



Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries: Contribution to the annual report of the Secretary-General

Following the LDC III conference in Brussels, to which the ILO made a substantial contribution, the ILO's regional structure and technical sectors at headquarters have received detailed briefing and instructions on follow-up to the Programme of Action adopted at the Conference. Copies of all relevant National Action Plans were provided as a frame of reference for mainstreaming support for LDCs into the regular programming of ILO activities.

The ILO aims to provide countries with technical assistance in an integrated manner, incorporating the main components of its Decent Work Agenda – rights, social dialogue and participation, employment promotion and skills development, and social protection – in the framework of an ILO country programme, which in turn is based on dialogue with the ILO's tripartite constituency to take full account of their needs and priorities. ILO activities are also programmed in the framework of CCA/UNDAFs for the UN system. Bangladesh is one of eight countries to have adopted a Decent Work Pilot Programme focusing on an integrated set of policies addressing the effects of globalization.

Particular emphasis has been placed on participation in PRSP processes, which are under way in many LDCs, to better incorporate poverty eradication, employment and other aspects of the Decent Work Agenda in the PRSPs. The ILO has sought to involve its tripartite partners and representatives of the affected poor in the PRSP process, in particular in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mali, Nepal and Viet Nam. In the African continent, which has the highest number of LDCs, the ILO has developed a major regional programme entitled "Jobs for Africa". The programme is now entering a new and larger phase, and is aimed at helping African countries formulate employment-generating economic policies at the macro-, meso- and micro-economic levels, as the most sustainable means of combating poverty and creating jobs for the 100 million new entrants into the labour market expected over the next 10 years.

A particular focus has been on LDCs affected by crisis as a result of war, internal conflict or natural disasters, such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. Such programmes seek to provide the most affected groups, whether displaced persons, returnees, refugees or rural populations, with economic and employment opportunities in the context of reconstruction and rehabilitation or local economic development programs. The spread of HIV/AIDS is causing havoc in many LDCs, which are particularly vulnerable and ill-equipped to deal with the effects of a large-scale epidemic on account of their weak health and social services infrastructures. The ILO's Programme on HIV/AIDS focuses in particular on the effects of HIV/AIDS on the labour market, prevention in workplace settings and fighting discrimination and stigmatization.

ILO technical cooperation is to a large extent dependent on financing from extra-budgetary donor resources, both multilateral and bilateral. In the dialogue with multi-bilateral donors, many of them have agreed to give particular priority to assisting LDCs or to focus entirely on LDC countries. In recent years expenditure on extrabudgetary technical cooperation in LDCs has been of the order of US\$ 20 million annually, corresponding to some 20 per cent of total expenditure.