

# Building better: Evidence-based decent work policies and COVID-19 implications

*Third quarter 2021*

Concept Note

## Justification

In accordance with the ILO's Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), the ILO seeks to *“help, wherever necessary, the institutional capacity of member States, as well as representative organizations of employers and workers, to facilitate meaningful and coherent social policy and sustainable development”*. As a follow-up, the Resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work (105<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference 2016) calls for ILO to effectively assist its members through capacity building and training activities. Capacity development is a core element of the ILO's aim to achieve decent work and further social justice. It is defined by the ILO as a *“process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time”* (GB.317/POL/6). Capacity development is therefore considered as an integral process where ILO constituents' priorities and needs guide the Office in its role as a supporter (GB.335/INS/9).

The ILC resolution on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work also calls on building capacity especially in enhancing research capacity (2017) and evokes the need to *“provide evidence-based and integrated capacity building and training for constituents”*. ILO's Strategic plan 2018-21 also calls for continuously increasing the capacity of its constituents to enhance the ability of constituents to give value to their members and potential members, and have the capacity to engage in policy-based advocacy, so that they can make the maximum possible contribution to decent work outcomes (GB.335/INS/9). The fundamental importance of capacity building, especially in enhancing knowledge of state-of-art ILO research, is affirmed in several ILO strategies – including the Strategic Plan 2018-21, the Knowledge Strategy 2018-21, and the ILO-wide strategy for institutional capacity development. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development goals (SDGs) also call for evidence-based policy making and increased capacity building in member countries. Additionally, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (adopted the centenary ILC 2019) calls for *“Strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world”* and for the need for ILO to strengthen the capacity of its tripartite constituents.

## COVID-19 policy responses and the world of work

The ILO's role has been ever more important in the context of the current COVID-19 crisis, especially in terms of moving beyond the pandemic and building back better (GB.340/HL/2). The scale and gravity of the unprecedented world of work crisis triggered by the pandemic makes it necessary to prepare and equip policy makers to respond the world of work challenges (GB.340/HL/2). One area in which the ILO can help is to build the capacities of its tripartite constituents to build back better. Indeed, one of the main factors on which the success of the human-centred agenda of ILO in the new era depends is “*how dynamically it deploys its principal tools of technical cooperation and capacity-building, research, social dialogue and standards*” (GB.340/HL/2). In addition, ILO's role in addressing the threat posed to the recovery in the world of work by the pandemic is further emphasised in the building blocks for a potential outcome document on a global response for a human-centred recovery (GB.341/INS/4). While regrouping the main aspects which should be on the agenda for the ILO's contributions to the recovery (namely the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work, the ILO Centenary Declaration as the basis of a global response, the need for urgent action to advance a human-centred recovery and the role of the ILO in the human-centred recovery), the document further points out to the importance of capacity building activities. Precisely, the document calls on the ILO “*to support fully the human-centred recovery strategies of its Member States including through constituent capacity-building, and evidence-based policy advice, research, statistics generation and advocacy [...]*” (GB.341/INS/4).

The ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020-25 clearly demonstrates why ILO should take the lead in to deal with the COVID-19's impact on the world of work. While recognizing the challenging conditions of the pandemic, it insists on the realization of the ILO Centenary Declaration's objectives which are more than necessary in the current situation. In regard to strengthening the capacities of all people, the quest for innovative and effective solutions is highlighted. The strategy underlines that “*the lockdowns and distancing measures required to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, which are likely to persist in various areas around the world for some time, make it essential to develop new models of delivering technical assistance and capacity development*” (GB.340/POL/6). In this specific context, adapting the ILO-wide strategy for organizational and institutional capacity development is crucial.

The Programme and Budget 2020-21 refers to the capacity building and training activities especially within the Outcome A (Output A.2 “*use of ILO research and tools to train ILO staff and constituents in the design and implementation of effective, evidence-based policies*”) and Output A.4 “*targeted technical training and Office support for constituent representatives to better enable them to contribute decent work perspectives and priorities in the UN Cooperation Frameworks, voluntary national reviews and other strategic national development processes*”. In terms of looking beyond the pandemic, the Draft Programme and Budget 2022-23 underlines the objective of maintaining a high level of research and knowledge management to increase the quality of evidence used for policy making. This is essential for ILO to “*strengthen its global leadership role as a centre of evidence-based*

*knowledge on the world of work and a key partner to shape a human-centred approach to recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis”.*

The COVID-19 pandemic and its short- and long-term implications further emphasize the need for greater institutional capacity development of employers, workers and governments in dealing with labour market and employment challenges. The crisis has highlighted gaps and vulnerabilities in societies which undermine the vision of social justice and decent work. The situation of specific groups (women, persons with disabilities, indigenous and tribal peoples, migrant workers, among others), who were already facing challenges have become far worse due to the pandemic. Therefore, ILO and particularly the RESEARCH department would provide constituents with solutions to tackle labour market challenges by using tools for promoting evidence-based policy making. These principal tools are primarily technical cooperation, research assistance, social dialogue, standards setting and capacity building (with various training methodologies).

