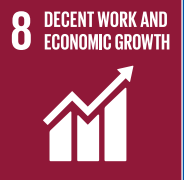




International  
Labour  
Organization



## ► The likely impact of COVID-19 on the achievement of SDG 8

A trade union opinion survey  
ILO-ACTRAV



# ▶ **The likely impact of COVID-19 on the achievement of SDG 8**

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ILO-ACTRAV

February 2021

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First published 2021

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*A trade union opinion survey*

ISBN: 9789220338292 (Print)  
9789220338308 (Web PDF)

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Design and layout by the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin – Italy

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# Foreword

At the 108<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC), the ILO's governing body adopted the *Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work* as a guiding principle for the work of the organization for the next 100 years. The declaration stresses the importance of multilateralism and the need for the office to play its role in ensuring policy coherence within the multilateral system. Regrettably, a few months after the declaration was adopted, the novel Coronavirus swept the whole world into a crisis never experienced in recent known history.

As the UN agency tasked with setting labour standards, developing policies and devising programmes promoting decent work for all women and men, the ILO has acknowledged that this crisis has a human face and therefore that all policy and pragmatic responses must be human-centred. In this regard, the ILO offers comprehensive and integrated recommendations in key areas of policy that should form part of that response.

Accordingly, international labour standards, together with the Decent Work Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provide a strong basis for efforts at the national level to “recover better”. Social dialogue must remain central to policy-making during the crisis, including the use of technology to keep social partners connected and engaged throughout the crisis. International, intra-national, inter-regional and inter-organizational solidarity and cooperation, including at the level of worker's organizations, is key if everyone is to recover without leaving anyone behind.

The SDG Decade of Action started on a negative footing due to COVID-19. However, while the picture is mostly gloomy, there is also an anticipated benefit in favour of the entire SDG agenda. Therefore, ACTRAV's role during this pandemic period is work with the rest of the office and the constituents to advance the ILO policy framework for tackling the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis as well as promoting the UN system's overall approach to bringing an immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.

To offer appropriate support to trade union organizations, we needed to understand their views, experiences and perspectives on the likely negative and positive prospects of COVID-19 on the achievement of SDGs, and more specifically on SDG 8. Against this background, ACTRAV commissioned a baseline assessment based on the views of trade union officials and technocrats from across the globe and whose outcomes are provided in this report. The findings, conclusions and recommendations give us useful insight on the perceived challenges and prospects of COVID in relation to Agenda 2030. They also provide us with a much needed rationale and foundation to continue supporting the trade union initiatives in Agenda 2030 at all levels.

ACTRAV is grateful to the ITUC, and more specifically to the Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN), for the support offered during the survey process. Sincere thanks are extended to all the trade union officials and technocrats in all the regions who honoured our request for participation.

I would also like to acknowledge the great efforts of the ILO-ACTRAV Multilateral team – Hilma Mote, Ariel Castro and Grayson Koyi – for conceptualizing, coordinating and finalizing this work. I also thank Anne Gasparini of ACTRAV for providing much needed administrative

support throughout the project. We extend our gratitude to Diana Quiroz and Eline Achterberg of the Profundo research and advice institute for their excellent work and collaboration on this assignment.

It is our pleasure to present this report to all the ILO constituents, especially to trade unions. We hope our findings, conclusions and recommendations provide a useful basis for stimulating trade union policy reflections and inputs on COVID-19 and Agenda 2030 at the national, regional and global levels.

Maria Helena Andre  
Director, ILO Bureau for Workers Activities (ACTRAV)



# Acknowledgements

This report was compiled by the Profundo research team comprising Diana Quiroz and Eline Achterberg, with contributions from Linnea Wikström. The conceptualization of the work, including the development of the concept note and data collection instruments, were prepared by Hilma Mote and Ariel Castro of ILO-ACTRAV. The overall coordination was done by Hilma Mote with support from Anne Gasparini. We are grateful to Grayson Koyi for his invaluable comments on the report.

Access to the respondents relied heavily on the support of the ITUC Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN). We therefore take this opportunity to thank Paola Simonetti and Diego Gonzalez of ITUC for their assistance. Thanks are also due to all the regional trade union organization members – too numerous to list – who facilitated our work.

We are also grateful to all the regional desk officers at ILO-ACTRAV and the field colleagues for the support extended to the researchers.

Thanks also go to the colleagues who facilitated the editing, production and publication of this report, including Mamadou Souare and Anita Hertereau of ILO-ACTRAV.

The front page cover photograph: “Vegetable seller in the market, Manila” is courtesy of the ILO Asia and the Pacific office (licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

## Summary

This report presents the findings of a global survey on the likely impacts of COVID-19 on the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda. The survey focused on SDG 8 and specifically on four targets and two indicators for which the International Labour Organization (ILO) is a custodian agency:

- ▶ Target 8.5. By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
  - Indicator 8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities.
  - Indicator 8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Target 8.6. By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of young people not in employment, education, or training.
- ▶ Target 8.7. Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
- ▶ Target 8.8. Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

The global survey was commissioned by the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ILO-ACTRAV) and conducted by Profundo B.V. The objectives were: to establish credible baseline data that will inform the ILO-ACTRAV's work on Agenda 2030 and serve as a basis for the office's work on SDGs and COVID-19; to serve as the first measure of the current assessment by trade unions regarding the positive and negative impact of COVID-19 on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically on SDG 8 indicators; and to draw information that will help ACTRAV to develop appropriate and timely messaging and advocacy campaigns on the role of trade unions in the achievement of SDG 8 during and post-COVID-19.

The report based its conclusions and recommendations on a combination of primary and secondary data. Through an online survey, it captured the views of 130 trade union leaders from Asia-Pacific (41 respondents), Sub-Saharan Africa (39), Europe (24), the Americas (17), and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (9). In addition, eleven interviews were conducted with trade union leaders at the national, regional and global levels including trade union technical persons (technical specialists) and labour support organizations including pro-labour academia. The opinions of these respondents were contrasted with data obtained from a review of published sources.

The baseline findings offer a mixed picture of positive and negative prospects. Overall, there is consensus amongst survey respondents, the key informants, and written sources that progress towards SDG 8 was already lagging before the global outbreak. In this context, according to the survey respondents, the COVID-19 pandemic will relegate the implementation of SDG 8. At the same time, however, aspects such as securing safer working environments and stimulating employment creation will be prioritised. Against this background, most trade union leaders expect their organizations' SDG work to gain more prominence in the future.

Looking at the trade union leaders' perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on different SDG 8 targets and indicators, the overall opinion on the achievement of the following targets and indicators oscillates between moderate progress and little to no progress:

- ▶ Target 8.5 (Full and productive employment and decent work by 2030);
- ▶ Indicator 8.5.1 (Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation, and persons with disabilities);
- ▶ Indicator 8.5.2 (Unemployment rate, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities);
- ▶ Target 8.8 (Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers).

Moreover, according to the trade union leaders, progress on the implementation of Target 8.6 (Substantially reduce the proportion of youths not in employment, education or training by 2020) is rather not on track or altogether off-track and less than half of the objectives will be achieved. On the other hand, the respondents' outlook on the achievements so far regarding Target 8.7 (Eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, worst forms of child labour by 2025) were more positive.

Regarding the Decent Work Agenda, the most prevalent opinion amongst trade union leaders is that COVID-19 will positively impact employment creation. However, this perspective is met with the opinion that, globally, governments have focused more on keeping big corporations afloat rather than protecting and creating jobs, particularly for vulnerable workers such as those in the informal economy and migrants. Likewise, the survey respondents primarily opined that COVID-19 will have a positive impact on social protection and social dialogue. In contrast, the respondents' expectations on rights at work are mixed, albeit skewing towards a negative outlook.

Lastly, trade union leaders worldwide regard employment and decent jobs as the two biggest SDG transformation challenges, except in the MENA region, where child labour is most pressing. In contrast, in all other regions, child labour was ranked as the least important challenge. Respondents from Europe and the Americas regard high work informality as most pressing, whereas women and youth unemployment is the biggest issue for respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa. Wages and income inequalities were ranked either second or third

in importance in all regions. Social protection appears to be less challenging in all regions as well.

Following the review of secondary data and responses of trade unions, the main recommendations mainly centre on the following:

- ▶ **Policy Advocacy:** Trade unions should advocate for policies aimed at protecting existing jobs, creating new employment in the formal economy and advancing decent work in the informal economy, while ensuring that such policies do not adversely impact workers' rights and decent work.
- ▶ **Campaigns:** Build and implement campaigns to address decent work deficits in the informal economy as well as extend social protection for all, including workers in the informal economy.
- ▶ **Social dialogue:** Trade unions should ensure they are consulted and actively participate in shaping the COVID-19 response, highlighting the key tenants of SDG 8, employment promotion, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue.
- ▶ **Capacity advancement:** Toward the internal transformation of trade unions to better prepare for recovery and resilience.

**ACTRAV shall work hand in hand with the workers organisations and with the rest of the ILO office at the HQ as well as at regional and national levels to:**

- ▶ Promote the consultation and active participation of trade unions and workers' organizations in shaping the COVID-19 response among national governments;
- ▶ Advise governments to extend their efforts to protect existing jobs and create new employment in the formal economy, while ensuring that such policies do not adversely impact workers' rights and decent work, especially in the sectors most affected by COVID;
- ▶ Advocate for the promotion of fiscal policies to safeguard employment, promote rights at work and guarantee social protection for all workers, with particular attention to vulnerable groups that are disproportionately impacted by the crisis, such as women, young people and migrant workers.
- ▶ Encourage and guide governments to create an enabling environment for social dialogue in which social partners can share their experiences and freely express their needs, to address the social and economic impacts of the global pandemic.

More detailed recommendations per indicator and work pillar are included in Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations.

# Abbreviations

<b>CBA</b>	Collective Bargaining Agreement
<b>GUF</b>	Global Union Federation
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ILO-ACTRAV</b>	ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities
<b>ITUC</b>	International Trade Union Confederation
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OSH</b>	Occupational Safety and Health
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>PSI</b>	Public Services International
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TUDCN</b>	Trade Union Development Cooperation Network
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>WTUF</b>	World Trade Union Federation



# 1. Introduction

COVID-19 is severely affecting the world of work. Less than one year into the global pandemic, the virus has driven the world into a crisis of unprecedented scale. The health-related, economic and social impacts of COVID-19 are putting a significant number of workers worldwide at risk of losing their long-term livelihoods. According to the ILO, the pandemic is expected to have a devastating impact on global employment, with up to 400 million full-time jobs lost and another 340 million at risk of being lost by the end of 2020.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global pandemic presents tremendous challenges for achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all. This study intends to set a base for anticipating and acting upon these impacts as well as their possible opportunities.

## 1.1 Background

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The Post-2015 Development Agenda was a process led by the United Nations (UN) from 2012 to 2015 to define the future global development framework that would succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed to replace the MDGs after they ended in 2015. These goals constitute the core of the Agenda for Sustainable Development to be accomplished by 2030, and specifically present the means of achieving these goals by their deadline.<sup>2</sup>

The SDGs include 17 goals that integrate economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection to achieve sustainable development that meets present needs and guarantees the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.<sup>3</sup> Within each of the 17 SDGs, the international community has established multiple targets that are crucial to achieving the goals by 2030. Each of the targets has one or more indicators that specify a quantified metric to measure the progress towards these targets and the overarching goals.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas the MDGs had 60 relatively straightforward indicators that used existing data sets and methodologies, the 232 SDG indicators are vastly broader in scope, more detailed, and often rely on innovative metrics and disaggregated data for which methodologies have

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<sup>1</sup> *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fifth edition*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_749399.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749399.pdf) [accessed in July 2020].

