

Pacific Action Plan for Decent Work

Introduction

In October 2005, Pacific leaders adopted a regional framework, “The Pacific Plan”, with the aims of enhancing economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security in the Pacific through regional initiatives.¹ In 2006 the 14th Asian Regional Meeting adopted the concept of the ‘Asian Decent Work Decade.’ Subsequently, in November 2007 the ‘Tripartite Technical Meeting on Decent Work: Pacific Island Countries’ (2007 meeting) reviewed progress with regards to the Decent Work agenda² in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Consequently, Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) were formulated for all Pacific Island member States in alignment with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Pacific and National Development Plans. Furthermore, the 2007 meeting called upon the International Labour Organization (ILO) to develop a Pacific Action Plan for Decent Work. This document reflects progress so far and spells out the common priorities for action.

This document does not supercede or replace country specific DWCPs. Rather it addresses the need to examine and resource common issues in a coordinated manner, as well as providing a vehicle for addressing broader issues arising from the GJP, Pacific Plan alongside those contained in DWCPs. The PAP-DW therefore will assist in the effective and efficient mobilizing of resources and assistance to deliver outcomes as appropriate in each country.

At the August 2009 Pacific Island Forum meeting, PICs agreed to the Cairns Compact On Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific and the Recommendations for Progressing the Pacific Plan, with the aims of improving economic opportunities and employment generation in the region.³ Tripartite agreement on the Pacific Action Plan across ILO PIC member states will further this tradition of Pacific regional cooperation and will contribute to realisation of the objective of PICs, expressed most recently in Cairns, of economic improvement and the creation of decent jobs.

Further, at the International Labour Conference in 2009 ILO members adopted the Global Jobs Pact (GJP) as a response to the Global Financial and Economic Crisis. Accordingly, ILO member States are encouraged to give effect to the GJP through national policy and programmes. The development of a regional framework on Decent Work, however, presents a further opportunity for ILO PIC member States to simultaneously give effect to the GJP and Decent Work priorities at a regional level. The Pacific Action Plan also presents an opportunity for PICs to address challenges presented by critical climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes through the generation of Green Jobs.

An examination of Pacific DWCPs has identified a number of common priorities which in turn are linked to the four pillars of Decent Work. These can be grouped as follows:

1. Improvement of labour market governance;
2. Employment and growth;
3. Expanded scope of social protection; and
4. Capacity building of tripartite partners.

¹ Tripartite Technical Meeting on Decent Work: Pacific Island Countries, Summary Outcomes of the Meeting http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/events/lang--en/docName--WCMS_098981/index.htm, Fiji: 26-28 November 2007.

² Decent Work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives – their aspirations for opportunity and income; rights, voice and recognition; family stability and personal development; and fairness and gender equality. Ultimately these various dimensions of Decent Work underpin peace in communities and society. Decent Work reflects the concerns of governments, workers and employers, who together provide the ILO with its unique tripartite identity.

³ Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (2009): Forum Communiqué, Fortieth Pacific Islands Forum, Cairns, Australia, 5-6 August 2009. See in particular Annex B: Cairns Compact On Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific; Annex C: Recommendations for Progressing the Pacific Plans.

Gender equality is mainstreamed throughout the entire Decent Work agenda including DWCPs and this Pacific Action Plan.

1: Labour market governance and labour law reform

Decent work deficit

A review, revision, or improved implementation of labour legislation and/or improved implementation of International Labour Standards (ILS) is included as a priority in all Pacific DWCPs. Most PICs have only basic labour legislation and the conformity of many of these laws with ILS remains largely unexplored. Six Pacific member States sought technical assistance to support their labour law reform process, as a priority. As a number of PICs are new members of the ILO they are expected to catch up with ratifications of ILS and to consider such ratifications in close consultation with employers and workers.

Outcomes to be realized by 2015

- All PICs have continued progress on ratification of all eight Core Conventions and at least two of the four Governance Conventions;
- All PICs have national laws and practices that are aligned with Core and Governance Conventions;
- All PICs have ratified the *Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC)* and at least 4 PICs have ratified *Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised) 2003 (C.185)*;
- All PICs are encouraged to ratify the *Work in Fishing Convention 2007 (C.188)*; and
- Labour administrations with input from the social partners submit comprehensive and timely reports on the application of ratified Conventions.

Outputs

The following activities are proposed to contribute to the realisation of national DWCP labour market governance priorities:

- Gap analyses, with respect to legislation, policy and practice, on Core and Governance Conventions, as well as the MLC and C.185, in each non-ratifying PIC member State will be undertaken;
- Workshops will be convened on Core and Governance Conventions as well as the MLC and C.185, to promote ratification;
- Technical assistance will be provided to review and amend labour laws consistent with Core, Governance and ratified ILS as well as the MLC and C.185;
- A tripartite knowledge sharing network and platform on good labour market governance established.

2: Employment and growth

Decent work deficit

Across the Pacific region unemployment and underemployment are major challenges, which have been further exacerbated by the Global Financial and Economic Crisis. Currently in the Pacific region the bulk of the population is engaged in industries and sectors where decent work deficits are high. Thus there is a need to improve both the quality and quantity of existing employment in industries through growth and increased job potential.