Emerging evidence from member countries and constituents shows that there is a gap in the capacity of the tripartite decision makers to access and use COVID-19 specific evidence effectively. As such policies are not based on sound labour market and employment policies and therefore leads to policy failures.. ILO’s constituents are requesting support to bridge this gap in research and policy development skills based on a human centered approach for the recovery and building better. The training will provide assistance to constituents in both the use and generation of COVID-19 relevant evidence from a variety of sources, including not only ILO databases but also from national and local sources, including evidence generation through data and metadata analysis of existing labour market policies.

The training will be organized by the ILO Research Department in cooperation with the ITCILO Turin Centre. It is timely given the need for better informed and effective evidence-based labour market policies relating the recovery and building better, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic creating an unprecedented impact on workers and enterprises around the world. During the pandemic, there has been a worldwide push to move towards coherent and evidence-based policy making in order to overcome specific challenges created by it. In this context, it is indeed fundamental for the ILO to provide its constituents with a training that allows them to effectively produce evidence-based policies for the post-COVID-19 era. Participants would have enhanced capacities to contribute to their respective countries/organizations’ policies while having an impact on how policies are planned and delivered. This contribution could happen either in a direct or indirect way, through their interaction with senior decision makers. The ILO Research Department is particularly well equipped to organize and deliver this training using ITCILO’s online facilities, given its expertise in research and policy experience.

## Aim & Objectives

The aim of this online training is to build capacities of ILO’s tripartite constituents using case studies, research papers, guidelines, publicly available online ILO data, other data and information sources for robust and comprehensive policy making for labour market policies in a post-COVID-19 era. As such the specific objectives of this training are to:

- Incorporate evidence-based policy making process for a human-centered recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Improve skills and knowledge of individuals and organizations to use a wide variety of evidences relating to impact of COVID-19 on the world of work;
- Enhance understanding of frontier issues that can be leveraged for a post-pandemic recovery, such as the role of the digital economy, climate action and just transition, among others;
- Establish research and policy dialogues between social partners to promote the use of evidence in response to the pandemic;
- Develop research and policy communities of practice with social partners and policy-makers for evidence-based labour market policies and share lessons on evidence use to promote best practices in COVID-19 responses.

By the end of this training, the participants will be able to:

- build skills and knowledge for evidence-based policy making to deal with COVID-19's impact on the labour market;
- draft policy brief proposals for influencing policy on the pandemic and the world of work and informing advocacy activities for building better;
- use skills and knowledge acquired in the training to build a culture of evidence-based policy making on the labour market and employment issues;

## Audience

This training would be targeted to those mid to senior level tripartite officials who are involved in policymaking, policy analysis or advocacy. They could be research officers, analysts, advisors, policy makers, among others. These individuals play a crucial role in providing information, analysis and recommendations to guide policy-making and advocacy strategies and support informed debate.

## Methodology

This training is developed by the ILO's Research Department and will use the digital learning tools of the ITCILO through the e-campus platform, including self-learning tools, webinars for online sessions and online interaction tools. The training is practical and allows participants to apply the skills learned during the course. This process leads to improved practices and performances both at the individual and organizational levels.

The training will use a practical, work-based approach to evidence-based policy making and is designed to be built around everyday situations, using best practices/case studies. This is not an academic or theoretical course. Throughout the training, participants will utilize both primary and secondary data and information sources, such as surveys, focus groups, and metadata analysis directly related to COVID-19 and the topics of concerned modules.

This training is organized in such a way as to give the participants the opportunity to learn and practice the skills and knowledge of evidence-based policymaking and to prove that they have mastered them by meeting the predefined objectives at the end of each session. It also

focuses on the learners' participation throughout the learning process. The course takes a learner-centered pedagogical approach while ensuring building institutional capacity in a holistic way. An integrated perspective will be used to address the three dimensions of capacity development whereby the transformation in learning that occurs at the individual level will affect, from a results chain perspective, the changes at organizational level. The learners should be able to achieve the objectives in the minimum time and to transfer the learning to their jobs. By doing so, participants can learn at their own pace and from each other. Each session will be organized as follows:

- **Introduction:** it shows the purpose, objectives, process, experiences of the participants and how the knowledge will be applied;
- **Learning:** structure and content, learning methods, skills and knowledge practice, progress monitoring, memory aids;
- **Review:** review or test learners to make sure the objectives have been achieved and to bring the session to a close (e.g. establish what the next steps are).