<sup>2</sup> *Decent Work and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Guidebook on SDG Labour Market Indicators*, ILO, 2018, <https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/Guidebook-SDG-En.pdf> [accessed in July 2020].

<sup>3</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d., <https://sdgs.un.org/> [accessed in June 2020].

<sup>4</sup> *SDG Indicators Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UNSD, n.d., <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/> [accessed in July 2020].

not been universally established.<sup>5</sup> This provides an opportunity to gather more precise and targeted data using new methods, but it also implies a much higher level of complexity and a need for new methodologies to monitor the progress towards sustainable development.

For each indicator, the UN assigned a custodian role to one of its agencies or to an international organization. These custodian agencies are responsible for measuring and reporting on their respective indicator on a global level. The International Labour Organization (ILO), as the UN agency in charge of advancing social and economic justice through labour standards, is a custodian agency for 17 indicators (11 as the sole custodian, three as a joint custodian, and three as a partner), particularly those relating to decent work as part of SDG 8, which aims to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.<sup>6</sup>

Despite some significant progress, SDG 8 was not on track to be achieved by 2030 even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. With significant gaps both between and within countries, unemployment levels are too high, gender wage gaps are persistent, and young people and persons with disabilities still face significant challenges in finding decent work.<sup>7</sup> The ILO had already determined that efforts would need to be accelerated to achieve the targets, but with the global spread of coronavirus from the start of 2020 and the ensuing social and economic crisis, it has become extremely difficult to avert the impacts of the evolving situation.

The pandemic raises concerns for vulnerable workers who are disproportionately affected by the health crisis and its economic consequences. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, “the severe socio-economic effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to increase the scourge of modern-day slavery, already impacting over 40 million people before the global pandemic”, as well as children who now are at “even higher risk of exposure to the worst forms of child labour.”<sup>8</sup> The UN special Rapporteur further emphasized that while the COVID-19 pandemic has affected billions, “the impact is much harsher for those in the informal economy, as well as day labourers, temporary employees and all those without social protection coverage”, which are also groups in which women and migrant workers are overrepresented. Out of the 2 billion people worldwide who work in the informal economy, estimates suggest that nearly 1.6 billion informal economy workers are significantly impacted by the lockdown measures and/or working in the hardest-hit sectors.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Decent Work and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Guidebook on SDG Labour Market Indicators*, ILO, 2018, <https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/Guidebook-SDG-En.pdf#page=72&zoom=100,94,78> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth and Environmental Integrity*, ILO, 2019, [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_712685/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_712685/lang--en/index.htm) [accessed in June 2020].

<sup>8</sup> *UN rights expert urges States to step-up anti-slavery efforts and protect most vulnerable amid COVID-19*, OHCHR, May 5, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25863&LangID=E> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>9</sup> *Impact of lockdown measures on the informal economy. A summary*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743534.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743534.pdf) [accessed in July 2020].



Likewise, migrant workers are impacted by layoffs and unfair recruitment practices. To find employment abroad, migrant workers often have to pay high recruitment fees to secure low paying jobs, which leaves them in debt for up to two years before they even start earning a living wage to sustain themselves and their families. The current COVID-19 crisis has put an abrupt end to the employment of millions of migrant workers across the globe, many of whom are indebted to agents, subagents, family members or small lenders in their home countries.<sup>10</sup>

Women in the formal economy are also severely impacted. In contrast to other economic crises, which are usually characterised by lay-offs, particularly in male-dominated sectors, crises stemming from infectious diseases tend to disproportionately impact feminised service sectors such as hospitality, tourism retail,<sup>11</sup> and domestic work. The ILO estimates that 527 million women (41 percent of the total female workforce) are employed in the sectors at the highest risk of job loss, including hospitality, real estate, business and administrative activities, manufacturing, and wholesale/retail trade. On top of that, many women in these sectors are self-employed or owners of micro or small-sized enterprises (MSEs). An additional 740 million women work in the informal economy.<sup>12</sup> Lockdowns and curfews as well as limited health care or maternity protection have only worsened these women's socio-economic situation. Driven by a need to provide for their families, many self-employed women and those in the informal sector keep working despite the absence of adequate health measures, which puts them at an increased risk of contracting the virus. The lack of access to personal protective equipment (PPE) further exacerbates these risks.<sup>13</sup>

Against this backdrop, the ILO has recommended protecting workers in the workplace by:<sup>14</sup>

- ▶ Strengthening OSH measures;
- ▶ Adapting work arrangements;
- ▶ Preventing discrimination and exclusion;
- ▶ Providing health access for all;
- ▶ Expanding access to paid leave.

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<sup>10</sup> *Decent Work for Migrant Workers at All Times: Implement Zero Fees and Employer Pays Model for Recruitment of Migrant Workers*, MFAsia, 2019, <http://mfasia.org/decent-work-for-migrant-workers-at-all-times-implement-zero-fees-and-employer-pays-model-for-recruitment-of-migrant-workers/> [accessed in June 2020].

<sup>11</sup> *The COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_744685.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744685.pdf) [accessed in June 2020].

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *The invisible coronavirus makes systemic gender inequalities and injustices visible*, Liane Schalatek, April 30, 2020, <https://us.boell.org/en/2020/04/30/invisible-coronavirus-makes-systemic-gender-inequalities-and-injustices-visible> [accessed in June 2020].

<sup>14</sup> *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743146.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743146.pdf) [accessed in June 2020].

Moreover, the ILO has called for reliance on social dialogue for solutions by:<sup>15</sup>

- ▶ Strengthening the capacity and resilience of employers' and workers' organizations;
- ▶ Strengthening the capacity of governments;
- ▶ Strengthening social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour relations institutions and processes.

However, the exact impacts the crisis will have on decent work and the progress towards achieving SDG 8 remain ambiguous given the ongoing public health and economic developments. While there are some signs that the crisis has also spurred positive developments, such as recognition for essential workers and strengthening of social protection schemes, it is clear that other areas will require a sustained and accelerated effort on all levels to achieve the 2030 targets. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic differs vastly across countries and industries and among groups of workers. Therefore, any such strategy needs to incorporate the voices of worker representatives on how to safeguard progress towards decent work for all.

## 1.2 Objectives

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Given its mandate and in line with the ILO priorities for the 2020-2021 biennium, the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) felt it was necessary to collect the views of trade unions on the likely impact of COVID-19 on the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda. The objectives were threefold:

1. To establish credible baseline data that will inform the ILO-ACTRAV's work on Agenda 2030 and serve as a baseline for the office's work on SDGs and COVID-19.
2. To serve as the first measure of the current assessment by trade unions regarding the positive prospects and negative impact of COVID-19 on SDGs, specifically on SDG 8 targets and indicators.
3. To gather information that will assist ACTRAV in developing appropriate and timely messaging and advocacy campaigns on the role of trade unions in the achievement of SDG 8 during and post-COVID-19.

The survey focused on SDG 8 and specifically on four targets and two indicators for which the ILO is a custodian agency:

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<sup>15</sup> *A policy framework for tackling the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_745337.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745337.pdf) [accessed in July 2020].

- ▶ Target 8.5. By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
- ▶ Indicator 8.5.1. Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Indicator 8.5.2. Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Target 8.6. By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training.
- ▶ Target 8.7. Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
- ▶ Target 8.8. Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

The intended outcome is to reinforce ACTRAV's work on Agenda 2030, but even more so to revise the strategy in line with the challenges and opportunities brought about by COVID-19 so that the office can advise and better respond to the demands of the trade union constituency at the national, regional and global levels.



## 2. Methodology

This baseline study was designed to capture current assessments by trade unions on the negative and potentially positive impact of COVID-19 on SGD 8 using a combination of primary and secondary data sources. Under the primary sources, data was collected through an online survey and key informant interviews. Secondary data were drawn from a review of published and available sources.

## 2.1 Survey of impacts and opportunities of COVID-19

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ILO-ACTRAV conducted a targeted opinion survey to capture the views of trade union leaders at the national, regional and global levels on the likely impact, challenges and opportunities of COVID-19 on the achievement of SDGs. An invitation to respond to the survey was sent to 305 trade union leaders in five regions. The contact details of these trade union leaders were obtained through the Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) as well as through ACTRAV staff at HQ and in the field. The ILO is the only UN agency in which decisions are taken on a tripartite basis with equal participation of governments, employers and workers.<sup>16</sup> Within this structure, the ITUC is the Secretariat of the ILO Workers' Group of the ILO Governing Body,<sup>17</sup> which is the ILO's executive council.<sup>18</sup> That and the fact that the ITUC represents over 200 million workers in 332 affiliated organizations in 163 countries and territories<sup>19</sup> ensured that we would be comprehensively reaching trade union organizations conducting work on SDG 8 across the globe.

The survey was conducted using the online software SurveyMonkey and consisted of six multiple-choice questions. To gain further insight into the informants' responses, after each question, space was provided for informants to elaborate on their answers. The survey was distributed for a period of 30 days to the participants. Each participant had the option of responding to the survey in either, English, French, Russian, Arabic or Spanish.

## 2.2 Interviews with key respondents

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In addition to the survey, targeted interviews were conducted with trade union technical persons, Global Union Federation (GUF) representatives and labour support organizations including pro-labour academia, both at the regional and global levels. The interviews

<sup>16</sup> *About the ILO*, ILO, n.d., <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm> [accessed in July 2020].

<sup>17</sup> *Secretariat of the Workers' Group of the Governing Body*, ILO, n.d., [https://www.ilo.org/actrav/about/WCMS\\_DOC\\_ATR\\_ABO\\_WGS\\_EN/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/actrav/about/WCMS_DOC_ATR_ABO_WGS_EN/lang--en/index.htm) [accessed in July 2020].

<sup>18</sup> *How the ILO works*, ILO, n.d., <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/lang--en/index.htm> [accessed in July 2020].

<sup>19</sup> List of affiliated organisations, ITUC, 2019, [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/list\\_of\\_affiliates\\_nov\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/list_of_affiliates_nov_2019.pdf) [accessed in July 2020].

were guided by semi-structured questions and focused on the likely impact, challenges and opportunities of COVID-19 on the achievement of SDG 8. In total, 11 interviews were conducted with an average duration of 25 minutes.

## 2.3 Report compilation and secondary sources

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This report presents the information gathered from first-hand sources, but an extensive secondary source review has also been made to contextualise the answers received through the survey and the key informant respondents. Using these information sources, Profundo compiled a report highlighting the main areas where the impact of COVID 19 is likely to be most felt, as well as the main opportunities for trade union advocacy.



