

**Employment**  
*creating jobs*



**Social Protection**  
*promoting human welfare and social consensus*



**Social Dialogue**  
*bringing together government, employers and workers*



**International Labour Standards**  
*fundamental principles and rights at work*



## **International Labour Organization Regional Office for the Arab States**

Responding to the call for dignity at work, for voice and participation and for societies built on respect for human rights is central to supporting the transition to stable and peaceful democracies in the Arab states.

Together with our tripartite partners – governments, workers and employers – the ILO Regional Office for Arab states works to foster social justice with decent work opportunities through sustainable enterprises, higher productivity and growth with equity.

We do this through working towards the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda:

-  **creating jobs**
-  **extending social protection**
-  **increasing social dialogue**
-  **guaranteeing rights at work**

The ILO response to the challenge of decent work in the Arab region is anchored in the principles of the Global Jobs Pact, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the Arab Decade for Employment (2010-2020) and the Arab Action Agenda for Employment.

The ILO's funding base consists of regular budget contributions provided by all member States by virtue of their membership in the ILO; unearmarked voluntary contributions that are allocated as needed in a flexible manner by the ILO; and earmarked voluntary contributions for specific projects with a clear timeline and a pre-defined focus.

For the 2010-2011 biennium, the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States received a \$13.5 million regular budget allocation, US\$15.9 million in earmarked voluntary contributions (70 per cent of which was raised by the Beirut office) and US\$2 million in unearmarked voluntary contributions. ROAS has witnessed a steady increase in its earmarked voluntary contributions since 2008, with an average US\$9.7 million raised annually over the last four years.

### **How the ILO works**

The ILO serves the interests of working women and men by bringing together governments, employers and workers to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes.

The very structure of the ILO, where workers and employers together have an equal voice with government in its deliberations, shows social dialogue in action. It ensures that the views of the social partners are reflected in ILO labour standards, policies and programmes.

The ILO encourages tripartism among its constituents and member States by promoting the participation of trade unions and employers' organizations in formulating and implementing national policy on social, economic and many other issues.

### **Countries covered by the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States**

**Bahrain  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Kuwait  
Lebanon  
Oman  
Qatar  
Saudi Arabia  
Syria  
United Arab Emirates  
Yemen  
occupied Palestinian territory**

## Employment

*creating jobs*



## Social Protection

*extending social security and improving working conditions*



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## International Labour Standards

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### Occupied Palestinian territory

A new cooperative law modelled on ILO recommendations has been approved by the Council of Ministers.

**Kuwait** A Consultative Committee for Labour Affairs has been established composed of government representatives, employers and workers. Kuwait has also adopted new labour legislation for the private sector.

**Jordan** Legal proceedings against employers in breach of labour inspection laws have been strengthened to improve the working conditions of migrants. A National Committee for the Prevention of Human Trafficking has also been established.

**Oman** The General Federation of Oman Trade Unions was established with ILO assistance; and the ILO continues to support its constitution and capacity-building programme.

**Lebanon** The ILO partook in a long-term programme on child labour and the development of a strategy for working children, with a priority focus on eliminating the worst forms of child labour.

### Focus on Gender

**15,000** women factory workers have signed up to the Better Work Jordan Programme, an initiative which aims to improve compliance with labour standards by assessing current workplace conditions and offering customized advisory and training services to factories to address their individual needs.

**2** members of the 11-person executive committee of the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions are women. It is the second such federation in the Arab States, after Bahrain's, that the ILO helped to establish.

**2011** witnessed the launch of a tripartite national steering committee in Jordan to coordinate and lead efforts to promote pay equity.



### Guaranteeing rights at work

The ILO maintains and develops a system of international labour standards aimed at promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity.

The ILO's supervisory bodies provide guidance on the implementation of international labour standards through technical cooperation and a rights-based approach to development.

The Regional Office for the Arab States works to enhance the awareness and capacity of tripartite partners to effectively act on their commitment to ILS and to address gaps at the country level. ROAS also systematically integrates international labour standards into national and regional programming processes.



**Raising awareness** A long-term programme of strengthening workers' organizations in Arab States through socioeconomic and legal literacy aims to respond to the needs of workers and their organizations in **Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, Yemen, and the occupied Palestinian territory**. The programme includes the design and validation of a socioeconomic and legal literacy training programme; the development and dissemination of policy and issue briefs on priority issues to inform labour leaders; and the training of trainers. This project supports partnerships such as with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In addition, the ILO has trained 12,000 women and men in **Yemen** as part of an initiative to integrate gender equality concerns into labour market governance.

**Strengthening Engagement** ILO support has resulted in the establishment of tripartite committees to support Decent Work Country Programme implementation in **Oman and Jordan**; the increased employment of women in the **occupied Palestinian territory**; and the reintegration of workers and the improvement of workplace relations in **Bahrain**. In **Jordan**, amendments to the national labour law allowing migrant workers to join the garment union have contributed to a tripling of the number of factories with employees who are represented by the garment union.

**Supporting Small Business** Many of Arab economies rely heavily on small enterprises. The ILO has been engaged in projects in **Jordan and Oman** with employer organizations to support the development of training programmes and policies that strengthen micro, small and medium enterprises. In the **occupied Palestinian territory**, ILO support has assisted in the creation of a sustainable and inclusive private sector development strategy for MSMEs and the improved provision of market-based services to the business community.

