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TWELFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Director-General

First Supplementary Report: Measuring decent work

Purpose of the document

The document reports and reviews activities related to measuring decent work since 2008. The future of the Office's work on this area is being addressed within the context of current Office-wide review of research, statistics and knowledge management functions. The Governing Body is invited to review and comment on the report.

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Policy implications: Yes.

Legal implications: No.

Financial implications: For consideration in the Programme and Budget for 2014–15 and technical cooperation.

Follow-up action required: Yes.

Author unit: Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION).

Related documents: Programme and Budget proposals for 2014–15 (GB.317/PFA/1).

Introduction

1. This document reports on work undertaken by the Office since 2008 to measure decent work through country profiles. It summarizes the way in which a set of decent work indicators recommended by a Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the Measurement of Decent Work in September 2008 and acknowledged by the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) have been used to prepare a series of decent work country profiles. The document also reports on pilot work on a recommendation of the 2008 Tripartite Meeting of Experts that the Office also examine ways in which the achievement of legal commitments related to fundamental principles and rights at work might be measured. The future of the Office's work on measuring decent work is being addressed within the context of current Office-wide review of research, statistics and knowledge management functions. This includes the development of an Information Gateway that would offer a single portal for access to a range of ILO information and statistics.¹

Background

2. The Governing Body has discussed the measurement of decent work on several occasions and provided guidance on the main principles and methodology that should guide the use of statistical and legal framework indicators of decent work (decent work indicators – DWIs)² and the development of national decent work country profiles.³ The complementary development of quantitative indicators and textual information on the legal and policy framework (comprising the rights at work dimension) were seen as essential for assessing progress towards decent work.⁴ In addition, the Governing Body has stressed the importance of capturing gender differences in access to decent work.⁵
3. Decent work country profiles cover ten thematic areas of decent work: employment opportunities; adequate earnings and productive work; decent hours; combining work; family and personal life; work that should be abolished (mainly child labour and forced labour); stability and security of work; equal opportunity and treatment in employment; safe work environment; social security; social dialogue; and workers' and employers' representation.⁶ For each thematic area a profile includes a set of statistical and legal framework indicators – the former to provide a quantitative baseline and means to track progress, and the latter to provide contextual background to the legal and policy environment affecting decent work. In addition, each profile contains a chapter on the social and economic context for decent work, comprising a set of mostly macroeconomic indicators.

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 progress made".

² The ICLS recommended that the Office proceed to test the framework of the measurement of decent work and report back to the ICLS.

³ See, for example, GB.301/17/6, GB.303/19/3 and GB.306/17/5.

⁴ GB.303/19/3.

⁵ GB.306/17/5.

⁶ *ibid.*

4. The Governing Body requested the Office to mobilize extra-budgetary resources to enable a comprehensive set of profiles to be prepared over the period covered by the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15.⁷ It stressed that this effort would in due course need to be built into the regular programme of collaboration between the ILO and its member States and sequenced in a way that maximizes synergies with other activities, for example, by providing an analytical framework for the design and review of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs).⁸ Contributions to the profiles from a number of units both at the headquarters and in the field and consultations with country constituents have been coordinated by a small team located in the Policy Integration Department (INTEGRATION). It has benefitted from the resources and expertise of a project on Monitoring and Assessing Progress on Decent Work (MAP), financed by the European Commission and scheduled to run until the middle of 2013.
5. The MAP project aims to identify national needs and constituents' priorities for the collection of DWIs, supports the design of suitable survey instruments (most notably labour force surveys) and incorporates data collection and analysis. The project has worked with nine countries.⁹ Other constituents benefit from the development of reference guides on measuring decent work, and through participation in international knowledge sharing and training events.¹⁰ By the close of the project, participating countries will have completed at least one national profile, while a few will have taken the initiative further with the development of subnational profiles for local level policy-making.

Decent work country profiles

6. All profiles are developed in collaboration with ILO constituents from ministries of labour, workers' and employers' organizations, and National Statistical Offices (or equivalent), as well as some other government agencies. In order to ensure that profiles are factually accurate and adequately reflect constituents' concerns, a process of extensive consultation is followed, and tripartite validation workshops are held prior to finalization and official publication.
7. Profiles have been developed for Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Brazil (including a second edition), Cambodia, Cameroon, Indonesia, the Philippines, the United Republic of Tanzania (mainland), Ukraine (including a second edition), Zambia.¹¹ Profiles for Bangladesh, Niger, Senegal and South Africa are currently under development. Namibia and Moldova have expressed an interest in developing national profiles, while Brazil, Indonesia, and possibly the Philippines may develop subnational profiles. The Office has

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ These are: Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Indonesia, Peru, The Philippines, Niger, Ukraine and Zambia,

¹⁰ Regional knowledge sharing events were organized for ten countries of Europe and Central Asia (September 2012, Kiev, Ukraine) and for ten countries of Asia and the Pacific (November 2012, Bangkok, Thailand). The participants came from the government institutions (Ministries of Labour and National Statistical Offices), as well as employers' and workers' organizations (for a few countries). Independent researchers and regional organizations (e.g. ASEAN, SAARC) also attended. Similar regional training and promotional activities took place in Africa and Latin America. A "global" meeting of participating countries was held in June 2012.