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# 3. Background of survey respondents

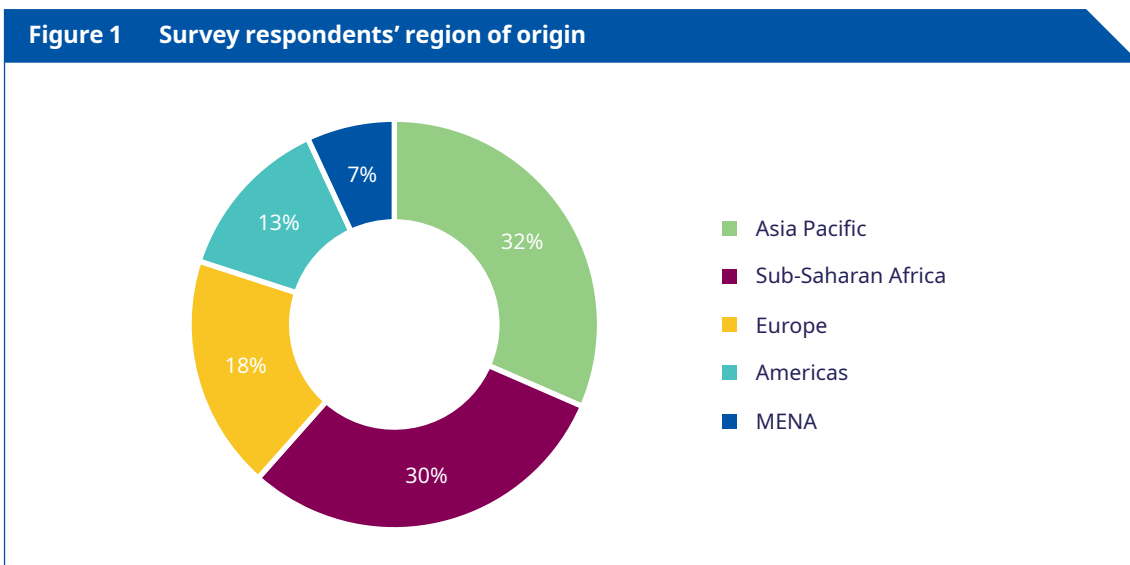
This section presents a profile of the different trade union leaders and key respondents who informed this research.

### 3.1 Profile of survey respondents

This study aimed at gaining a thorough understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 on SDG 8 informed by the experiences of trade union leaders globally. While it acknowledges the importance of a balanced number of men and women in the response pool to obtain results with a gender perspective, it was not possible to draw a gender-balanced sample given the nature of trade union leadership, which is often male. Nonetheless, the sample may well be representative in that it approximates the distribution of gender in the workforce represented by the trade union leaders and/or technocrats. Other than the country of origin and the trade union organizational level, this study did not collect additional demographic data from its respondents.

#### 3.1.1 Geographical coverage of the online survey

In total, 130 trade union leaders completed the online survey. Their responses were organized based on the ITUC geoscheme, which groups national trade union organizations into five regions.<sup>20</sup> The highest response rate came from Asia-Pacific (41 informants), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (39), Europe (24), the Americas (17), and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (9) (Figure 1).



<sup>20</sup> *About us*, ITUC, n.d., <https://www.ituc-csi.org/about-us> [accessed in August 2020].



### 3.1.2 Organizational level of survey participants

From the 130 trade union leaders who responded to the online survey, 113 were active at the national level, five globally, four regionally, and two at the sub-regional level. Six informants did not disclose their trade union's organizational level (Figure 2).



## 3.2 Profile of key respondents interviewed

The profile of the key respondents interviewed for this study is provided in the Table below.

**Table 1 List of stakeholder groups and number of persons interviewed**

Stakeholder group (sector/region)	Male	Female	Total
GUF (Food and agriculture)		2	2
GUF (Construction)	1		1
GUF (Health)	1		1
ITUC (Africa)	1	1	2
ITUC (Asia-Pacific)	2		2
ITUC (Americas)	1		
Labour support organization (Americas and Sub-Saharan Africa)	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>

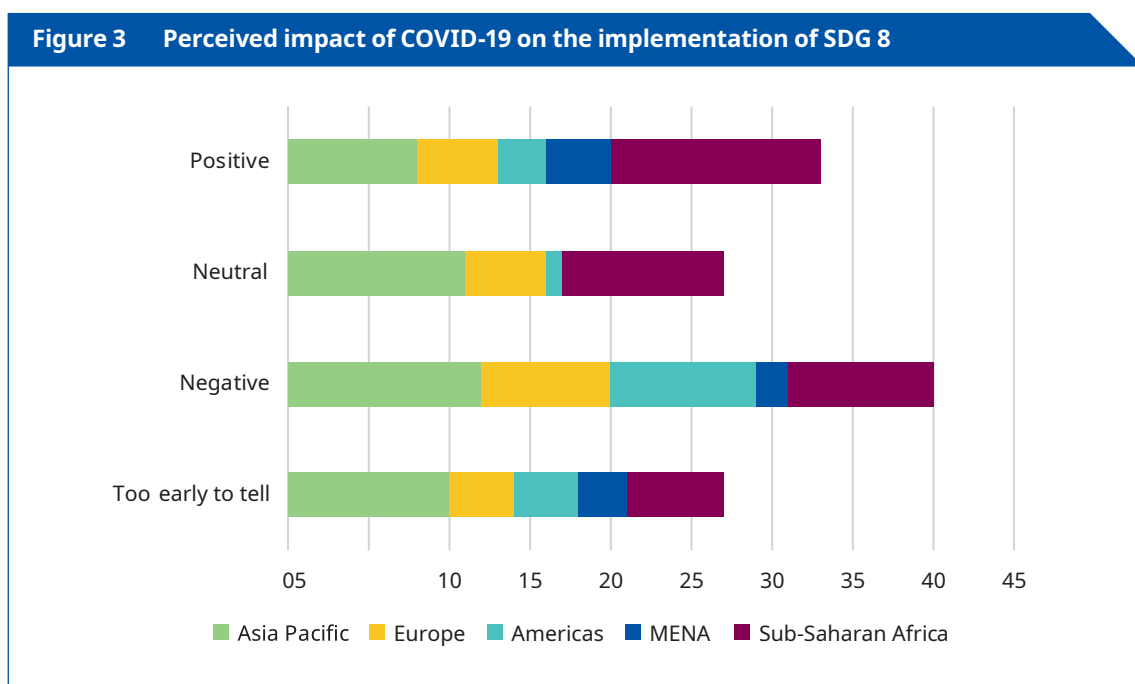


# 4. The impacts of COVID-19 on SDG 8

This section presents the perceptions of trade union leaders worldwide of the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of SDG 8 in their countries as well as on their own work on the SDGs and on the decent work pillars. Five scales were used to capture their assessment of the progress of four SDG targets and two indicators: 'on track', 'rather on track', 'moderately on track', 'rather not on track, and 'off track'.

## 4.1 The likely impacts of COVID-19 on the implementation of SDG 8

SDG 8 strives to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. While all stakeholders (governments, civil society, the private sector, and others) are expected to contribute to the realisation of the 2030 agenda, it is ultimately the countries' responsibility to lead its implementation and secure its success by deploying their own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes.<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, the trade union leaders were asked to opine about the likely impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of SDG 8 in their countries. The most prevalent response was that this will not be a priority in the future, followed by the opinion that it will be prioritised. In equal measures, survey participants noted that it was too early to tell or had a neutral opinion regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on the implementation of SDG 8 (Figure 3).



<sup>21</sup> *The Sustainable Development Agenda*, UN, n.d., <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/> [accessed in August 2020].

The varied views of the trade union leaders resonate with the opinions of key respondents that while COVID-19 has further slowed the aspects of SDG 8 that were lagging, there is also scope for opportunities. Amongst the examples of positive impacts, the informants highlighted the global response to securing safer working environments for essential workers, such as those in the health sector.

On the other hand, job loss and some elements of social protection (such as unemployment benefits) have been insufficiently addressed and it is likely that the impending worldwide economic recession will worsen this situation. Moreover, where public sector workers (especially those in health and education) have been the recipients of widespread societal recognition for their role in containing the pandemic, their workload has become considerably heavier and this has generally not been addressed with adequate policies. This, according to informants, is of utmost importance given the percentage of females working in the health and education sectors who, apart from having to work longer hours, also face increased unpaid care-related responsibilities in their homes, also as a result of the COVID-19 measures.

Moreover, all respondents agreed that the prospects for vulnerable groups of workers such as migrant workers and those in the informal economy have been the most impacted by the global pandemic. Unable to work from home, informal workers are faced with a choice: “to risk dying from COVID-19 or from hunger”. In this regard, the UN estimates that, globally, the income of these workers dropped by 60 per cent in the first month of the crisis, and up to 81 per cent in some regions.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, in many countries migrant workers bear the brunt of COVID restrictions by either “being exposed to infection in densely populated accommodation facilities, or by being forced to return home or not travel to their host countries, thereby losing vital income.”

Various sources agree that the world was not on track with the implementation of the SDGs before the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>23</sup> and the crisis will only compound this situation.<sup>24</sup> In this context, 58 percent of unionised workers worldwide believe that employers are responding badly to the needs of workers (93 percent in the Americas),<sup>25</sup> suggesting that the efforts of

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<sup>22</sup> *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*, UN, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf> [accessed in September 2020].

<sup>23</sup> *Time to act for SDG 8. Integrating decent work, sustained growth, and environmental integrity*, ILO, 2019, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms\\_725984.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_725984.pdf) [accessed in May 2020]; *SDG Decade of Action: Trade Union Policy Responses*, ITUC, 2020, [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/sdg\\_decade\\_of\\_action\\_-\\_trade\\_union\\_policy\\_responses.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/sdg_decade_of_action_-_trade_union_policy_responses.pdf) [accessed in August 2020]; *Can we achieve decent work for all by 2030?*, ILO, n.d., <https://ilostat.ilo.org/can-we-achieve-decent-work-for-all-by-2030/> [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>24</sup> *COVID-19: Stimulating the economy and employment. ILO: As job losses escalate, nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods*, ILO, April 29, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_743036/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_743036/lang-en/index.htm) [accessed in May 2020]; *Unemployment Rates March 2020*, OECD, 2020, <http://www.oecd.org/sdd/labour-stats/unemployment-rates-oecd-05-2020.pdf> [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>25</sup> *ITUC Global COVID-19 Survey*, ITUC, 2020, [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/200603\\_ituc\\_covid-19\\_globalsurveyreport\\_en.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/200603_ituc_covid-19_globalsurveyreport_en.pdf) [accessed in May 2020].

States to achieve better work during the pandemic are insufficient. This is supported by calls by the UN to protect jobs and workers in the context of economic response to and recovery from COVID-19.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the UN has emphasized how the global pandemic “threatens to push back limited gains made on gender equality and exacerbate the feminisation of poverty, vulnerability to violence, and women’s equal participation in the labour force”.<sup>27</sup> Published sources also highlight the increased impacts on workers of sectors in significant trouble, such as the garment industry. Garment workers are very likely to face extreme poverty and health impacts due to the systemic issues within the sector and reliance on low wages, which leave workers without an economic safety net when faced with reduced work or unemployment.<sup>28</sup>

The likely positive prospects of COVID-19 on the implementation of SDG 8 highlighted by written sources relate to the improvement of working conditions for workers whose jobs do not require them to work from a specific location. Working remotely could reduce commuting time for workers, thus increasing their possibilities for a better work-private life balance. However, this concerns mostly workers in high income countries, where data safety and connectivity are not an issue.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, policies need to be developed that adequately secure the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) of employees working from home (further considerations on remote work are discussed in the box below).