Outcomes to be realized by 2015

- All PICs have designed and implemented national employment plans with a special emphasis on industries with growth and sustainable job creation potential;
- Tripartite industry development groups in priority industries are established in the region and include major employers, workers' representatives across the supply chains, and governments;
- An analysis of the enabling environments for sustainable enterprises in accordance with the International Labour Conference *Conclusions on Sustainable Enterprises*, 2007 is undertaken;
- A data collection instrument to produce labour market information and a centralised database developed, in conjunction with other regional institutions, and made available to labour administrations;
- Regional competency standards for technical and vocational training institutions are developed; and
- All migrant workers from PICs receive comprehensive pre-departure training/orientation and a regional database on migration flows across PICs is established.

Outputs

- Analysis of opportunities and constraints for sustainable job creation in key selected industries;
- Tripartite dialogue and participation in the design and implementation of industry focused employment policies and programmes;
- Improved availability of employment and career guidance services for disadvantaged job seekers including youth and the disabled;
- Provision of skills training, business training and improved microfinance opportunities for self employment;
- Reformed training systems through the stronger involvement of social partners, increased market orientation and the development of competency standards and where relevant harmonisation of those standards;
- Awareness raising for tripartite constituents and demonstration projects on opportunities and policies for green jobs under the climate change response umbrella;
- Strengthening PIC governmental capacity in the collection, storage and production of socioeconomic statistics, with a specific focus on labour market information;
- Strengthening tripartite constituent capacity in LMIA collection, interpretation and analysis;
- Undertaking a cross-country comparison of labour migration policy and legislation in sending and receiving countries;
- Providing technical assistance to develop a regional training program to ensure the quality of; recruitment, pre-departure orientation, information, return, re-integration and re-employment services, including the role of social partners; and
- Greater cooperation on policies, practices and areas of joint action arising from dialogue between the tripartite constituents and the relevant regional organizations working in the Pacific.

3: Expanded scope of social protection

Decent work deficit

Recent research has indicated that traditional welfare structures and formal social protection systems in most PICs do not adequately meet the needs of all Pacific islanders. The gradual development of an inclusive social floor, while it may differ from country to country, is considered indispensable for sustainable economic and social development in the Pacific region.

Another area requiring attention in the Pacific region concerns working conditions and the welfare of maritime workers and port workers. Due to the involvement of a considerable number of workers in foreign flag ships and the fishing industry, all PICs are committed to improving safety and promoting better working conditions and the welfare of workers in the maritime industry.

Outcomes to be realized by 2015

- Inclusive strategies for increasing the level and scope of social protection, such as in the areas of health insurance, workers' compensation, pensions and in the informal economy, as well as the development of a social floor are incorporated into National Development Plans; and
- National HIV/AIDS industry and workplace policies consistent with ILO instruments are developed and implemented in all PIC member States.

Outputs

- Tripartite workshops on social protection and the social floor are convened;
- Providing "Train the Trainer" workshops in PICs to build the capacity of tripartite constituents to assist labour administrators, union members and employers to develop industry and workplace HIV/AIDS policies; and
- ILO programmes to promote occupational health and safety in PICs are implemented.

4: Capacity Building of tripartite constituents

Decent work deficit

The DWCPs of all Pacific member States include capacity building of the tripartite constituents as a priority. While it is agreed that capacity building is necessary across the Pacific region, it is simultaneously clear that current capacity levels of tripartite constituents vary markedly between PIC member States. Capacity building of tripartite constituents and strengthening of tripartite institutions is critical to facilitate the implementation of all outcomes and outputs under this Pacific Action Plan and Pacific DWCPs. The Bureaux for workers' and employers' activities will be fully involved in all capacity building activities for the social partners.

In particular, the capacity of labour administrations, social partners and tripartite institutions is too weak in many PICs to facilitate active tripartite contribution to necessary law reform processes. Further, social partners commonly expressed the need for their staff to upgrade their skills in organising, leading and managing their organizations to provide better services to their members and to strengthen their capacity as development partners.

Outcomes to be realized by 2015

- A tripartite Decent Work Steering Committee is established in each PIC and these Committees are integrated within a Pacific network to support each other's effective operation;
- The social partners are strengthened in the provision of meaningful services to their members and to extend the representation of their organizations;
- The number of registered collective agreements across the region increases by 20% on 2010 levels; and
- Tripartite constituents consistently and effectively contribute to law reform processes, policy development and ILS reports.

Outputs

- Capacity assessments will be undertaken and training plans and institutional strengthening programmes will be developed, for tripartite constituents and institutions in each PIC;

- In accordance with training plans, capacity building workshops, in-country training and distance learning tailored to the Pacific situation, will be carried out;
- A regional knowledge sharing platform on tripartite structures, good practices of social dialogue, collective bargaining and dispute settlement will be established; and
- Workshops for Decent Work Steering Committee members will be convened to establish a knowledge sharing and peer support network.