

MINI ACTION GUIDE

ITUC - International Trade Union Confederation
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Decent Work

Why is Decent Work important?

Every person on earth should be able to have a job that enables them to live a good life in which their basic needs are met. Employment is a crucial factor for achieving this. The millions of women, men, young people and migrants who work or are looking for a job need governments that take adequate measures to:

- ensure that social protection and workers' rights are fully respected in labour laws and in practice. Living standards and economies need productive employment to develop.
- create millions of meaningful jobs for women and men. Jobs are only improved if they are linked to standards and rights. Social protection gives workers the security they need to face the future with confidence.

This is why all governments should be urged to work more on job creation. Not just any jobs, of course, but decent jobs for everybody. It is often argued that countries cannot afford to have fair wages and better conditions, however the short-term costs will quickly be outstripped by the long-term benefits. That is why Decent Work is the best way to fight global poverty. To most people around the world, lack of work means poverty.

What is Decent Work?

The short answer is a job that enables a person to live a good life. But there's also a longer answer: decent work, as a concept and an agenda, was introduced and initially promoted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1999. It consists of four components: employment, rights, protection and dialogue. Decent Work is based on the conviction that all four components are needed to create the best prospects for social progress and development.

Employment means...

- a fair income that ensures a decent livelihood
- equal treatment and opportunities for all
- good working conditions
- health and safety in the workplace
- access to meaningful and productive work
- prospects for personal development

Workers' rights in relation to employment are...

- freedom to organise
- freedom of expression
- that both women and men are able to participate in decisions that affect their own lives:
- the right to bargain collectively
- freedom from discrimination
- freedom from forced labour
- freedom from child labour
- legal recognition and access to a legal system
- the existence of labour laws and the general rule of law

Social protection stresses...

- the important link between productive employment and security for those who for some reason do not have a job at all
- protection from the loss or reduction of income due to unemployment, injury, maternity, parenthood or old age.
- fair and inclusive societies

Social dialogue emphasises...

- that workers and employers have the right and means to be represented through their organisations
- that the best and most enduring solutions are reached through cooperation which is central to social stability, sustained growth and sustained development
- that channels exist through which conflicts can be discussed and resolved





What is the ITUC doing?

World Day for Decent Work – October 7 2008

The founding congress of the ITUC decided that there should be a worldwide day of action organised by the international trade union movement. October 7 2008 has therefore been chosen as the World Day for Decent Work. The ITUC will be making materials available to help you plan activities, especially on the three themes for the Day:

- Rights at work
- Solidarity
- Ending poverty and inequality

Decent Work Decent Life

The ITUC is working on making the importance of Decent Work known to a whole range of organisations, institutions and governing bodies. A worldwide campaign was launched in January 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, at the World Social Forum by the Decent Work Alliance. This Alliance consists of the ITUC, ETUC, Solidar, Global Progressive Forum and Social Alert International. The alliance aims to place Decent Work at the core of development, economic, trade, financial and social policies at the national, regional and international level.

Call to Action

In Lisbon in October 2007 the Decent Work, Decent Life alliance organised a pre-event the day before the big ILO conference on Decent Work. Key decision makers from national governments and international institutions were invited to sign the Call to Action for Decent Work, Decent Life that was launched. The Call to Action has seven key demands, including changing unfair trade rules, protecting the rights of workers to organise, ratifying and implementing the UN and ILO conventions on the protection of migrant workers and providing social protection to the 80% of the world's population who live without it.

Please go to www.decentwork.org to read the Call to Action in full and sign it - please also invite others to sign!

Activities all around the world

Several activities, including workshops and seminars, have already been organised during 2007 in many different countries, including Ukraine, Costa Rica and Ghana.

Decent Work, Decent Life for women

On International Women's Day, March 8 2008, the ITUC will launch the Decent Work, Decent Life for Women Campaign which advocates decent work for women and gender equality in employment policies and agreements. Detailed information and a participation form are available on our website.

Youth Actions for Decent Work

On the eve of the 2007 G8 summit in Berlin, Germany, 200 young people from all six continents met and discussed issues and strategies to counter barriers to decent work. A declaration of 10 demands, calling on the G8 leaders to urgently address the economic and social issues that are keeping young people out of work or in precarious and insecure jobs, was handed over to Kajo Wasserhoevel, the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs for Germany.