¹¹ Copies will be made available during the Governing Body and may be consulted at www.ilo.org/mdw.

recently prepared a first version of a manual on “Decent work indicators: Concepts and definitions”. Related training materials and modules are also under development and preliminary testing.

8. Decent work country profiles are designed to help strengthen the capacity of national constituents to measure national level progress toward decent work objectives. In countries such as Brazil, Peru, the Philippines and Indonesia, selected DWIs have already been incorporated into regular statistical activities under the national statistical office or equivalent, while in others, labour force or household surveys have been improved to broaden the data sources for indicators (e.g. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Niger and Zambia). Some governments are now seeking additional budgetary resources to implement regular labour force surveys, which will enable more regular compilation of DWIs and related national assessments of progress. Having a regular labour force survey is critical for profile development, since around half of the decent work statistical indicators are captured through such surveys.
9. Decent work country profiles also support processes of social dialogue in participating countries, by facilitating tripartite discussions and consensus building on key decent work issues and the effective design, monitoring and evaluation of national economic and employment policies and DWCPs. The extensive consultations pursued in developing the profiles have ensured strong national ownership over the documents – a process which extends to reaching agreement on the list of nationally appropriate indicators. National ownership is also enhanced through the process of tripartite validation, with constituent workshops organized to discuss and recommend changes before finalization. Upon publication and official launching of the profiles, media campaigns and accompanying publicity materials raise the visibility of the Decent Work Agenda and national assessments of progress toward it.

Value of decent work country profiles

10. The recommendations of the 2008 Tripartite Meeting of Experts regarding the ten main categories for DWIs and the use of both statistical indicators and a narrative text on legal frameworks have proved to be robust in a wide variety of countries, although not all have the necessary information.
11. The profiles provide data and information on the major dimensions of decent work in a country for at least two points in time,¹² enabling the analysis of progress in the framework of national economic, labour and social policies. They offer a factual basis for the design and development of DWCPs, particularly in terms of identifying gaps. They have proved useful for constituent engagement in discussion of national policies and plans concerning labour and employment issues and wider socio-economic development. For example, the Armenia DWCP 2012–15 was formulated based on the information contained in the country profile, which provided constituents with an evidence base on which to prioritize the DWCP outcomes and strategies.

¹² Besides ten core “thematic areas” of decent work that define the scope and structure of the profiles, ILO constituents in a few countries are calling for additional indicators, particularly on migration and skills/training.

Building on experience with profiles

12. Since the pilot programme on decent work country profiles was started, the Office has launched a new Information and Knowledge Management Strategy. One important component is the development of a new *Information and Knowledge Management Gateway* (Gateway) which will provide “one-stop” access to country-level statistical, legal and policy information.¹³ The Gateway is based on a user-friendly IT application to make existing ILO databases more accessible within a single-entry portal.
13. In this context, the Office is considering the development of electronic, web-based profiles “e-profiles” that would be presented on the Gateway platform and updated on a regular basis. This would require a gradual approach to building up indicators for countries with inadequate and poor quality data (e.g. where labour force surveys are lacking). More comprehensive and up-to-date country information could feed into the design stage of DWCPs.

Fundamental principles and rights at work

14. As proposed by the 2008 Tripartite Meeting of Experts, a separate pilot project was undertaken by the Office to investigate possible methods for measuring progress towards effect given to the fundamental principles and rights at work, taking freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining as a starting point. Following on the Governing Body’s discussion,¹⁴ the project aimed to construct a method – building on clear and sufficiently detailed criteria to define progress towards compliance – that would be fully coherent with the ILO supervisory system and, at the same time, both reliable and replicable.
15. The method developed involves coding the findings of the ILO supervisory system and compiling this information in a concise and accessible manner. The findings are categorized under nine main headings, each of which is broken down into de jure and de facto information. The consistent manner in which the ILO’s supervisory bodies have treated information on freedom of association enables a further detailed breakdown under these main headings. The final product is a table providing detailed and verifiable information that can be traced back to the original ILO textual source. It does not however “measure” respect for freedom of association.
16. The Office has therefore had to reconsider what is possible within the guidance provided by the Governing Body for this work. A more modest goal is to provide a compilation of pre-existing information in a concise and accessible format. This tool can support countries in monitoring progress and identifying gaps and areas for improvement, as well as facilitating the identification of technical cooperation needs at the country level.
17. Since completing this investigation of ways to improve the compilation of information on freedom of association and collective bargaining, the Governing Body has discussed follow-up to the recurrent item discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work at the 2012 Conference. The plan of action discussed by the Governing Body in November 2012 included the production of an in-depth knowledge base on fundamental principles and rights at work using sound research methods that enable the design and

¹³ The Gateway will also contain information on ILO technical cooperation projects, publications, etc.

¹⁴ GB.303/PV.

implementation of effective policies and programmes to promote fundamental principles and rights at work and assess their impact. Experience gained on the pilot project can be drawn upon in implementing and developing the plan.¹⁵

- 18.** The Governing Body is invited to discuss these developments in measuring decent work.

¹⁵ GB.316/INS/5/3.