

WORLD OF *Work*

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ILO

*Working more,
working better?*
The ILO reports

Inside this issue: ILO poster on child labour



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE





The ILO in history



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Recollections of 1919

The International Labour Conference in Washington: A host bows out

In October of 1919, the first International Labour Conference opened in an atmosphere of hope and uncertainty. As delegates gathered in Washington, D.C., they were about to set in motion elements of the Treaty of Versailles that concerned the labour world. But one question remained, predominating over all others: Would the United States, one of the most active proponents of the new system of multilateral cooperation and host to the Conference, participate?

U.S. Secretary of Labor, Mr. W. B. Wilson opened the meeting at 11.30 a.m. on 29 October in a hall in the Pan American Union Building. Through a certain Franklin D. Roosevelt, then the Assistant-Secretary of the Navy, a site had been made available for the Conference, along with several offices at the nearby Navy Building. One of the first decisions made by the 123 delegates (accompanied by 155 technical advisers) from 40 countries, was to grant Germany and Austria ILO membership, even though those two delegations were unable to attend due to transportation conditions of the time.

From then on – according to Edward Phelan, a close collaborator of the Secretary-General Harold Butler – the work of the Conference progressed unexpectedly swiftly. Strong personalities who were to shape the future of the Organization were at the forefront of the discussions – Fontaine, Barnes, Malcom Delavingne, Mayor des Planches and Mahaim among the Government members; Carlier, Hodacz and Guérin among the Employers; and Jouhau, Oudegeest and Mertens in the Workers' group.

By the end of the Conference on 29 November – a full month later – six Conventions, six Recommendations and 19 resolutions had been adopted. At the 19th sitting, the announcement of the composition of the Governing Body of the future ILO had prompted an outcry by a number of delegations, in particular from Latin America, protesting the fact that no less than 20 (of a total of 24) of the posts were occupied

by Europeans. Following a proposal by South Africa the Conference adopted a resolution expressing its discontent.

Some days earlier, on 20 November, had come the news everyone was dreading – the United States Senate had refused to ratify the Peace Treaty, making it impossible for the United States to join the ILO. Samuel Gompers had participated in just one sitting – the seventh – in the capacity of United States delegate, and had taken part in the discussion on hours of work in industry (the subject of the first Convention). It was not until 1934, under Roosevelt's presidency, that the leading world power changed course and joined the Organization.

Michel Fromont

Source: International Labour Conference, First session, 29 October-29 November 1919. Washington, 1920.



ILO

U.S. Secretary of Labor, Mr. W. B. Wilson opening the first International Labour Conference in October 1919.

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Writers wanted

To increase its coverage of labour issues and ILO activities worldwide, the *World of Work* seeks correspondents in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Qualified journalists, writers and others with expertise in labour issues who wish to write for the magazine should contact the ILO Bureau of Public Information by mail, fax or e-mail. Articles are *only* done on assignment and in consultation with the Editor. Payment is commensurate with current levels for freelance articles and photos. Send cover letter with a *curriculum vitae* and references if possible to: The Editor, *World of Work*, International Labour Office, Bur. 1-123, 4 route des Morillons, 1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, Fax: +4122/799-8577; E-mail: presse@ilo.org

Created in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) brings together governments, employers and workers of its 174 member States in common action to improve social protection and conditions of life and work throughout the world. The International Labour Office, in Geneva, is the permanent Secretariat of the Organization.

Working longer, working better?

New ILO study highlights labour trends worldwide

Does working more mean working better? Not necessarily says a new global study by the ILO. In fact, the study suggests that increased productivity is not the only indicator that should be considered – compensation, unemployment, levels of technology, social benefits, job security, even cultural attitudes towards work and leisure are all necessary for any meaningful analysis of working time. Here, highlights of the 600-page report covering 240 countries and territories around the world provide a detailed glimpse of the world of work.

US workers put in the longest hours on the job in industrialized nations, clocking up nearly 2,000 hours in 1997, almost two weeks more than their counterparts in Japan, where hours worked per year have been gradually declining since 1980, according to a new statistical study of global labour trends published by the International Labour Office (ILO).*

The study examines 18 **Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)** including labour productivity, labour costs and hours worked. It shows that the US pattern of increasing annual hours worked per person (which totalled 1,966 in 1997 versus 1,883 in 1980, an increase of nearly 4%) runs contrary to a worldwide trend in industrialized countries that has seen hours at work remaining steady or declining in recent years.

The long working hours of US and Japanese workers (whose 1995 total was 1,889 annual hours worked versus 2,121 in 1980, a decline of more than 10%) contrasts most sharply with those of European workers, who are logging progressively fewer hours on the job, particularly in the Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Sweden where hours worked in 1997 were, respectively 1,399 and 1,552 per year.

In France, which recently introduced legislation limiting the work week to 35

hours, men and women workers put in 1,656 hours in 1997 versus 1,810 in the 1980s. In Germany (Western), the annual total of working hours was just under 1,560 in 1996 versus 1,610 in 1990 and 1,742 in 1980.

Workers in the United Kingdom, putting in 1,731 hours annually in 1997, appear to have neither gained nor lost much free time since 1980 when they worked 1,775 hours. Irish workers' annual hours dropped from 1,728 in 1980 to 1,656 in 1996, putting them roughly on par with Switzerland (1,643), Denmark (1,689 hours for male workers in 1994) and Netherlands (1,679 for male workers in 1994).

Workers (both men and women) in Australia logged only slightly longer hours than their counterparts in New Zealand in 1996 (1,867 versus 1,838). Canadian workers have seen their work schedules decline by more than a full work week during the last decades, with 1996's result of 1,732 hours closely resembling 1980's total of 1,784.

Fewer annual statistics are available on annual hours worked per person for the developing world than the developed world, so trends are not as easily identifiable. However, among rapidly industrializing countries and regions, East Asia would appear to have the longest hours of work with Hong Kong – China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Sin-

gapore and Thailand all reporting between 2,200-2,500 per year, but the figures are all pre-1996, prior to the Asian financial crisis. Figures for the Republic of Korea show the highest number of hours reported for countries with data, with 2,689 hours in 1980, declining only slightly to 2,467 by 1996.

Workers in Latin American and Caribbean countries work between 1,800-2,000 hours per year, with only modest declines from 1980 levels.

Working more may not be working better

Commenting on the findings, ILO Director-General Juan Somavia said: "The number of hours worked is one important indicator of a country's overall productivity and quality of life. He added that "while the benefits of hard work are clear, it is not at all clear that working more is the same thing as working better."

However, Mr. Somavia cautioned that many other factors – "including productivity, compensation, unemployment, levels of technology, social benefits, job security and even cultural attitudes toward work and leisure need to be considered in any meaningful analysis of working time."

"Among the goals of the ILO KILM project," he added "is to provide an up-

to-date statistical profile of worldwide employment trends so that the full range of social and economic consequences of different labour market options can be examined." Somavia said that he hoped the 600 page volume, containing comparative data from 240 countries and territories worldwide, would prove a valued reference in "the search for equity and efficiency in the world of work, which are all too often considered in terms of an "either/or tradeoff rather than a considered choice based on a range of factors."

The project is the result of a collaborative effort among the ILO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and several national and international agencies to select and refine global labour trends.

Productivity puzzle

The first instalment of KILM, which presents information by category and by country, will no doubt raise as many questions as it answers, notably on the vexed questions of matching labour resources to productivity, employment and economic pressures in the increasingly global economy.

Mr. Lawrence Jeff Johnson, the ILO labour economist who directed the KILM project, said that in spite of divergence in working hours, the major industrialized countries are seeing convergence on the labour productivity front.

Said Johnson: "Currently the US worker works more hours than his or her counterpart in other industrialized countries, and he or she also leads the way in terms of productivity."

He added that "in 1996, the US outpaced Japan by nearly \$10,000 in terms of value added per person employed and in terms of value added per hour worked by nearly \$9, but in recent years

workers in Japan have been rapidly closing the gap."

A similar situation prevails vis-a-vis the US's largest trading partner, Canada, where labour productivity is increasing at a faster rate in terms of value added per hour worked (123.4 vs 120.3); however, in terms of value added per hour worked in 1997, US workers outproduce their Canadian counterparts by more than US\$5.

According to Johnson, "the productivity race is like a never-ending marathon in which the US worker today remains ahead of the pack, but a significant number of competitors – notably Japan, the Republic of Korea and the major European countries – are picking up speed with the US in their sights."

The KILM shows that on average, labour productivity growth in western Europe has been increasing at a faster rate than in the US (22 percentage points). Asia (excluding Japan) has shown a significantly better catch-up performance relative to the advanced countries. Between 1980 and 1997, productivity growth in Asia was about 2 percentage points faster than for the advanced countries, and its productivity gap relative to the United States declined by almost 5 percentage points.

This suggests that the major competitive challenge to current US productivity dominance comes not only from a reviving Asian economy, but also

from the major European economies, in spite of the many different labour market strategies including reduced work schedules, being implemented in countries worldwide.

Among European countries, Ireland had by far the highest levels of labour productivity growth, which surged by 82 percentage points in the years between 1997-1980. The very high growth levels in Ireland are partly explained by the country's comparatively low level of labour productivity versus other European countries, but also by high educational achievements and fast economic growth rates in the country. Other European countries showing high growth in labour productivity include Finland (54 points), Sweden (39 points), Spain (38 points), Denmark (34 points) and Belgium and the UK (both at 33 points). French labour productivity grew by at about 30 points during the period, Germany's by 31 points.

The productivity challenge comes from both developed and developing areas of the world. Thailand saw its labour productivity growth soar between 1980 and 1997, with the value added per person employed rising by a whopping 241 percentage points. The measure, which basically divides a country's gross domestic product by the number of people employed in order to estimate the average output per worker, does not take account of all possible factors (such as access to technology and capital) but does provide a reliable indicator of worker efficiency in relation to overall economic growth.

On the basis of the value added per person measurement, the Philippines' productivity growth shrank from 100 in 1980 to 84 in 1995. Indonesia's rose by 49 points between 1980 and 1995. Hong Kong, China grew by 91 points between 1980 and 1996. Taiwan, China grew by 120 points in the same period. Elsewhere in Asia since 1980, India was up 64 points in 1995,



Sri Lanka 58 in 1995.

Among developing regions, Latin America has shown very little productivity improvement over the past two decades, with the notable exception of Chile and Colombia which saw a more than 20 point increase in productivity between 1980 and 1996. On average, the Latin American experienced a slight decline in productivity between 1980 and 1996, with Brazil virtually unchanged since the 1980s.

Other key labour market trends

Worldwide employment shift from sectors that produce goods (agriculture and industry) to the services-producing sector. This shift is most pronounced in the developed countries and transition economies, and less dramatic in sub-Saharan Africa and some Asian countries. However, with few exceptions, the proportion of total employment engaged in agriculture is declining around the world and the services sector is responsible for at least half of total employment in industrialized countries.

The KILM shows that in 1996 and 1997, rates of unemployment were relatively high throughout much of the world, with nearly one-half of all countries studied showing unemployment rates in excess of 7%. Developed countries had high rates as well, with 14 out of the 29 countries rating in excess of 7%. For most countries for which data are available for this indicator, women have higher unemployment rates than men. The principal exception is sub-Saharan Africa, where

<i>Annual number of hours worked per person</i>								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Australia	1,869	1,858	1,850	1,874	1,879	1,876	1,867	1,866
Canada	1,737.6	1,717.2	1,714.1	1,718.4	1,734.7	1,737.2	1,732.4	
Japan	2,031	1,998	1,965	1,905	1,898	1,889		
United States	1,942.6	1,936	1,918.9	1,945.9	1,945.3	1,952.3	1,950.6	1,966
New Zealand	1,820.1	1,801.4	1,811.8	1,843.5	1,850.6	1,843.1	1,838	
France						1,638.4	1,666	1,656
Germany, Fed.Rep.	1,610	1,590	1,604.7	1,583.7	1,579.5	1,562.7	1,559.5	
Ireland	1,728	1,708	1,688	1,672	1,660	1,648	1,656	
Norway	1,432	1,427.3	1,436.9	1,434	1,431	1,414	1,407	1,399
Sweden						1,544.4	1,553.8	1,552
Switzerland		1,640	1,637	1,633	1,639	1,643	1,732	1,731
United Kingdom								
Denmark (Male)	1,644.5	1,620.15	1,669	1,660.55	1,688.85			
Netherlands (Male)	1,619.3	1,623.55	1,689.25	1,684.2	1,679.35			

men's unemployment exceeds that of women in most countries.

Worldwide wage trends were found to be diverse. Wages in major European countries have been increasing steadily, while they generally remained unchanged or dropped in Europe's transition economies. Similarly, wages in east Asia and Southeast Asia increased steadily before the economic crisis showed steady growth, while wages remained constant or declined in south-central Asia during the same period. Wages in Latin America were somewhat diverse, while they showed a steady downward trend in sub-Saharan Africa.

The urban informal sector represents

an integral part of many developing economies. Of 42 countries studied, 13 had rates of urban informal sector employment at greater than 50% of total employment. These include nine African countries (Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Tanzania and Uganda), three Latin American countries (Bolivia, Colombia and Peru) and one in Asian, Pakistan. The highest shares of urban informal sector activity (more than 70%) were recorded in Gambia, Ghana, Mali and Uganda.