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<sup>26</sup> *A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19*, UN, 2020, [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_framework\\_report\\_on\\_covid-19.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_framework_report_on_covid-19.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>27</sup> *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19*, UN, 2020, [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_report\\_socio-economic\\_impact\\_of\\_covid19.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_report_socio-economic_impact_of_covid19.pdf) [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>28</sup> *Sedex Insights Report. COVID-19 Impacts on Businesses*, Sedex, 2020, <https://cdn.sedex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sedex-Insights-Report-COVID-19-Impacts-on-Businesses.pdf> [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>29</sup> *Business as unusual: How COVID-19 could change the future of work*, UN News, May 27, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064802> [accessed in June 2020].

### Remote work and future of work

Almost the entire global workforce – 93 percent of the world's workers – live in countries where lockdown measures or partial closure of businesses were imposed in the first half of 2020.<sup>30</sup> In most countries, this included a mandate to work remotely as much as possible. While promoting remote work may be a key strategy to fight the pandemic while safeguarding economic productivity, most workers are not able to heed this call. According to ILO estimates, only around 18 percent of the global workforce work in occupations and live in countries with the necessary infrastructure that allows them to work from home.<sup>31</sup>

Workers in sectors that are classified as essential (such as healthcare, public transportation and food supply) are not able to perform their jobs remotely and, as a result, are disproportionately exposed to the risk of contracting the virus, especially where PPE and other protective measures are lacking. On top of that, the world's 2 billion informal economy workers usually earn their living on markets, construction sites or in domestic care settings. For them, lockdowns and the inability to go to their place of work presents a complete loss of income.<sup>32</sup> Workers in low- and middle-income countries are more likely to lack the necessary technological infrastructure, such as a speedy internet connection or a well-functioning computer, to be able to efficiently perform their tasks at home.<sup>33</sup>

But even in countries and occupations where remote work is possible, the call to work from home also lays bare inequalities that the Decent Work Agenda and SDG 8 had set out to eradicate. In Europe, managers are 80 percent more likely to be able to work from home than the clerical employees they supervise. In general, high-skilled and highly educated workers are more than twice as likely to be able to work from home (76 percent) than low-skilled workers (31 percent).<sup>35</sup> Young workers, women, migrant workers and ethnic minorities are also up to three times less likely to be able to work remotely due to their overrepresentation in low-skilled, informal and clerical occupations as well as in the essential sectors.<sup>36</sup>

For those workers for whom it is an option, remote work does provide numerous benefits. It reduces commuting time and thereby also pollution, it provides possibilities for a better work-leisure time balance, and it allows companies to stay in operation despite COVID-19 measures.<sup>37</sup> While supporting those nearly 600 million workers worldwide who are able to perform their jobs remotely can be key to limiting the circulation of the virus, it is clearly not an option for the vast majority of workers. For this reason, it is crucial that policy frameworks be developed which adequately secure the Occupational Safety and Health of both workers who can stay home and those who cannot.

<sup>30</sup> *COVID-19 and the world of work. Fifth edition. Updated estimates and analysis*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_749399.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749399.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>31</sup> *Working from Home: Estimating the worldwide potential*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743447.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743447.pdf) [accessed in September 2020].

<sup>32</sup> *COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy - Immediate responses and policy challenges*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743623.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743623.pdf) [accessed in July 2020].

<sup>33</sup> *Who gets to work from home? A suddenly relevant indicator of privilege and inequality in labour market outcomes*, UNU-Wider, Piotr Lewandowski, 2020, <https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/who-gets-work-home> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> *Labour Supply in the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Empirical Evidence on Hours, Home Office, and Expectations*, IZA Institute of Labor Economics, 2020, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp13158.pdf> [accessed in September 2020].

<sup>36</sup> *Not everybody can work from home. Black and Hispanic workers are much less likely to be able to telework*, Working Economics Blog, March 19, 2020, <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-and-hispanic-workers-are-much-less-likely-to-be-able-to-work-from-home/> [accessed in September 2020].

<sup>37</sup> *'Business as unusual': How COVID-19 could change the future of work*, UN News, May 27, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064802> [accessed in June 2020].

## 4.2 The likely impacts of COVID-19 on organizations' SDG work

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Through their role representing and defending the interests of workers across the globe, trade unions are instrumental in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. From this viewpoint, they have undertaken to build an independent worker's perspective on the implementation of the SDGs. Trade unions engage in their own in-depth monitoring process at national level, focussing on a number of priority thematic areas, as well as on the implementation process as a whole.<sup>38</sup> This survey question refers to the trade union's own national initiatives, including monitoring, to ensure their governments are on track to fulfil their commitments<sup>39</sup> and how, in their opinion, these endeavours will be impacted by COVID-19.

Against this backdrop, 67 of the trade union officials believe that their organizations' SDG work will gain more prominence as a result of the global pandemic. Thirty-two respondents deemed it too early to tell how COVID-19 will impact their organizations' SDG work, while 22 of them believe that this work will remain the same. Nine respondents believe that it will become less important (Figure 4).

The findings above are supported by the views of the key respondents who see a silver lining in the global pandemic, as it has laid bare structural conditions that subject many workers the world over to labour rights violations ranging from poor OSH practices to low social protection coverage and exclusion. Moreover, "massive job loss has been experienced both in high- and low-income countries, thereby increasing the need for campaigning for better social protection measures." One key respondent discussed how unionised workers in the construction sector will need to devote more endeavours to negotiating better working conditions not only through collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), but also through advocacy. Economic recovery efforts include strong stimuli for the construction sector to create more employment. However, more jobs do not mean better jobs, especially since the construction sector increasingly relies on subcontracted workers who are not protected under most legislative frameworks.

Surveys conducted by different global trade union federations highlight the need for increased advocacy for better work in the context of COVID-19. For example, over 55 percent of workers in the health sector surveyed by Public Services International (PSI) reported not having received PPE since the beginning of the pandemic, and 62 percent of workers who could come in contact with COVID-infected people during the course of duty had not been provided with this either.<sup>40</sup>

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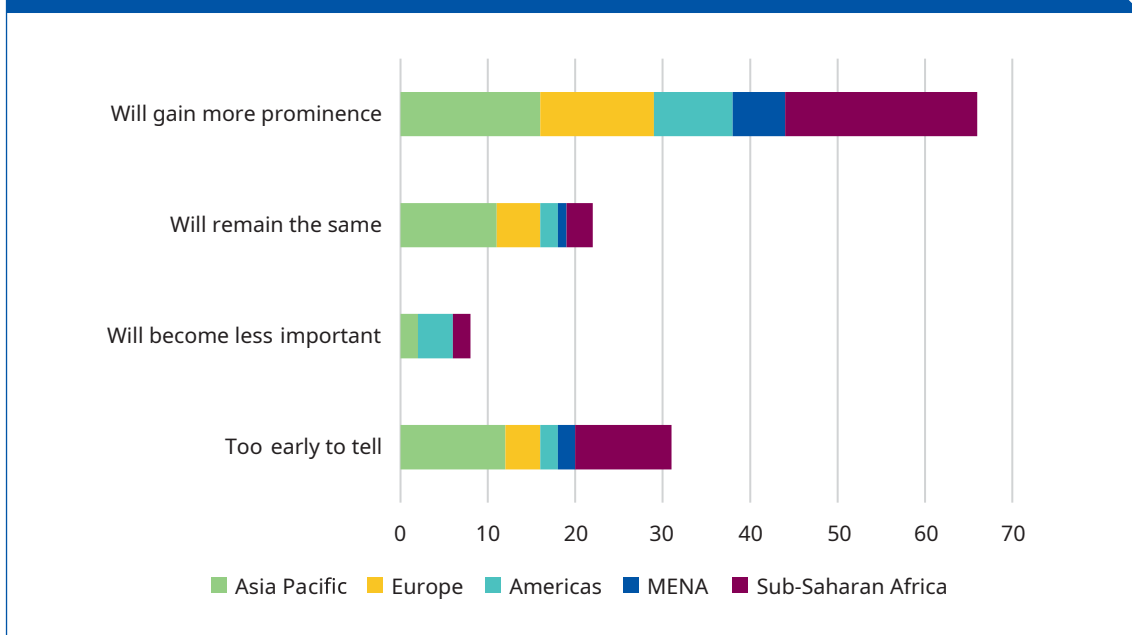
<sup>38</sup> *A Trade Union Take on the SDGs*, TUDCN-ITUC, 2018, [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/tudcn\\_sdgs\\_global\\_report\\_2018\\_en.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/tudcn_sdgs_global_report_2018_en.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>39</sup> *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, ITUC, n.d., [https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda?debut\\_messages\\_523=30](https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda?debut_messages_523=30) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>40</sup> *COVID-19 Union Response Survey Global*, PSI, 2020, [https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/310559\\_5eb90e8d452862.42428113](https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/310559_5eb90e8d452862.42428113) [accessed in May 2020].

Moreover, 37 percent of unionised workers worldwide believe their government is responding badly to the needs of workers affected by COVID-19 (73 percent in the Americas, 35 percent in Africa, 53 percent in Asia-Pacific, 18 percent in Europe). In response to the results of these surveys, GUFs and national trade union organizations have increased their advocacy efforts for better work in the context of the global pandemic. These efforts range from mobilising for the most vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, to calling for recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational disease, to launching proposals to end exploitative labour conditions in the food sector that have been exacerbated by the global pandemic.

**Figure 4** Perceived impact of COVID-19 on trade unions' work on SDGs



### 4.3 The likely impacts of COVID-19 on four SDG 8 targets and indicators

The UN has defined 12 Targets and 17 Indicators for SDG 8. Of these, the ILO is the custodian of seven targets and nine indicators.<sup>41</sup> The following section presents the trade union leaders' views on the progress made to date on four SDG 8 targets and two indicators, as well as the likely impacts of COVID-19 on the achievement of these targets and indicators.

#### 4.3.1 Target 8.5: Full and productive employment and decent work by 2030

SDG target 8.5 aims at achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men by 2030, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and

<sup>41</sup> *Decent Work Indicators in the SDGs. Global Indicator Framework*, ILO, n.d., [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/presentation/wcms\\_493329.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/presentation/wcms_493329.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].



