



Governing Body

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GB.310/PFA/6

Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee

PFA

FOR INFORMATION

SIXTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Knowledge Strategy 2010–15: The role and contribution of decent work statistics

Overview

Issues covered

Statistics as part of the overall ILO Knowledge Strategy and linkages to the Programme and Budget proposals for 2012–13.

Policy implications

None.

Legal implications

None.

Financial implications

None.

Action/Decision required

None.

References to other Governing Body documents and ILO instruments

GB.301/PFA/2; GB.304/PFA/2(Rev.); GB.306/PFA/12/3; GB.307/PFA/7/2.

ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

Context and framework

1. This paper further details the role of statistics in the overall ILO Knowledge Strategy and the new information management system as put forward in the Programme and Budget proposals for 2012–13, statistics being one of the three pillars of the “central gateway”.¹
2. The need for a strong and coordinated statistical knowledge base in the ILO has been highlighted by constituents in recent Governing Body sessions and the International Labour Conference. During the Recurrent Discussion on Employment in 2010, many references were made by constituents, highlighting the need to have timely and high-quality labour statistics, including short-term indicators.
3. The need for more sophisticated, timely and quality data, covering key aspects of decent work, has been underlined by the global jobs crisis, when governments, employers and workers are looking to the ILO for support and technical advice.
4. The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization urges the Office to strengthen its knowledge base and the capacity of constituents, particularly in the establishment of appropriate indicators and statistics to monitor and evaluate progress made.
5. The ILO Strategic Policy Framework for 2010–15² outlined the need to strengthen the statistical capacities both of constituents and of the Office in support of the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda and the 19 outcomes adopted.
6. Work on statistics forms an integral part of the knowledge base of the Office and is reflected under Outcome 1 of the knowledge strategy adopted by the Governing Body in November 2009.³ This paper fulfils the biennial milestone set therein for 2010–11, to establish a strategy for a strong and sustainable statistical base.

Outcome 1: Strengthened evidence-based analysis helps constituents implement the Decent Work Agenda and the Global Jobs Pact

Indicator	Baseline	Target for 2010–15
1.2. Availability of a solid statistical basis covering the four strategic objectives and their interlinkages.	A large number of countries lack the necessary statistical infrastructure to monitor policies, in particular in Africa and Asia, as well as developing countries in some other regions. Scattered empirical evidence is not coherently compiled and assessed in the ILO to be turned into useful statistical databases.	Member States receive support to develop and improve their statistical capacity, and the ILO's role as the main international warehouse of labour statistics and statistical indicators is maintained and improved.

¹ GB.310/PFA/2.

² GB.304/PFA/2(Rev.).

³ GB.306/PFA/12/3.

7. The ILO can count on a range of databases covering several dimensions of decent work, pointing to the need to rationalize the compilation, dissemination and analysis of available data and making this knowledge publicly available. The production of statistical data relies mainly on what member States and constituents themselves compile and make available to the Office. As the leading specialized agency in the provision of internationally comparable data on decent work and its components, the Office must take a more active role in building the capacities of constituents to that effect.
8. To address these challenges, the Director-General decided in May 2009 to reorganize the statistical services, creating the ILO Department of Statistics.⁴ Centralized coordination, but not necessarily execution, of statistical activities based on a network, aims to assure quality, build a coherent system, compile timely information and harmonize procedures.

Strategy to develop a strong and sustainable statistical base

9. The Office has identified a strategy based on six interrelated work areas, managed and coordinated by the ILO Department of Statistics and focusing on the collection and dissemination of quality datasets and support to constituents. The work areas and related outputs are as follows.

Establishment of a portal for all statistical databases in the Office (ILOSTAT)

10. The need to have one statistical data warehouse, searchable by country and theme, as sole entry point for constituents is seen as a priority and is part of the proposed “central gateway” of the Knowledge Management System. The portal will include the databases on short-term indicators, yearly data and the corresponding methodology. A user-friendly approach will prevail, although appropriate detail will be included for consultation.
11. Activities to achieve this output are well under way. Key issues include the need for harmonization of the IT platforms to ensure proper communication between databases, use of common software, and presentation in simple understandable forms. Quality control of databases, overall coordination and the elimination of databases not meeting minimum requirements or coverage, are among the specific areas that the Department of Statistics is working on at present.
12. Particularly important is the transfer to a modern ORACLE-based IT platform. This is a major endeavour since it entails a large-scale migration of historic data dating back more than 50 years. This activity is being complemented by a complete inventory of existing databases, updating of the metadata, and defining the different dashboards that the new portal will have, among other activities.