Through these different learning methods, by the end of the course participants will be able to draft a policy brief on COVID-19 implications and communicate it to their audience.

To enable a better appreciation of the above-mentioned goals, the Organizational Performance Assessment (OPA) framework will be used to define learning and capacity development results. The framework will allow translating learning into concrete changes that have taken place at the level of skills, work behaviours and practices by participants, as well as the transferring of this knowledge to the work unit, organization or network.

## Course framework

This e-learning training will be implemented over a period of approximately 6 weeks in the third quarter and is structured around 5 content modules with follow-up activities and assignments.

An equivalent of 7 hours of online learning is planned for each week and participants can take it at their own pace. Overall, the participation into the training will require 40 learning hours, with an additional 20 hours devoted to preparing a policy brief as the voluntary assignment to receive a certificate of achievement.

Each week will also have a live webinar which will be shared in recording as well.

**Day 1:** Presentation of the course and pre-course activities

**Module 1:** Impact of COVID-19 on the labour market and employment

**Module 2:** Lessons to be learned from policy responses to deal with COVID-19's impact on the labour market

**Module 3:** Labour market policies in a post-COVID-19 era

**Module 4:** Evidence-Based Policy Making for decent work

**Module 5:** Practical application: drafting policy briefs on COVID-19 and the world of work

## Course structure

Prior to the course participants will be requested to formulate their major learning goals and take a pre-course assessment. During the training, each of the learning modules of the course has a fixed structure and includes the following components:

***1. Live Webinar, with the group and ILO trainer and/or invited speakers (session of 90 min)***

ILO experts will facilitate 90-minutes sessions on the topics of each module. Each session will include 30 minutes on the concepts and trends by the experts, followed by a 30-minutes interactive discussion. The final 30 minutes of each session will be used for a specific review that would encourage participants to apply the concepts and tools they have been introduced.

***2. Individual self-learning, activities and assignments, as well as group activities when possible (session of 90 min)***

The main thematic sessions will be complemented by a 90-minutes individual or group work session on the same theme, to allow participants to collaborate, apply the tools and concepts they have learned and delve deeper into the practical issues of the COVID-19 implications on the labour market.

Specific case studies will be used for participants to practice how to use evidence for policy making.

***3. Forum discussions, self-facilitated or facilitated by the ILO trainers and tutors***

## Evaluations

The individual policy briefs will be submitted for review by the ILO specialists and trainers and shared with the other participants.

A post-course evaluation will be conducted to assess the individual learning outcomes.

A final evaluation will be conducted to receive the feedback of the participants on the training methodology, content and the learning tools.

Upon completion of the course and its activities, participants will receive a “*certificate of participation*”. If they finalize and submit a policy brief, they will receive a “*certificate of achievement*”.

Follow-up phase: after the completion of the training, participants will be asked to fill out a survey and a mentorship tool will be regularly carried out for a period of one year, to check

on how their new learning has contributed to improved practices both at the individual and organizational levels.

## Modules

The training will be organized in four modules. Following is a brief overview and the presentation of learning objectives envisioned for each module.

### **Module 1: Impact of COVID-19 on the labour market and employment**

This session will present participants relevant materials and sources used across the ILO in order to evaluate the impact and consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on labour markets and employment. Through databases from ILOSTAT, flagship reports, sectoral briefs and other relevant documents, the module will equip the learners with necessary skills to understand how COVID-19 is affecting different aspects of the world of work. Participants will particularly learn how to select and use these quantitative as well as qualitative information in a relevant manner for their policy making perspective. The session will equip participants with specific quantitative and qualitative tools for understanding the impact of COVID-19 on different vulnerable groups.

By the end of the session, participants will be familiarized with:

- Relevant ILO sources pertaining to COVID-19's impact (COVID-19 Monitor, ILO Monitor briefing notes, WESO, sectoral briefs, etc.);
- The impact of the pandemic on the labour market and data collection;
- The response of the ILO to the increase in demand for information concerning the impact of the pandemic;
- Measuring and assessing the effect of COVID-19 on tripartite constituents, especially on workers and employers.

