of social dialogue in action.

The programme also promotes efficient labour administration, capable of responding to changing economic and social conditions, and making a vital contribution to national development and improved working conditions.

The ILO helps countries to formulate and develop their labour legislation and administration.

The InFocus Programme on Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration provides a unique concentration of services so that labour ministries and other relevant government agencies can better facilitate and participate in social dialogue. The programme provides wide ranging support for labour ministries and related units of government in order to influence economic and social policy.

Attention is also given to the process of labour law reform as a central component of the promotion of tripartism and social dialogue.

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The ILO helps governments, employers' and workers' organizations to establish sound relations, adapt labour laws to meet changing economic and social needs, and improve labour administration.



Employers' activities in the ILO

Successful enterprises are at the heart of any strategy to create employment and improve living standards. Employers' organizations are crucial for shaping an environment conducive to competitive and sustainable enterprises that can contribute to economic and social development, and by providing services that improve and guide individual performance of enterprises. Employers' organizations are a critical component of any social dialogue process, which can help to ensure that national social and economic objectives are properly and effectively formulated and enjoy wide support among the business community which they represent.

At the same time, employers' organizations at national and international levels are the most cost-effective means for enterprises to access information on a wide range of economic, labour and social issues. Their information and representational skills can help an enterprise to understand and influence its business environment, and to seize the opportunities offered by expanding trade, investment possibilities and competition, in an increasingly globalized world.

The Bureau of Employers' Activities of the ILO works with employers' organizations so that they can effectively support their members. The Bureau runs a programme of assistance to employers' organizations in developing countries, countries in transition to a market economy and countries emerging from a situation of conflict, by stressing strategic planning and in-depth dialogue which will enable identification of their priorities. The programme helps employers' organizations develop services of benefit to enterprises. This can also help increase membership levels, which in

turn strengthens the organizations in their efforts to foster a business environment conducive to enterprise growth.

As one of the three constituents of the ILO, employers' organizations have a special relationship with the organization. The ILO's Bureau of Employers' Activities is responsible for the nurturing and development of that relationship. The Bureau maintains close contacts with employers' organizations in all member States of the ILO and provides support to them in their relations with the ILO.

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Workers' activities in the ILO

Free trade unions are democratic, self-organizing institutions of working people wishing to advance their rights as workers and citizens. Despite the denial of the right to organize in many countries the international trade union movement is the world's largest and most representative organization based on voluntary membership. Trade unions are key civil society institutions in most democratic countries.

In a rapidly globalizing world the challenge of securing decent work, safe conditions of work, living wages, basic social security, gender equality and fair income distribution call for better global governance and universal application and enforcement of international labour standards.

Since its creation, trade unions have regarded the ILO as an essential institution for promoting the protection of workers through global social dialogue and standard setting.

The Bureau of Workers' Activities supports the link between the ILO and one of its three main stakeholders: the trade union movement. It enables trade unions to make full use of the potential of the Office. The Bureau cooperates with workers' organizations on a national and international level, assisting them in being an effective voice of working people and their families. Different programmes are supporting trade unions:

- defending fundamental rights at work;
- improving education and training capacity;
- organizing unprotected workers;
- developing social and employment policies for social justice and sustainable growth and
- promoting international labour standards.

Within the International Labour Office the Bureau of Workers' Activities sees itself also as a service institution that helps and encourages other departments to engage in fruitful cooperation with the trade union movement.

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Sectoral activities: Bringing the ILO to the workplace, and the workplace to the ILO

Wherever a person earns his or her livelihood, in a classroom or factory, on a building site or in a bank, in a mine or on a farm, each works in a sector of the economy which has its own technical, economic and social characteristics. Many labour issues have a specifically sectoral character, and general issues such as globalization, sustainable development, HIV/AIDS and gender, may take different forms depending on the sectoral context.