It is well known that both poverty and inequality impact upon, and are affected by, the functioning of labour markets. The report shows nine countries were found to have poverty levels of 50% or more. They are Guinea-Bissau (88.2%), Zambia (84.6%), Madagascar (72.3%), Uganda (69.3%), Niger (61.5%), Senegal (54.0%), India (52.5%), Nepal (50.3%) and Kenya (50.2%).

John Doohan, ILO
Bureau of Public Information

* Key Indicators of the Labour Market 1999. International Labour Office, Geneva, 1999. ISBN 92-2-110833-3. The KILM is available in two formats – a standard print version and CD-ROM. Additional information about the KILM project and indicators is available on a special ILO web site (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/60empfor/polemp/kilm/kilm.htm>).

<i>Value added per person employed (in 1990 US\$)</i>								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Belgium	43,911	44,554	45,510	45,384	46,947	47,676	48,193	49,187
Denmark	34,543	35,351	35,404	36,778	38,804	39,119	39,780	40,214
Finland	33,287	32,518	33,760	35,512	37,481	38,518	39,199	39,722
Hong Kong, China	36,009	37,280	39,759	41,293	42,462	43,864	44,412	
Ireland	34,603	35,534	36,049	36,827	38,469	40,792	42,916	44,253
Japan	36,669	37,406	37,407	37,374	37,597	38,134	39,434	
Korea, Republic of	21,243	22,374	23,016	23,971	25,261	26,787	28,166	
Spain	36,782	37,538	38,618	39,924	41,203	41,245	40,997	41,138
Sweden	33,768	34,168	35,192	36,416	37,975	38,796	39,619	40,741
Taiwan, China	25,258	26,496	27,649	29,006	30,252	31,679	33,438	
United Kingdom	35,001	35,164	35,744	36,775	38,047	38,419	38,890	
United States	45,377	45,606	46,434	47,350	48,043	48,493	49,150	49,905

Decent work in the Americas

Latin American and Caribbean jobs: Outlook is grim despite decade-long reforms

Despite a decade of economic reform and modernization, unemployment in Latin America and the Caribbean is rising fast and is expected to affect as many as 9.5% of the region's regular workforce this year. A new ILO report on Latin American/Caribbean labour markets explains.

LIMA— The report, *Decent Work and Protection for All: Priority of the Americas**, by ILO Director-General Juan Somavia, says that reforms and modernization succeeded in taming rampant inflation and prompted a return to growth and investment throughout much of the region.

However, the jobless rate of Latin American and Caribbean economies rose steadily in the 1990s and job insecurity increased as the modern sector of the economy virtually ceased to generate employment.

The bottom line, says the ILO report: "Economic growth and price stability have not produced a significant improvement of the employment situation or of wages."

"The outlook for 1999 is not encouraging," the report notes, forecasting a negative growth rate in the region of around -0.4% this year. "The less dynamic world economy will thwart growth in the region even further."

The ILO report, which provides an extensive overview of Latin America's labour market and economy this decade, was prepared for the **Fourteenth Regional Meeting of the ILO, American member States** held in Lima, Peru, August 24-27, 1999.

Stagnation in modern, organized sectors

Throughout the past decade, employment growth in modern, organized sectors has been generally stagnant, with upwards of 85% of all new jobs being created in the informal sector – micro-enterprises, farming and small-scale services, where wages, productivity and levels of social protection are generally much lower than in the formal sector. Temporary and part-time work has increased.



ILO/Jacques Maillard

Throughout the past decade, employment growth in modern, organized sectors has been generally stagnant.

"In 1998, nearly all new jobs were created in the informal sector, where employment expanded by 4.6% per year," the report says. "Unfortunately, workers in this sector are almost

never protected by any laws, nor are they usually able to join recognized unions that would protect their interests."

Women and younger workers have been especially hard-hit by these trends. Youth unemployment rates are usually double the national average and triple for workers between ages of 15 and 19. Women's unemployment rates are between 10% and 60% higher than men's rates.

For example, 1998 figures in Venezuela showed 9.7% of men unemployed, versus 14.1% of women; in Panama, 12.4% of men versus 20.1% of women; in Colombia, 12.8% of men versus 19.5% of women; and Peru, 5.5% of men versus 11.2% of women.

While overall poverty levels remained constant or decreased in most countries due to lower inflation and higher output growth, impoverished families continue to suffer disproportionately from the paucity of income opportunities and growing deterioration in the quality of employment.

The report expresses "growing concern" about **child labour**, which affects roughly 15-19% of children in the region between the ages of 10 and 14 and its potential to "perpetuate indigence" if left unchecked.

The ILO Director-General said the results of the 1990s in Latin America reveal "tremendous strides in modernizing economies, while maintaining steady growth and overcoming inflation." However, the downside has been "the cycle of low wages, decreased employ-

ment and social security and weaker labour-market institutions.”

Mr. Somavia insisted that “in an open international economic system, the struggle for macroeconomic stability and increased productivity was necessary and inevitable, but the burden of adjustment has been heavily borne by the workforce. The modernization of the economy is coming about as a result of casualization of labour relations, with often disastrous social consequences for workers.”

The priority today, he argued, has to be the provision of decent work and social protection, which are “the greatest guarantors of social progress and the best means of consolidating the gains of the past decade.”

In view of the slowdown in the global and regional economies, Mr. Somavia said that the region’s burgeoning labour market problems require urgent action, “notably by improving the skills, working conditions and income prospects of millions of men and women who are today unemployed or underemployed via improved training and strengthened institutions for social dialogue, which should be a natural outgrowth of democracy.”

“Broadening opportunities for decent work for men and women are what people are asking for and, what is more, it is what our countries must have if we are to build stable societies for the future,” the report says.

Relative wage reductions and productivity declines

In addition to slower growth in the global economy, other factors fuelling



ILO/Jacques Maillard

Workers in this sector are almost never protected by any laws, nor are they usually able to join recognized unions that would protect their interests.

the region’s labour-market woes derive from slow productivity growth and modest wage gains.

The ILO report indicates that workers in employment have made little gain in real income during the 1990s. Although industrial wages have risen in real terms by 2.7% annually throughout the decade, the average wage is only slightly higher than in 1980.

The purchasing power of minimum wages fared much worse. Although increasing on average 0.8% per year during the 1990s, the present average minimum wage in Latin America stands 27% lower than at the beginning of the 1980s.

Real minimum wages fell 7.2% in Uruguay between 1990 and 1997, 4.6% in Mexico, 4.5% in Venezuela, 4.1% in Guatemala and 3% in Venezuela. Over the same period, real minimum wages rose 10.4% in Bolivia, 9.9% in Argentina

and 5.9% in Ecuador.

Workers in the informal sector also suffered a decrease in the purchasing power of their incomes during the 1990s, the report finds. This decline resulted from the fact that the surge in informal employment was not accompanied by a proportionately higher demand for the goods or services produced. Thus, the average income of informal workers shrank by 1% annually during the 1990-1998 period.

The ILO report says. “This continuous drop has important implications, as most new jobs were concentrated in the informal sector. It is estimated that 59% of non-agricultural jobs in the region are concentrated in the informal sector.”

The absence of internal sources of demand, due partly to low wages and scarce jobs, was not offset by relative gains in international competitiveness. Although labour costs, calculated in US dollars, dropped in several countries as a result of currency devaluations, the competitive gains yielded were much smaller than those registered in the south-east Asian countries. “The highest competitive gains were registered in Colombia (11%), while in Southeast Asia the gains fluctuated between a minimum of 20% in Thailand and 60% in Malaysia.” In other large Latin American economies, relative competitive gains were 3.7% in Argentina, 4.3% in Brazil and 6% in Colombia.

Productivity improvements overall were only 0.4% annually, indicating that most of the jobs generated during the period were of lower quality. “On the one hand, this spikes the possibilities of countries to better competitiveness and on the other constitutes a barrier for quick recovery of workers’ real wages, a prerequisite to improving the distribution of income and reduce poverty,” the report notes.

Uncertain results of restructuring

While these trends apply to some extent to all countries in the region, there are important variations among them. The report cites “a small group of countries which made significant strides in productive restructuring” yielding positive consequences for the labour market versus “a large number of countries which had



ILO/V. Bastian-OLMI

While overall poverty levels remained constant or decreased in most countries due to lower inflation and higher output growth, impoverished families continue to suffer disproportionately from the paucity of income opportunities and growing deterioration in the quality of employment.

to impose new macroeconomic adjustments to respond to accrued imbalances and vulnerability created by short-term capital flows."

The most successful experiences in the field of labour pertain to the group of countries with the most lengthy reforms (Chile, Bolivia and Costa Rica) and to one country with recent reforms (Colombia). In all these countries, the ILO report notes "unemployment shrank, wages improved, informality hardly expanded or remained unchanged and productivity, except in Bolivia, augmented."

In all these countries economic growth was high and sustained – between 3% to 7% – resulting in a solid process of job generation. Although the growth was, to a great extent, due to the participation of the private modern sector, it was also due to the dwindling of unemployment, the report notes.

In other countries (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela) where reforms were initiated more recently, "unemployment, informality and job precariousness increased." In all these countries, except Venezuela, industrial wages and minimum wages recovered due to success in curtailing inflation. However, they all suffered losses in modern employment as a consequence of drastic reductions in public employment and limited contribution from the large and medium-sized enterprises in generating employment.

Privatization has had a significant impact on the structure and quality of employment in Latin America. Public employment as a percentage of total employ-

ment dropped from 15.5% in 1990 to 12.9% in 1998. Modern enterprises in the private sector did not fill the void left by the State in its previous role as employer of the first resort, and private enterprises, the report says, "opted to reduce employment and change the types of work contracts in an attempt to sustain competitiveness."

As a result "the modern private sector decreased its participation in total employment from 32% in 1990 to 28% in 1998 and only generated 11 out of 100 new job positions during the period." The increase in informal activities "was the upshot of a displacement of modern jobs to the informal sector."

The report suggests that further Latin American reforms need to shift further away from the previous emphasis on "stable but static" employment levels and towards the promotion of employability and worker protection.

"However, the reforms that are taking place are not extending protection to all workers, and indeed in some cases are actually reducing it," Mr. Somavia says. "Many workers in the informal sector and many poor rural workers are still denied the benefits of social protection."

The report highlights "four strategic objectives" that will define the basic thrust of the ILO's activities in the coming years. These are: promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work, employment protection, social protection and social dialogue.

"Each of these objectives must take into account the dimensions of development and gender," the report says.



ILO/Jacques Maillard

The goals that the ILO supports for Latin America include new training systems to improve productivity and competitiveness.

"Gender and development concerns are inextricably linked: the promotion of gender equality is essential if we are to build a fair society and is a crucial element in development. These are of particular importance in Latin America and the Caribbean, given that most countries in the region are developing countries and women have played a key role in the development of survival strategies in times of crisis."

The goals that the ILO supports for Latin America include:

- New training systems to improve productivity and competitiveness;

- Labour legislation reforms, together with increased ratifications of international labour standards;

- Changes in the protection of workers, including a rigorous evaluation of the effects of reform on labour legislation and social security;

- Renewed emphasis of the labour administration and the role of the labour ministries.

Among the proposals for administrative and legislative change, the ILO report points to harmonizing labour legislation of the countries, especially with reference to labour migration; regulation of labour relations through collective bargaining at different levels; modernizing the informal sector and ensuring that labour standards are applied; designing new training and employment policies and encouraging the participation of the private sector; promoting social dialogue and strengthening of the social actor organizations; extending social protection; and finally, developing a new culture of supervision for the application of labour standards. □

MIXED RESULTS

Among the other findings of the 149-page report are:

- Inflation dropped to an average of 10.2% yearly in 1998 as compared to 550% registered during the 1990-93 period;

- Population growth slowed, from 2% per year in the 1980s to 1.8% this decade, causing a decrease in the Latin American labour force growth rate from 3.8% during the 1980s to 3.1% up to 1998;

- The unemployment rate in the formal sector averaged about 6% from 1990 through 1993, when it began to slowly rise, increasing to 7.7% by 1996 and rising to 8% in 1998;

- Rural-to-urban migration continued strongly, as increasing numbers of rural poor flock to towns and cities: 76% of the labour force lived in urban areas by the end of 1998, up from 66% in 1980 and urban unemployment rates are growing;

- Workers' buying power in Latin America also fell dramatically during the past decade, dropping to 27% below what a salary bought in 1980 for minimum wage earners;

- Overall employment in Latin America increased on average 2.9% between 1990 and 1998, a rate this was not sufficient to absorb the annual 3.1% expansion of the labour force.

*Decent Work and Protection for All: Priority of the Americas. Report of the Director-General, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1999. ISBN 92-2-111564-X. The text is available on the Internet:

<http://www.oitamericas99.org.pe/english/agenda/textadop/report/index.shtml>

The Chacabuco story

From brick works to gardens: How one Latin American town helped the children of the kilns

The elimination of child labour at the brick works of Chacabuco seemed an impossible dream for many of its 44,000 inhabitants. For others, it seemed not to make much sense: What could a child learn about life in a school, they asked? Today, however, hardly any children work the brick kilns of this Argentine town. Fernando Laborda, Argentine journalist, explains how the children of Chacabuco found a new life in the town where the kiln was king.

CHACABUCO, Argentina – Oscar Molina has been baking bricks here all his life, and so, basically, has his 13-year-old son. It is not exploitation that drives families to send their children to work along side parents at the brick kilns in this Argentine town: until recently, it was seen as a necessity.