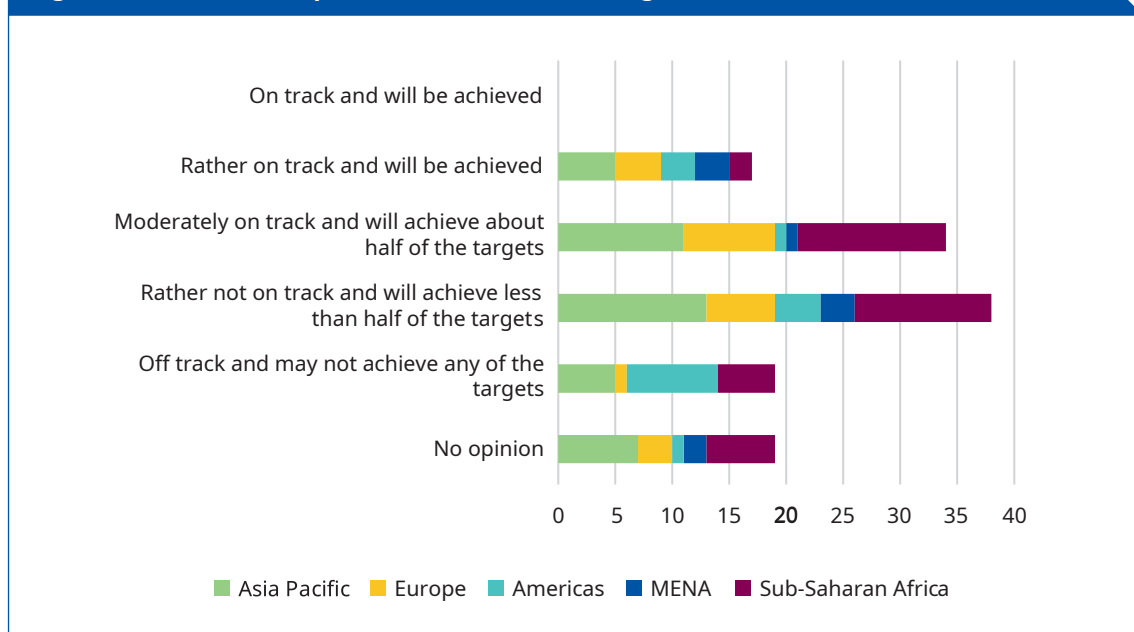
equal pay for work of equal value. From this perspective, none of the trade union leaders thinks that SDG target 8.5 is well on track or that the desired results will be achieved. Many of the respondents in fact reiterated that the world was not on track to achieve the targets in the first place, and the situation has deteriorated further in the pandemic.

Instead, 19 respondents believe that this target is off track or rather not on track and that less than half of the expected results will be achieved (39 respondents). Further, over a quarter (34 persons) of the trade union leaders believe that this target is moderately on track and that about half of the expected results will be achieved. In similar proportions, respondents believe that either the target is rather on track (18) or totally off track or have no opinion (19 respondents) concerning this target's achievements to date (Figure 5).

A couple of the trade union leaders shared their frustration about governments' focus on the quantity but not on the quality of employment. A representative from the Asia-Pacific region explains:

The economic growth does not reflect progress in the four pillars of decent work [...] the focus is always on employment, but government policies on employment do not focus on decent work. The pandemic will hinder the implementation further. Asia-Pacific has the highest rate of informal employment in the world and the longest working hours and this precarity is continuously increasing. We probably have a regressive development. If there is no decisive action from governments soon, inequality will increase, and decent work will deteriorate.

**Figure 5** Perceived impact of COVID-19 on SDG target 8.5



The respondents identified various barriers to achieving decent work, such as “the increasing casualisation of work” through subcontracting, the gig economy and flexibilisation, the high and increasing rate of informal work and a lack of social protection mechanisms covering all workers. The unions also highlight trends of union-busting, where unionised workers face criminalisation, layoffs and even violence. In some cases, the respondents opine that governments and politicians have been unwilling to improve the situation, and representatives in low income countries indicated that there is also simply a lack of public funding to invest in social security and decent work, amidst concerns of corruption and misuse of funds.

Multiple trade union leaders also shared their disappointment in the ability of the SDGs to contribute to achieving decent work, stating that the SDGs have been insufficiently integrated into policies and that the response of the ILO and other UN agencies to the COVID-19 crisis did not sufficiently call for integrated approaches while upholding all standards. Some representatives admit that the SDGs have not always been a priority for unions either, and in countries such as the Philippines and Namibia, unions have been struggling to survive due to declining membership and legislative barriers that hinder their effectiveness.

The survey respondents’ views on the how the global pandemic impacts the achievement of full and productive employment align with the opinions of the key respondents who do not believe that SDG Target 8.5 will be timely met. Against this backdrop, the effects of COVID-19 on workers in the garment sector also project a grim outlook. The social distancing measures taken in the world’s largest apparel markets have had devastating effects leading to the closure of thousands of garment factories and millions of workers being laid off without a social safety net. As the virus spreads within the garment-producing countries themselves, more factories will be forced to close, putting potentially millions more workers out of work.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, it is possible that retailers will cease or at least reduce their operations, thereby also reducing the workforce in end markets.

#### *4.3.2 Indicator 8.5.1: Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation, and persons with disabilities*

Departing from the recognition that earnings are a key aspect of the quality of employment and living conditions, SDG indicator 8.5.1 provides information on the mean hourly earnings from paid employment of employees by sex, occupation, age, and disability status.<sup>43</sup> With regard to this, the majority of the trade union leaders (35 respondents) believe that efforts to achieve SDG indicator 8.5.1 are moderately on track and that about half of the objectives will be achieved. Almost half of the informants have a negative view of the progress achieved

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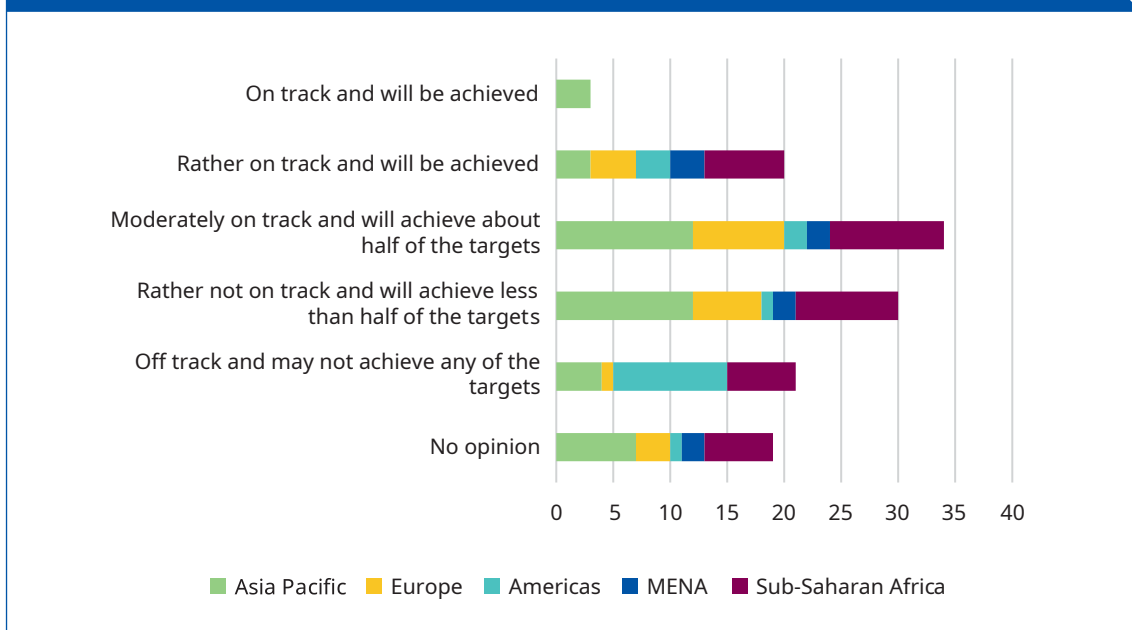
<sup>42</sup> *COVID-19 - an existential crisis for the garment industry*, IndustriALL, March 23, 2020, <http://www.industriall-union.org/covid-19-an-existential-crisis-for-the-garment-industry> [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>43</sup> *SDG Indicator Metadata Repository. Indicator 8.5.1*, United Nations Statistics Division, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-05-01.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].

so far, believing that COVID-19 will impact measures that are currently rather not on track in a way (31 respondents), or altogether off track (22). In contrast, fewer trade union leaders believe that progress is rather on track (20 respondents) or on track (3 respondents) and that objectives will be achieved. Nineteen respondents had not formed an opinion about the likely impact of COVID-19 on SDG indicator 8.5.1 (Figure 6).

Several respondents shared their concerns about the increased rate of informal employment, which is generally associated with lower wages, as well as the reduced incomes that formal workers are facing due to reductions in work hours and wage cuts. One trade union leader shared an example: "In Kenya, lockdowns have been mandated within the cities, and without public transport [it is] very difficult for daily labourers to reach their jobs in the city. An example of this is daily construction workers who usually just show up at the construction sites in the morning to ask for work, [but] with the curfews this has not been possible and hence they have not had any income." Another respondent from Africa confirmed the same issue, and said "the informal economy is hardest hit, as you cannot work from home. As you cannot go to the market, you cannot get your income."

**Figure 6** Perceived impact of COVID-19 on SDG indicator 8.5.1



One of the major concerns for all trade union leaders is also the loss of income for migrant workers. Many trade union representatives emphasized that COVID measures taken by their governments to guarantee a minimum income and provide social security had not been extended to migrant workers. In the MENA region, trade union leaders see how indebted migrant workers are, as they have lost their income but still need to pay off high recruitment fees. Regarding the situation of migrant workers, one respondent emphasized: "The crisis has exposed the vulnerability that already existed."

The rather negative views of the trade union leaders on the impact of COVID-19 on SDG indicator 8.5.1 are in line with different published reports on this issue. For example, the Latin American and the MENA regions will not only face rampant unemployment in the aftermath of COVID-19, but also a deterioration in employment quality, due to the increase in informality and decline in hours and wages.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, some of the key respondents interviewed for this study do not think achieving SDG 8 is feasible in a context where some countries have gone from middle income to low income country status within 6 months.

#### 4.3.3 Indicator 8.5.2: Unemployment rate, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities

SDG indicator 8.5.2 concerns the percentage of persons in the labour force who are unemployed. This indicator is grounded in the rationale that the employment rate is an indicator of an economy's ability to efficiently and effectively absorb its labour force and of the performance of the labour market.<sup>45</sup> Against this backdrop, the trade unions leaders' perception on the progress achieved so far is slightly skewed towards the positive, with a quarter of respondents (33) who believe that progress is moderately on track and that about half of the objectives will be achieved during and post-COVID-19. 20 respondents opined that progress is rather on track, and two respondents that it is on track.

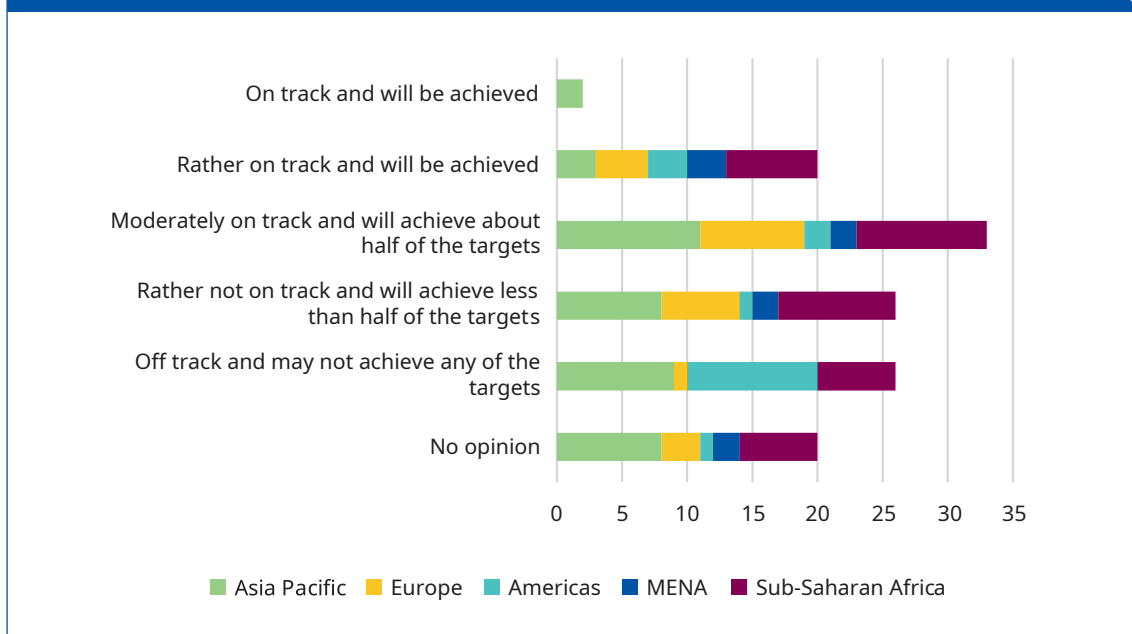
In contrast, 27 informants believe that progress is rather not on track and that less than half of the objectives will be reached, and another 27 believe that progress is off track and that the objectives may not be achieved. 20 trade union leaders do not have an opinion on the progress of SDG indicator 8.5.2 to date and the likely impacts of COVID-19 on its achievement (Figure 7).

