

MONITORING ACHIEVEMENT OF SOCIAL GOALS  
IN THE 1990'S

Report prepared by the International Labour Office

In his Report to the 72nd Session of the International Labour Conference (1986) 1/, the Director-General of the ILO drew attention to major changes now occurring in the world of work.

The ILO Medium-Term Plan for 1990-1995 2/ gives the ILO's response to the important questions and challenges facing the world of work in the 1990's.

Briefly, the major challenges to the ILO include the need to:

- increase employment and reduce poverty;
- extend social protection beyond the formal sector;
- protect vulnerable groups, including women, young and older workers and migrant workers;
- confront all the social implications of technological change and transfer;
- respond to new problems associated with the prolonged economic recession; and
- support the process of change in employers' and workers' organisations.

The Plan describes the action envisaged by the ILO in the statistical field, inter alia, in order to respond to some of the above issues. The relevant section of the Plan is quoted below:

"While the statistical services already provided by the Office are largely of an ongoing nature, new trends in the world of labour will no doubt affect the scope of these services. There is an increasing need in many countries for information about unemployment, new forms and patterns of employment (and the wages or income they generate), the continued decline of the share of agriculture and growth of the share of services in total employment, working time and working conditions, and the work situations of women and men. New kinds of statistical data will therefore have to be collected, analysed and made accessible to policy-makers.

"The need to broaden the statistical coverage of different types of employment is particularly obvious in developing countries where the wide range of informal sector activities performed by people in various types of irregular employment is inadequately documented.

In industrialised countries the deterioration of the employment situation has led to the launching of special job creation schemes and the proliferation of different types of employment. Thus, forms of employment such as multiple job holding, part-time work, casual and temporary employment, youth employment-training schemes and community work have become more significant. These developments call for more refined labour statistics identifying more precisely the level, nature, characteristics and consequences of these non-standard forms of employment.

The existing international standards on labour statistics need to be revised and extended in scope in order to enable member States to determine more precisely the extent of these changes in the pattern of employment. It is therefore envisaged that during the Plan period existing national statistics and methodologies will be analysed and guide-lines will be developed to revise or supplement the present international standards on status in employment and statistics of employment, unemployment and underemployment; wages and income; working time; and occupational injuries.

The present standards on concepts, definitions and classifications of employment, unemployment and underemployment and on status in employment do not provide information on trends in the numbers of workers involved in the different forms of employment, incomes, and the associated movements of workers in and out of the labour force. Yet, such data are needed for the measurement of persons experiencing recurrent and long-term unemployment, and the preparation of estimates of the total volume of employment for national accounting and productivity analyses. Better data would also permit an assessment of the annual hours of work, and the related incomes, in different parts of the labour force.

Wage statistics are limited currently to paid employment; income generated by different forms of employment, including self-employment, is not adequately identified. Work will be undertaken to guide the collection of data on income from self-employment and precarious employment, and on the effect of taxes and social security contributions and benefits relating to net income from employment. Such new data will enable better analyses of income distribution, the standard of living and the extent of poverty and employment-income relationships. Moreover, information on income from self-employment is essential for integrating employment and income statistics.

" Similarly, current statistics on hours of work apply to wage earners and salaried employees. They do not deal with working time associated with various patterns of employment, nor do they take into account new forms of work organisation such as flexi-time, part-time work, etc. A framework for analysing the components and the use of working time will be developed in order to enable the collection of data on time worked in various types of employment. A methodology for measuring total annual hours of work, a useful piece of information for economic and social policy formulation, will be established within this framework.

At present data-gathering on occupational injuries, as defined by the recommendation adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), is generally limited to workers protected by national legislation and excludes all those in forms of employment not covered by the legislation who may be working in poor or even dangerous conditions. It is envisaged to revise the earlier recommendation so as to identify, if possible, the most dangerous work hazards outside the formal sector; this work will be carried out in conjunction with related activities in the field of occupational safety and health concerning a possible new international labour standard on the reporting of industrial accidents.

It is also desirable to develop standards for integrated data collection of labour statistics. Therefore there will be an examination of the problem of achieving complementarity between censuses and surveys and the reporting systems used, with exact linking and statistical matching.

Data on employment, wages and hours of work are published in the ILO Year Book of Labour Statistics and Bulletin of Labour Statistics, but the figures do not show the relationship between them. Ideally, data on average hours worked should be disaggregated to indicate averages for part-time employment and other atypical types of employment, and to reveal differences between industrial and service sectors. The same comment applies to wage statistics. Activities in the 1990's will include the collection of more complete data in this field, and also on income distribution, poverty, and sources of income. The data on employment, wages and hours of work will be harmonised at the national level; data will also be extended in respect of the service sector. At the same time, the coverage of Statistical Sources and Methods will be extended to include labour cost, occupational injuries and strikes.

Future growth in employment will probably take place to a large extent in the service sector, both in industrialised and in developing countries. However, the available statistics are much better for the manufacturing sector. Work is under way to redress this imbalance, the revision of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) constituting the ILO's main contribution to this effort so far. Activities to follow-up the adoption of ISCO by the 14th ICLS (1987) will be pursued during the Plan period.

" Apart from seeking to improve the quality and scope of the data it collects and publishes, the Office will have to handle more data because of the increasing volume of statistics generated by member States. To take account of this, a restructuring of the LABORSTA data base has already been started. This data base was originally designed for data dissemination through printed publications. There is an increasing demand for statistics on magnetic tapes or diskettes or through on-line direct access to the data base. The restructuring of the data base will respond to this demand, and should also allow direct access users to obtain descriptions of the sources and methods used to generate the data. Also, data arising from the work in hand on annual estimates of employment and unemployment and from work on labour force estimates and projections will be integrated into the data base.

The restructuring of the LABORSTA data base will be complemented by assistance in the use and analysis of the data, especially with respect to particular industries or categories of workers. The development of LABORSTA will complement the data base on employment and labour market statistics under the World Employment Programme. The excellent co-ordination which exists in the statistical field between international organisations will be maintained, and the ILO will continue to provide substantial inputs to the work of other international users (e.g. UN, FAO, World Bank, OECD, EUROSTAT, etc.), while benefiting from their activities."

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<sup>1</sup>/ The changing world of work: Major issues ahead, Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 72nd Session, 1986 (Geneva, 1986)

<sup>2</sup>/ The ILO Medium-term Plan 1990-95, Supplement to the Report of the Director-General: Documents of the 239th (February-March 1988) Session of the Governing Body, International Labour Conference, 75th Session, 1988 (ILO, Geneva, 1988)