For many of the residents of this town 220 kilometres northeast of Buenos Aires, there has never been an alternative to baking bricks. Over some four generations, thousands of people here have relied on brick kilns for their livelihood, many knowing no other occupation.

Every day, they work the kilns, often located right beside their precarious homes. Men and women toil side-by-side with children – suffering back injuries and serious burns and inhaling the thick smoke and dust.

“Many of these parents had grandparents who baked bricks and they have been doing this work since they were very young”, noted Fernando Pérez, a local NGO official. “The tradition of brick baking was very strong. For these families the main thing was that their children knew how to add and subtract. The rest they could learn at work.”

Yet today, Gabriel Molina is learning at school instead of at the kiln and is growing vegetables and fruit instead of baking bricks.

“We hope soon to begin sowing tomatoes and peppers”, Oscar says proudly of his son, one of the first children to leave the brick kilns and return to school following the implementation of a programme to combat child labour.

Attaining the unattainable

For many, eliminating child labour in the kilns was an unattainable dream. People believed schooling was unnecessary since children could not learn at school



INTERVIEW WITH JULIÁN DOMÍNGUEZ, MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF CHACABUCO

– How would you describe the results achieved since the implementation of the programme to eliminate child labour in the brick kilns?

When I became mayor of Chacabuco, we conducted a survey of the district together with social workers and NGOs, in order to give us a general picture and to identify social problems. We noticed that children working in the brick kilns constituted a risk sector and to counter this we sought cooperation with NGOs and found with the ILO and the DCI the possibility of setting up a programme targeting children at high risk of leaving school for that type of work. The programme involved 12 schools and 100 children benefitted directly from it, while a further 800 children benefitted indirectly, these being the younger siblings or schoolmates of the children who had been working at the brick-works. This is a very important aspect, given that children who abandon school tend to infect those around

them with the same idea. The programme included scholarships and training workshops, and we are currently involved in the final stage which is the development of horticultural projects with three families who used to make bricks for a living. These three families have greenhouses and receive technical assistance, tools and seeds. From the point of view of results, the programme has kept 100 per cent of the children in the risk category at school.

– What was the key to the programme's success?

The key was the development of a social management model, seeking strategies targeting different sectors of the population, with the support of organizations outside the provincial administration. The involvement of the tertiary sector in the implementation of social policies has led to Chacabuco today being the city in the Province of Buenos Aires with the lowest child mortality rate. Collaboration with NGOs allowed us to build a social network

to prevent problems which we would not have been able to contain under a patronage system. It enabled us to improve the situation of the most vulnerable sectors and to develop programmes to monitor and audit all social programmes.

– Can social programmes develop successfully without extensive financial resources?

Money is an important factor but it is certainly not the only one. Where it is lacking, cooperation between the State and NGOs allows idle human resources, which seem unimaginable from the perspective of a bureaucrat's office, to be mobilized. It is the tertiary sector which, in collaboration with the State, generates the concept of the community resolving its own problems. The State must oversee coordination and set the priorities to be achieved. To do so it requires scientifically precise analyses and must set aside any notion of favouritism.

the lessons they needed in life. And the effects on their health and development were not considered.

Now, some three years since the implementation of an action programme linking the local social partners with the ILO's *International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour* (IPEC), hardly any children work in the Chacabuco kilns.

Some have started school for the first time. Others have been trained in horticulture so they can grow fruits and vegetables for food, instead of earning their living by baking earth.

This achievement was possible due to the agreement between the Argentine section of the non-governmental organization *Defence for Children International* (DCI) and IPEC. The agreement led to the establishment of a local committee on child labour here, comprised of principals from rural schools, brick producers, representatives of neighbourhood associations, municipal representatives, and members of the Argentine section of the DCI.

A mayor plays a decisive role

The plan to remove children from the dangerous work in the kilns was the brainchild of Julián Domínguez, who as mayor of the municipality of Chacabuco,

was one of the instigators behind the establishment of the local committee.

"When I became mayor of Chacabuco, we conducted a survey of the district together with social workers and NGOs, in order to give us a general picture," he said. "We noticed that children working

IPEC IN LATIN AMERICA

The ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is a 90-nation partnership aimed at promoting alternatives to child labour. Of the more than 60 nations where IPEC manages programmes, 17 are in Latin America. The Programme serves to guide and support national initiatives in fundamental issues relating to the formulation of national policies and direct action programmes.

On 22 March 1995 the Spanish International Cooperation Agency

(AECI) and the International Labour Office signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the "International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour in Latin America", which has been fully operational since 1996 and will last five years.

In the case of Argentina and the experience described in this article, the project has been promoted and supervised by the ILO Regional Office and the ILO Area Office for Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.



Over some four generations, thousands of people here have relied on brick kilns for their livelihood, many knowing no other occupation.

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According to Rosana Chielli, head of the Council for Family and Human Development of Chacabuco – giving children of the poorest families access to school books and equipment they had not had before changed the attitude of their families towards schooling. At the same time, parents, teachers, kiln owners and others were informed about the situation of child workers and dangers to their health and normal development. To drive this point home, local media participated in an information campaign about the Committee’s work.

Little by little, the community began to understand what was going on. Once convinced that this tedious and uncreative work prevented children from developing normally and exposed them to severe physical risks, people began to view the employment of children in brick kilns negatively.

From bricks to books: The role of schools

One of the first tasks of the local committee involved identifying schools

with the highest rates of working children or where there was a high risk of children abandoning school to go to work. Through dialogue with the principals and with the help of social workers from the town’s *Council for Family and Human Development*, 30 children working in brick kilns were selected and were each awarded a direct scholarship.

“We tried to show the parents of children working in the brick kilns that life did not necessarily have to involve such work and that there were other alternatives, other much less dangerous occupations in which their children could be trained if they did not leave school”, said Ana Lía López, principal of School 17 of Chacabuco, situated in a semi-rural area where brick works abound.

The scholarship consisted of teaching materials, school equipment and other basic items to facilitate and encourage school attendance, such as overalls and espadrille, travelling expenses for scholarship holders most likely to abandon school, activities to promote recreational and cultural integration, and basic training courses in occupations such as electrician, mechanics, horticulture and cooking.

During its first phase (1996-97) the programme also benefitted a further 130 children who worked in the brick kilns on a sporadic basis and who in all likelihood would take up the work in the

future given that it was the activity that sustained their families. Activities for this group focused on prevention and training in a variety of occupations.

During the following two years (1998-99) 100 children benefitted directly, while about 600 children in vulnerable circumstances also benefitted more indirectly.

After the kilns, gardens

With the support of the municipal authorities, three micro-enterprises were financed for families who had until then made bricks for a living. After the children had been trained in horticulture, the three families were given help to set up greenhouses beside their homes which would allow them to grow garden produce.

“Strangely enough, it is the opposite of what they used to do, given that brick kilns actually destroy the earth”, observed Rosana Chielli.

Child labour almost eradicated

Almost three years after the Local Committee was set up, child labour in the Chacabuco brick kilns has been virtually entirely eradicated. The experiences of the children who returned to school influenced their schoolmates and, according to the principals of the rural schools, the percentage of children finishing basic general education and wanting to go on to secondary studies has risen from 40 per cent to almost 90 per cent in the last year.

The success achieved has encouraged DCI representatives to propose similar programmes in other Argentine towns where child labour is concentrated. For example, in Necochea, where many children work collecting residual grain that falls from trucks at the port of Quequén; in Chascomús, where about 100 children carry out manual milking; and in Río Negro, in the south, where over 100 children look after animals. □

More than making ends meet...

Microcredit in West Africa: How small loans make a big impact on poverty

Over the past few years several microcredit or local savings schemes similar to those of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh have been developed in West Africa. These small financial initiatives have helped mightily to provide new opportunities for impoverished street sellers, embroiderers, mechanics, restaurateurs, artisans, agricultural workers, small entrepreneurs and others in both rural and urban areas. Journalist Bernard E. Gbézo examined how these microfinancing schemes are working in the region and what role the ILO has played in their development.

DAKAR – For a young rural girl without income, education, training or future prospects in her village, becoming a domestic servant in a city or town was the only way to augment her family's income, assure her own future, and sometimes, escape the harsh realities of rural life.

This prospect—of an income and a future—attracted Salima to Dakar 15 years ago. The attraction, however, proved to be a mirage. At the age of 35, she was abandoned by her husband and left alone with four children. Without resources, she moved to a shanty town a few kilometres from the capital, where for many years she sold fish on a commission basis.

In 1993, Salima joined a women's aid association and heard of the programme to support small businesses of Gand-Yoff, near Dakar. She wanted to create her own self-sustaining activity, a fish shop at the market. With the help of a local NGO, she obtained a loan of 75,000 CFA (US\$ 138), reimbursable over one year. At the end of three years, she had managed to set aside enough profit to hire two other women to help with the extra work generated by the expansion of her business.

Today, Salima has decent housing, can feed her family, and even send her children to school. "I have regained my dignity as a woman and a mother," says



Jacques Maillard

Salima. "Without the faith shown in me by members of my association and the women's savings and credit scheme of Gand-Yoff, I would never have had the courage to set up a business."

The story of Salima is not unique. She is one of some eight million persons in the world who have turned to very small loans to help them crawl out from under the yoke of poverty and rise above their state of powerlessness and vulnerability.

A tool for economic and social freedom

Microfinancing, or microcredit, is simply a way for the most insolvent populations to get a helping hand by obtaining small sums of money, short-term loans at a rate of interest far below the prevailing rate. In the beginning, the first loans sanctioned were less than US\$ 30. Today, they range from US\$ 100 to US\$ 500 and are meant mainly to create the kinds of jobs that can keep households severely hit by the economic crisis afloat.

But beyond the simple financial aspect, microcredit programmes also have an impact on local development. They affect different sectors, such as agriculture (village groups, farmers' co-operatives, professional agriculture organizations), crafts (craft



Microcredit projects specifically target rural women, young entrepreneurs...

groups and women's craft associations), financing of social economy (savings and credit schemes, village banks), social protection (health societies, primary health centers). In this way, they contribute to improved access to basic social, health and family planning services and to drinking water.

Another feature of this movement is that it relies on insurance and traditional solidarity networks which are relatively effective and encourage the regular reimbursement of loans. The setting up of these programmes also provides the opportunity to undertake training activities, in particular in community development and enterprise management.

The challenges of institutes for microfinancing (MIFs)

Microfinancing has become increasingly popular, principally with women, who have generally been ignored by commercial banks. These MIFs have revolutionized classical banking methods. By adopting innovative operational principles such as solidarity guarantees and group credit, and due to their proximity to the beneficiaries, they have shown that not only are these persons capable of managing viable microenterprises, but are also in a position to tolerate prevailing market interest rates, on condition that this gives them access to economically profitable activities.

The 98% reimbursement rate being seen in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere shows that loans to the most deprived are not only a way of rescuing people from poverty, but also stimulating economic development and lightening the responsibilities

of states which very often would have to provide for them otherwise.

Among the most such successful initiatives are the Network of People's Savings in Burkina Faso, the *Kafo Jiginew* (Granary Union) Network in Mali, and the Alliance of Credit and Savings for Production (ACEP) in Senegal.

For several years already, the majority of international financial institutions have been paying special attention to this new instrument of aid to development. A "Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest" was created by several multi- and bilateral agencies interested in microfinance. Its secretariat is housed at the World Bank and the ILO is on the Executive Committee. It has enabled many decision-makers to realize the effectiveness of this sector. And the 1997 Micro Credit Summit in Washington was a significant turning point in bringing about awareness of the important effects resulting from microfinance activities. The challenge is to reach out to more than 100 million families from now to the year 2005.

To attain such objectives, many NGOs are now setting up as veritable microfinancing institutions able to realize the resulting benefits so as to be economically viable and thus a paying proposition. This economic logic is essential for them, since it means increasing their capacity to intervene quickly and to become more credible in the eyes of their financial partners.

It should be noted, however, that a balance needs to be struck, because too much emphasis on profitability would drive away those who originally needed help, for example if a very strict selection of potential borrowers is made. On the

other hand, a strictly social vision could bring them to apply interest rates which are too low, or to be overly liberal by allocating loans, placing their continued existence in danger.

In the opinion of the experts, organizations working in this sector should strengthen their effectiveness and means of action, and they should be encouraged to link up with larger official institutions. The AMINA programme, started in 1997 by the African Development Fund (ADF) should be placed in this perspective.

AMINA proposes a range of services which aim to strengthen the capacity of the different actors concerned (NGOs, mutual savings institutions, village banks), to offer durable financial services to micro-entrepreneurs and other disadvantaged groups. In particular, this support should include the setting up of training activities in financial analysis, portfolio management, follow-up of loan operations, and the development of a computerized information system.

Another important objective for this programme is the development of an appropriate and transparent regulatory framework, creating a favourable environment for offering microfinance services. As to the criteria used to determine the execution of programme activities, it should be noted that the programme concerns member countries of ADF which have the highest levels of poverty, where very active microfinance institutions and decentralized decision-making structures exist, enabling a participative approach to poverty reduction.

At the government level, it should be emphasized that the authorities also supply essential support; for example, the creation of development banks, guarantee

funds and measures to encourage commercial banks to finance small-scale economic operators. In 1996, the Government of Burkina Faso issued its first series of government bonds for 5 billion CFA (US\$10 million), the funds destined for local credit and savings associations, NGOs and other programmes administering rural microcredit centres.