*Social dialogue and the practice of tripartism between governments and the representative organizations of workers and employers within and across borders are now more relevant to achieving solutions and to building up social cohesion and the rule of law through, among other means, international labour standards*

*ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*

## Promoting Social Dialogue

Social dialogue plays a critical role in achieving the ILO's objective of advancing opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. Social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest.

## Arab Regional Conference on Social Dialogue

The Arab world's first-ever Regional Conference on Social Dialogue was held in Rabat in December 2010. Co-organized by the ILO and the Arab Labor Organization, the three-day conference concluded with a commitment to strengthening national frameworks for social dialogue through mobilizing resources, prioritizing social dialogue in projects with the ILO, enacting legislative reform, launching awareness-raising campaigns, empowering employers' and workers' groups, addressing informal work conditions and adopting a rights-based approach in line with international conventions.



## Social Protection

*extending social security and improving working conditions*



**Improving Social Security** Pensions, unemployment protection and maternity protection are three important policy areas in the Arab region. The ILO has assisted **Bahrain** to develop an unemployment insurance scheme and is working with other Arab states to develop similar schemes.

**Jordan**, in 2010, adopted a maternity insurance scheme proposed by the ILO that shifted the responsibility for funding women's salaries during their maternity leave from individual employers to social insurance. This collaboration between the ILO and Jordan has supported pension reforms and an initiative to develop a comprehensive Social Protection Floor. In addition to providing support for pension reform, an ILO review addressed the introduction of universal healthcare in **Lebanon** through a study of policy options, a survey of Lebanese households, and a comprehensive report presenting a costing study for the consideration of the tripartite partners. Similarly, the ILO has supported **Saudi Arabia** with a financial assessment and the drafting of new legislation to assist the unemployed.

**Protecting Migrant Worker Rights** An ILO initiative assisted Jordan in the introduction of new legislation permitting migrant workers to join trade unions and led to the creation of a Migration Department. Domestic workers in **Lebanon** have been the beneficiaries of ILO interventions including the introduction of a 'unified contract', the monitoring of private recruitment agencies and proposals for revisions to the labour law for their inclusion.

*Social protection  
is a foundation for  
sustainable and inclusive  
economic growth*

**2,300** people were surveyed by the ILO in Kuwait and UAE as part of a study on migrant workers.

### Extending Social Protection

Today, only 20 per cent of the world's population has adequate social security coverage, and more than half lack any coverage at all.

The ILO actively promotes policies and provides tools and assistance aimed at improving and expanding the coverage of social protection to all groups in society.

Social security involves access to healthcare and income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, disability, child maintenance, work injury, maternity or loss of a main income earner.

The Social Protection Floor is a global social policy concept that promotes nationally defined strategies for the provision of a minimum level of access to essential services and income security for all.







**Labour Force Surveys** The ILO conducted a nationwide labour force survey interviewing 2,800 Palestinian refugees in **Lebanon**, as part of an advocacy campaign on the right to work, and assisted the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in **Yemen** in undertaking its first labour force survey in over a decade.

**Influencing National Policy** An ILO programme of skills development to support employment generation in **Iraq** has enabled the development of a national employment policy. In the **occupied Palestinian territory**, the ILO helped to reactivate the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection to support active labour market policies and job creation measures. In line with the Global Jobs Pact, a rapid labour market assessment was carried out in **Jordan**, examining the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on Jordan and exploring policy responses.

**Strengthening Skills** In **Gaza**, the ILO provided support to UNRWA to reform its programme for overage students towards competency based curricula, structured apprenticeships and improved training and assessment methodology. In south **Lebanon**, ILO's intervention led to government endorsement of a new national vocational training curriculum for the construction sector.

**Developing skills among the disabled** A skills development programme in the **occupied Palestinian territory** targeted the large number of young Palestinians with disabilities and special needs who are dropping out of schools early on. The project provided them with technical and vocational training and donated equipment to the Sheikha Fatima Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Hebron with funds from the Islamic Development Bank. In **Oman**, the ILO supported persons with disabilities through technical assistance for labour market inclusion and laying the groundwork for a national training and placement agency.

**Fostering entrepreneurship** The ILO's Know About Business (KAB) entrepreneurship-awareness training has been introduced in **Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, Oman, Yemen, Iraq** and **Syria**; with local trainers certified in the oPt, Iraq and Lebanon. KAB training has been integrated into national training curricula in Syria, Yemen, Oman and the oPt.

**Green Jobs** The ILO supported efforts to mainstream green jobs into the UN Development Assistance Framework through skills upgrading for green jobs in **Syria**, especially for young people. In **Lebanon**, the ILO assessed the potential for green jobs in key economic sectors, in particular in energy, construction, waste management and agriculture. In 2011, the ILO produced the study "Towards Sustainable Construction and Green Jobs in the Gaza Strip" and teamed up with UNRWA to provide safe housing and livelihood opportunities to vulnerable families in **Gaza**.

*Over 100,000 students and trainees have undertaken the Know About Business programme in Syria, where it has been integrated into the national curriculum*

### Global Employment Agenda

The ILO identifies policies that help to create and maintain decent work and income; policies that are formulated in a comprehensive Global Employment Agenda worked out by the ILO constituents – governments, employers and workers.

The Agenda aims to place employment at the heart of economic and social policies.

Through the creation of productive employment, it seeks to better the lives of people who are either unemployed or whose remuneration from work is inadequate to allow them and their families to escape from poverty.

