**Research Note**

**Donor Support to Decent Work**

In 2012 the TUDCN in cooperation with the University of Leuven – HIVA conducted an in depth research on *Trade unions’ views on working with donor governments in the development sector*. The “analysis of 18 donor countries discusses the current dynamics of trade union (TU) support mechanisms, based on a comparative study encompassing 25 TUs in 18 countries.” It “concludes that donors have acknowledged the diversity of civil society organisations in theory, but have failed to do so in their support mechanisms. A one size-fits-all approach is often adopted for all CSOs.” Finally, the “report identifies the need for donors to move towards actor-based support mechanisms, and to make use of the differences between TUs and CSOs in a complementary way.”

Since this initial research was conducted there have also been a number of significant developments on the international stage, most notably the agreement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among the SDGs are goals and targets which are high priorities for the trade union movement, including a specific goal on Decent Work. At the same time, efforts to engage non-state actors have also increased and evolved, with multistakeholder partnerships appearing to preferred approach to nearly everything in the development community.

On this basis there are very clear grounds to expand on the original research, especially in light of the new global development agenda and given evolving dynamics of multistakeholder cooperation. The broad lines of such research would explore the role development cooperation can play or more directly how can donors support the implementation and achievement of Decent Work for All, in all its dimensions, as part of overall efforts towards achieving the SDGs.

Overall the research would explore how donors support the different dimensions of the decent work agenda. This in the first instance could look very concretely at resources allocated to achieving the four pillars of decent work. A very concrete example would be to look at the amount of ODA earmarked towards social protection programs. However, it will be more interesting to go beyond the obvious areas where it is possible to easily quantify donor support, by looking also at how donor policy more broadly is geared towards achieving decent work. For example, this could look at a donor’s private sector strategy to determine whether it is in line with decent work objectives.

Then, an important part of this research would also include identifying the level and type of support given to the social partners, and in particular in support of trade union activities. This would look at how donors can or are supporting the social dialogue at national, regional and even global levels.

The research will use as a starting point the original research undertaken in 2012 but can also build upon and incorporate findings from recent research and case studies conducted by the TUDCN, which has looked at the private finance in development and the role of social dialogue in three countries.