Moreover, to reinforce its project for the support of rural microenterprises, the Government of Burkina Faso was awarded a loan of US\$12 million by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project specifically targets rural women, young entrepreneurs, impoverished peasants, artisans and business owners. It will provide about 3,000 persons with financial and technical assistance, which is indispensable in order for them to create or improve their businesses while remaining in the rural milieu.

The experience of the ILO

Employment promotion and the fight against exclusion are at the heart of ILO's priority activities. For many years, the ILO has undertaken programmes geared to help African governments establish economic policies leading to employment growth, the creation of small and microenterprises and, improved access to microcredit and its utilization. The effectiveness of the ACOPAM programme in the Sahel countries is exemplary. This programme has had an especially significant effect on women's employment and has enabled about 40,000 persons to create independent jobs, thanks to savings and credit cooperatives and cereal banks.

Using its extensive experience in this field, the ILO is currently implementing

a joint programme with the Central Bank of West African States. Financed by Germany, Norway and the Netherlands, PASMEC (a support programme for savings and credit cooperatives and societies) encourages the promotion of savings and credit associations and other MIFs in the subregion, to optimize access of disadvantaged populations to financial services.

Its distinct feature is to establish a bridge between financial authorities and initiatives operating generally outside of any regulatory framework, through information exchange, data collection (over 170 institutions are registered here, representing 2,280 local associations and more than 700,000 beneficiaries), training activities and turnkey advisory services.

ILO's social Finance Unit (SFU) manages the PASMEC and other programmes. It is the ILO's focal point on microfinance. It manages a portfolio of technical cooperation and research projects aimed at identifying and removing constraints in the access to credit, savings, insurance and other financial services. It also reviews financial policies from the point of view of their impact on employment and poverty. The PASMEC programme is the major activity of the SFU in West Africa.

The ILO also endeavours to promote equality among men and women through technical cooperation activities. In this context it is worth noting two programmes centred on promoting women's entrepreneurship:

● **The International Small Enterprise Programme (ISEP)** Launched in 1998, its objective is to encourage the growth of small and microenterprises –

which are barely surviving – in particular those managed by women, and

● **The International Programme on More and Better Jobs for Women (WOMEMP)** Launched in 1997, this programme is aimed not only at women entrepreneurs, but all working women. Its objective is to eliminate gender-based discrimination in employment and occupation, and at the same time to attempt to provide jobs for women which will eradicate poverty and lead to sustainable development.

Through all its interventions, the ILO shows not only its commitment to the development of entrepreneurship, but also that women constitute a large target group which must be pulled out of the spiral of economic and social exclusion as quickly as possible.

Globally, microcredit practices on the Continent seem to be showing positive results, in spite of some organizational and management setbacks here and there due to the amateurism of certain NGOs and local groups. The system in itself is not a cure-all for the microentrepreneur, who often has to face other constraints of an administrative, fiscal, commercial and human resources nature.

Moreover, microfinance cannot resolve all development problems. Over and above access to financial resources, there are social needs and vital problems which all the actors and the authorities must address through appropriate methods and machinery. □

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All photos: ILO, Jacques Maillard

...impoverished peasants, artisans and business owners.



“People have no idea of gender issues...”

Baltic blues: For women workers in Estonia, new jobs are lacking



ILO/Jacques Maillard

Before independence, women in Estonia were guaranteed full employment and equality in the workplace – on paper. Since then, however, the situation for women has changed. Gone are those guarantees, replaced by the harsh new realities of market economics. Now, both the government and the ILO are seeking new avenues for assuring equality among working women. Journalist Leyla Alyanak reports.

TALLINN, Estonia – As dawn breaks over the farm settlement where Liia, a 38-year-old teacher lives with her extended family in rural Estonia, the long working day begins before she leaves her home.

After making a fire in the stove to get warm water and boil potatoes for the pigs, she feeds the animals and milks her eight cows. Then she wakes up the rest of the family and serves them the breakfast she prepared the night before.

“My day starts at 4 a.m.,” she said in a recent interview. “I don’t eat in the morning. I have 10 minutes to get ready and get to work.”

In the evening, she corrects her students’ schoolwork assignments. Then, she repeats everything she did in the morning – and gets breakfast ready for the following day.

For most people, the effort involved in Liia’s struggle to combine the role of wife and mother with that of income-earner would be enough of a challenge. But these days, Liia faces yet another concern. Should she lose her job, she might have a hard time finding new work in a tough employment market where ads openly call for “young, slim women.” And no matter where she works, she may find herself in a decidedly inferior position – both in terms of status as well as income.

Since this tiny country of 1.4 million people regained its independence in 1991 – it was independent once before between the two World Wars – women have been hit hardest by the shrinking jobs market. As the workforce has withered from 800,000 to 600,000, more women than men are unemployed or under-

employed: 38.3% of women compared with 24.7% of men. Women tend to hold the lowest-paid jobs even when they are more skilled, earn less than men in most occupations, and often work in the low paid public sector rather than in private enterprise.

New freedoms, more complications

In the new transition economy, women’s lives have become more difficult. In addition to the demise of guaranteed employment for all, a shutdown of day-care centres and facilities for the elderly requires many women to spend more time than ever before at home caring for families, which in turn lowers not only their employability but also their household income.

Nowhere is the challenge more visible than in rural areas where the dismantling of collective farms has thrown thousands of women out of work. In Tuhala, a rural township some 25 kilometres from the capital Tallinn, Tiiu Soans has found a way to make ends meet: she turned her farm into a country hotel.

"It wasn't easy," she said. "Five years ago the situation was new and strange. All of a sudden we found we had to cope on our own, make our own choices and have responsibilities."

To help others like her understand the changes sweeping her country, Ms. Soans runs the Union of Estonian Rural Women which retrains women and shows them how to deal with the transition. She remains shocked at the gender disparities in her country. "Equality was formally declared, we heard it every day, in the press, on the radio. We all took it for granted that we were equal."

Unmasking paper guarantees

"In Soviet times we heard that word so often," said Reet Laja, a senior official of the Ministry of Social Affairs when asked about equality of women in the workplace. "Most women thought they had already achieved equality. They were shocked to find out they had not."

Indeed, in countries in transition where the realities of capitalism and market economics have begun to bite, women are finding that the once loudly trumpeted concept of equality for women in the workplace is no longer a given.

"One of the biggest setbacks for the countries in transition has been a marked increase in gender inequality in the political, economic and social spheres," says the UNDP's 1999 Human Development Report on transition economies. Indeed, across the former Soviet Union, women are finding that with economic and agrarian reform, it is often their jobs—rather than men's— that suffer or are eliminated first.

Estonia is far from unique. A recent World Bank study in Orel, some 300 kilometres south of Moscow, pinpoints some of the worst aspects of discrimination against rural women. Land redistributed under land reform is based on length of employment and wages—again, women stand to lose since they tend to earn less in their lifetime than men. And while women provide most of Russia's farm labour, the vast majority of private farms have been and remain in men's names.¹

One of the most glaring setbacks for women has been in the formal labour market. From lifetime employment to hand-to-mouth existence, women have watched grimly as promises of a stable future disintegrated into joblessness or underemployment.

In many former East bloc countries, salaries for women are lower than for equally qualified men. In Poland, university-educated men earn about 40% more, on average, per month than educated women. In Latvia, women employed full-time bring home 14-32% less than men. Not only do women make less for the same jobs, but they are concentrated in the lower-paid professions. In Croatia, women make up 70% of office workers and 55% of all low-skilled labour.²

Many of these countries have laws against gender discrimination in hiring but these are often unenforced. As countries slip towards economic inequity, traditional stereotypes begin to resurface. Says Grazina Gruzdiene of the Lithuanian Trade Union of Food Industry Employees, "High male unemployment is one fact among others, which is increasingly pushing women into the only role that society has deemed fit for women, as wife and mother."

Seeking more and better jobs

The return to traditional values is intensifying the challenge faced by Estonia's women.

"The general sentiment on gender issues remains patriarchal and conservative," said Riina Kutt, Estonia's National Coordinator for the ILO's *International Programme on More and Better Jobs for Women* set up in 1997 as a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development to reinforce ILO's long-standing commitment to gender equality at work. "In fact with the transition, there has been a re-emphasis on traditional gender roles."

Easing these inequalities and providing a way out for rural women is what the hopes to accomplish with a new pilot project in the southeastern Estonian county of Valga. Here, it plans to help Valga's most vulnerable women find ways to make money through self-employment.

"We picked Valga because it ranks second in unemployment in the country," said the ILO coordinator. "It is an agricultural area so there is much unemployment since state and collective

farms broke down. Lots of jobs for women were lost. They were economically disadvantaged and it has been very difficult for them to find new jobs. Some have high qualifications but there are few opportunities."

By identifying business opportunities for local women, the Valga county project will try to help them turn their ideas into income-generating realities, softening some of the worst blows of economic transition. One option is tourism, since this is Estonia's hilliest region and a magnet for visitors in both summer and winter.

Still, identifying viable opportunities remains a formidable task. At the same time, decades of predictability robbed many women of their ability to plan their futures and make their own choices.

"We have to learn everything..."

The government is not insensitive to the growing disparities between women and men and is trying to rectify the worst of them.

"When I started I wanted to establish a special unit for equality because there was nothing at the government level on gender issues," said Reet Laja of the Social Affairs Ministry. Few women would choose to turn back the clock but they now face a fight to reclaim in practice what they once had on paper. One daunting challenge is to convince the mostly male ruling class that there actually is a problem. Another is to roll back emerging "reactionary" attitudes which inevitably return in times of hardship.

Adds Ms. Laja of the Social Affairs Ministry: "An Equality Bureau was only established here in 1996. Before, there was no need for such a unit. Now you have to prove that inequalities exist because people have no idea of gender issues."

"Women are very educated in Estonia but we have a lack of free market experience," said Ms. Kutt. "We have very limited business traditions in Estonia, though some remain from the time between the wars. We have to learn everything."

For more information on the International Programme on More and Better Jobs for Women, see the programme's web site on www.ilo.org, or contact the ILO at +4122/799-8276, by fax at +4122/799-7657, or e-mail to womemp@ilo.org

¹ *Gender and Property Rights: Women and Agrarian Reform in Russia and Moldova*, World Bank Study, 1995.

² "Human Development Report for Europe and the CIS: Transition 1999," UNDP, pp. 66-76.

Essay: *The end of labour?*

From labour to work: The global challenge

By Guy Standing, ILO*

The century of the labouring man is coming to an end. It began with calls everywhere for the rights of labour, meaning both freedom from labour and improved conditions in jobs. For those of a radical disposition, the primary objective was freedom from labour, through drastically reducing working time or even overthrowing the labour relation altogether. For others, it meant steady reforms to secure rights within labour, or better working conditions for labourers.

In most places, the latter tendency prevailed. By the middle of the century, the main call had become the right to labour, meaning the right to have a job, captured in the term Full Employment. This was a convenient and sexist fiction, since it meant ensuring all ‘working class’ men had full-time wage labour. For the most part, women’s work was disregarded and their involvement in the labour market was seen as ‘secondary’.

With the spread of mass unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s, and with the ascendancy of the Chicago school of law and economics – an economic revolution equivalent to the Keynesian revolution of the late 1930s – the right to labour was gradually dropped. By the 1990s, the main message was that there was a *duty to labour*, epitomized by talk about ‘no rights without responsibilities’ and the ‘reciprocity principle’.

So, in a growing number of countries governments are introducing *tax credits* paid to ‘families’ if members are working for an income. And increasingly entitlement to state benefits is only ensured if you have laboured, and if you have done so for increasingly long periods, or if you are prepared to labour or undertake training in preparation for labour.

In the process, there has been a revival of the 19th century dichotomy of the *deserving* and *undeserving poor*. In short, by the end of the century, the emphasis

had shifted to the *duty to labour*, with reforms of welfare policy tying entitlement to state benefits to the obligation to take a job or undertake training. In this respect, an irony was that the duty was being extended to women with young children.

Yet this threefold shift – from rights of labour, through the right to labour to the duty to labour – is running up against powerful counter-trends. With globalization, technological changes and the shifting balance of bargaining strength of workers and employers, more flexible labour relations are spreading everywhere, while contrary to the expectations of 20th century policymakers employment is becoming increasingly informal. This is the case in industrialized and in developing countries. In many respects, more flexible and informal labour markets could be beneficial. But, what these changes have brought in their wake is an upsurge and global awareness of pervasive social and economic *insecurity*.

Is labour becoming a commodity?

For much of the century in many parts of the world, there were advances in seven forms of labour security, and there was an expectation that developing countries would follow in the same mould. Essentially, two labour-based models competed for supremacy as development models – state socialism and welfare state capitalism. The former collapsed from its own deficiencies, in terms of authoritarianism, centralization, and lack of economic dynamism. Underlying the latter was a model of income distribution designed to reduce income inequality in the course of economic growth. The ILO caught the mood, when in its Philadelphia Declaration it asserted in a one-line paragraph, “Labour is not a

commodity.” The main post-1945 trend was what was called *labour decommodification*, meaning that the labour market was expected to become less like a market for lemons, and that the price mechanism should become peripheral, or in effect the money wage should become a smaller part of total income. In many countries, there was a shift in the form of *social income* from money wages to state benefits and other non-wage benefits. Employment was based on the payment of good wages and benefits, and was thus redistributive, backed by progressive taxes, and in the background the state acting as ‘employer of last resort’.