Since the Berlin gathering, the ITUC Youth Committee has adopted a policy on Decent Work for young people and has committed itself to be actively involved into the campaign. Both documents are available on the youth section of the ITUC website.

Run the Decent Work checklist

You can see below a checklist of twelve things to do to fight for Decent Work. You can use the results of your actions to get an idea about how your own country is doing when it comes to Decent Work. (This may seem more obvious if you are working in a developing country than in an industrialised one, but even the industrialised countries have issues to tackle, such as the informal economy, migrants and trafficking, trade union rights, organising, and the role of the multinationals.)



Decent Work Checklist:

Basic questions about Decent Work in your own country:

1 Does every woman and man in your country have the opportunity to obtain work that enables them and their families to live a decent life?

2 Can everyone in your country join a union as they please?

3 Are trade unions in your country free to perform their work without outside interference and without restrictions on organising, bargaining and striking?

4 Do people in your country have protection from the loss or reduction of income due to unemployment, discrimination, injury, maternity, parenthood, old age, or indeed any other kind of financial hardship that may be of concern to society?

5 Do trade unions and employers' organisations engage in social dialogue in your country and are they involved in tripartite discussions with the government and other authorities on matters relevant to them?

6 Do women have equal opportunities at work or in obtaining a job? Do they have adequate protection against discrimination in law and in practice?

Basic questions about how your country influences the promotion of Decent Work in the rest of the world:

1 Does your country support the work of the International Labour Organisation on promoting Decent Work?

2 Does your country support further promotion of Decent Work within the scope of regional (for example in the EU, African Union, ASEAN or Mercosur) and global governance (not least the United Nations system)?

3 Does your country prioritise Decent Work in its development cooperation, including when allocating development aid?

4 Does your country prioritise Decent Work in its trade policy, including by prioritising the employment impacts in trade negotiations and by supporting the integration of the respect of Core Labour Standards in trade agreements?

5 Does your country support and prioritise the promotion of Decent Work in lending by International Financial Institutions (for example the World Bank and the IMF), including by demanding that loan conditions include respect of Core Labour Standards and that such lending promotes employment-intensive policies, social protection and the participation of the social partners (i.e. unions and employers) in governance?

6 Does your country include proposals for achieving gender equality in the above-mentioned areas?

What can you do?

Most things a union does can in some way quite easily be linked to Decent Work. Here are some ideas on how you can promote Decent Work.

Participate in the World Day for Decent Work

On 7 October 2008, the international trade union movement is planning a day of action for all its affiliates and their union members. Please look out for more information on our website and come up with your own ideas for action in your country!

