

# Working for our future

- trade unions on the move for  
people, planet & prosperity



# 1.

## Full employment & Decent Work for all

Work is a key element of social and economic development. Through job creation and better working conditions people, communities and countries can lift themselves out of poverty and improve livelihoods. This happens only when work is decent, productive, provides fair wages, underpinned by rights. A decent work goal must include concrete targets for full employment, investment in green job promotion, reducing precarious work and ensuring a living wage as well as complying with international labour rights for all workers and gender equality at the workplace. The ILO Decent Work Agenda provides a useful reference for the understanding of decent work and its components as well as indicators for the measurement of the progress on its implementation.



# 2.

## Universal social protection

Ensuring universal access to basic guarantees of social protection is a human right and a direct and efficient way of reducing inequalities. The new agenda should include a goal on the implementation of social protection floors. Targets must be set and realised on income security for the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, pregnant women, children and the elderly as well as on access to health care, education, housing and sanitation. While social protection remains the responsibility of governments, a Global Fund for Social Protection should be established to introduce or strengthen social protection floors in the poorest countries.



# Work for all

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. Over 200 million people were unemployed in 2012, including 75 million young people (ILO, 2012a). Unemployment not only pushes many people below the poverty line, but also increases economic and social inequality, as employment rates vary for different social groups, with women and youth being in particularly precarious situations.

Even those who have jobs often suffer from insecurity resulting from underemployment or casual and vulnerable employment. Informal economy remains a growing concern, especially in developing countries, where they account for between 35 and 90% of total employment, majority being women (ILO, 2012b). Workers in the informal economy often lack access to health care, retirement pensions, maternity leave and other social transfers, keeping their social income much lower than their counterparts in formal economy (UN, 2007) and making them more vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks.

Nearly 1/3 of all workers live with their families below the poverty line, many of them women and/or working in the informal economy.

## What is Decent Work?

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** (A fair income, equal treatment for all, health and safety in the workplace etc.)
- **Rights** (Freedom to organise and freedom of expression, right to bargain collectively, freedom from forced labour and child labour etc.)
- **Social Protection** (protection from the loss or reduction of income due to unemployment, injury, maternity, parenthood or old age etc.)
- **Dialogue** (That workers and employers have the right and means to be represented through their organisations, that channels exist through which conflicts can be discussed and resolved etc.)

Decent Work is based on the conviction that all four components are needed to create the best prospects for social progress and development.

## 1. Any job is better than no job.

In fact, the goal is not merely the creation of jobs, but the creation of jobs of acceptable quality. All parts of the world now have a concept of decent work, but to workers the quality of a job has several meanings. It can relate to wages, to rights, to different forms of work and different conditions of work, as well as feelings of value and satisfaction. It is essential to work out policies that can create jobs where workers' rights are respected and so they can get the wages, conditions, social protection and satisfaction they want.

The need of the world of work today is to create social and economic systems that ensure basic security, proper remuneration and employment while remaining capable of adapting to rapidly changing circumstances at the labour market. A job that endangers your health or leaves you incapable of providing for your family is not a decent job.

## 2. The decent work agenda is not relevant in developing countries because of the large informal economy.

False! In much of the developing world labour markets are characterised by a large urban informal economy and a massive rural-based labour force. Many people in these situations are not able to provide for themselves or their families despite having an occupation. So, the challenges of creating a decent livelihood are perhaps even greater in developing countries especially with barriers existing at both national and international levels. The promotion of decent work for all in developing countries will create new sustainable opportunities for women and men to work productively, to receive a regular income with their rights protected and in the end to help win the fight against poverty. Decent work in all of its forms can help develop a more socially inclusive and economically dynamic development model.

# social protection employment rights dialogue

## Some common myths about Decent Work

### 3.

#### **The labour market of our globalised economy is not compatible with decent work.**

In reality, we need to give a human face to the globalised economy. Increased competition, accelerating economic and social changes and improvement of productivity in a market-driven economy does not automatically lead to social inclusion, nor create a route to a sustainable environment. The social consequences of globalisation can be adverse if workers do not fight to obtain and promote equal opportunities for women and men within the ILO Decent Work Agenda: the promotion of rights at work; employment; social protection; and social dialogue. Sustainable development and decent work for all must become an integral part of globalisation to create an effective “level playing field” in employment, equity and human dignity.

### 4.

#### **Standards and fundamental principles and rights at work are burdensome in moving forward with globalisation.**

Not true! We live in a highly competitive global market where workers face constant pressure to meet targets, deadlines and quotas. Globalisation, along with its many advantages, has also brought increased insecurity, uncertainty, and outsourcing of jobs and the possibility of working across borders under different laws in each environment. To ensure that workers are protected and treated fairly, we need recognition and an effective implementation of international labour standards on freedom of association, equality, and forced and child labour. They are shared commitments that can fight uncertainty, prevent competitive social dumping and ensure equal treatment, responsibility and respect while providing a global reference point for labour laws. Workers' rights must become a guidance point for global industry and good governance.

## Social protection for all

Ensuring universal access to basic guarantees of social protection is a human right and a direct and efficient way of reducing inequalities as well as fighting poverty and social exclusion. Social protection is also an investment in a healthy, productive and equitable society. It stabilises peoples' livelihoods, stabilises the economy, contributes to social cohesion and peace and builds peoples' resilience to economic and environmental shocks. Still, over 75% people on this planet do not have access to social protection.

### What is the Social Protection floor?

The Social Protection Floor is a set of basic social security rights and transfers, to help promote human rights and support decent living standards worldwide. The aim of Social Protection Floors is to extend basic support and protection to all those in need.

The Social Protection Floor should be established according to each individual nation's priorities and resources and designed and implemented with the participation of all relevant social partners. It should be implemented through national legislation and be progressively enhanced according to the economic development of each country.

The Social Protection Floor should be a key aspect of a country's development plans and strategies and should be closely linked to policies that promote employment and decent working conditions.

Within this framework, the International Labour Organization (ILO) promotes four essential guarantees: access to healthcare, child benefits, basic retirement pensions, and income support for the working poor, the unemployed and pregnant women.

## What IS social protection?

Social protection is a right. It is a coherent, rights-based approach to social policy, ensuring people's access to basic services and social guarantees.

### Social protection includes the following:

- Income security for unemployed (unemployment benefits)
- Income security for elderly (pensions)
- Income security for people with disabilities
- Income security for children (child benefits)
- Income security for pregnant women (maternity benefits, maternity leave)
- Access to quality education
- Access to affordable healthcare
- Access to affordable housing
- Access to sanitation
- Access to water

### What social protection is NOT:

- Social protection is not mere safety nets provided to people in the times of crisis.
- Social protection is not a network of privatised service providers, accessible only to the wealthy.
- Social protection is not just an economic calculation to boost consumption and reduce future costs.



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