All this has gone into reverse in the last decades of the century, for reasons outlined in my book. There is *labour recommodification*. Yet the counter-trends arise because more people everywhere are finding it necessary or desirable – depending on their opportunities or competencies – to combine several work activities, to move in and out of employment, to indulge in their work-based enthusiasms, and to define themselves in ways not easily captured by the labour statistics that have measured economic activity in the 20th century.

The counter-trends of flexibility and informalization are making it more ridiculous to measure work as labour in the sense used during the 20th century. For instance, the work of *caring* for others has been legitimized as work, and some countries have introduced national insurance for care or have moved to provide income compensation for carers. For too long, most of those people providing care to relatives or to others in their communities have not been regarded as working. In the future, they will be. Similarly, most of those involved in the hundreds of thousands of non-governmental civic organizations on a voluntary basis have tended to slip through the labour statis-

ticians net. And most of those doing 'informal' work activity on an own-account basis or on some handshake basis have escaped as well.

During the century of labouring *man*, there has been a distorting ambiguity about the notion of 'labour'. The trouble began with the fact that labour means three things. For most economists, it means a 'factor of production', expended in combination with 'capital'. For many ordinary people, labour means the activity of working. And in popular imagery, labour also means workers or the 'working class'. A consequence of this treble meaning is that often political and learned discussion is conducted at cross purposes, and reality is distorted.

It does not take a genius to recognize that there is much more work going on than meets the eye. Yet the focus on official employment (labour) statistics and formal "jobs" leads numerous sages to fret over high unemployment, "jobless growth", and so on. Of course, unemployment is important. However, what is far more important is the poverty and lack of income security among an increasingly large number of people who are working. More and more people in jobs cannot expect to receive an income on which they can live in decency. It is also clear that the income from capital has been growing enormously for many years, absolutely and relative to the income from labour. To compound the growth of functional income inequality, governments have been cutting taxes on capital, and have been cutting subsidies for labour while increasing subsidies for capital.

Globally, there has been a growth of seven forms of socio-economic insecurity – labour market, employment, job, skill, work (health and safety), income and representation insecurity. Together, these trends mark a new era of personal insecurity for numerous millions of men and women. There are several "labourist options" for rectifying these adverse trends – notably welfare reforms such as "workfare", employment and wage subsidies, minimum wages, and selective "social safety nets." These make up part of the "new paternalism" that has been so influential in the 1990s, which has worrying longer-term implications for socio-economic security and the pursuit of occupation.



Economically just societies in the 21st century will require a shift away from labour to work, policies to ensure basic income security and new forms of representation security, and new democratic means of redistributing income and wealth so that all groups in society can benefit from the dynamics of the modern economic system.

Only if people have effective voice, adequate income security and access to the surplus generated by economic growth will they be able to make rational choices about their working lives.

The fundamental tenet that guided the ILO throughout the 20th century is the vital need for collective *voice regulation* of economic and social affairs. Without organizations, institutions and regulations that guarantee an effective voice for the vulnerable and insecure, will any scheme for transferring income to those sections of society be sustainable? In this era of cyberspace, the Internet and distance communication, there may appear to be an historical lull in the appreciation for collective voice and action. Yet without

it, the forward march of distributive justice will not resume. And history teaches us that the march will go on.

Only if people have effective voice, adequate income security and access to the surplus generated by economic growth will they be able to make rational choices about their working lives. Without a guarantee of a modest income from society, as a human right set at a level according to the capacity of that society, ordinary people will be exposed to the insecurity that gives rise to intolerance, anomic behaviour and the chilling willingness to follow extremists peddling their potions of social poison. It is this huge lesson of the 20th century that makes it essential that world leaders give the extension of socio-economic security a very high priority in the early part of the 21st century. It is why the ILO is launching, in the 2000-2001 biennium, an InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security.

In the light of a shift from labour to work – decent work, as expressed in the Director General's report of June 1999 – the international community needs to think afresh about the so-called *right to work*. This should not mean the right or duty to labour. It can only be meaningful if there is a right to refuse despicable forms of onerous labour, jobs that 'deskill', and 'makework' schemes. It can only be meaningful if policies and institutions are moving in the direction of enabling everybody in society to have a right to *occupation*, to have an opportunity to develop and realize their competencies, and to define themselves through their work with a sense of dignity and pride. This in turn means finding ways of enabling people in *all* walks of life to have more autonomy, more *self-control*, so that they can pursue their own sense of occupation. This may seem almost utopian at the end of the century of labouring man, but it beckons as a great theme of the coming century, which must be made the century of decent work, when basic security becomes the right of every man, woman and child. □

*This article is based on *Global Labour Flexibility: Seeking Distributive Justice* (Basingstoke and New York, Macmillan and St.Martin's Press, 1999). Just published by Guy Standing, Director of the ILO's InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security.

Working World

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

● After a two-day general strike, the Government of **Colombia** and the trade unions reached an agreement on 2 September that paves the way for negotiations on the austerity programme in the year 2000 budget and the freeing of union members arrested during confrontations with the police during the strike. (*Le Temps*, 1 Sept., *CISL on line*, 2 Sept).

● Unions in **Burkina Faso** launched a 48-hour general strike in June to protest a decrease in buying power. In addition, the strikers also demanded respect of democratic liberties, in particular in the area of freedom of association and purging of public management. (*CISL on line*, 29 June).

● **Senegal** experienced its first general strike in seven years in June. Eight trade unions called for an increase in salaries and family allocations, the creation of a national sickness insurance fund, retirement at age 60 and a reduction of taxes. The government and five trade unions agreed to increase salaries and family allocations in the private sector, as well as create an insurance fund. (*CISL on line*, 29 June)

NEGOTIATIONS

● In the **United States**, General Motors surprised everyone during the course of negotiations concerning the renewal of the Agreement linking the Big Three (GM, Chrysler

A regular review of trends and developments in the world of work

LANE KIRKLAND DIES



Keystone

● Lane Kirkland, former President of the American national center, the AFL-CIO, died on 14 August at the age of 77. Mr. Kirkland was well-known on the international scene, noted Mr. Bill Jordan, General Secretary of the ICFTU. "Kirkland helped shape the history of this century through his

unstinting support for freedom of association in Poland, giving strong backing to Solidarnosc (Poland's 1980s independent trade union organization) before, during and after martial law, the fight to bring down apartheid in South Africa, and the struggle against the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile". With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Lane Kirkland called attention to the dangers of that dogma and compared it with totalitarian communism, saying "Both have something in common. Both can be lethal to the institutions of civil society that make life tolerable to ordinary people." (*Washington Post*, 31 August; *CISL on line*, 16 August).

CONTROVERSIES

● The manufacturer of Michelin tyres provoked the outrage of unions and the political leaders in **France** when it announced a 17% rise in profits and the simultaneous layoff of 7,500 persons in Europe over a three-year period.

Announcement that Michelin would shed 10% of its total workforce sent the company's stocks soaring by 12%. Many observers note that the simultaneous announcement of both these pieces of news was pre-planned and geared towards this result. (*Libération*, 10 Sept.)

● In the **United Kingdom**, the method to measure unemployment remains a controversial subject between the government and the opposition, the latter accusing the other of striking off 200,000 persons from the number of unemployed; anyone working at least one hour during the reference period was being counted as employed. (*UK News*, 19 June).

INDEPENDENT WORK

● In a landmark full court ruling, the Federal Court in **Australia** has cleared the way for individual contractors and other non-employees to claim unfair termination as stipulated by the ILO Convention. This should apply to persons working for an enterprise with an independent status; i.e., linked to this enterprise not by a work contract but by an enterprise contract. (*AFR Net Services*, 6 Sept.)

● In the **United States**, some 33 million independent workers represent around a quarter of the workforce. A survey carried out by Boston-based Aquent shows that an independent worker is more satisfied with his work than an employee and is making more money. The survey was

and Ford) to the United Automobile Workers Union (UAW), by offering lifetime employment guarantees for many current workers. This in return would offer greater flexibility in work organization and easier layoffs. (*Washington Post*, 6 Sept.; *Libération*, 10 Sept.)

ASIA'S ECONOMIC REVIVAL?

● Are Asia's economies reviving from two years of being on the financial brink? Personal computer sales seem to indicate so. For the first quarter of 1999 personal computer sales rose as follows:

Country	Number	Evolution 1998/1999
Indonesia	35,000	67%
Philippines	43,000	10%
Malaysia	93,000	4%
Thailand	55,000	31%
Singapore	106,000	29%
Hong Kong	107,000	8%
Taiwan (China)	195,000	28%
Korea	424,000	51%
China	1,020,000	22%

(L'Usine nouvelle, 2-8 Sept.)



ILO/Jacques Maillard

carried out among 1,006 persons, of which 300 were independent workers, and does not show any significant difference between the two groups in terms of family situation, gender or race. Independent workers, however, seem to be older, better paid and more conservative than the employees. (*The Journal of Commerce online*, 7 Sept.).

INEQUALITIES

● Inequality in professions between men and women still remains high in **France**, according to a report requested by the Prime Minister. The average difference in salary is 27%, women represent only

7% of managers in the 5,000 top companies of the country. 60% are clustered in about 30% of the professions, and they represent two-thirds of 20% of the least-remunerated jobs and one-third of 20% of the best-paid jobs. (*Le Monde*, 3 Sept.)

● The gap between the rich and poor is widening in the **United States**, according to a study of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Between 1977 and 1999, household incomes of the richest (1% of the whole) have risen by 115%, those of the poorest (60%) by less than 8% and those in the middle categories (39%) by 14% to 43%. The ratio be-

tween the incomes of a CEO and an industry worker has risen from 42 in 1980 to 419 in 1998. (*Le Figaro*, 7 Sept.)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

● A national survey conducted in 1997 in **Mongolia** covering 14,000 workplaces and 191,000 workers revealed that 20% of them work in poor conditions that can damage their health and expose them to accidents. (*WHIN*, Jan.-June 1999).

● According to a study published by *The Lancet* in May 1999, 10% of occurrences of asthma, an ailment which affects one out of 20 adults, could be job-related. This is the result of a survey conducted by the Municipal Medical Research Institute of Barcelona among 15,637 persons in **12 industrialized countries**. The highest risk is in the following professions: agriculture, painting, plastics and cleaning. (*WHIN*, Jan.-June 1999).

● **Finland:** A survey carried out by the Finnish Trade Union SAK confirms research in other countries indicating that temporary or occasional

workers are more exposed to accidents than others. This study notes that the risk is higher by 30% in Finland, a number which reaches 50% in industry and 75% in the metals manufacturing sector. (*WHIN*, Jan.-June 1999). □



ILO/Jacques Maillard



ILO/Jacques Maillard



News in brief

AIDS in Africa

ILO launches campaign on HIV/AIDS in the world of work

PRETORIA – *HIV/AIDS is a human rights issue, a social issue, an economic issue, and, a general development issue in the region.* So reads the chief conclusion of a regional workshop on HIV/AIDS and its social and labour impact in Africa held here on 6-8 September. The meeting is the first in a new campaign being mounted by the ILO on HIV/AIDS in the world of work.

“The primary goal of the ILO – promotion of opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity – is threatened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic,” said the report of the meeting. “Within the world of work, HIV/AIDS has become a major

problem in pre-employment, terms and conditions of employment and post employment.”

The participants agreed that all four ILO Strategic Objectives approved by the 1999 International Labour Conference have a direct bearing on, and are also impacted by, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, adding “there is, therefore, the critical need for the ILO to take HIV/AIDS as part and parcel of its activities, particularly in the context of the African regional focus.”

The next step is a tripartite meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, scheduled for 13-15 October, which will seek a continent-wide platform of action on HIV/AIDS for Africa. (See box)

killing millions of people in Africa is, on its own, a direct threat to the development of many countries as human resources are at the centre of progress and development, technological, environmental, social, political and economic. HIV/AIDS is, thus, not just a health problem, it is also a development problem that threatens the social and economic growth of almost all Sub-Saharan African countries. HIV/AIDS is now considered to be the single most important impediment to social progress to many countries in Africa.

“HIV/AIDS is now considered to be the single most important impediment to social progress to many countries in Africa.”

– Pretoria report

CALL FOR AN “ACTION PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS”

The Pretoria meeting urged the ILO to develop an institutional policy on HIV/AIDS. An African regional Programme of Action should contribute towards the formulation of this policy. The components of the Programme of Action should include:

- capacity building and training on HIV/AIDS to ILO staff and constituents, including all activities at the ILO Turin Centre for Africa,
- understanding the knowledge base of the current situation and the corresponding responses on the existing activities,
- developing concrete activities for a sustainable development programme to mitigate effects of HIV/AIDS at the world of work, and
- identification of resources required to implement the programme.

HIV/AIDS in Africa

At the end of 1998 more than 33 million adults and children worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS, 22.5 million of whom were living in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, sub-Saharan Africa, with a population of less than 10 percent of the total world population, hosts two-thirds of the world’s HIV/AIDS infections. According to new data from UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, some 80 percent of the world’s total deaths from AIDS occur each year in Africa alone, with some 5,500 funerals being held each day. Overall, UNAIDS says that AIDS has killed over 11 million Africans since the start of the epidemic.