Sectoral activities of the ILO aim to improve the capacity of those working in specific sectors to deal equitably and effectively with labour issues. Regular international tripartite sectoral meetings have long provided an important forum for social dialogue on sector-specific labour and social issues. This dialogue paved the way for practical activities to address them at the national level. Henceforth, a more targeted approach with greater emphasis on such constituent-driven activities, in conjunction with other ILO units at headquarters and the field, will strengthen and accelerate the means to achieve decent work at the workplace. Meetings too will be more focused with practical outcomes, such as guidelines or codes of practice.

A mix of sectoral meetings and sectoral action programmes will enable greater cooperation, more flexibility and provide more impact in addressing the sectoral dimension of the Decent Work Agenda.

All recent sectoral meeting reports and many sectoral working papers are available on the ILO Web site.

Maritime activities

The overall objective of ILO maritime activities is the promotion of social and economic progress in shipping, fishing, ports and inland water transport, especially as regards the working and living conditions of workers in these industries.

The 29th Session of the Joint Maritime Commission (January 2001), considered the changes which had taken place in the shipping industry. It announced a new agreement, the Geneva Accord, designed to improve safety and working conditions in the maritime industry. The agreement calls for the consolidation of existing ILO maritime instruments into a new, single “framework” Convention. This proposed new Convention would provide an ILO “social pillar” for the shipping sector to complement the existing maritime safety and environmental pillars of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The Governing Body has called for a maritime session of the International Labour Conference, to be held in 2005, to finalize the Convention. Ratification and application of existing relevant standards; in particular, the Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 147) and its Protocol of 1996, will place member States in a better position to ratify the proposed new Convention.

The ILO adopted in June 2003, the Seafarers’ Identity Documents Convention, 2003 (No. 185) and the Governing Body in March 2004, adopted the minutiae-based biometric standard to enable countries to implement the Convention. Convention No. 185 serves to protect seafarers’ rights, facilitate international trade and provide countries with the security they need.

In ports, increased automation of cargo handling, structural adjustment and privatization have posed major new challenges and have resulted in reductions in the workforce. The ILO continues to provide guidance on the social dimensions of port privatization, and has developed the Portworker Development Programme (PDP) which, through its implementation in ports in both the developed and developing world, improves the skills, working conditions and status of portworkers, as well as the efficiency and productivity of ports.

In March 2004, the ILO Governing Body approved two new Codes of Practice: one on Safety and Health in Ports and another on Security in Ports.





Services sectors

The services sectors have become the dominant source of employment in many countries. Much recent employment growth has been in knowledge-intensive work. A major challenge throughout the world is the provision of more and better public services (including education) and the transformation of some sectors from exclusively public, to “mixed”, with both public and private components, particularly as borders have blurred between public and private services. Health, transport, utilities, and postal and telecommunications services are notable examples.

Private services in areas such as commerce, financial and professional services, hotels, catering and tourism, the media, culture and the graphical sector, are conditioned by the increasingly fierce competition of globalized markets, deregulation, liberalization, mergers and acquisitions, and rapid technological advances such as digitalization. These changes have intensified the need for social dialogue in these sectors.

Recent sectoral meetings covering services addressed: violence in services; the employment impact of mergers and acquisitions; the impact of crises on the hotel and tourism sector; and challenges facing municipal services, public utilities and public emergency services. Several new action programmes are focusing on these issues.

Industrial activities

Regular tripartite meetings in the ten extractive, rural, manufacturing and construction sectors addressed globalization, sustainable development, industrial relations, lifelong learning, employment, training, working arrangements and safety and health. Some meetings led to the development of codes of practice or guidelines on occupational safety and health and labour inspection in different sectors. Others resulted in regional and national workshops, technical advisory services, a newsletter, and working papers on topics such as industrial relations, working time, labour inspection, employment and poverty, home work and gender, in different economic sectors. Action programmes in agriculture, construction, and textiles and clothing will provide a specific national input to improving conditions in these sectors.

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Regional activities of the ILO

ILO activities in the field bring together regular budget and extra-budgetary activities, in full consultation with the tripartite constituents at the regional, sub-regional and country levels, to provide services in the areas of standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue.

The network of field offices and technical specialists underpins the ILO's work in promoting the Decent Work Agenda as an integral part of national development policies.