Unemployment rates are certainly one of the main concerns amongst trade union leaders. A representative from Afghanistan explained that "the unemployment rate is very high in our country, [and] we don't have unemployment insurance." A respondent from South Africa stated that "approximately three million people lost their jobs over the lockdown period, representing an 18 percent decline in employment from 17 million people employed in February 2020, to 14 million people employed in April 2020." Several other trade union representatives also indicated that the unemployment rates and lack of job creation was already worrisome in their countries before the outbreak of the pandemic. Respondents pointed out that most of the workers who have lost their jobs have now been pushed into the informal economy.

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<sup>44</sup> *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, CEPAL, 2020, [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45582/4/S2000306\\_en.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45582/4/S2000306_en.pdf) [accessed in May 2020]; *COVID-19 Labour Market Impact and Policy Response in the Arab States*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_744832.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms_744832.pdf) [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>45</sup> *SDG Indicator Metadata Repository*. Indicator 8.5.2, United Nations Statistics Division, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-05-02.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].

**Figure 7** Perceived impact of COVID-19 on SDG indicator 8.5.2

Many unionists feel that their governments should do more, both to protect existing jobs and to ensure that new jobs are created in the formal sector. Where this is lacking, particularly in countries where social security systems and unemployment benefits are weak or non-existent, unions observe that informality is growing exponentially. Several respondents indicated that governments should ideally protect jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises, but instead most funding is going to big businesses, according to the unions.

Most of the respondents are specifically concerned about migrant workers, who have lost their jobs in great numbers. According to the unions, their situation is particularly precarious because migrant workers can usually claim little to no social security benefits, often lose their housing when contracts are terminated, are often in debt with recruitment agencies and may lose their visas and work permits as soon as they get laid off.

Adding to this rather negative outlook on the impact of COVID-19 on SDG 8.5.2 are figures on the unemployment rates of vulnerable groups such as women and workers with disabilities. The latter have been found to be disproportionately affected by the recession caused by the global pandemic.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, 527 million women (41 percent of the total female workforce) are employed in the five sectors at the highest risk of job losses (accommodation and food services, real estate, business and administrative activities, manufacturing, and wholesale/retail trade).<sup>47</sup> In the context of the global pandemic, migrant women, who make up the

<sup>46</sup> *nTIDE April 2020 Jobs Report: COVID Recession Hits Workers with Disabilities Harder*, Kessler Foundation, May 8, 2020, <https://kesslerfoundation.org/press-release/ntide-april-2020-jobs-report-covid-recession-hits-workers-disabilities-harder> [accessed in August 2020].

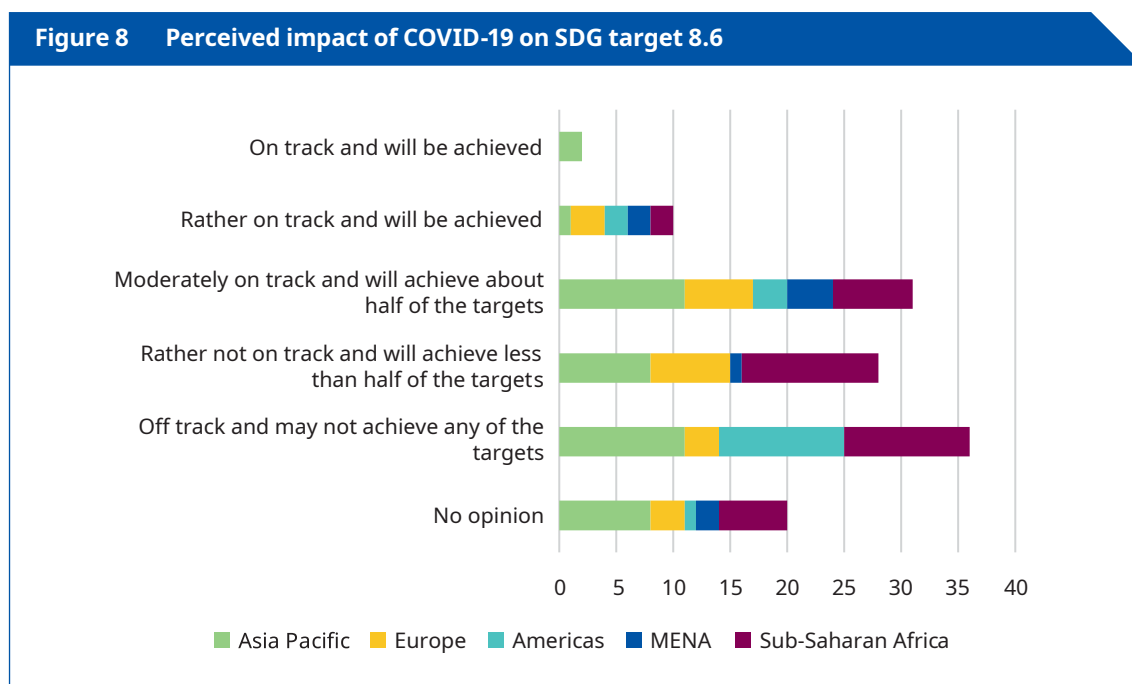
<sup>47</sup> *The COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_744685.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744685.pdf) [accessed in June 2020].

bulk of the workforce in the MENA region's domestic work sector, are not only especially vulnerable to unemployment but also to gender-based violence.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.3.4 Target 8.6: Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2020

SDG target 8.6 aims at substantially reducing the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2020. Progress towards this objective is measured through this target's only indicator, which looks at the proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (also known as the "youth NEET rate").<sup>49</sup> In this context, half of the trade union leaders' opinions slant towards the negative with 37 respondents believing that progress is off track and 29 respondents believing that progress is rather off track and that less than half of the objectives will be achieved. In this context, one respondent from Sub-Saharan Africa argues that "while, on paper, there are intentions to improve the situation of youth, the implementation of these plans has fallen short of success they aimed to achieve."

In contrast, almost a quarter of all the trade union leaders who responded to the survey (32) feel that moderate progress has been made, while ten respondents think that progress is rather on track and more than half of the objectives will be achieved. Two respondents believe that progress is fully on track, and 20 respondents have no formed opinion about the achievements so far or how SDG target 8.6 will be affected during and post-COVID-19 (Figure 8).



<sup>48</sup> MENA: *Workers' rights on the line during COVID-19*, Amnesty International, April 30, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/mena-workers-rights-on-the-line-during-covid19/> [accessed in September 2020].

<sup>49</sup> *SDG Indicator Metadata Repository. Indicator 8.6.1*, United Nations Statistics Division, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-06-01.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].

The rather negative outlook of trade union leaders on target 8.6 echoes repeated sentiments that the economic effects of the global pandemic disproportionately affect young people: prior to COVID-19, 77 percent of young workers (328 million) were in informal jobs compared to 60 percent of adult workers.<sup>50</sup> With the pandemic, young people not only face increased difficulties to enter the labour market, but they also face disruptions to education, training and work-based learning (which could reduce potential employment opportunities and earnings in the future).<sup>51</sup>

These prospects for young people are observed across sectors. For example, one in ten workers in the transport sector under the age of 30 has become unemployed in the last months and over 70 percent of young workers have worked fewer hours and earned less compared to older workers since the pandemic.<sup>52</sup> High youth unemployment in the context of economic recessions (such as the current one, spurred by COVID-19) is grounded in the fact that young people tend to be employed in highly affected occupations (such as those associated with lower levels of education).<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, young people constitute a large share of all new job seekers, who have to compete with more experienced workers for fewer jobs. Further, because they earn less than more experienced workers, it is also easier to fire them, either because they tend to work in less protected jobs (such as temporary and informal jobs), or because most legislations prescribe higher costs for firing more seasoned workers.<sup>54</sup>

From an intersectional perspective, young women are even more affected by the global health crisis. Young women spend considerably more time doing unpaid care and household work as compared to young men. Widespread closures of schools and the unavailability of childcare services are intensifying the double burden of care often borne by young women,<sup>55</sup> which further limits their ability to earn an income.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *ILO Monitor – COVID-19 and the world of work. Fourth edition*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_745963.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>51</sup> *Preventing exclusion from the labour market: Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_746031.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_746031.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>52</sup> *Young transport workers and COVID-19*, ITF, 2020, <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/reports-publications/young-transport-workers-and-covid-19> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>53</sup> *Youth and COVID-19: Impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_753026.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_753026.pdf) [accessed in September 2020].

<sup>54</sup> *Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis in Asia and the Pacific*, ADB-ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_753369.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_753369.pdf) [accessed in September 2020].

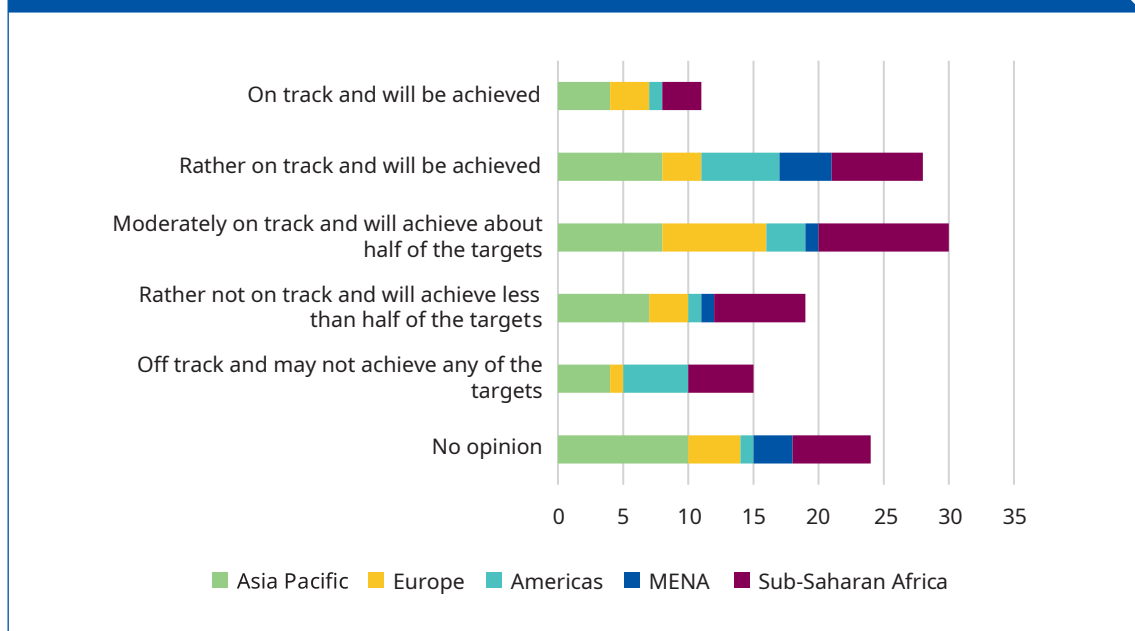
<sup>55</sup> *Preventing exclusion from the labour market: Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_746031.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_746031.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>56</sup> *Ignored, undervalued, and underpaid: The impact of Corona virus on young women's work, finances, and well-being*, Young Women's Trust, 2020, [https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/assets/0001/3590/Ignored\\_Undervalued\\_and\\_Underpaid\\_Report.pdf](https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/assets/0001/3590/Ignored_Undervalued_and_Underpaid_Report.pdf) [accessed in September 2020].