“HIV/AIDS has now become a human tragedy in Africa,” the Pretoria report said. “Its horrendous consequences affect the very social fabric of communities, productive populations, human resources development, equal treatment and human rights, gender relations, conditions of work, and occupational health and safety. The fact that HIV/AIDS is

The report said that the primary goal of the ILO – promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity – was being threatened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and noted that ILO constituents had “long called for ILO assistance on this issue.” During the 1994, Regional African Meeting, for example, they requested the ILO technical assistance to include activities to help governments, employers and workers’ organizations respond to the threat posed by the high incidence of HIV/AIDS infection. Several activities have taken place in response to this call. Recently, the Director-General was called upon in Windhoek, Namibia, to give ILO assistance to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

It was against this background that the ILO Regional Training and Sensitization

Workshop on "HIV/AIDS and its Social and Labour Impact in Africa" was organized by the Regional Office in collaboration with the Turin Centre, Headquarters and field offices in Africa, the report said.

Pretoria report calls for major new effort

In addition to concluding that HIV/AIDS had implications for human rights issue, as well as social and general development, the meeting also discussed creating an "enabling environment" for people living with HIV/AIDS involving governments, and employers' and workers' organizations. Participants declared that employers "should in particular be aware that progressive policies on HIV/AIDS, are good business investments in both the short and long run."

Participants also considered the aspects of gender and poverty in HIV/AIDS activities, discussing women's specific needs within the HIV/AIDS programme; the gender dimensions of poverty and the vulnerability of the poor to HIV/AIDS and; community-based strategies for gender sensitive HIV/AIDS programmes.

"Aside from the biological considerations which render women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, their role as custodians of family health and as caretakers of the young, the old and the ill, place them in a central position to contribute to AIDS prevention and as assistants to people living with HIV and AIDS," the report said. "HIV/AIDS afflict the poor more than any other segment of society and women and their dependent children constitute 70% of the poor in Africa. Moreover, in order to reach the majority of women labourers, programmes must have a strong base in the community."

The Pretoria group also noted that the ILO could provide assistance in the adoption of laws and regulations to protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS with regard to access to health insurance, employment, education as well as labour administration, productivity and the informal sector: that the ILO could assist its tripartite partners in developing and effectively implementing national and enterprise workplace policies on HIV/AIDS; that the ILO could provide tech-

AIDS IN AFRICA: THE NUMBERS

"Africa continues to dwarf the rest of the world on the AIDS balance sheet. According to UNAIDS and WHO estimates, 7 out of 10 people newly infected with HIV in 1998 live in sub-Saharan Africa; among children under 15, the proportion is 9 out of 10. Of all AIDS deaths since the epidemic started, 83 per cent have been in the region. At least 95 per cent of all AIDS orphans have been African. Yet only one-tenth of the world's population lives in Africa south of the Sahara."¹

Africans infected with HIV² since the start of the epidemic: 34 million

Africans living today and infected with HIV: 21.5 million

Africans who have died of AIDS: 11.5 million

Percentage of children among those deaths: 25

AIDS funerals per year in Africa: 2 million

Per day: 5,500

Africans newly infected with HIV in 1998: 4 million

¹ Source, "AIDS in Africa," Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Geneva, 1998

² HIV stands for the "human immunodeficiency virus," which causes AIDS

nical assistance specifically on HIV/AIDS to social security schemes and medical schemes; that the ILO could work with and advise specific industries, such as the insurance companies; and that the

ILO should, using its already established network and knowledge base, disseminate, replicate and adapt best practices with regard to HIV/AIDS prevention and caring.

DITA SARI RELEASED

JAKARTA – Dita Indah Sari, labour activist of the Democratic People's Party and chairwoman of the Centre for Indonesian Workers Struggle by the Indonesian authorities, was released from the women's penitentiary in Tangerang on Monday, 5 July. The Committee on Freedom of Association and Direct Contacts Mission of the ILO considered these charges unjustified and derived from legitimate trade union activities. The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association has repeatedly called for all criminal charges to be dropped and for Dita to be released. Dita Sari had been

held since 1997 on criminal charges relating to civil unrest and alleged subversion under the 1963 Subversion Law. ILO Director-General welcomed the release, saying he appreciated the efforts of Indonesian Minister of Manpower, Mr. Fahmi Idris, in securing her release. Iftikhar Ahmed, Director of ILO Jakarta Office (right), said the release of Dita constituted a major development with regard to freedom of association in Indonesia. Following the ratification of the three last core Conventions in June, Indonesia became the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to have ratified all seven of the fundamental human rights Conventions of the ILO (Freedom of association and collective bargaining (No. 87 and 98); Forced labour (No. 29 and 105); Non-discrimination (No. 100 and 111); and Minimum Age (No. 138.)).



ILO



AROUND THE CONTINENTS



**A regular review of the
International Labour
Organization and ILO-related
activities and events taking
place around the world.**

ONLINE CONFERENCE ON ORGANIZED LABOUR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

▲ Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO, and Bill Jordan, General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), will launch a debate in an online Conference “Organized Labour in the 21st Century”.

The Conference will be run by the ILO’s International Institute for Labour Studies in cooperation with the ICFTU, and will begin in mid September 1999. It focuses on the future of trade unions around the world, and is expected to run for approximately twelve months.

Guest speakers will be invited to act as “panel members”. The Conference, which is aimed at trade unionists and labour researchers, will be open, and those who have signed up before mid-September will have a chance to react and put questions to the keynote speakers by e-mail or over the Web.

Anyone wanting to participate can learn more by going to the International Institute for Labour Studies’ Website, where it is possible to sign up to participate in the Conference: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/130inst/research/network/index.htm>

For further information, you may also contact Mr A.V. Jose, International Institute for Labour Studies (INST), phone: +4122/799-8496; fax:

+4122/799-8542; e-mail: jose@ilo.org

ILO BALKAN ACTIVITIES AFTER THE KOSOVO CRISIS

▲ The conflict and subsequent destruction have created a massive unemployment and poverty problem in Kosovo. The ILO has developed a strategy aiming for reconciliation, reconstruction and economic development. A number of immediate response projects are ready to start: Labour-intensive work in city centres, infrastructure investment programmes, promoting access to financial services, capacity building for entrepreneurship development and for small contractors, setting up of an Integrated Employment Development and Training Centre, local economic development and creation of a network of Enterprise Development Agencies. Through these activities, ILO could support the process of reintegration of demobilized soldiers, for which ILO has been successful in the past in such countries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mozambique. Other special target groups of ILO activities would be the unemployed, especially women, and people injured by the war. Further mid-term response

activities will be proposed in the fields of labour market assessment and rapid data collection, social protection schemes and institutional capacity building, an appropriate labour law framework and the promotion of social dialogue, reconciliation and social healing.

For further information, please contact the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, phone: +4122/799-6666; fax: +4122/799-6061 or e-mail: europa@ilo.org

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF FINANCE

▲ The Asian Financial Crisis is a forceful demonstration of how deeply the financial sector affects employment, incomes and social cohesion. It is for

the ILO to work on the social dimension of finance. The Social Finance Unit, focal point for microfinance – banking for poverty alleviation, employment and social integration – works on financial sector issues relevant to the ILO. The Unit has now published its first annual report 1998 which gives a concise overview of on-going, completed and new work items: Action Programme on microfinance in the industrialized world, analytical work on debt bondage and on informal migrant remittances, advisory missions on microfinance to post-crisis countries (Bosnia, Croatia, Lebanon, Mozambique and Somalia) and the launch of a global programme to build and strengthen the capacity of NGOs and self-help organizations to manage guarantee funds.

For further information, please contact Bernd Balkenhol, Head of the Social Finance Unit, phone: +4122/799-6070; fax: +4122/799-7691; e-mail: balkenhol@ilo.org



MINIMIZE THE USE OF PESTICIDES

▲ Ever more intensive cultivation and narrow specialization of agricultural production have increased the importance of pest control in the



Agricultural workers getting ready to spray insecticide, Brazil.

tropics. The current situation concerning pesticides in Africa is unsatisfactory, according to the latest ILO/FINNIDA *African Newsletter on Occupational Health and Safety* (volume 9, number 1, April 1999).

Many countries do not have registration systems and lack proper information concerning the hazardous properties of imported products. Not knowing the risks or restrictions on the use of pesticides has already caused many cases of human illness and deaths, as well as adverse ecological effects. International financial support and the transfer of technologies to many countries in Africa are necessary in order to accelerate the development of programmes that minimize the risk of pesticides for both, human beings and the environment. Like its Asian counterpart, the African Newsletter provides a voice for safety and health

practitioners from all over the continent.

For further information, please contact the International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre (CIS), phone: +4122/799-6740; fax:

+41-22-799.8516; e-mail: CIS@ilo.org

STRESS IN WORKING LIFE

▲ Success in working life requires good physical health and psychological well-being. Work has, on average, become more stimulating and rewarding during the past 25 years. Unfortunately, not all changes have been in this positive direction. One widespread trend is a radically increasing pace of work which results in stressful time pressure. The latest issue of the *Asian-Pacific Newsletter on Occupational Health and Safety* (volume 6, number 1, April 1999) argues that different forms of psychological stress at work should be monitored so that stress does not become a consequence of development. The Newsletter is published by the ILO/FINNIDA Asian Regional Project on Occupational Safety

and Health, with content provided by specialists from countries in the region.

For further information, please contact the International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre (CIS), phone: +4122/799-6740; fax: +4122/799-8516; e-mail: CIS@ilo.org



Keystone

JOBS FOR AFRICA

▲ In March 1995, the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen called for the promotion of employment-intensive growth. In support of the Copenhagen Declaration, the ILO runs the programme on Employment Generation and Poverty Reduction in Africa, "Jobs for Africa" (JFA). This is also the ILO's contribution to the United Nations Special Initiative for Africa.

The JFA programme emphasizes the importance of investment-led strategies, and promotes the necessary shifts in public investment programmes and national budget priorities that can generate employment and reduce poverty. It also calls for establishing and strengthening of national advocacy teams to promote the adoption and implementation of employment-intensive growth strategies.

The programme started initially in ten African countries: Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Zambia. In response to the request made to ILO in April 1999 during the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) Labour and Social Affairs Commission Meeting at Windhoek, Namibia, the ILO Director-General approved an extension of JFA to six additional countries (Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Namibia). Other countries may join the programme in the future.

The call for policy shift which is spearheaded by the JFA-PRESSA project (Jobs for Africa – Poverty Reducing Employment Strategies for Africa) will be supported by ten programme components: capacity building in training systems and policies, small and medium-sized enterprise development, labour market information and poverty monitoring, promoting cooperative employment, employment-intensive infrastructure projects, women's employment programmes, employment for peace in post-conflict countries, microfinance schemes, promoting urban informal sector employment, and strengthening of the social partners in job creation.

The UNDP made an initial contribution of US\$3.25 million for the takeoff of the programme. As of July 1999 the total funds mobilized for JFA stand at about US\$5.5 million made up of UNDP and ILO contributions. The participating countries also make in kind contributions to support JFA structures set up in their countries.

For further information, please contact the Regional Office for Africa in Abidjan, phone: +225/212639; fax: +225/212880; e-mail: abidjan@ilo.org



IN THE PRESS...IN THE PRESS...IN THE PRESS...IN THE PRESS...

Employment in Latin America and Key indicators of the labour market

FINANCIAL TIMES (23.8.99, UK)

ILO REPORT LATIN AMERICA FAILS TO BOOST PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

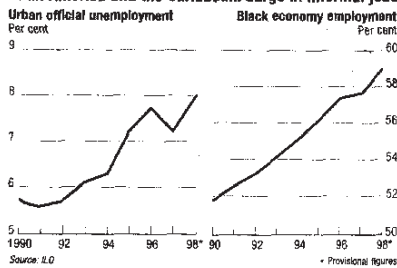
Surge in black economy jobs

By Robert Taylor, Employment Editor

The black economy has generated as many as 85 per cent of the new jobs in Latin America during the 1990s, according to a report published today by the International Labour Organisation for a conference in Lima, Peru.

Neither the private nor the public sector has been successful in ensuring employment opportunities over the past decade, the report says. As a result an estimated 59 per cent of Latin American workers work in the so-called informal sector. The number of informal jobs

Latin America and the Caribbean: surge in informal jobs



weak recovery of 0.8 per cent in the level of minimum wages. It believes this will account for an estimated 40 per cent of the new infor-

Report: economic reform not creating employment in Latin America

August 22, 1999
Web posted at: 5:20 PM EDT (2120 GMT)



GENEVA (AP) -- Economic growth and price stability in Latin America and the Caribbean have failed to reduce unemployment or increased wage levels, according to a United Nations report released Monday.

Development in the region could stall if efforts are not made to tackle rising unemployment rates and job insecurity, Juan Somavia of Chile, director-general of the International Labor Organization, said in his 149-page report.

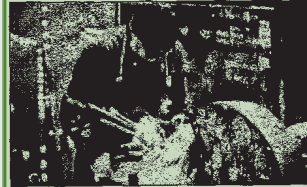
BBC ONLINE NETWORK



(6.9.99, UK)

Monday, September 6, 1999 Published at 09:20 GMT 10:20 UK

Business: The Economy US employees 'most hardworking'



Productivity is rising regardless of the length of the working week. American workers are the most productive but also work the longest hours, according to a United Nations study of employment around the world.

The International Labour Organisation says people in the UK work longer hours than the rest of Europe but Americans work even more.

Four out of ten British employees do more than 40 hours a week, whereas the figure is seven out of ten in the US.

The Washington Times

(6.9.99 USA)

Americans called hardest workers

GENEVA — Americans work the longest hours in the industrialized world, overtaking the Japanese, according to a U.N. study released today.