6.1



Jobs in Africa

Years of crisis have left a legacy of high levels of unemployment, combined with low wages and social conflict. Nearly half of the population in sub-Saharan Africa live under the poverty threshold. With the continuation of economic reforms and the settlement of conflicts in Africa, a favourable context for recovery is gradually emerging. A recent ILO/UNDP report (**Jobs for Africa**) insists that many countries in the region could break with the legacy of poverty, and that the nascent recovery should be seen as a “launching pad for takeoff if the right policies are introduced and pursued”.

However, the poverty problem in Africa is closely related to incoherent policies and uncoordinated strategies and programmes, with unclear policy outcomes on adequate employment opportunities and social protection. Present and past policies have been unable to provide an environment for, let alone having been able to stimulate the creation of, productive employment which could provide adequate incomes for individuals and households, and their social economic security. Therefore, the creation of productive employment must constitute a key output of macroeconomic policies and the overall development agenda.

As the ILO flagship Programme in Africa addressing the growing unemployment, underemployment and poverty challenge, Jobs in Africa aims at enhancing the capacity of our constituents and other actors to influence economic policy and the deployment of public and private sector investment so that it is more effectively directed towards the promotion of productive employment and the reduction of poverty.

This has been pursued by advocating the implementation of policies favouring the poor within an environment which fosters productivity and efficiency, thus enhancing the growth and competitiveness of the economy and facilitating labour force mobility and skills development. These efforts have also led to the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive employment, poverty strategies and programmes for the creation of more and better jobs, the promotion of entrepreneurship and the development and protection (against HIV/AIDS) of human resources in several African countries.

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The ILO response to the financial crisis in Asia: Strengthening the constituents' capacity to provide decent work

The pain inflicted on Asian societies by the financial crisis, especially in east and south-east Asia, remains widespread. South Asian countries with less open economies, though less affected by the crisis, continue to face the daunting challenge of combating poverty and unemployment. The transition countries still face serious labour market reform problems, and need to give high priority to assisting displaced workers. At the same time, there is a tendency for workers and employers to accept poorer and more hazardous working conditions for survival. Victims of occupational accidents and their families could fall into poverty. The small island states in the Pacific face a problem of economies of scale, and hence the overriding need to develop their human resources and diversify their economic base.



While there are now encouraging signs that currency and financial markets have stabilized, complacency must be avoided. The crisis has forged a recognition that deficiencies in the pre-crisis economic and social systems need to be remedied.

The ILO response to the crisis and to other developments in Asia, which accounts for almost two-thirds of the world's poor, was forged at the 13th Asian Regional Meeting, in 2001. With the conclusions of that meeting to guide it, the ILO will work with constituents to put the Decent Work Agenda into practice at the national level – striving to make sure that decent work is an integral part of country priorities and programmes for poverty alleviation. The ILO's main focus will be on advocating economic policies which generate productive employment, extending social security coverage to the presently excluded majority of workers in the informal/unorganized economy, and on strengthening tripartism and social dialogue. It will also aim to step up its activities in the field, notably on behalf of vulnerable groups, and in support of labour-based public works programmes and decent working conditions.



A common new vision for reform is emerging which recognizes the importance of democracy as a guarantor of basic human rights (including fundamental principles and rights at work) and the value of social dialogue. At this stage, high priority should be given to strengthening systems of social protection. Possible measures include introducing social protection programmes for the unemployed, such as unemployment insurance where appropriate, expanding social assistance schemes to reach out to people in extreme poverty, focusing particularly on basic needs such as health care, introducing a basic infrastructure and legal framework for social security in countries where it does not exist, and taking practical steps to improve safety, health and working conditions to prevent occupational accidents and diseases.

Besides traditional collaboration within the UN system, the ILO has been active in entering into partnerships with bilateral donors, as well as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, the latter having specifically highlighted its collaboration with the ILO recently through joint technical programmes, strategies and a Memorandum of Understanding (May 2002).