#### 4.3.5 Target 8.7: Eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, worst forms of child labour by 2025

The aim of SDG target 8.7 is to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. This target's only indicator (8.7.1) calculates the proportion and number of children aged 5 to 17 years engaged in child labour as defined by the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), by sex and age.<sup>57</sup>

**Figure 9** Perceived impact of COVID-19 on SDG target 8.7



From this perspective, more than half of the trade union leaders' opinions are rather positive: almost a quarter of the total (31 respondents) believe that progress is moderately on track and that about half of the objectives will be achieved, 28 respondents think that progress is rather on track, and 11 respondents think that progress is on track and that objectives will be achieved. In contrast, 20 respondents perceive progress as rather not on track, and 15 respondents think that progress is off track and that the objectives may not be achieved during or after the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, 24 of the trade union leaders who responded to the survey had not yet formed an opinion on the progress made so far towards achieving SDG target 8.7 (Figure 9).

<sup>57</sup> SDG Indicator Metadata Repository. Indicator 8.7.1, United Nations Statistics Division, 2019, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-07-01.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].



The rather positive views on the achievements so far as well as the impact of the global pandemic on SDG target 8.7 can be explained by the steady progress towards eradicating child labour globally. While this is a laudable achievement, the COVID crisis could lead to the first rise in child labour again after 20 years of declining figures.<sup>58</sup> In this context, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) points out that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global crisis caused by quarantine imposed on all countries of the world, even more children are being forced into child labour, prey to the appetite of big businesses which use child labour to reduce loss of profits.<sup>59</sup> This problem is seen across all regions, even in those with strong legislation against child labour such as Europe, where children work informally in agriculture and domestic work and in some cases are sexually exploited or recruited for criminal activity.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.3.6 Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers

SDG target 8.8 aims to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, women migrants, and those in precarious employment. Two indicators are used to measure progress towards meeting this target. SDG indicator 8.8.1, which calculates fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status, and SDG indicator 8.8.2, which looks at the level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status.<sup>61</sup>

Against this background, almost half of the trade union leaders who responded to the survey feel that progress has been made: a quarter of respondents (33) believe that the objective is moderately on track to being met and that about half of the targets will be achieved during and post-COVID-19; 22 respondents think progress is rather on track; and five percent believe it is on track and that objectives will be achieved.

In opposition to that view, 31 of the trade union leaders perceive progress as rather not on track and 18 of them noted that progress is altogether off-track and that the objectives will not be met during or post-COVID 19. Lastly, 20 respondents did not have an opinion concerning the progress of SDG target 8.8 to date (Figure 10).

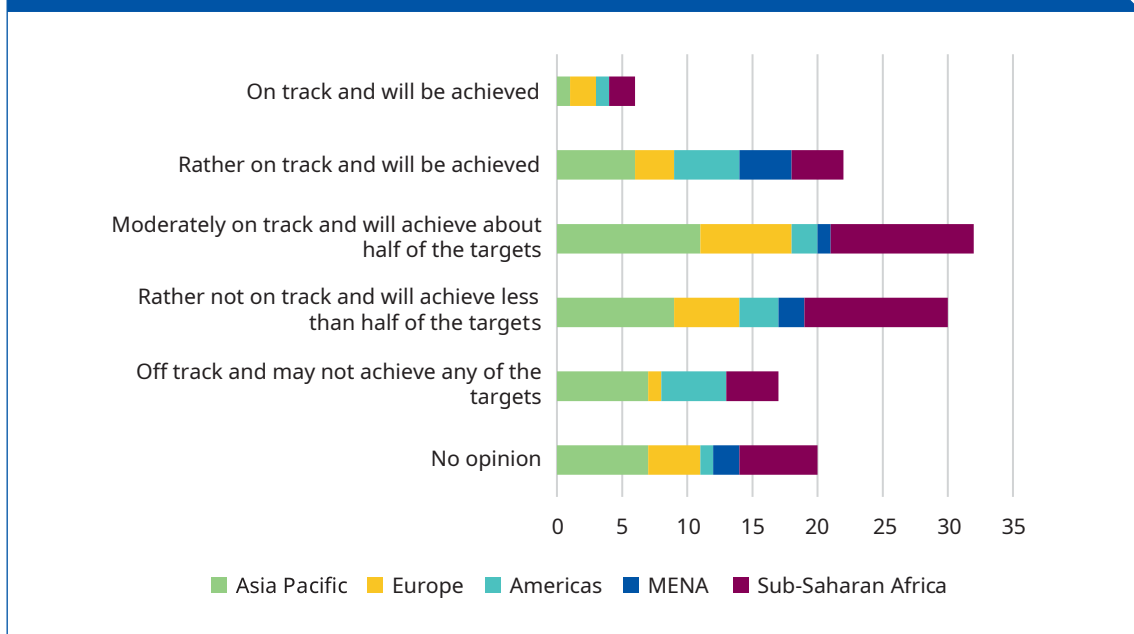
<sup>58</sup> *COVID-19 may push millions more children into child labour*, UNICEF-ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms\\_747421.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_747421.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>59</sup> *June 12th World Day Against Child Labor*, WFTU, 2020, <http://www.wftucentral.org/june-12th-world-day-against-child-labor/> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>60</sup> *Europe risks seeing a rise in child labour*, Council of Europe, 2020, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/-/europe-risks-seeing-a-rise-in-child-labour> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>61</sup> *SDG Indicator Metadata Repository. Indicator 8.8.1*, United Nations Statistics Division, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-08-01.pdf> [accessed in August 2020]; *SDG Indicator Metadata Repository. Indicator 8.8.2*, United Nations Statistics Division, 2017, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-08-08-02.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].

Figure 10 Perceived impact of COVID-19 on SDG target 8.8



In line with the respondents' opinions, safety at work has seen both improvements and retrogressions. As discussed in section 4.2, the global pandemic has caused some workplaces to become more unsafe for workers. For example, almost a third of unionised health sector workers have reported receiving dated OHS training and guidance information on infection prevention and control and the use of PPE.<sup>62</sup> In this context, according to one of the key respondents, "migration is playing a great role in unveiling the gap in the workforce. Eighty percent of the global nursing workforce care for less than 50 percent of the total global population (mostly in the global North) and migrant health workers are invariably forced to accept very precarious working conditions compared to their native counterparts."

Likewise, transport workers, particularly women, are at a disproportionate risk at work due to increased exposure and the lack of protective equipment. This is due to the sector's high segregation, where women are on the frontlines of the pandemic in customer-facing and cleaning roles.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> COVID-19 Union Response Survey Global, PSI, 2020, [https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/310559\\_5eb90e8d452862.42428113](https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/310559_5eb90e8d452862.42428113) [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>63</sup> Women Transport Workers' rights and COVID-19, ITF, 2020, <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/reports-publications/women-transport-workers-rights-and-covid-19> [accessed in August 2020].



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# 5. The likely impacts of COVID-19 on different decent work pillars

This section presents the trade union leaders' perceptions of how COVID-19 will impact the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda: employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue. Moreover, survey respondents were asked to rank the biggest SDG challenges in their countries. Their views are discussed in respect to the opinions of key respondents and the published sources reviewed for this study.

## 5.1 The Decent Work Agenda

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The ILO has developed an agenda for the community of work called the Decent Work Agenda, which strives to achieve decent work for all. The ILO defines decent work as “opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”<sup>64</sup> In the context of SDG 8, this vision runs across the entire 2030 Agenda with a specific goal: to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.”<sup>65</sup>

### 5.1.1 Employment creation

In the context of the Decent Work Agenda, employment creation refers to securing access to productive and freely chosen employment for all.<sup>66</sup> In this regard, a third of the trade union leaders (40 respondents) think that COVID-19 will positively impact employment creation. One of the respondents' most common explanations for this is that “the crisis situation will put employment at the centre of government policies.” Another respondent explains: “During the lockdown, the importance of relying on local goods was brought into sharp focus, thus promotion of local industries has become a priority.”

In contrast, over a quarter of the survey respondents (36 respondents) expect employment creation to be negatively impacted by the global pandemic. Various respondents criticize the crisis response of their governments, stating that the financial support has focused more on keeping big corporations afloat rather than protecting and creating jobs, particularly in the informal sector and for migrant workers. A trade union representative from East Africa stated that “the stimulus packages supported by governments [focus] less on supporting

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<sup>64</sup> *Decent work*, ILO, n.d., <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>65</sup> *2030 development agenda: Major breakthrough for world of work*, ILO, August 4, 2015, [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_388407/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_388407/lang--en/index.htm) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>66</sup> *Decent work*, ILO, n.d., <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm> [accessed in August 2020].

those who have lost their jobs in the form of financial support, i.e. unemployment benefits, [but] there is a lot of stress on big business and inadequate measures for the informal sector that employs more than 60% of East Africans.”

In Latin America, one respondent emphasized that

the situation prior to the pandemic was already extremely vulnerable with respect to job creation. Even with economic growth, the countries did not significantly generate jobs and those generated were mainly in services and in sectors where there is no recognition of the dependency relationship. The responses to the pandemic of most governments and many companies are not guaranteeing the stability of employment and wages for workers. On the contrary, in many ways they reproduce and consolidate pre-pandemic vulnerabilities.

Thirty respondents believe it is too soon to tell what the impact will be, and 18 percent believe that the effect of the global pandemic on employment creation will be neither positive nor negative (Figure 11). One respondent explained that “there is no clear strategy on how to approach the situation currently,” whereas others emphasized that there are positive signs that the government is willing to reform and promote employment, yet a “structural economic transformation agenda remains constrained by limited fiscal space due to debt and lack of political leadership to push for such reforms.”

