



The Millennium Declaration, the MDGs and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda

Overview



MDG 1

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger



MDG 2

Achieve universal primary education



MDG 3

Promote gender equality and empower women



MDG 4

Reduce child mortality



MDG 5

Improve maternal health



MDG 6

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases



MDG 7

Ensure environmental sustainability



MDG 8

Develop a global partnership for development

The ILO is a specialized agency of the United Nations, founded in 1919. It has 183 Member States.

“Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere.”
– *ILO Constitution*

Millennium Declaration, 2000: 189 nations committed “to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work”.

“The guarantee of fundamental principles and rights at work... enables the persons concerned to claim freely and on the basis of equality of opportunity their fair share of the wealth which they have helped to generate, and to achieve fully their human potential.”

– *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998*.

The Millennium Declaration, the MDGs and the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda: Overview

The goal of **Decent Work for All** and the pledges in the **Millennium Declaration** go hand in hand. In this information folder, one brief for each of the eight **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) shows how the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda (DWA) is essential for achieving these shared aims.

Decent Work Agenda for growth with equity

The primary goal of the ILO is to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people. In order to help Member States and the social partners achieve this aim, the ILO pursues the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) which focuses on four inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive objectives:

Employment – the principal route out of poverty is through work and income: in the current crisis context the ILO adopted in June 2009 a Global Jobs Pact which offers policy guidance and practical advice on addressing the major challenge of creating decent work for all

Rights – without the effective enforcement of fundamental rights at work people will not be empowered to escape from poverty

Social protection – it safeguards income and underpins health: the United Nations Social Protection Floor initiative, headed by the ILO and the World Health Organization, promotes a basic set of social transfers and access to essential services as a means to alleviate the social impact of the crisis

Dialogue – the participation of employers’ and workers’ organizations in shaping national development policy in the social sphere and poverty reduction strategies helps ensure that they are appropriate and sustainable.

Together, these four pillars of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda support coherent and gender-sensitive development strategies.

The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs

The MDGs are based on the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000). The Declaration focuses on development and poverty eradication through peace and security, values and human rights, democracy and good governance. It identifies the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. UN Member States pledged to ensure greater coherence in policies across the international system. The Declaration builds on earlier international commitments made at the global summits of the 1990s, such as productive and freely chosen employment (World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995).

What the ILO does

■ The ILO’s role and partners

The ILO’s work aims at the “more peaceful, prosperous and just world” envisaged in the Millennium Declaration. It pursues this goal through policy advice, information dissemination, research, statistics, technical assistance, capacity building, standards and advocacy.

The ILO works closely with other multilateral organizations and other development actors in support of the Millennium Declaration. The ILO’s structure – comprising representatives of employers and workers as well as governments – brings together vital allies in the fight against poverty. Their participation in crafting a poverty reduction strategy bolsters its sustainability.

The ILO’s unique experience in adopting international labour standards through dialogue involving governments, employers and workers has produced universal social norms, and methods of assisting in and monitoring their implementation. These standards form part of international human rights law and national legal systems.

■ Progress towards the MDGs

Without additional efforts several of the MDGs are likely to be missed in many countries. The challenges are most severe in the least developed countries (LDCs), land-locked developing countries (LLDCs), some small island developing states (SIDS) and those vulnerable to natural hazards.

Most countries in or emerging from conflict face greater constraints as basic infrastructure, institutions and adequate human resources are often absent while lack of security hampers economic development.

The MDGs provide a historic framework for focus and accountability. This fabric of accountability, however, is being tested and will need to be further strengthened to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

United Nations Secretary-General's 2010 report

Priorities relating to MDGs are increasingly mirrored in national poverty reduction strategies (PRS) and in national budgets. The ILO stresses the importance of country ownership and of customizing the MDGs to national circumstances. For growth with equity, decent employment and incomes must be at the heart of economic and social policy.

The MDGs set time-bound and measurable targets. Regular reporting on progress towards the targets set under each MDG occurs at the national and international levels. Within the UN system, the ILO takes the lead in reporting on trends concerning the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people (Target 1B). The Target 1B indicators are:

- 1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed
- 1.5 Employment-to-population ratio
- 1.6 Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day
- 1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment.

The employment indicators are complemented by a separate indicator under MDG 3 (share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector), and by others concerning social protection, social dialogue and workers' rights in the set of decent work indicators used to monitor progress. The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector – Indicator 3.2, linked to Target 3A, under Goal 3.

