



Contributions of ILO to the implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027): a note

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Eradicating poverty: a key objective for social justice

- This note presents some of the ILO's contributions implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) by key areas of policy focus on the UN System plan. It highlights the factors affecting the persistence of poverty and decent work gaps and how ILO continues to contribute to poverty reduction through policy support and development cooperation.

Structural transformation, productive employment and decent work

- Almost a quarter of the world's employed were classified as extremely poor or moderately poor, according to ILO estimates¹, many of them are in informal jobs. Transition to formality means including enterprises and workers within a regulatory framework. Operating in the formal economy has several advantages for workers, enterprises and society as a whole and it constitutes a key component of structural transformation leading to poverty reduction. The ILO is supporting interventions for allowing broader and deeper transition to formality by tackling different causes of informality. Moreover, the ILO is working with governments and social partners in designing and implementing national employment policies that support the operationalization of national development plans.

Expanding Social Protection Systems to Underpin Inclusive Poverty-Reducing Development

- Extreme poverty remains concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, and areas affected by fragility, conflict, and violence. These countries have the lowest effective social protection coverage, in particular only 7.8 percent of the vulnerable persons receive cash benefits in low-income countries and 15.2 percent in lower-middle income countries.² Social protection systems are an essential part of building lasting productive and human capacity and eradicating poverty. They are essential to increase the capacity to accelerate development. Stronger social protection systems are also needed

¹ [wcms_696387.pdf \(ilo.org\); Advancing social justice and decent work in rural economies | International Labour Organization \(ilo.org\)](#). ILO estimates that, globally, around 2 billion workers were in informal employment in 2022.

² ILO, 2021. World Social Protection Report 2020-2022: Social protection at the crossroads- in pursuit of a better future (ILO, Geneva)



to facilitate transitions and a structural transformation that is inclusive and contributes to social justice.

- The ILO have been strongly engaged in the UN System Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, an initiative that promotes an integrated approach to foster equitable economic, demographic, and ecological transitions, ensuring fairness for all workers, businesses, and communities. The initiative aims to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it is expected to make a significant contribution in poverty reduction by supporting the creation of decent jobs, primarily in the green, digital and care economies, and to extend social protection to people who are excluded.

Human Capability Development: Addressing the Non-Income Forms of Poverty

- The resilience of economies and societies amidst the major current economic shifts should be strengthened by advancing social justice. This needs to include strengthening labour and social protection to insure workers and their families against various forms of risk as well as expanding education and vocational training to help workers to transition to alternative sectors or occupations. Large educational gaps exist, producing significant barriers to structural transformation and productivity upgrading.
- The ILO is supporting building institutions of work. These broadly comprise international labour standards, labour market and labour administration institutions, and social dialogue, all of which help define and implement policies, regulations and programmes not only for the good governance of labour markets but also for broader sustainable economic and social development. The institutions of work are instrumental in reinvigorating the social contract between actors of society, reduce poverty and promote social justice.

The Future of Food and Sustainable Agriculture

- Extreme poverty primarily affects rural areas of developing countries and two-thirds of the extremely poor are engaged in agriculture.³ Globally, about one billion people work in the agricultural sector, constituting approximately 28 per cent of the employed population. About 450 million are waged workers, many of whom depend on incomes from jobs in the plantation sector.
- However, agriculture workers regularly face high levels of working poverty, food insecurity, poor health and safety conditions, and lack of labour and social protection. A socially, environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural sector with full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work at its core is essential for eradicating poverty, tackling inequalities and ending global hunger. Realizing decent work for all workers in the agri-food sector is, therefore, also key to achieving sustainable development and ensuring that no one is left behind, thereby contributing to social justice.
- The ILO has recently produced policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector.⁴ These are reference tools setting out principles that can be reflected in the design and implementation of policies, strategies, programmes, legislation, administrative measures and social dialogue mechanisms in particular economic sectors or sectoral clusters. Sectoral guidelines are

³ ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook 2016: Transforming Jobs to End Poverty, 2016.

⁴ ILO 2023 [Policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector | International Labour Organization \(ilo.org\)](#); [Advancing social justice and decent work in rural economies | International Labour Organization \(ilo.org\)](#)



adopted by meetings of experts comprising governments, employers and workers. They provides guidance for stakeholders engaged in the design and implementation of policies and measures on decent work in the agri-food sector as an essential part of efforts aimed at building sustainable food systems. It sets out common principles and the policy framework that should guide action to achieve decent work in the agri-food sector. The guidelines recognize the need for an integrated and coordinated approach at various levels (international, national, sectoral, local, and enterprise) and for the involvement of a wide range of actors.

Reducing Inequalities

- In the midst of the current challenging circumstances, major decent work deficits persist around the world, undermining social justice. Hundreds of millions of people lack access to paid employment. Those who are employed all too often lack access to social protection and fundamental rights at work, most workers being informal or unable to express their interests through social dialogue. Incomes are distributed highly unequally, such that many workers fail to escape poverty.
- Given its central importance to inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development, social justice constitutes one of the cornerstones of the renewed multilateralism that is required to overcome current challenges – a rallying point as well as an organizing principle. The ILO Global Coalition for Social Justice promoted by the ILO will provide the platform for an effective and coherent multilateral effort to strengthen the social dimension of sustainable development and economic growth.

Addressing Climate Change and the Intensification of Natural Hazards

- The ILO leverages its tripartite structure to foster partnerships that are inclusive, ensuring that governments, employers, and workers collectively shape the solutions for a low-carbon future. ILO programmes have provided support to small-scale farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices that create decent work and improve productivity while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- The ILO has supported the expansion of social protection coverage and strengthening of social protection systems to prevent and reduce poverty and people's underlying vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, as well as to facilitate a just transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies.

Fighting Poverty in Fragile and Humanitarian Contexts

- Since its creation the ILO has recognized that there can be no sustained peace without social justice and that labour rights are human rights. Crises severely impede our collective quest for peace, socio-economic security, equality, and social justice. Decent Work is central both to the mitigation of these crises, and to achieving the quest. Not only does conflict impede the dignity and livelihoods of people by provoking job loss and economic insecurity, but the absence of decent jobs is a core driver of instability. Employment and decent working conditions stand at the heart of fostering social cohesion and fortifying democracy.
- The ILO's response is structured across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN). The nexus is characterized by a cooperative approach aimed at cultivating resilience, planting the seed of peace, and ensuring humanitarian responses pave the way for sustainable development in regions marred by conflict. Through collaborative endeavours with partners across the United



Nations system, and in concert with governments, employers, and workers' organizations, the ILO provides a unique contribution to this nexus.

- A crucial element is the creation of safe and adequately paid jobs during reconstruction and stabilization phases complementing the alleviation of immediate humanitarian needs, setting the stage for sustainable development and peace.
- In Myanmar, amidst the unrest, ILO has continued our efforts to combat child and forced labour and to help improve conditions for Burmese migrant workers who are working in large numbers across Southeast Asia. Similarly, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), where more than 638,000 jobs have been lost since the October 2023, ILO programs have been geared towards supporting social protection systems, promoting employment, and fostering social dialogue.
- The ILO has proposed plans, driven by the needs of people, governments, and social partners, as an inclusive labour market supported by well-functioning world of work institutions and adequate social protection are prerequisites for diminishing inequalities and empowering vulnerable and marginalized groups. These all contribute to the building of more unified and equitable societies.