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The Americas: A fight for quality employment, better income distribution and social protection

In 2003, unemployment is likely to decrease slightly in Latin America, according to an ILO regional report (Panorama Laboral). The ILO estimates that unemployment on the continent will reach 10.5% compared to 10.9% in 2002. This trend was fuelled by a positive, if modest rate of growth in the economy.

Subregional integration efforts have continued towards the consolidation of NAFTA, MERCOSUR and CARICOM, as well as other integration initiatives. In this increasingly open economic environment, it is all the more important for ILO programmes to ensure that economic development is accompanied by social progress.

The ILO cooperates with member countries which have programmes designed not only to combat unemployment, but also to enhance the quality of employment. Member States are encouraged to develop legal and institutional frameworks which facilitate the inclusion of informal workers in the modern economy. Progress needs to be made also in the involvement of representative employers' and workers' organizations in the economic reforms and policy decisions related to regional integration and globalization.

The region is currently going through a second generation of labour reforms, in which efforts are being made to avoid the undesirable results and shortcomings of pioneer countries and to enhance their achievements.

The ILO acts to ensure that these reforms incorporate policy changes to promote basic labour rights, employment and social protection for all, and reinforce social dialogue.

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The Arab States: Improving employment policies, social dialogue and social protection

The low-income Arab States suffer from high rates of unemployment and underemployment, poverty and low levels of social protection, accentuated by rapid population growth and the slowdown of their economies. Higher-income countries have been able to maintain high standards of living, mainly through revenues from the export of oil and other natural resources. However, the dwindling price of oil and dwindling financial reserves have put unprecedented pressure on the economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which are confronted with increasing domestic unemployment, especially among the young.

ILO technical cooperation in the Arab States has increased considerably since the reopening of the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States in Beirut (Lebanon) in May 1995 – after an absence of more than 12 years. In all the countries of the region, there is an urgent need to promote employment policies, tripartism and social dialogue, and to improve labour administration so that they can address more effectively the issues of job creation, labour legislation and the protection of workers, including migrant workers.

Special efforts are devoted to providing technical assistance to the Palestine Authority and its social partners in setting up much-needed labour market institutions.

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Europe and Central Asia: For a better balance between economic and social development in transition countries

All European countries are confronted with the new challenges arising out of globalization. Their responses must focus on improving economic efficiency and social cohesion. For the transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the establishment of a social market economy and the development of greater macroeconomic stability, including the privatization of state assets, remain key priorities.

Most Central European countries are seeking to become members of the European Union, which emphasizes social justice and social progress in its enlargement process. An ILO priority is to help these countries bring their national law and practice into conformity with ILO principles, ensuring that standards adhere to the social policy requirements of members of the European Union and the Council of Europe. In south-eastern Europe, the ILO is promoting a social cohesion initiative for the Stability Pact countries.

In the countries of the former Soviet Union, the success achieved in strengthening their democracies will be crucial for the consolidation of political, economic and social transition in the subregion. In Western Europe, the ILO places emphasis on promoting awareness and support for the Organization's work, and maintaining policy dialogue and cooperation on labour issues in Europe.

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Priorities for ILO activities in transition countries in Europe and Central Asia

- The restructuring of local labour markets and the development of small enterprises
- The reform of labour legislation on the basis of international labour standards
- The reform and development of social security systems
- The setting up and strengthening of labour administrations
- The promotion and strengthening of independent employers' and workers' organizations
- The development of tripartism
- The protection of workers' safety and health



A centre of excellence for training, research and publications

The ILO is the world's major resource centre for information, analysis and guidance on the world of work. Research accompanies and reinforces all of the Organization's practical activities, and the ILO is universally regarded as an authoritative source of statistical information.



ILO publications

The International Labour Office publishes the results of research related to the changing nature of work and employment which is of importance to policy makers and others. Technical guides, Codes of Practice and training manuals are also produced. Topics covered include enterprise development, social security, gender issues, international migration, industrial relations, labour law, child labour, occupational safety and health, and workers' rights. Employment in the globalized economy and in the information society is a primary focus. The problems confronting workers and employers in developing, transition and industrialized economies are addressed, the objective being to contribute to the ILO goal of "decent work" for all.