But the U.S. lead in productivity is being whittled away by European and Japanese rivals, who are working less while Americans stay on the job more, said the report by the International Labor Organization.

LE FIGARO. économie

(24.8.99, France) MARDI 24 AOÛT 1999

AMERIQUE LATINE

Les restructurations engendrent la précarisation

Le Bureau international du travail dresse un bilan assez négatif du développement dans cette région. Seuls le Chili, la Bolivie et le Costa-Rica tirent leur épingle du jeu.

GENÈVE : Laurent MOSSU

Le progrès social mesure le pas et le chômage augmente. En dépit des multiples réformes et des efforts de modernisation, la situation précaire de l'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes perdure. Le Bureau international du travail publie à l'ouverture de sa conférence régionale de Lima un rapport alarmant. Le retour de la croissance et de l'investissement, la maîtrise de l'inflation n'ont pas entraîné d'amélioration significative en matière d'emplois ou de revenus. Et la main-d'œuvre assume, précise son directeur général Juan Somavia, « une lourde part du fardeau de l'insécurité ». La modernisation de l'économie s'appuie, dit-il, sur une précarisation des relations du travail avec des conséquences sociales souvent désastreuses pour les travailleurs.

(Bolivia)

Economía
24 agosto 1999



EL DIARIO internet



Pedido de la OIT: América Latina debe dar énfasis a lo social para encarar el desempleo

LIMA, Ago. 23 (Reuters) - América Latina y el Caribe deben poner un mayor énfasis en la adopción de programas sociales para suavizar el impacto de los mayores niveles de desempleo en casi 20 años, dijo el lunes el director general de la OIT, Juan Somavia.

"Esto es indispensable si queremos ganarle al desempleo", dijo Somavia en Perú en una entrevista con Reuters.

La Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT) dijo el lunes en un informe que el desempleo en 1999 afectará hasta un 9,5 por ciento de la fuerza laboral de América Latina y el Caribe. El informe señaló que ese nivel, que creció a un ritmo progresivo desde inicios de la década de los '90, se elevó pese al crecimiento económico y la estabilidad de los precios en la región en el marco de profundas reformas estructurales.

Según cifras de la OIT la tasa de desempleo en el sector formal pasó de 6 por ciento en 1990 a 8 por ciento en 1998.

"Hav que equilibrar las cosas. La creación del empleo debe ser ahora un objetivo principal; no

BAE

Buenos Aires Económico

(6.9.99 Argentina)

La productividad laboral crece a mayor ritmo en Europa que en los EE.UU.

Las tendencias de las horas trabajadas en los diferentes países de similar grado de desarrollo no ha sido homogénea en los últimos años.

En los EE.UU. aumentó hasta ocupar el primer lugar, con 1.966 por persona y por año, seguido, con el equivalente a casi dos semanas laborales menos, por Japón, mientras que en las naciones europeas es mucho menor, pero a diferencia de los dos casos anteriores registran aumentos de productividad más sostenidos.

A estas conclusiones llegó el nuevo estudio estadístico de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo para el cuatrimestre 1994-1997, el cual muestra que entre los países en desarrollo, los asiáticos son los que registran más horas por obrero ocupado.

(27.9.99, Brazil)

CORREIO BRAZILIENSE

Buenos Aires Económico

(6.9.99 Argentina)

Brasil tem baixa produtividade Estudo mostra que norte-americanos trabalham 1.966 horas por ano. Jornada é superior à de japoneses e europeus

Paulo Silva Pinto
Av. Augusto de Carvalho
125 - 1404

A produtividade do trabalhador brasileiro não aumentou nas duas últimas décadas. Segundo relatório do Bureau International du Travail (BIT) divulgado on-line pela Organização Internacional do Trabalho (OIT), em Genebra, o trabalhador brasileiro continua com a mesma produtividade de 1980. Para fazer os cálculos foram considerados dados entre 1980 e 1998.

Em outros países, no entanto, houve ganhos (veja quadro). No Chile, a produtividade cresceu 258,5 por cento entre 1980 e 1998.

CORRIERE DEL TICINO

(7.9.99, Switzerland)

Tempo di lavoro: gli americani sono stakanovisti, infatti lavorano di più rispetto ai colleghi giapponesi

Sono i lavoratori americani i più «stakanovisti» tra quelli dei paesi più industrializzati con quasi 2.000 ore di lavoro l'anno e una crescita del 4% tra il 1980 e il '97. E quanto emerge da uno studio dell'Organizzazione internazionale del lavoro (OIL). Secondo lo studio gli Stati Uniti sono l'unico paese in «controripetizione» rispetto al generale calo delle ore lavorate nel mondo occidentale. Tra i paesi nei quali i lavoratori hanno guadagnato più tempo per il riposo ci sono il Giappone (1.889 ore di lavoro contro le 2.121

del 1980 e un calo del 10%) e la Francia nella quale, anche grazie alla normativa sulle 35 ore, le ore di lavoro l'anno sono scese a 1.656 l'anno contro le 1.810 del 1980. La Germania ha un orario medio di 1.559 ore mentre i lavoratori svizzeri sono in ufficio per circa 1.843 ore l'anno. Quasi invertito l'orario medio per gli inglesi a quota 1.731 ore mentre Norvegia e Svezia mantengono la palma di «gaudenti» con rispettivamente 1.599 e 1.552 ore. In Italia si lavorano 98,5 ore a settimana per poco più di 1.700 ore l'anno.



IN THE PRESS...IN THE PRESS...IN THE PRESS...IN THE PRESS...

DAGBLADE

Amerikanske arbejdere producerer mest

GENEVE: Amerikanske arbejdere er stadig de mest produktive i verden, men deres kolleger i Europa og Asien haler ind på dem. Det fremgår af en ny rapport fra Den Internationale Arbejdsorganisation (ILO).

(7.9.99, Denmark)

uendeligt maratonløb. De amerikanske arbejdere løber stadig, men et betydeligt antal konkurrenter haler tydeligt ind på USA, siger rapportens redaktør, Lawrence Jeff Johnson.

De lande, som ligger tættest på USA, er Japan, Sydkorea samt de større europæiske lande.

Men selv om amerikanske arbejdere slider i det *høje tempo* end deres kolleger i andre industrialiserede lande, stiger blandt andet de europæiske arbejderes produktivitet nu i et hurtigere tempo.

En amerikansk arbejder arbejder i 1997 i gennemsnit næsten 2000 timer. Det er to tuger mere

(6.9.99, Germany)



06.09.99

Studie zur Arbeitszeit: Amerikaner liegen vorn Durchschnittlich 1966 Stunden pro Jahr im Job

GENF. - In keiner Industrienation verbringen die Menschen so viel Zeit an ihrem Arbeitsplatz wie in den USA. Im Durchschnitt arbeitet jeder erwerbstätige Amerikaner 1966 Stunden pro Jahr - Tendenz steigend.

Wie die Internationale Arbeitsorganisation (ILO) in Genf mitteilt, hat die Verlängerung der Jahresarbeitszeit in den vergangenen fünf Jahren aber nicht zu großen Produktivitätssteigerungen geführt. Beobachter des US-Arbeitsmarktes gehen deshalb davon aus, dass die Beschäftigten vor allem aus Angst, ihren Arbeitsplatz zu verlieren, dazu bereit sind, länger zu arbeiten.



06.09.99 Nihon Keizai Shimbun

Working hours of US shows exceptional increase: 1,966 hours in 1997, while Japanese working hours reduced to 1,900, says the ILO

日本の労働時間、突出して増大
ILOの調査によると、1997年の米国労働時間は1,966時間と大幅に増加した。一方、日本の労働時間は1,900時間と減少した。ILOは、米国労働時間の増加は、労働者の長時間労働によるものであると指摘している。

(Japan)

EL PAIS (Spain)

EL PAIS, lunes 6 de septiembre de 1999

EE UU es el país donde más horas se trabaja

La jornada laboral anual en España es la tercera más prolongada de Europa

EFE / L. V. Ginebra Los trabajadores estadounidenses son, de entre todos los de los países industrializados, los que trabajan más al año: casi 2.000 horas por persona en 1997, mientras que en España se trabajaron 1.809 horas, lo que la sitúa en el tercer lugar entre las naciones de Europa occidental. Estos datos se recogen en un informe de la Oficina Internacional del Trabajo (OIT) titulado Indicadores Claves del Mercado de Trabajo (ICMT), publicado ayer.

El aumento del número de horas profesionales en Estados Unidos y Japón contrasta con la tendencia observada en Europa, donde cada vez se dedica menos tiempo al trabajo, especialmente

TIEMPOS MUNDO

OBJETIVO DEL MINISTRO PEDRO FLORES POLO

Trabajo decente para todos



Mucha gente cree que el Ministerio de Trabajo es una gran fuente de empleos, afirma el ministro del ramo Pedro Flores Polo. La nueva labor es ayudar en la generación de empleo y en el papel conciliador entre trabajadores y empresarios, de acuerdo a las recomendaciones de la Organización Internacional de Trabajo. PAG. A2, A3yA4

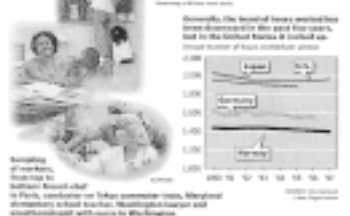
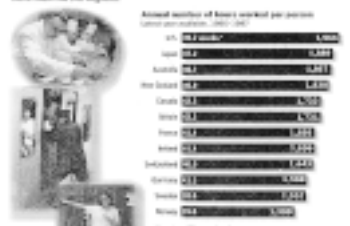
The Washington Post (USA)

(USA)



Work, Work and More Work

Americans put in more hours on the job than their counterparts in other industrialized nations, according to a new study by the International Labor Organization. Americans work about two weeks a year more than the average of 44 weeks from those from the Washington Post.



(6.9.99, France) Les chiffres clés de l'emploi dans le monde

LE FIGARO

Travail : les Etats-Unis à contre-courant

Le Bureau international du travail publie aujourd'hui le constat le plus complet sur la situation du travail dans le monde.

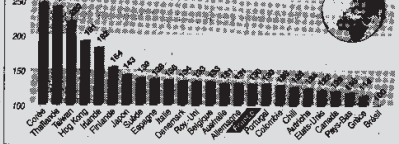
GENEVE: Laurent BOISSY

Les Américains, totalement à contre-courant, allongent très sensiblement la durée annuelle du travail. Première puissance économique de la planète, championne de la compétitivité et du plein-emploi, les Etats-Unis insistent d'ailleurs être une course attendue aux résultats alors que leurs partenaires du reste du monde accroissent leur temps libre.

Ce constat est dressé dans un nouveau rapport que le Bureau international du travail (BIT) consacre aux grandes

Gains de productivité du travail

Rapport PNB / nombre de travailleurs (Base 100 en 1980)



puissance économique de la planète. Le BIT remarque en effet que le nombre de pays parvenant actuellement à compenser la réduction du temps de travail par une productivité accrue. Ainsi, l'amélioration est-elle spectaculaire en Europe. Le BIT souligne le bond en avant effectué par l'Irlande qui a vu son taux de productivité progresser de 82 points entre 1980 et 1997. D'autres réussissent également bien. Les progrès constatés par le BIT sont de 64 points pour la Finlande, 38 pour l'Espagne, 31 pour l'Allemagne et 30 pour

(Canada)



6.09.99

Americans work longest hours, ILO survey finds

JAMES DALZIEL

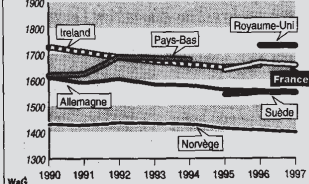
TORONTO (CP) - A global labour survey released Monday could embarrass Canada - or make some people think twice about joining any brain drain to the United States.

In the industrialized world, Americans put in the most hours at work - the equivalent of almost six 40-hour weeks a year more than Canadians, on average - the International Labour Organization says.

That's just one of the findings in a 600-page study of global labour trends from the Geneva-based United Nations agency.

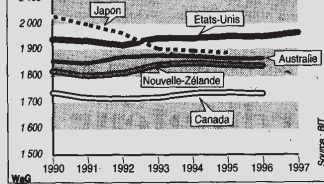
Tendance à la baisse en Europe

Nombre d'heures travaillées par personne et par an



Plus d'heures travaillées aux Etats-Unis

Durée de travail par personne et par an



Media shelf

In print

WOMEN, GENDER AND WORK (Part I)

(*International Labour Review*, Vol 138 (1999), No. 3). ISSN 0020-7780. Price: 90 Swiss francs; US\$72; UK£44 for a one-year subscription.

By any measure there have been far-reaching developments in the world of work this century. An enormous increase in the labour force has resulted from the multiplication of the world's population and a doubling of life expectancy; a dramatic reduction in the material content of national product has freed the vast majority of workers, especially men, from heavy and dangerous physical labour; the general spread of democratic institutions has given a voice to people, including in the workplace; women have entered the regular labour market in astounding numbers.

The *International Labour Review* has, in the past few years, taken up some of the key developments in the world of work in the form of *special issues* – on competitiveness, equity and skills; employment policy in the global economy; the nature and future of work; labour rights, human rights; and, on the occasion of the *ILR*'s 75th anniversary, a major retrospective. So it is now fitting that, to close the century, the *ILR* turn to an examination of *women, gender and work*. While several articles have been published on particular questions, such as occupational segregation and wage differences by sex, there has not been any systematic coverage of the field in the *ILR*, so this special issue is long overdue.

