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Monitoring and assessment of the progress towards decent work at the national level

Summary: The Office has acquired valuable experience in developing decent work indicators and working with constituents on decent work country profiles as a result of its efforts on monitoring and assessing progress towards decent work at the national level. Recent evaluations confirmed the overall usefulness of the development of indicators and analyses for participating member States. The support provided to raise national statistical capacities resulted in more and higher quality statistics for monitoring decent work, and the profiles aided a number of countries in their policy-making and development planning as well as being useful for the development of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). The tripartite consensus approach to developing and validating the indicators and profiles, in collaboration with ministries of labour and employment and national statistical offices, was cited in both evaluations as highly beneficial and a key good practice. Depending on how the post-2015 framework for sustainable development evolves, this experience is likely to assist constituents and the ILO in fulfilling their role of ensuring that decent work is positioned at the heart of national and UN system strategies.

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Related documents: GB.317/INS/12/1; *Monitoring and Assessing Progress on Decent Work: Final Independent Evaluation*; *Stocktaking of the ILO Programme to Measure Decent Work: Decent Work Indicators and Decent Work Country Profiles*; *Report of the Conference: 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 2–11 October 2013*.

1. The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008, recommends that member States consider “the establishment of appropriate indicators or statistics, if necessary with the assistance of the ILO, to monitor and evaluate the progress made”.¹ In September 2008, the Tripartite Meeting of Experts proposed a framework for the measurement of decent work (including statistical and legal indicators) and in November 2009, the ILO Governing Body endorsed the proposal to compile a comprehensive set of decent work country profiles by 2015.² Since then, more than 20 profiles have been developed. The work involved contributions from a number of units both at headquarters and in the field and active collaboration with the constituents. It illustrated the remaining gaps and challenges for achieving decent work for all. At the 19th Session of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in October 2013, constituents acknowledged how important the support received was on the production and compilation of statistical indicators on decent work.³
2. The ILO’s programme on measuring decent work was led by the former Policy Integration Department, in close collaboration with the Department of Statistics. Technical departments and regional offices were also actively involved in its implementation. In addition to regular budget staff resources (one full-time senior economist), support was provided by a five-year (2009–13) €4.2 million capacity-building project entitled Monitoring and Assessing Progress on Decent Work (MAP) and funded by the European Commission. The 306th Session (November 2009) of the Governing Body approved an additional Special Programme Account allocation of US\$500,000 to the Policy Integration Department in order to hire short-term staff and cover other costs related to the completion of the pilot country profiles.⁴ Additional resources, including the Regular Budget Supplementary Account, were obtained through the regional offices and from other donors on an ad hoc basis to fund indicator and profile development in member States that requested ILO assistance.
3. Decent work country profiles offer a baseline assessment of recent progress across major decent work components, using authoritative data from national sources and objective data analyses. They can be used to inform national priorities and policy-making across social and economic spheres, not just those directly related to labour and employment, and can also serve as important input into the design, priority setting and monitoring and evaluation frameworks of national and sectoral development plans, poverty reduction strategies, and DWCPs.
4. In March 2013, the 317th Session of the Governing Body noted that evaluations of the Office’s work on assessing progress towards decent work should be undertaken and “looked forward to receiving the evaluation reports”.⁵
5. Two such evaluations took place in the latter months of 2013 through early 2014. The first was an independent final evaluation of the ILO/European Commission MAP project, which assessed capacity building, indicator identification and profile development in

¹ Part II(B)(ii).

² GB.306/PV, para. 287.

³ ILO: *Report of the Conference: 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians*, Geneva, 2–11 October 2013.

⁴ GB.306/PV, para. 178.

⁵ GB.317/PV, para. 190.

11 countries,⁶ as well as the development of global methodologies, manuals and guidelines. The second was a stocktaking exercise⁷ of the wider ILO programme on measuring decent work, which reviewed the effectiveness and relevance of the programme based on interviews and surveys of ILO staff at headquarters and in the field as well as constituents from six additional countries⁸ not covered by the MAP evaluation.

6. Both evaluations confirmed the overall usefulness of the development of indicators and profiles for participating member States. The support provided to raise national statistical capacities resulted in more and higher quality statistics to monitor decent work, and the profiles aided a number of countries in their policy-making and development planning and were useful in the development of DWCPs. Moreover, the tripartite consensus approach to developing and validating the indicators and profiles, in collaboration with ministries of labour and employment and national statistical offices, was cited in both evaluations as highly beneficial and a key good practice for augmenting the credibility and legitimacy of the data and conclusions and creating ownership of the process and the results.
7. The evaluations provided a number of lessons learned and recommendations,⁹ including:

- (1) **Country selection and link to DWCPs:** Country selection for the development of decent work indicators and profiles should be based on clear criteria and the engagement of ILO constituents and should be developed only in those cases when the requests originate from the constituents. One criterion could be the presence of a DWCP in a country. There is also a need to clarify the links between the development and profiles and the design and monitoring of DWCPs. Such a link would ensure that there are regular updates (in line with the DWCP's cycle), provide tripartite partners with accurate information and encourage continual improvement of decent work statistical and legal framework information systems.
- (2) **Engagement of national constituents:** The engagement of the tripartite constituents and national statistics offices (NSOs) in the different stages of the process of development is critical. In some countries, this was the first time that tripartite constituents were involved with NSOs in discussing indicators and survey design.
- (3) **Social dialogue:** In order to help reinforce social dialogue at the national level and improve national ownership and sustainability, wherever possible, indicators and profiles should be developed in partnership with the existing tripartite social dialogue institutions.
- (4) **Methodology:** Although very much appreciated by constituents, the methodology used in the development of the decent work country profiles could be improved by focusing more on the specific economic and social contexts and needs of countries.¹⁰ Decent work indicators and profiles could continue to be produced at various levels

⁶ Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Indonesia, Niger, Peru, Philippines, Ukraine, Zambia and two additional countries – Armenia and Cameroon – which were not beneficiary countries of the MAP project but were added to the evaluation for comparison purposes.