The ILO's high-profile **World Employment Report** provides up-to-date information and analysis on major trends in the world of work. The four-volume 4th edition of the **ILO Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety** (also on CD-ROM) reflects the latest developments in this area and provides comprehensive coverage.

The ILO also publishes statistical, legal and bibliographic materials in both printed and interactive electronic form. The **Yearbook of Labour Statistics** contains data from around the world and is one of the key sources of statistical information on employment issues (see 7.2, "Labour Statistics" for more details). **Key Indicators of the Labour Market** (KILM) provides analyses from the Yearbook and other international references, and is available online, in print version, and on CD-ROM.

The International Labour Review – the ILO flagship journal published quarterly in English, French and Spanish – features current policy analysis on employment and labour issues. The ILO also publishes the quarterly **Labour Education** in English, French and Spanish, and the magazine **World of Work** in 14 languages, aimed at ILO constituents and all those who follow developments in the field.

For further information visit our Web site:
www.ilo.org/publns

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Labour statistics

Within the UN system, the ILO Bureau of Statistics is the focal point for labour statistics. The activities of the Bureau fall within three related areas:

- Collection and dissemination of labour statistics
- Development of guidelines for the effective collection of valid, reliable and comparable labour statistics
- The provision of technical assistance to national authorities responsible for labour statistics

The **Yearbook of Labour Statistics**, a comprehensive survey of annual data from all parts of the world, covers the economically active population, employment and unemployment, hours of work and consumer prices, occupational injuries, strikes and lockouts. Each issue of the Yearbook is accompanied by a volume in the series **Sources and Methods: Labour Statistics** (a technical guide to series published in the Yearbook and the Bulletin of Labour Statistics). The Yearbook also exists in the form of a database (LABORSTA). Other ILO databases refer to estimates and projections of the economically active population, wages and hours of work, household income and trade union membership.

The **Bulletin of Labour Statistics**, published quarterly with updated supplements for intervening months, contains monthly and quarterly data on employment, unemployment, hours of work, wages and consumer prices. A special annual supplement, entitled Statistics on occupational wages and hours of work and on food prices, presents the results of the yearly "ILO October Inquiry".

All requests for statistical information from these databases should be addressed to:

ILO Bureau of Statistics

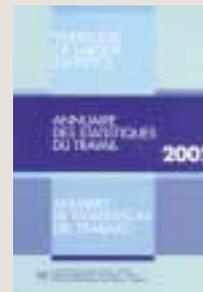
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Web site: <http://www.ilo.org/stat>

The database may be consulted at
<http://laborsta.ilo.org>





Library services

The ILO Library offers a range of information services and products to facilitate research into the world of work. It provides and preserves an extensive, multilingual collection of print and electronic information sources including books, reports journals, national legislation texts and statistical publications. It has over 40,000 ILO publications.

The Library publishes Labordoc, a unique database available on the Internet, providing worldwide coverage of publications, including journal articles, on all aspects of work and sustainable livelihoods, and the work-related aspects of economic and social development and human rights. It provides an ever-increasing number of links to online publications. Labordoc is the authoritative source for ILO publications.

The Library is the focal point of a network of information centres at ILO Headquarters and in the field. In addition, the Library offers an information consultancy service, publishes the ILO Thesaurus and Taxonomy and develops projects and training courses in labour information.

Requests for library services should be addressed to:

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International Institute for Labour Studies

The ILO International Institute for Labour Studies in Geneva promotes policy research and public discussion on emerging issues of concern to the ILO and its constituents – labour, business and government.

The organizing theme of the Institute's programmes is the notion of "decent work". The Institute's programmes seek to contribute to the development of the analytical and empirical foundations of decent work and a broader understanding of the policy instruments necessary to implement it in practice.

The Institute provides three major facilities:

- A global forum on social policy, enabling governments, business and labour to interact informally with the academic community and other opinion-makers
- International research programmes and networks linking academics with business, labour and governments practitioners, to explore emerging policy issues of potential relevance for the ILO and contribute to policy formulation.
- Educational programmes to assist trade unions, employers' organizations and labour administration in developing their institutional capacities for research, analysis and policy formulation in the economic and social fields.

