



ILO Research Programme on Integrating Trade and Decent Work



► Programme background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to strengthen dialogue and policy coherence around the twin objectives of trade liberalization and decent work among a range of stakeholders at the international, national and enterprise level. Alongside the promotion of “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” (Goal 8), the 2030 Agenda commits Member States to a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system” (as part of Goal 17). Within this framework, international trade is regarded as an engine of economic growth, development and poverty reduction.

Integrating trade and labour market policies that are beneficial to economic growth and development and that also enhance workers’ well-being is an essential part of achieving these two objectives.

The ILO research programme on integrating trade and decent work (INTEGRATE) is built on the above premise. Rather than adopting a traditional market-oriented perspective on globalization and its impact on employment, this programme follows a more human-centred approach, which means treating decent work as a central objective of trade policy, as called for in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019).

The INTEGRATE programme is a multi-donor partnership for the conduct of evidence based research on the labour market effects of international trade and trade policy (at the firm and sectoral level), and on the contribution of institutional frameworks (at the national and regional level) to decent work. The programme also supports tripartite dialogue and the development of interactive web-based tools and training activities with a view to building the capacity of stakeholders (policymakers, governments, the social partners and civil society) and helping to improve the integration of trade and labour market strategies.

► Main Areas of Research

The programme comprises three interdependent, but separate areas of research:

- 1) Assessing the effects of trade on quantitative and qualitative aspects of the labour market using decent work indicators (under the ASSESS project);
- 2) Supporting sustainable development through the alignment of trade policies and domestic labour market institutions so as to reduce inequalities, gaps in social protection and poverty (under the SUPPORT project);
- 3) Implementing activities to bridge capacity gaps and support policymakers and the social partners in engaging more effectively in dialogue on trade and labour market policies (under the IMPLEMENT project).

▶ ASSESS

“Trade, enterprises and labour markets: Diagnostic and firm-level assessment”



The project is based on a three-pronged strategy that consists of (a) developing and applying a broader set of labour market indicators based on the ILO's decent work indicators; (b) linking those indicators to appropriate assessment methodologies; and (c) conducting empirical analyses at the sectoral and enterprise level in selected countries focusing on the distributional effects of trade on the labour market.

▶ SUPPORT

“Inclusive trade and decent work: Supportive domestic policies for sustainable outcomes”



The project contributes to a better understanding of best practices and new approaches at the country level to build and strengthen capacity in compliance of international labour standards within the context of trade. It does so through the conduct of evidence-based policy research to support the development of capacity-building activities for stakeholders, web-based research tools and tripartite dialogue.

▶ IMPLEMENT

“Labour provisions in trade arrangements: Implementation and stakeholder involvement”



The project is based on regional training activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders to engage in informed and effective dialogue on trade-related labour market issues and at improving their knowledge of international labour standards as a way of promoting sustainable trade.

▶ Main outputs and activities

The activities being carried out to achieve the programme's objectives include:

- Developing diagnostic tools for assessing the impact of trade on labour markets. This comprises the *Trade and Decent Work: Handbook of Assessment Methodologies* and the *Trade and Decent Work: Indicator Guide*;
- Carrying out country case studies on trade and decent work at the macro/meso, firm and worker level in Mexico, Viet Nam and Malawi;
- Contributing to evidence-based policy research on trade and labour governance. This will be through the publication of a two-volume compendium on inclusive trade and policies to achieve better social, labour market and sustainable enterprise outcomes;
- Developing online databases and analytical tools for: a) mapping, organising and analysing labour provisions in trade agreements, and b) trade and labour market analysis at the macro level;
- Conducting tripartite training courses and seminars on trade and decent work and establishing platforms for tripartite social dialogue.

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