



# A MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH TO DECENT WORK IN THE URBAN ECONOMY

*ILO's Sectoral Activities Department*



International  
Labour  
Office

***T***his leaflet is about decent work in urban areas. It explains the relevance of a sectoral approach to labour-related challenges in the urban economy and presents the specific contribution of the Sectoral Activities Department of the ILO.

**C**ities and towns are engines of economic growth. Yet, for this potential to be fully realized, attention needs to be paid to employment generation, improvement of working conditions, enterprise development and many other aspects related to labour. Cities and towns will not be sustainable if the livelihoods of their inhabitants are not addressed. Urban poverty is widespread, especially in the South, and is increasingly outpacing poverty in rural areas. Poverty is not only a toll on the living conditions of large numbers of urban dwellers, but it also limits the capacity of workers and enterprises to fully contribute to the urban economy. In addition, urban development initiatives such as infrastructure provision, inner-city regeneration, slum upgrading and the like will not last if the livelihoods of the population is not addressed.

*Each sector of the urban economy has specific characteristics, and requires tailor-made actions due to its distinctiveness, to its specific interfaces with other sectors and to government policies with a sectoral impact.*

## **Why a Sectoral Approach to Decent Work in the Urban Economy**

**There are individual sectors:** the urban economy is composed of different sectors, each of which has particular properties and needs focused attention at sectoral level. Action entails:

*Taking into account the specific characteristics of each sector to improve decent work.*

**There are interrelationships between sectors:** the fact that the sectors of the urban economy are encompassed within a limited geographical area (a city or town) entails interlinkages. In addition, a number of sectors are intrinsically interrelated (to give one example: utilities, infrastructure, construction and waste). Therefore, labour issues in a given sector are linked to what happens in other sectors. Action entails:

*Taking into account interfaces between specific sectors and their mutual effects, in order to propose relevant interventions for each sector which consider external influences. This also enables the development of multi-sectoral proposals which take into consideration the synergies between sectors.*

### **There are policies with sectoral impacts:**

development and/or regulation of the urban sectors are by and large under the coordination of local authorities, which have an integrated plan for each city or town. Policies for the urban environment also tend to be integrated (whether under the local government or a central government agency). Operations for adaptation to climate change in a given city or town also tend to integrate different sectors. Actions entail:

*Taking into account government policies that have an impact on different sectors, and understanding the impact on each specific sector. This enables the review of policies to improve their specific impact on each sector.*

### **There is sectoral social dialogue at the local level:**

in many cities and towns, a number of sectors have a critical mass of employers and workers structured in organizations, which enable them to engage in social dialogue between themselves and/or with the local government. Local-level sectoral dialogue addresses specific issues of each municipality, which are difficult to be included in overall dialogue at the national level. It may include actors such as informal workers and enterprises, grass-roots communities and NGOs working on labour issues, which are seldom represented at the national level. There are some cases of good practice of urban multi-sectoral dialogue, such as in Marikina (Philippines), the municipal decent work programmes in Belo Horizonte, and a number of towns in the metropolitan region of Sao Paulo in Brazil. The experience of the leading sectors of the urban economy in social dialogue can set examples of good practices to be replicated in other sectors.

Action entails:

*Promoting social dialogue in the sectors which are organized to engage in such process. Supporting other sectors to organize themselves. Exploring possible linkages between different sectors to establish or strengthen a coalition to bring the Decent Work Agenda to the local level – an approach which is consistent with the plan of action of the Council of Global Unions (October 2010).*





## ► Initiatives of the ILO's Sectoral Activities Department

The value-added of ILO's Sectoral Activities Department is its unique understanding of and know-how to target the decent work deficits in each sector of the economy, its capacity to link activities between sectors, and its long-standing collaboration with other units of the ILO.

The Department is developing a knowledge-base to provide conceptual and practical guidance and support to activities in the field. This includes publications, tool-kits, training materials and technical advice.

### Examples of completed products

- Training on green jobs in sectors of the built environment (Turin, April 2011).
- Training on livelihoods in low-income settlements (together with UN-Habitat, World Bank and New Synergies for Development, delivered at the World Urban Forums IV and V).
- Conceptual support to the initial Decent Work Municipal Programmes in Belo Horizonte and towns in the metropolitan region of Sao Paulo (Brazil).
- Inputs to the "Cities" chapter of UNEP's *Green Economy Report* (2011)
- Inputs to the "Cities" chapter of ILO's Report *Promoting Decent Work in a Green Economy* (2011)
- Working Paper *Labour-oriented Participation in Municipalities: how decentralized social dialogue can benefit the urban economy and its sectors*. By C. Van Empel and E. Werna. Sectoral Activities Department WP 280 (2010).
- Working Paper *The Role of Local Authorities in Promoting Decent Work – towards an applied research agenda for the construction and urban development sector*. By J. Klink. Sectoral Activities Department WP 243 (2007).
- Working Paper *Participatory Approaches for Planning and Construction-related Assistance in Settlement Upgrading and Expansion – the roles of tripartite actors and other stakeholders*. By D. Williams. Sectoral Activities Department WP 255 (2008).
- Report of the research *Promoting Decent Work in Construction and Related Activities [Utilities] – the key role of local authorities*. By ILO's Department of Sectoral Activities and the University of Geneva (2008).
- Working Paper *Informal construction workers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania*. By Jason, A. Sectoral Activities Department WP 226, Geneva, ILO (2005)
- Working Paper *Informal labour in the construction industry in Kenya: A case study of Nairobi*. By Mitullah, W. V. and Wachira I. N. Sectoral Activities Department WP 204 (2003)
- Working Paper *The Warp and the Web: Organized production and unorganized producers in the informal food-processing industry: Case studies of bakeries, savouries' establishments and fish processing in the city of Mumbai*. By

- Dewan, R. Sectoral Activities Department WP 156 (2000)
- Guiding Manual for Decent Work Municipal Programmes (published as an annex in the Working Paper *Labour-oriented Participation in Municipalities: how decentralized social dialogue can benefit the urban economy and its sectors*).

### Examples of activities currently under production

- Design of an operational project to promote employability, improvement in working conditions and social dialogue in neighbourhoods affected by the earthquake in Haiti.
- Design of an operational project to promote decent work in the World Football Cup in Brazil.
- Component on access of vulnerable urban and peri-urban workers to food in a programme proposal on decent work for food security.
- Technical support to a project on green jobs in social housing in the Philippines.
- Manual to guide studies on green jobs in the built environment.
- Training material on improving livelihoods in key sectors of the economy in low-income settlements (in consultation with UN-Habitat).
- Action-research on decent work in urban and peri-urban agriculture in Zimbabwe.
- Research on health of workers in key sectors of the urban economy.

### The way ahead

ILO's Sectoral Activities Department aims to continue expanding its knowledge-base on key sectors of the urban economy and increase technical cooperation. Ideas for the near future include:

- Working papers on: "green jobs in the built environment"; and "a systemic approach to labour in the sectors of the urban economy"
- Application of the guiding manual and the training materials currently under preparation.
- Replication of the course delivered at the World Urban Forums IV and V.
- Development of the project for the World Football Cup into a model of intervention to be replicated in the preparation of other games.
- Development of the project for Haiti into a model of intervention to be replicated in other post-crisis situations.
- Design of a project for the promotion of green jobs in the built environment.
- Design of an overall mode of intervention for activities in the sectors of the urban economy.

#### ► For more information contact:

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