The Institute's means of action include: research, social policy forums, public lectures, courses and seminars, internship programmes, a visiting scholar programme, the Phelan Fellowship programme and publications. It also organizes the Social Policy Lectures, endowed by the ILO's Nobel Peace Prize and held, by rotation, in major universities of the world.

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International Training Centre in Turin

As skilled human resources are central to the pursuit of decent work, in 1965, the ILO established its training arm in Turin, Italy, to assist countries in their social and economic development through training.

Working in close partnership with regional and national training institutions, the Centre contributes to disseminating the ILO's principles and policies, and to strengthening the capacity of national institutions to implement relevant programmes, in line with its strategic objectives. It seeks to assemble, package and deliver the best thinking, practice and experience – from the ILO and elsewhere – concerning fundamental principles and rights at work; employment and income opportunities for women and men; social protection for all, tripartism and social dialogue; and management of the development process.

Its large residential facility offers a wide range of training and learning opportunities through standard courses, customized learning events, comprehensive training projects, advisory services and training material design and production. Its range of services is highly diversified. It may be entrusted with the overall design and execution of a multi-year project that has several components, with the implementation of one project component or with the organization of a single training activity.

Participants are representatives of the ILO's tripartite constituency and their partner institutions. They are typically decision-makers, senior and mid-level managers in private and public enterprises, directors of vocational training institutions and systems, leaders of workers' and employers' organizations, government officials and national counterparts responsible for social policy, women in development and management of human resources.

To date, one hundred thousand women and men from 170 countries have benefited from the Centre's services. The annual number of activities exceeds 300 programmes and projects. The annual number of participants exceeds 8000. Around half the activities take place on campus and half in the field. It is steadily gaining further outreach through distance learning programmes via the internet.

The Centre's training portfolio is customized to the specific needs of developing and transition countries in Africa, the Americas, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific and Europe. Courses are delivered in the language of the participant (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish.) These tailor-made training activities are integrated into nationally-executed programmes or projects and therefore contribute to the overall development efforts of the recipient country.

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CINTERFOR
 The Inter-American Research and Documentation Centre on Vocational training (CINTERFOR) in Montevideo, Uruguay, is the central node of a network of vocational training institutions covering Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain.

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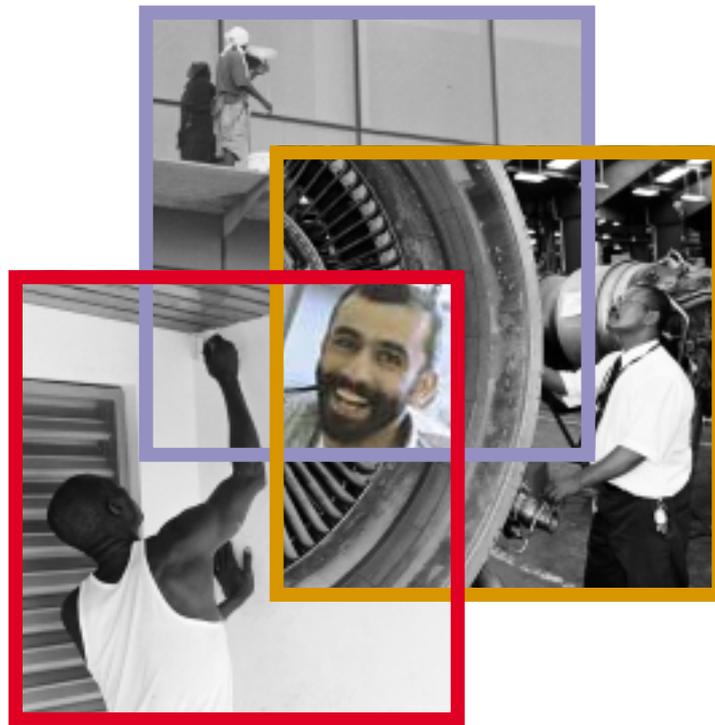
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