### **Module 2: Emerging Lessons learned from policy responses to deal with COVID-19's impact on the labour market**

This module aims to help participants use the “Country policy responses” online portal on policies undertaken by the ILO constituents for combatting the effects of the pandemic. The learners will understand and reflect upon the regional and country impact of COVID-19 and see how the constituents are taking measures to prevent the spread of the disease, as well as diminishing its impact on the economy and labour market. They will learn to use these examples from a policy-making perspective. The session will be constructed around the four-pillar policy framework defined by the ILO to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on businesses, jobs and the most vulnerable members of society (including frontline and essential workers, women persons with disabilities, indigenous and tribal peoples, migrant workers, among others): 1) stimulating the economy and employment, 2) supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes, 3) protecting workers in the workplace and 4) relying on social dialogue for solutions. The objective of the module is to answer the following question: *what can we learn from the array of COVID-19 policy responses on how to support labour markets?* The participants will have an insight on the necessity to prioritize sustained investment across the

pillars for public policy and international cooperation. They will also be given tools & methodologies to assess country-level policy responses, through the general rapid diagnostic model comprising four main components: overview of socio-economic situation, labour market transmission mechanisms, identifying workers most at risk and policy responses & gaps. Some already existing assessment reports will be used as examples.

By the end of this session, participants will be familiarized with:

- Effectively using the online portal for searching specific policies regarding different categories;
- The four pillars of action defined by the ILO to lessen the impact of COVID-19;
- ILO's policy framework for tackling the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis;
- The importance of stronger worker and social protection, environmental sustainability and economic resilience for building forward better;
- The role of ILO in the international response against COVID-19;
- Exporting content from the portal to be used offline;
- Comparison of policy responses across regions and countries;
- Rapid diagnostics for assessing the efficacy of country-level policies set up against COVID-19.

### **Module 3: Labour market policies in a post-COVID-19 era**

This module will attempt to demonstrate how the ILO, social partners and the governments should adapt to the post-COVID-19 environment in terms of policy making. Based on relevant documents, it will show how the human-centred approach for the Future of Work (consisting of 1) A normative action focusing on the improvement of the rights & standards in the labour market, 2) A policy side prioritizing the rebalance of investment on the labour market towards workers and 3) A statistical side suggesting the use of a more balanced set of metrics to measure growth) might best be brought to bear on the extraordinary challenges of recovery that the COVID-19 crisis poses to the world of work, especially in terms of employment policies. The difference between policy making in pandemic vs. post-pandemic situations will be highlighted. The module will, furthermore, try to answer a central question in terms of policy making in a post-COVID-19 era: *How can we make evidence more accessible to policy makers in the new environment?* Participants will be equipped with skills to find and use appropriate evidence for policy making.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the role that social dialogue has to play in addressing the changes and challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis;
- Identify opportunities and challenges for leveraging the digital economy, and other factors transforming the world of work, for a sustainable post-pandemic recovery;
- Navigate the uncertainty of the post-COVID-19 situation and the urgency of evidence-based decisions;
- Adopt strategies such as “flexibility” and “adaptation” in terms of evidence use and policy making;
- Transparently share recommendations and results with relevant stakeholders to cope with the speed of decision-making in the “new normal”.



#### **Module 4: Evidence-Based Policy Making for decent work**

This module will attempt to show the steps of a policy development process, discuss the meaning of evidence and research-based policy making in the “new normal”, different types of evidence, actors and policies, and conceptually explore how policies should be drafted in the specific context of the changing environment. Evidence used as teaching materials in this session will mainly be concrete policy examples of the participants’ concern. Exploration of real examples on the following topics will be privileged, while presenting the policy problems related: social protection, work arrangements, OSH measures and employment retention measures.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify challenges of using labor market evidence for the post-pandemic era, with the aim of overcoming them;
- Judge the reliability and credibility of information found online, and apply this to their own work situations;
- Define evidence synthesis and describe steps in synthesizing;
- Describe what makes policy recommendations ‘actionable’;
- Comprehend functions and key elements of a policy brief.

#### **Module 5: Practical application: drafting policy briefs on COVID-19 and the world of work**

In the concluding module, participants will use the sources, best practices and policy examples shown during the training and build on the areas discussed in the previous weeks, to develop their policy brief about COVID-19 and labour market issues pertaining to their country. They will use the information from various sessions to progressively draft a policy brief on a topic of their choice around the “new normal” idea. ILO experts and trainers will provide assistance and guidance in drafting the brief and making it comply with organizational quality standards. Participants will also have the opportunity to learn how to leverage their work through relevant communication strategies adapted to the post-pandemic situation. The best end products will be selected and eventually published for influencing policy on labour market and COVID-19 responses.

## Working language

The training will be delivered in English.

## Composition

This course will be offered to approximately 30 tripartite participants including workers, employers and government officials from various countries at the global level (Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America).

## Contact

Naren PRASAD

Head of Education and Training

Research Department, ILO Geneva

[prasadn@ilo.org](mailto:prasadn@ilo.org)