Highlights

■ International community gets on board with the Decent Work Agenda

The recognition that employment and decent work are legitimate and fundamental goals in their own right, and are not the automatic by-products of growth, led to the inclusion in 2005 of a new MDG Target (1.B): "achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people". In February 2007 the Commission for Social Development discussed follow-up "efforts to promote full employment and decent work for all."

The indicators are an important contribution to monitoring the Decent Work Agenda, as recommended by the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) and should be seen in the context of the full set of proposed Decent Work Indicators (DWIs). The Declaration expresses the contemporary vision of the ILO's mandate and emphasizes its key role in helping to achieve progress and social justice in the context of globalization.

However, if these goals are not attained, it is unlikely that the other MDGs can be achieved or that growth will bring social progress. This interdependence is reflected in the adoption of the theme of decent work for the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION, THE MDGS AND THE ILO'S DECENT WORK AGENDA: OVERVIEW

"Looking ahead to 2015 and beyond, there is no question that we can achieve the overarching goal: we can put an end to poverty. In almost all instances, experience has demonstrated the validity of earlier agreements on the way forward; in other words, we know what to do. But it requires an unswerving, collective, long-term effort."

– *United Nations Secretary General*

"... The ILO has the solemn obligation to further among the nations of the world programmes which will achieve the objectives of full employment and the raising of standards of living, a minimum living wage and the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need..."

– *ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008.*

■ Joint Crisis Initiatives

The turmoil of the food, fuel, financial and economic crises, and the resulting job crisis, presents unanticipated challenges to people and their governments, and jeopardizes the feasibility of reaching the MDGs.

In April 2009 the heads of all UN agencies, the World Bank, IMF, and the WTO, meeting as the Chief Executives Board (CEB), agreed on nine joint initiatives to tackle the crisis, accelerate recovery and pave the way for a fairer and more sustainable globali-zation:

1. Additional financing for the most vulnerable
2. Food Security
3. Trade
4. A Green Economy Initiative
5. A Global Jobs Pact
6. A Social Protection Floor
7. Humanitarian, Security and Social Stability
8. Technology and Innovation
9. Monitoring and Analysis

The ILO is lead agency for the Global Jobs Pact and joint lead agency with WHO for the Social Protection Floor Initiative, and is cooperating with the other initiatives.

■ Keeping the promise

With five years to go to the MDG target date of 2015, enhanced commitment, policies, resources and effort are needed if the goals are to be met. The ILO is a member of the UN Task Force reviewing the MDGs and is co-leader with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to prepare the review paper on MDG 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger). The Task Force is coordinating the review papers, which complement the UN Secretary-General's report for the 2010 General Assembly review of progress towards the MDGs, *Keeping the Promise*.

Priorities

■ Decent Work Agenda

Decent work is central to efforts to reduce poverty, and is a means for achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. With the political will to make the Millennium Declaration, fair globalization and decent work a reality, poverty can be vanquished.

Efforts to achieve the MDGs should place full and productive employment and decent work at the centre of economic and social policies, and should be based on the four equally important strategic pillars of the Decent Work Agenda, as summarized in the ILO's Global Jobs Pact:

Promoting employment: creating a sustainable institutional and economic environment where:

- people can develop skills for productive, fulfilling jobs and the common well-being
- enterprises are sustainable and enable growth, job and income creation
- societies can achieve economic development, good living standards and social progress.

Developing sustainable, country-specific social protection, including:

- social security and labour protection
- the extension of social security to all
- healthy and safe working conditions
- effective policies on wages and earnings, hours and working conditions, promoting social justice.

Promoting social dialogue and tripartism as the most appropriate methods for:

- adapting the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda to each country
- translating economic development into social progress, and vice versa
- building consensus on employment and decent work strategies and programmes
- making labour law and institutions effective.

Respecting, promoting and realizing the fundamental principles and rights at work, noting that:

- freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are vital to the attainment of decent work
- the violation of labour standards cannot be used as a basis for legitimate comparative advantage
- labour standards should not be used for protectionist trade purposes.

"We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies."

– ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration (2006).

The briefs
in this folder are
available at:

www.ilo.org/mdg

Overview



Published by the International Labour Office (ILO) with financial assistance from the European Union under the ILO/EC project "Implementing the UN CEB Toolkit within the Decent Work campaign".