



ECOSOC • Integration Segment (27–29 May, 2014)
SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

**Contribution to the
2014 United Nations Economic and
Social Council (ECOSOC)
Integration Segment**



International
Labour
Organization

A NEW UN URBAN AGENDA

PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION BY THE ILO

Sustainable development in general and urban sustainability in particular comprise ecological, economic and social dimensions. Labour is an important element of the social dimension, with spin-offs for the economic and ecological dimensions. Cities and towns will not be sustainable if the livelihoods of their residents are not properly addressed.

While wealth may be concentrated in the urban areas, it is by and large unevenly distributed within such areas. Urban poverty is extensive, and is increasingly overtaking rural poverty. Poverty increases the vulnerability of urban workers in regards to a plethora of risks, such as food insecurity, lack of protection against disease and environmental hazards, crime and violence. In addition to its direct consequences for the lives of a large number of urban inhabitants, it also limits the ability of urban workers to fully contribute to the economy and the greening of cities and towns. ILO's Decent Work Agenda is of central importance to achieving urban sustainability, and, specifically, to addressing inequalities and vulnerabilities.

The ILO uses the concept of decent work to address the various aspects of labour. The concept comprises four pillars: employment creation, workers' rights, social protection and social dialogue. Each component, and examples of action, will be explained below.

1. EMPLOYMENT

The rapid growth of urban populations is outpacing employment opportunities. The lack of quality jobs in sufficient numbers has induced urban poverty and insecurity. Employment creation entails not only promoting 'job rich' methods of production, but also supporting enterprises and increasing employability via for example skills training and initiatives for disadvantaged groups.

Different levels of government can play a role in addressing this challenge, but the role of the local government is particularly important. There is a great deal that local governments can do – directly and via forging public private partnerships – to promote employment creation: invest in the built environment and upgrading of infrastructural facilities like roads, drainage, water and energy facilities, sewerage systems, public buildings, and public transport and waste management & recycling establishments, among others. Such investment can stimulate local economies, result in immediate employment gains, and have long term impact on income, and living and working conditions. Local governments can also encourage job growth - and enforce better employment conditions - in other sectors in which they are not directly involved, by supporting private entrepreneurship, especially micro and small enterprises which are responsible for a significant proportion of urban employment. Investment in training in the different sectors of the urban economy and dealing with informality is also fundamental for employment creation.

Different sectors of the urban economy and/or different cities may require distinct interventions, which depend on the specific sectoral and local characteristics. The ILO has acted on different aspects of employment generation, from advise to government policies to direct training to poor communities. One example of a broad intervention is that of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where a set of initiatives support the creation of employment through for instance provision of training in several trades related to the reconstruction process, and private sector development. One innovative initiative is currently being implemented in Brazil, related to the host-cities of the forthcoming World Football Cup. This initiative promotes, inter alia, the expansion of opportunities for employment and businesses (for instance, promoting small enterprises), which helps to address current inequalities. The ILO is also continually

seeking new opportunities for employment creation, and a new sector for exploration is urban and peri-urban agriculture. An Information and Users Guide has recently been prepared.

2. WORKERS' RIGHTS

Many urban workers still face challenges related to their rights. Their inability to secure their rights has practical implications for their living and working conditions - and productivity. Examples of issues related to workers' rights in urban areas include informality, casualisation, child labour, bonded labour and discrimination against female and migrant workers.

To address workers' rights, there are many possible lines of action related to different groups of workers, based on various **ILO** conventions, recommendations, and other instruments. There are instruments for each aspect of decent work, including workers' rights, for which broader synergies can be explored. One example of operational activities is **ILO's** International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, which has included many activities with local governments.

There is also a burgeoning international movement on "the right to the city" which gives specific attention to community and consumers' rights. Workers' rights also fit within this framework, and should be promoted.

3. SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection also needs to be addressed in order to ensure sustainable urban development. Inappropriate working and living conditions expose many urban workers to risk on a daily basis, therefore increasing their vulnerability. To give one example, workers in major urban sectors such as construction, transport and waste management, among others, face serious occupational health and safety risks both due to the inadequacy of the existing occupational safety and health management systems and the impact of technological change. Also, a large number of urban workers are poor and live in neighbourhoods with inadequate sanitation and housing conditions. Numerous urban workers do not have access to an adequate system of health care, pay for holidays, and protection against loss of pay when they are unable to work due to unemployment, illness, accidents or old age.

Again, **ILO** instruments provide a sound basis for action, many of which specifically correspond to social protection. Also, poor people have at times mobilized their own resources and organized their own risk protection through mutual health protection and community surveillance. **ILO's** STEP (Strategies and Tools against Social Exclusion and Poverty) programme included the support to such type of initiatives. In their turn, recent initiatives related to cash transfer help to address inequalities.

4. SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Social dialogue is an important means for workers, employers and the government to jointly discuss solutions to the challenges noted before. It is necessary to address the barriers which have hindered social dialogue in urban areas. There are cases of good practice of urban multi-sectoral dialogue around the globe, including for instance Marikina (Philippines), LEDAS (local economic development agencies) in Mozambique and the municipal programmes in Brazil. Both the work in Mozambique and Brazil have been supported by the **ILO**. Another example related to sectoral dialogue is the **ILO** project to support construction workers in the city of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, which created a platform of dialogue with

both private formal actors and the public sector, leading to their recognition by the National Construction Council.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Job creation policies must be carried out through a process of social dialogue, with respect for workers' rights, and by providing them with social protection. **ILO's** work in urban areas can bring together the above means of action. Such work has ample room for synergy with the actions of sister UN agencies, given the fact that urban sustainability requires efforts from different perspectives, and at the same time is intrinsically linked to decent work.

While the **ILO** is ready to continue to provide specific types of support within its broad mandate, there is also the possibility of a comprehensive approach. The development of a Municipal Decent Work Agenda is a useful way to start work in a given city. Such agendas have been promoted in Brazil. In regard to operational activities, two proposed initiatives are noted:

The first proposal entails a partnership between the ILO and UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments). With the **ILO's** expertise in labour issues and UCLG's experience in connecting cities, they will help local governments to adopt the local economic and social development approach to improve the performance of key sectors of the urban economy to further create and promote decent work. This was piloted in 2013 through cooperation among the cities of Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Maputo (Mozambique), Durban (South Africa) and Barcelona (Spain), in the area of food markets.

The second proposal entails a partnership between the ILO and UN-Habitat that works with, and prepares, public and private actors of cities to identify and implement appropriate interventions in key sectors of the urban economy. The Programme's objective is to take advantage of **ILO's** expertise in the promotion of decent work and UN-Habitat's experience in spatial and infrastructure planning, to help cities improve the built environment while strengthening the local economy, creating employment and improving the working conditions of all citizens. This was piloted in 2013 in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania).

Both proposals have interfaces and are actually mutually reinforcing. They can also be implemented together, and serve as inspiration for the **ILO** and sister UN agencies to promote urban sustainability.

In October 2013 the Iberian-American Summit of Heads of States took place in Panama City. One of its focuses was 'sustainable cities', and the Summit was preceded by a UN workshop on the theme. The ILO took part in the workshop (Mr. Edmundo Werna, SECTOR). At the time, the UN agencies in the region were interested in putting together a joint programme for the region.

In April 2014, UN-Habitat hosted the WUF7 (World Urban Forum VII) in Medellin, Colombia. The **ILO** participated, including in an inter-UN agencies meeting to discuss the Habitat III process.

Geneva, 11 April 2014.