⁷ ILO: Stocktaking of the ILO's Programme on Measuring Decent Work, Geneva, March 2014.

⁸ Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, and South Africa.

⁹ ILO: *Monitoring and Assessing Decent Work in Developing Countries (MAP): Final independent evaluation*, April 2014.

¹⁰ This could be done by incorporating some elements of the Country Level Decent Work Analysis methodology, developed by the former Employment Sector of the ILO.

(local, regional, provincial), where appropriate. It was further noted that the costs of the profiles could be reduced by replacing printed versions with an electronic version.

- (5) **Future development:** With reference to the various country-level assessment tools that have been developed by the Office in parallel to the profiles, it was recommended that the ILO should pursue a more integrated policy on country analysis focused on the needs of constituents. It should fully integrate constituents' knowledge and expertise with existing knowledge and experience of ILO country offices, regional offices and headquarters, as well as other development partners, in order to deliver a high-quality product.
8. Based on these evaluations and in consideration of the need to streamline the Office's approach to analysis of decent work at the country level, the methodology used for decent work country analyses could be adjusted so that they take less time to compile and include better contextual analyses. Member States would take the lead, with the Office providing technical advice. Such advice would be largely provided by the field offices, with headquarters focusing on further improvement of methodologies and the development of relevant capacity-building tools. The option of transforming the analyses into electronic "e-profiles" could allow for a gradual approach to building indicators, which is particularly pertinent in countries with inadequate and poor-quality data. In this regard, a strengthening of the ILO's capacities to support countries in filling statistical gaps is seen as an important prerequisite to extending the methodology in developing countries. This will in turn require enhanced partnerships with donors and a strengthened Department of Statistics, as was highlighted at the 19th ICLS and on other occasions.
9. Key areas where the Office could provide support include: (i) dissemination of international statistical standards (concepts and definitions); data collection and calculation of decent work indicators at national and regional levels; and (ii) technical assistance for the preparation of new national assessments. As the Programme and Budget for 2014–15 does not contain specific budgetary provisions for decent work indicators, member States, with assistance from the Office, may wish to seek resources from donor agencies to undertake this work. Discussions on the Programme and Budget for 2016–17 should include special attention to these items, particularly regarding Office support through the Department of Statistics and regionally based capacities.
10. As concluded by the evaluations, the quality and effectiveness of the analyses depend on whether the Office and the constituents take full advantage of existing ILO knowledge, information and data sources. Such sources are linked through the now operational ILO Knowledge Management Gateway, which provides user-friendly access to country-level data on policies, international labour standards and statistics, and which will benefit from further upgrades in 2015.
11. Among the issues likely to be discussed as part of the emerging post-2015 sustainable development framework are indicators of progress on agreed goals and targets. The work conducted to date in developing decent work indicators provides the ILO with a useful resource on which to draw if and when indicators might be needed for targets related to the goal of full and productive employment and decent work.
12. The proposal for a set of 17 sustainable development goals agreed in July 2014 at the final session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) has set the stage for the final round of negotiations that will lead the United Nations General Assembly to adopt its development agenda beyond 2015. The proposal suggests a goal to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (SDG 8), which includes targets on several key items of the Decent Work Agenda, such as: achieve full employment and equal pay for work of

equal value; reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training; end child labour in all its forms; protect labour rights and promote safe working conditions for all workers including migrant workers; and support entrepreneurship and encourage the formalization of micro-, small and medium enterprises. Additional decent work issues referred to in the targets under other proposed goals include social protection, rural employment, skills formation and vocational training, and fundamental freedoms. Targets are defined as aspirational global targets, with each government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. They should be supported by indicators focused on measurable outcomes, to be elaborated at a future stage.

13. The ILO has already proposed several suitable decent work indicators¹¹ on employment, the quality of jobs, income inequality, social protection, working poverty, vulnerability and insecurity at work.¹² The ILO's lessons learnt from its work on measuring decent work can also make a contribution in this regard, especially on the participatory approach that has been promoted and the sustainability mechanisms.

Conclusions

14. The Office has acquired valuable experience in developing decent work indicators by working with constituents on country profiles as a result of the work stream on monitoring and assessing progress towards decent work at the national level and by producing and compiling statistical information for this purpose. The evaluations of the work have led to a number of valuable lessons including the importance of social dialogue in enabling a comprehensive and objective view of the progress being achieved towards decent work. This will be drawn upon in the future work on the ILO Knowledge Management Gateway and in the new diagnostic approach to decent work analysis that the ILO is developing. Depending on how the post-2015 framework for sustainable development evolves, this experience is likely to assist constituents and the ILO in fulfilling their role of ensuring that decent work is positioned at the heart of national and UN system strategies. In this regard, the Office will have to enhance its own country support capacities to improve statistical data on decent work, filling the important gaps that exist in many countries in order to monitor expected goals in the forthcoming sustainable development agenda. The Office will also explore donor interest in providing support to constituents and whether it can support an integrated approach to the analysis of progress towards decent work with a focus on underpinning ILO DWCPs.

Geneva, 23 September 2014

¹¹ ILO: *Jobs and livelihoods in the post-2015 development agenda: Meaningful ways to set targets and monitor progress*. ILO Concept Note No. 2.

¹² ILO: *Decent Work Indicators – Guidelines for producers and users of statistical and legal framework indicators*, ILO Manual, 2nd version, September 2013.