⁴ The Department of Statistics, reporting to the Director-General, has replaced the former Bureau of Statistics, which was reporting to the Department of Policy Integration, and has absorbed its remaining staff and resources.

Enhancement of constituents' capacity to produce more and better decent work statistics

13. A crucial objective is the provision of assistance and support through technical cooperation and partnerships with funding agencies to support countries in strengthening their own sources. Partnerships with international donors and funding agencies dealing with statistics are being established in order to better support the member States. In fact, the number of requests for assistance and technical and financial support to the Office has risen sharply in recent years.
14. A key output will be a map of gaps in labour statistics at the country level, identifying the main sources (household and establishment surveys, administrative records and censuses, among others) in order to prioritize and tailor technical assistance by country.
15. The Office will also reinforce its technical capacity in the regions. Regional advisers on labour and decent work statistics will be established to work closely with the regions, coordinated technically by the Department of Statistics. The objective is to enhance and improve the quality of advice provided to constituents.

Strengthening of data compilation by the Office

16. This work will modernize the compilation of statistics through faster and better mechanisms and ensure that the latest information from member States can be accessible to users. Particularly important is support for the design and implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes based on up-to-date data. This entails strengthened ties with national constituents and international and regional institutions to ensure the timeliness and quality of the data provided.
17. In October 2010, the Office made available the database on short-term indicators of the labour market. Although the availability of reliable short-term data (as distinct from yearly data) is limited in country coverage, an effort is being made to compile and produce data for short-term monitoring. Another recent example is the request of the G20 to report on the latest labour market outlook.
18. In March 2010, the Governing Body approved additional resources, from the Special Programme Account, to support these activities, especially to strengthen support to member States in compiling and reporting information.⁵

Improvement of internal coordination of the statistical activities in the Office

19. The need to establish a coordinated network centrally managed by the Department of Statistics has been clearly identified by the Director-General. The capacity of the Department of Statistics is being strengthened to that effect. A quality assurance mechanism through peer review of statistical work and publications is a milestone for 2012–13 in the Knowledge Strategy. Clear office directives will be established in this regard.

⁵ GB.307/PFA/7/2.

20. Labour statistics are a complex body of agreed definitions, recommendations and resolutions that must be carefully managed, and supported by the necessary expertise. Specific work relating to Office-wide capacity building is therefore being carried out.
21. A number of technical cooperation projects have built-in statistical components. It is important to make a cost-effectiveness analysis of these types of activities to assure coherence and sustainability.

Strengthening standard setting of statistical concepts and methods

22. The ILO is responsible, within the international system, for setting standards in labour and decent work statistics. The ILO hosts and services the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) every five years. The 19th ICLS will be held in 2013. The Office should then be in a position to support the discussion on key statistical issues in relation to all four dimensions of decent work. Important topics such as new ways of defining labour underutilization, informal employment, wages, labour productivity, hours of work and other dimensions are attracting discussion with national constituents worldwide. Priority will be given to building the Office's capacity to support sound discussions with wide participation of developed and developing countries. A key aspect is strong relationships with national statistical offices, ministries of labour and international organizations in order to increase the number of participants in these discussions, especially from the developing world.
23. An internationally agreed manual on informal economy statistics is planned to be completed in 2011.

Capacity building for constituents and Office staff on measuring decent work

24. Capacity building is supported by two annual training courses carried out jointly with the ILO International Training Centre in Turin by activities for constituents in all regions, and by the production of user-friendly manuals as well as e-learning platforms to disseminate the different statistical definitions in the academic world, school systems and the media.

Improved coordination with international organizations

25. A continuous dialogue has been established by the ILO with the statistical international community: OECD, Eurostat, the United Nations and its regional commissions, and with national statistical offices.

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Submitted for information