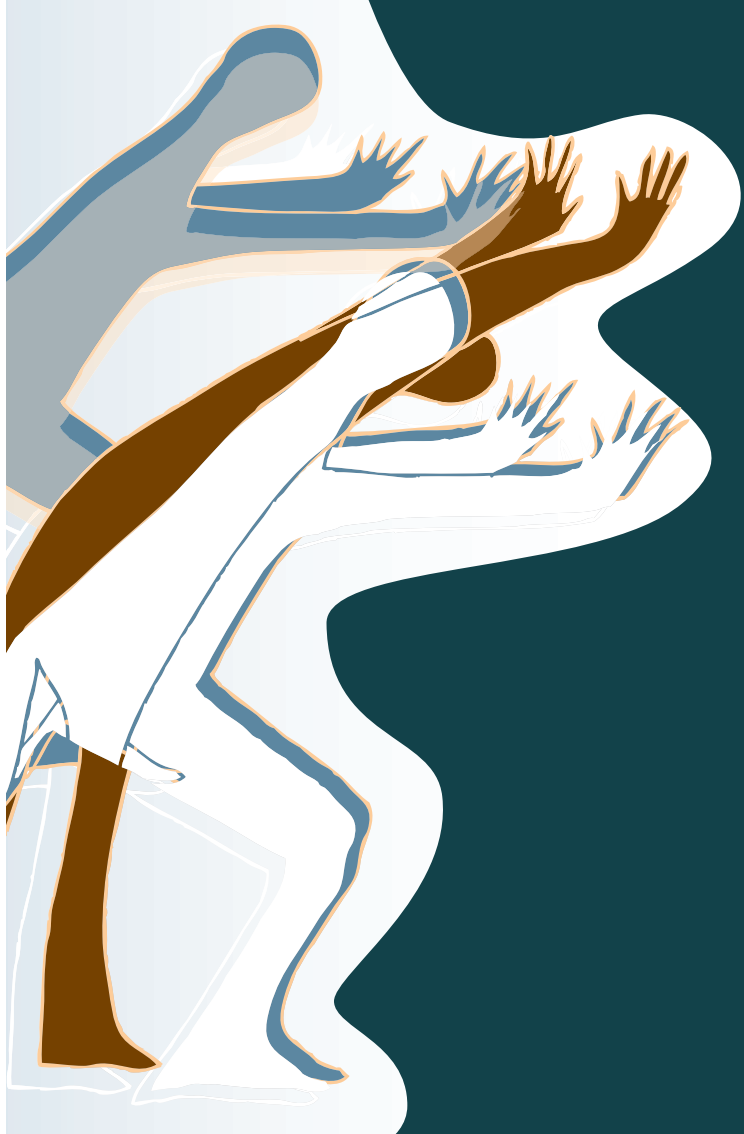
Read up on Decent Work

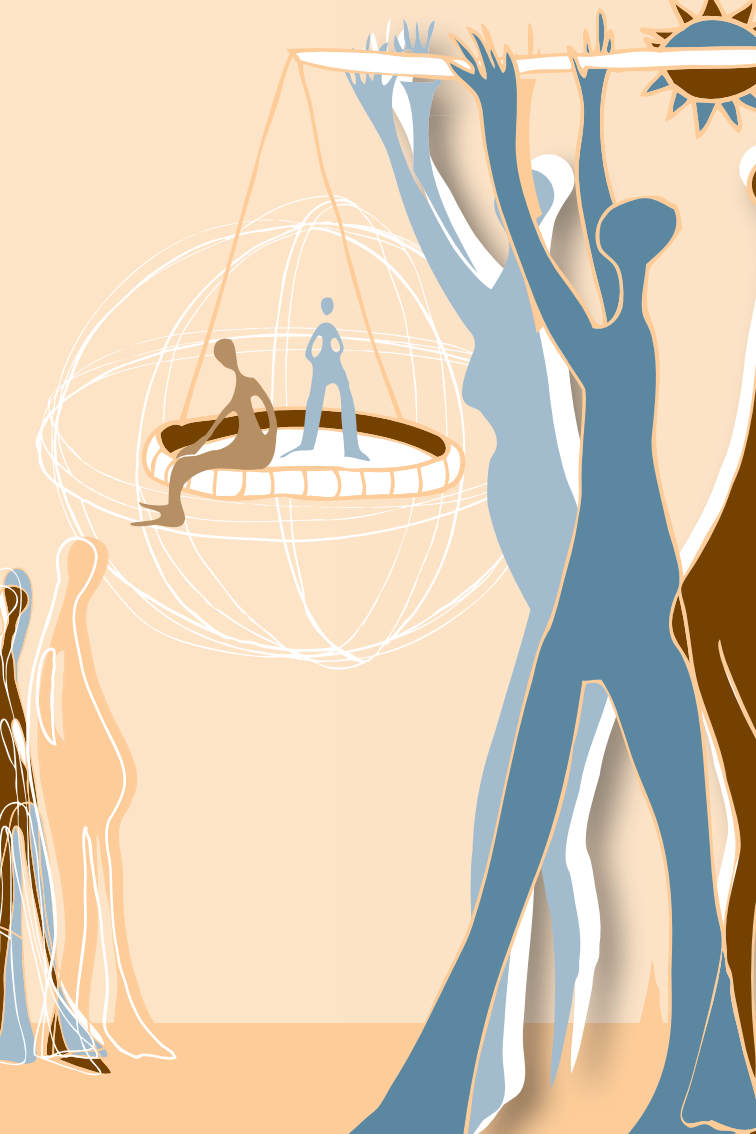
Find out more about Decent Work on our website: www.ituc-csi.org and www.decentwork.org

Decent Work Strategy

Use the Campaign as an opportunity to further strengthen your union strategies on Decent Work e.g. job creation, equal pay, organising new members, migrant workers and young people's situation. Focus in particular on women and the younger generation because the majority of them are concentrated in low-paid, unprotected, temporary or casual work.

- Women face multiple forms of discrimination and account for an increasing proportion of the world's poor
- Up to 93 % of all the jobs available to young people are in informal and unprotected work





Information in the trade union movement

Check how the Decent Work agenda can be integrated in your existing policies and activities. Publish information about the Decent Work Campaign in your trade union publications and promote the campaign in your ongoing work and see what parts fit within the Decent Work agenda. How can you promote this work within your own movement and membership?