It is timely to take stock of what developments have occurred as the employment of women approaches that of men, and now there is a substantial volume of data disaggregated by sex that can be drawn upon. But it is also necessary to probe some of the outstanding

questions that affect the roles of both men and women and the nature of the family, to reflect on the use of legislation to advance gender equity, and to determine whether there is progress or regression. To attempt an exploration of these questions the *ILR* will be focusing on this theme for two consecutive issues, the last two of the century. The first (1999/3) will concentrate on analyses of the underlying questions and debates, the second (1999/4) on the empirical bases for judging relative positions and trends, with legal questions taken up in both.

Human capabilities

The first question which must be addressed is that of the objective. There are many specific indicators available as partial measures of progress or deterioration in gender equity (such as equal pay for work of equal value), or of negatives to avoid (such as discrimination and sexual harassment). But it is difficult to find any useful formulation of gender equity as an end state to which society aspires. Martha Nussbaum, a professor of law and ethics in a department of philosophy, takes up that challenge in her article, "Women and equality: The capabilities approach". She starts with human dignity and the idea it incorporates of equal worth – of rich and poor, rural and urban, female and male. The freedom and opportunity that equal worth implies is widely vio-

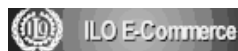
lated on grounds of sex, and many existing value systems deny liberty of choice. The great strength of the capabilities approach comes from the importance it gives to enabling a person to function to the full extent of her or his human capability. Each person is a bearer of value. Nussbaum suggests a list of the elements necessary for "truly human functioning" across cultures that includes life, bodily health and integrity, human senses, emotion, reason, affiliation, play ... She argues that "the basic intuition from which the capability approach begins, in the political arena, is that human abilities exert a moral claim that they be developed." Not to do so "gives us a sense of waste and tragedy." As she explains, we need fulfillment of both human rights and human capabilities.

Affirmative action

A particular form of action for achieving justice is affirmative action, which is an extension of the notion of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination". As Jane Hodges-Aeberhard explains, "Affirmative action in employment: Recent court approaches to a difficult concept", differing outcomes emerge from courts even as they confront similar facts. By reviewing recent court decisions in a number of countries, especially the United States, South Africa and Europe, she demonstrates that the application of the law often lacks the coherence and effectiveness that is expected of such an important instrument for opposing discrimination. The resulting confusion in the jurisprudence is cause for concern – both for victims of discrimination and for policy-makers responsible for eliminating discrimination. A senior ILO specialist in international labour standards and labour law, Hodges-Aeberhard argues that consideration of a new normative initiative to provide greater clarity would be timely.

Labour statistics

Few people realize how critical statistics are to the allocation of resources, policy formulation and legislation. Phenomena – and people – that are not counted or measured are quite easily ignored.



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Since the collection of good national data is expensive, that which is not deemed a top priority is often counted poorly. Women and the work they do are frequently neglected – and are surely undercounted – despite decades of effort on the part of those who are concerned about the distortion that results. In “Gender issues in labour statistics”, Adriana Mata Greenwood, a statistician in the ILO, explains that “to serve users, labour statistics need to reflect reality as closely as possible.” However, since statistical categories reflect what are perceived to be the “core” employment and unemployment situations, in which men dominate, and women are often found in “other” work situations, the neglect of women’s work is pernicious. As she points out, the “systematic under-reporting and misrepresentation of women’s contribution to the economy ... perpetuate a vicious circle of inequality between men and women”. As science continues to reveal ways far beyond the visible biological in which men and women differ, it becomes even more of an imperative to measure accurately their respective work activities so that sensible policies can be designed and destructive ones avoided.

Unpaid labour

The most glaring problem of under-valuation concerns unpaid work, most of which is, not incidentally, done by women. Attempts to improve its measurement and thereby its perceived value have been underway for decades, but little of the result has been incorporated into national labour statistics or the national product. There is purposive resistance, but also indifference and ignorance. Lourdes Benería, a professor of city and regional planning and once an ILO official, explains what progress has been made and the contending arguments in

“The enduring debate over unpaid labour.” Work in the subsistence and informal sectors, domestic and voluntary work are all seriously undercounted. As Benería points out, underlying that is the fundamental question of what is *value* and *of value to society*. And she gives further impetus to those who believe in a fairer valuation of women’s work – and men’s.

Care-giving

One of the most critical forms of unpaid work is care giving. It has a fundamental impact on people’s well-being and thus transcends the specific value of other forms of productive, reproductive and volunteer work. If its value were to be fully attributed it would surely be expensive. Lee Badgett and Nancy Folbre examine care giving, “Assigning care: Gender norms and economic outcomes”. Care is given both freely and through the market. One could argue that care *services* are mediated by the market and that care *giving* is formally voluntary. But that would imply accepting the preeminence of those spheres and underplay the gender norms that assign all forms of care largely to women. The social norms which define women’s greater responsibility for providing both remunerated and unpaid care are not, they argue, benign; nor can that responsibility be explained, as neoclassical economics might do, as simple altruism. Not biological determinism, nor culture, offer acceptable answers either. “Feminist theory emphasizes the coercive dimensions of social norms of masculinity and femininity, describing norms as important elements of gendered structures of constraint.” The authors argue that resistance to confronting this occupational stereotype results from the cost: Yet norms of masculinity and femininity are being contested, and alternative social contracts are possible – and necessary.

Books

This issue of the *ILR* closes with a *books* section that, as usual, offers critical reviews and notes as well as information on new ILO publications. But it highlights books that are pertinent to the theme of this special issue – *women, gender and work*. On this occasion independent advisers to the *ILR* have joined ILO staff in providing particularly rich observations on recent publications.

■ Credit unions and the poverty challenge: Extending outreach, enhancing sustainability.



Edited by Bernd Balkenhol. ILO, 1999. ISBN 92-2-110852-X. Price: 25 Swiss francs.

Credit unions are increasingly recognized as important players in micro finance, but do they really contribute to poverty alleviation? Or, could they be used more effectively to help with the survival strategies of the poor? Micro finance seeks to harmonize “outreach” and “sustainability”; a financial institution should reach as many poor clients as possible while operating on sound business principles. Do credit unions fulfill these requirements? Are they efficient financial intermediaries? If not, is their lack of efficiency due to their governance or to external factors, for example poorly designed support programmes?

This book reviews experiences with refinancing credit unions in several countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

■ Human resource implications of globalization and restructuring in commerce.

ILO Sectoral Activities Programme. TMC/1999. ISBN 92-2-111761-8. Price: 20 Swiss francs.

This report reviews the impact of restructuring and glo-



balization in the commerce sector – and increasing liberalization of

the marketplace – especially the emergence of new distribution circuits, the growing use of new information and communication technologies on the personnel in this sector. It examines the implications of these changes in employment, labour relations and working conditions.

■ European Works Councils in Multinational Enterprises Background, working and experience.

Multinational Enterprises Programme, Working Paper No. 83. By Roger Blanpain. ISBN 92-2-111434-1. Price 15 Swiss francs.

■ Employment, Working Conditions and Labour Relations in Offshore Data Service Enterprises: Case studies of Barbados and Jamaica.

By Leith L. Dunn, and Hopeton S. Dunn. Multinational Enterprises Programme, Working Paper No. 86, 1999. ISBN 92-2-111607-7. Price 15 Swiss francs.

This report implements resolution No.105 concerning salaried employees and professional workers in multinational enterprises which was adopted by the ILO Committee on Salaried Employees and Professional Workers in May 1994. It is addressed to the ILO’s tripartite partners: governments, employers (including multinational enterprises) and workers. The study provides up-to-date information on labour practices in enterprises providing offshore

International Institute for Labour Studies

The ILO's International Institute for Labour Studies in Geneva promotes policy research and public discussion on emerging issues of concern to the ILO and its constituents – labour, business and government.

The organizing theme of its programmes is the relationship between labour institutions, economic growth and social equity. The Institute's current work programme focuses on the changing relationships between labour and society, and between business and society, in order to identify ways in which trade unions and employers' organizations, as the largest organized actors in civil society, can contribute to sustainable markets, human development

and social cohesion. An initial examination of the changing role of government is also being undertaken to identify areas for future research.

The Institute provides three major facilities:

- **a global forum** on social policy enabling trade unions, employers' organizations and labour administrations to interact informally with the academic community, other opinion-makers, and ILO staff;
- **international research networks** linking academics with business, labour and government practitioners, to explore emerging policy issues of potential relevance for the ILO and contribute to policy formulation;
- **educational programmes** to

assist governments, business and labour in developing their respective institutional capacities for research, analysis and policy formulation in the labour field.

Its **means of action** include: research; social policy forums; public lectures; courses and seminars; internship programmes; a Visiting Scholar programme; and publications. It also organizes the biennial Social Policy Lectures, endowed by the ILO's Nobel Peace Prize, and held, by rotation, in major universities of the world.

For further information, please contact International Institute for Labour Studies (INST) at Tel: +4122/799-6128, Fax: +4122/799-8542 or by E-mail: INST@ilo.org

computer and related services in the Caribbean. Case studies of Barbados and Jamaica are used to illustrate the main trends as these countries have the largest and most developed IT sectors.

■ **Key Indicators of the Labour Market 1999 (KILM)** print version, 140 Sw.frs.; US\$ 99.50; £59.95, ISBN 92-2-110833-3. CD-ROM version – 140 Sw.frs.; US\$ 99.50; £59.95, ISBN 92-2-110834-1. Print and CD-ROM set – 250 Sw.frs.; US\$ 180; £110, ISBN 92-2-111705-7.

A valuable, wide-ranging reference tool, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) provides the general reader, as well as the expert, with concise explanations and analysis of the data on the world's labour markets, including world and regional estimates. Harvesting vast information from international data repositories as well as regional and national statistical sources, this comprehensive reference offers data on a broad range of countries and issues such as labour force, employment, unemployment, underemployment, educational attainment of the workforce, and more for the years 1980 and 1990 and all available subsequent years.

The CD-ROM version's interactive design allows users to customize their searches by any combination of indicator, country, year, data inputs, and more. Its easy-to-use format makes searching for relevant information quick and simple. The CD-ROM will be available in November this year.

The CD-ROM version includes the Key Indicators of the Labour Market,

Country Profiles, 1999 Edition, a quick reference for users of the CD-ROM.



BOOK REVIEW

SOCIAL SECURITY FOR THE INFORMAL SECTOR?

More than half of the world's population today is excluded from any form of State-legislated social security protection. The workers concerned – and their dependants – are largely left to their own devices in case of sickness or injury, maternity, unemployment, old age or widowhood. At 5 to 10% and decreasing, coverage is lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and in south Asia. Figures vary from 10 to 50% in the rest of the developing world while, in most industrialized countries, coverage is practically 100%.

Because they do not have regular jobs whose earnings can be monitored and on which mandatory contributions can be collected from both their employers and themselves, workers in the so-called informal sector are generally left without any protection at all. Self-employed or working in micro-enterprises without a written contract, most informal sector workers – a large proportion of whom are women – have low incomes and live in poverty. Few of them as a result are able or willing to contribute a significant portion of their income towards benefits that do not meet their most immediate needs: health costs and education for their children.

In recent years, the structural adjustment policies adopted in many developing countries have resulted in a decline of the small percentage of workers in the formal sector. They have led also to severe cuts in health and education budgets and increased the isolation of vulnerable groups outside the labour force such as the disabled and old persons without families.

To respond to these large and unmet needs for social protection, new approaches “aimed at people in financial need, who cannot be reached by policies for productive employment and who cannot ... contribute to statutory social insurance schemes” are urgently required, according to a new report* published by the ILO.

Case studies carried out in five developing countries – Benin, China, El Salvador, India and the United Republic of Tanzania – provide illustration of the varied ways in which the issue is being addressed.

One approach involves the extension and reform of statutory social insurance schemes to offer protection to vulnerable groups including certain categories of workers in the informal sector. China and India have both conducted successful experiments in this regard. But conservative attitudes, legal restrictions and administrative bottlenecks – including the management of lifetime records for all beneficiaries – limit the possibilities for extension: the authors estimate that only 10% of the population might be concerned.

Another is to extend the scope of social assistance schemes which are financed or supported by general tax revenue. Here the authors warn that, while certain middle-income countries have developed such schemes, those with the greatest need of social protection “are also those whose public finances are most severely constrained: they simply do not have the resources or tax-base to provide much in the way of anti-poverty support”.

Cooperatives and mutual-benefit associations, set up and financed by groups of informal sector workers and usually operated at the community level, have long existed, particularly in rural societies. Today, voluntary health insurance and pension schemes are being actively developed in numerous countries, often with the help of NGOs. “However”, notes the report, “a preliminary assessment of self-financed schemes is that they have so far reached only a very small proportion of the poor and of informal sector workers”.

Small, and as yet experimental, area- and occupation-based social protection programmes, founded on organizations which have spontaneously emerged at the local level, “may offer the best hope”, says the report. Relying on trust and solidarity between local government and the social actors, they imply relatively low overhead and a high degree of local participation and control. The authors advocate paying a great deal more attention to these types of “bottom-up participatory approaches” in contrast with the “top-down” strategies which were favoured in the past on the assumption that all workers, sooner or later, would join the formal sector.

**Social Security for the Excluded Majority*, edited by Wouter van Ginneken, ILO, Geneva 1999. ISBN 92-2-110856-2. Price: Swiss francs 30.