Join the Decent Work, Decent Life for Women Campaign

8 March 2008 marks the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day (IWD) whose origin is based in the protests, strikes and marches of women trade unionists. Their courage and determination to stand up for women workers' rights and the historical role of women trade unionists in the creation of IWD calls for a very special celebration on 8 March 2008. That is why we encourage you to join the launch of the two-year Global Campaign for Decent Work, Decent Life for Women.

Seminars and debates

If you are already arranging a series of seminars and/or debates, you can include the Decent Work theme once in a while. Seminars or debates are a good way of encouraging an open and sincere discussion. Try to invite representatives from employers and political parties to create a tripartite social debate/dialogue/seminar/workshop. If you are a student, hold debates in your school or university to raise awareness amongst other students.

Publish a report, a brochure or a leaflet

Publications are a good tool for explaining complicated things whilst making a statement. You can use the checklist as a reference for a research to include in your report.

Start or join a campaign to help others promote Decent Work

If you don't feel the need to start a campaign on Decent Work in your own country, there is always the option of doing it for some other countries. Most union movements already have very good, established solidarity projects throughout the world. Join one of those. Help your friends in Cambodia or Zimbabwe or somewhere else to get decent working conditions! A solidarity concert is also a pleasant way of raising money for a good cause.

Demonstrate

Demonstrations, when wisely used, are a very good trade union tool. Get out on the streets and demand Decent Work, Decent Life for all!

- Organise a “walk for decent work” and finish it outside a politically strategic building
- Use and display banners, flags and other materials in symbolic or strategic places, schools, universities, etc. Banners can include slogans, signatures, handprints or drawings
- Invite members of your trade union section to participate in a rally for Decent Work
- Organize a Decent Work information stand in the main shopping street of your city or in other busy public places

Media campaigning

A good way of getting your voice heard and putting pressure on politicians is media campaigning. Arrange seminars with important persons; write reports on Decent Work issues; write debate articles or react to other people's statements or articles — and let the press know about it! Media campaigning is hard to categorise since it is so different from country to country and in some cases even from region to region but it is a key instrument for reaching and informing citizens.

Political lobbying

Many of the things mentioned above are forms of traditional lobby work. You can do all sorts of things to attract the attention of politicians in your country, at a local, regional or national level, and also these in the international institutions (e.g. the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the UN, the EU. . .). Writing (open) letters to politicians is also a powerful tool for changing things in your direction. Request them to sign the Call to Action supporting Decent Work.

Sports and Cultural Events

You can use sports and cultural events to raise awareness and promote decent work amongst various and numerous groups of people. Some examples: concerts, music festivals, marathons, rollerblade parades. . .

e-Campaigning

Internet and new technologies are fast, easy and affordable ways to promote your actions and decent work but also to broadcast your message to a wider audience. There are hundreds of ways to get your message known, the only requirements are to be creative and to reach people where they are online.

- Use the ITUC Decent Work website www.ituc-csi.org as a source of information and updates
- Use your own website as a source of mobilisation information and updates
- Use social networking to reach new people, involve them in the Decent Work campaign and promote your actions: add and recruit as many people as you can to the “Decent Work Group” and/or the “Decent Work Cause” on Facebook, organise a virtual demonstration and distribute virtual t-shirts and flags on Second Life, create a group on takingitglobal.org, create a blog etc. The popularity of these sites differs for every country so use the most popular in yours

- If you have a camera, record videos of your actions and/or a documentary about Decent Work, and put them on Youtube, Dailymotion or Myspace
- Create e-banners and put them as signatures in your emails
- When you are sending emails, make sure that they are clear and simple with specific action and tasks that people can promote
- Use message boards and instant messaging to inform and promote debate
- Sign the Call to Action for Decent Work, Decent Life. Create a campaign around the Call to Action to raise more signatures. E-campaigning, postcards, signing books - use all the tools that suit you! But don't forget to report all your collected signatures!

Report back!

We really want to know what you are doing within the Decent Work agenda, so when you have held an activity you can report back by e-mail to: campaigning@ituc-csi.org
If you have photos or videos we will gladly accept them as well!

Contact

Please contact us if you have any questions or want to know more.

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