It is worth noting that the respondents’ mostly positive opinion on the impact of the global pandemic on employment creation is not supported by the different prognoses on this issue by specialized agencies. Globally, an estimated 400 million full time jobs were lost during the second quarter of 2020 and another 340 million full-time jobs will likely be lost by the end of the year.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, unemployment will remain high until at least 2021,<sup>68</sup> and long-term effects of COVID-19 can be expected in economies suffering financial crises or reliant on fossil energy exports (such as some MENA countries).<sup>69</sup> As stated earlier, although some sectors (such as construction) will likely see a surge in jobs as part of the economic recovery measures, recovery will not be uniform across the globe. Latin America, for example, will see the world’s worst economic and social crisis in decades with the hospitality, real state, trade and manufacturing, and administrative sectors expected to be the most affected.<sup>70</sup>

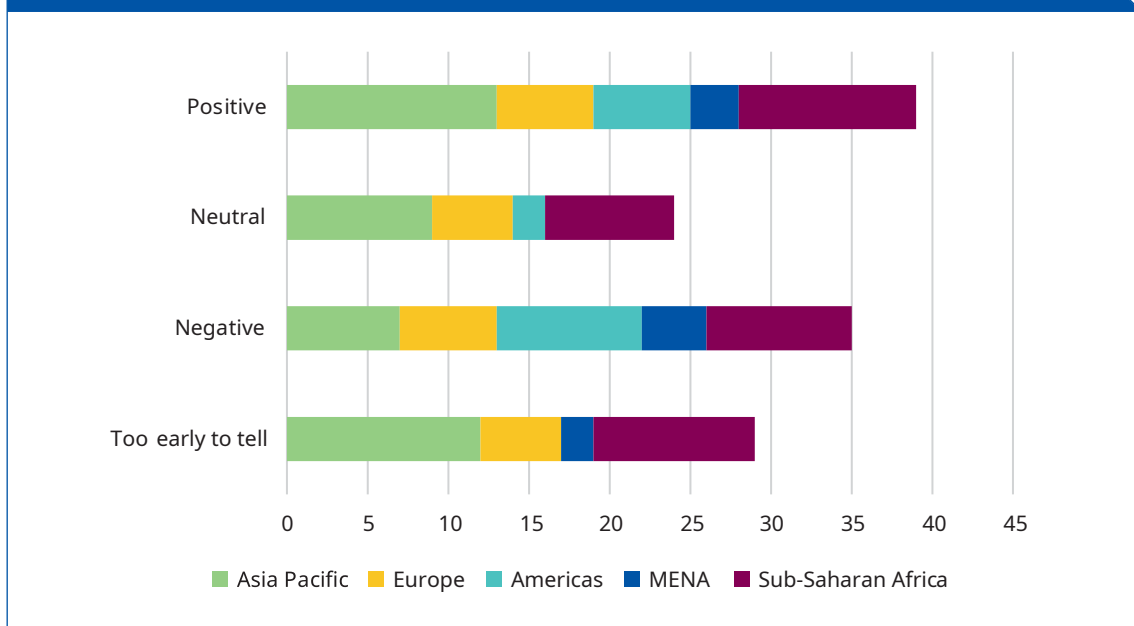
<sup>67</sup> *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fifth edition*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_749399.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749399.pdf) [accessed in July 2020].

<sup>68</sup> *OECD Employment Outlook 2020. Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis*, OECD, 2020, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/1686c758-en/1/2/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/1686c758-en&csp\\_fc80786ea6a3a7b4628d3f05b1e2e5d7&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/1686c758-en/1/2/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/1686c758-en&csp_fc80786ea6a3a7b4628d3f05b1e2e5d7&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>69</sup> *Lasting Scars of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, World Bank, 2020, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/112641588788257004/Global-Economic-Prospect-2020-Topical-Issue-1.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>70</sup> *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, CEPAL, 2020, [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45582/4/S2000306\\_en.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45582/4/S2000306_en.pdf) [accessed in May 2020].

Figure 11 Perceived impact of COVID-19 on employment creation



### 5.1.2 Rights at work

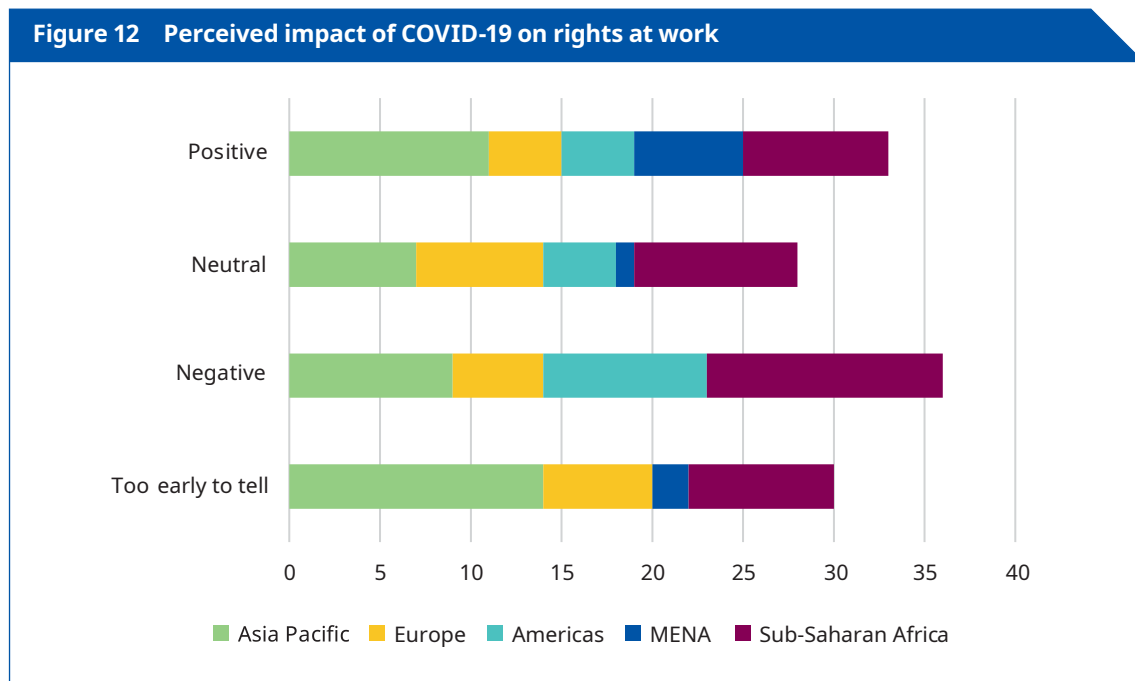
Rights at work are labour standards applicable to all countries in all stages of development, regardless of whether they have ratified the relevant ILO Conventions. Rights at work include freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.<sup>71</sup>

When asked about how COVID-19 will impact rights at work, almost a third of the trade union leaders (37 respondents) responded that the impact will be negative. The most common concern among the respondents is that governments focus on retaining jobs and supporting businesses, but in the process are willing to compromise workers' rights. One respondent clarified that "there may be interest in approving legislation that makes working hours more flexible to the detriment of current regulations." Many trade union representatives point out that labour rights are already widely violated in their countries under the veil of COVID-19, such as forcing workers into unpaid leave, reducing work hours, hindering collective bargaining and failing to protect the health and safety of workers during the pandemic. Trade union leaders from India are particularly worried about the situation, as one respondent clarified: "Instead of protecting the employees, the Government of India has decided to withdraw most of the Trade Union Rights and is trying to bring new legislations in the name of reforms, which are more advantageous to the employers."

<sup>71</sup> ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, ILO, 2010, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms\\_716594.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_716594.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

Contrary to that view, a quarter of the respondents (34 respondents) believe that rights at work will be impacted positively by the global pandemic, indicating that the crisis may push governments to implement policy reforms with more recognition for workers. Twenty-nine of the trade union leaders believe that the impact will be neither negative nor positive or mixed. Some union representatives explained that it depends on the sector, as some industries have seen increased recognition for workers whereas others remain vulnerable. Other respondents believe that because this is now a major priority for trade unions, unionised workers may be more protected, but overall the enforcement of labour inspections has been particularly difficult through the crisis and violations are going unreported; informal workers and those who are not unionised are particularly at risk.

30 respondents think it is too early to tell what the impact of COVID-19 will be on this pillar of the Decent Work Agenda (Figure 12).

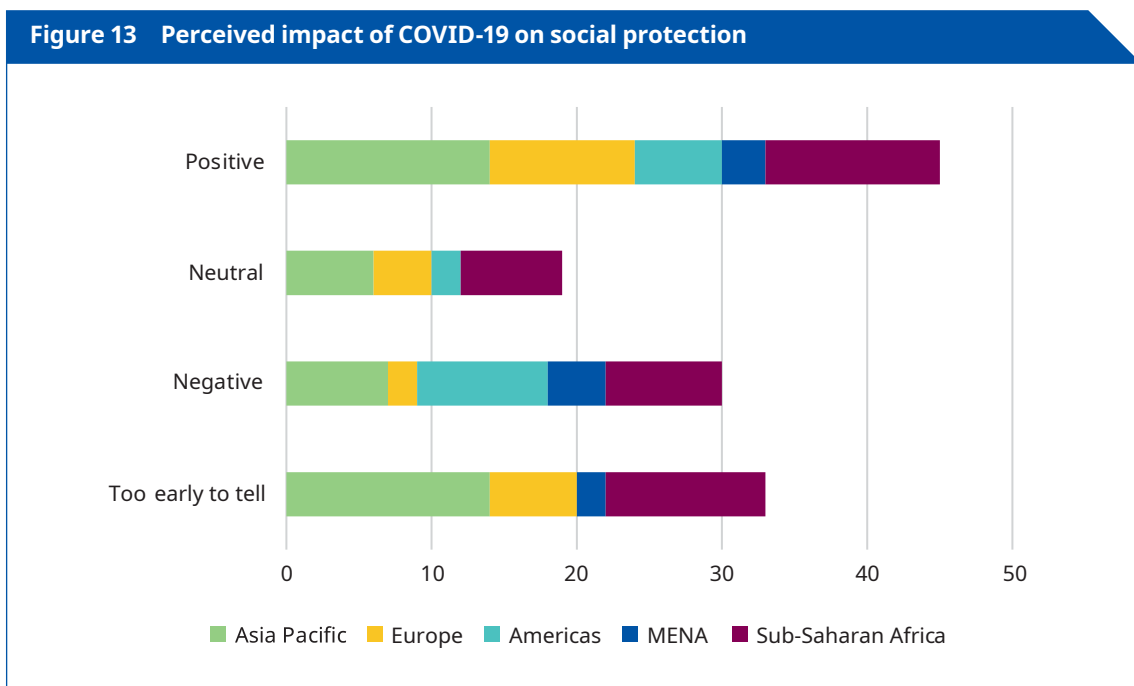


Evidence from the ITUC Global Rights Index aligns with the view that COVID-19 will negatively impact rights at work. In this context, 85 percent of countries have violated the right to strike and 80 percent have violated the right to collectively bargain, while 89 percent of countries impeded the registration of unions. Moreover, in many countries, the existing repression of unions and the refusal of governments to respect rights and engage in social dialogue has exposed workers to illness and death and left countries unable to fight the pandemic effectively.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> 2020 ITUC Global Rights Index, ITUC, 2020, [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc\\_globalrightsindex\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc_globalrightsindex_2020_en.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

### 5.1.3 Social protection

The ILO regards social protection as the provision of basic income security and access to essential services such as medical care, unemployment benefits, old age benefits, and maternity leave. Moreover, it stresses that while these benefits should be available to all, particular attention should be given to securing the access of more vulnerable groups to these provisions.<sup>73</sup>



With respect to the perceived impact of COVID-19 on this pillar of the Decent Work Agenda, 46 of the trade union leaders believe the impact will be positive. In this context, some of the respondents gave examples of positive developments in response to the global pandemic. In Argentina, for instance, “the government has extended social protection measures, assisting with income substitution programs for sectors and workers that have suspended activities.” Likewise, in the Russian Federation, “to counteract the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of workers, wages and scholarships will increase by 15 percent as of September 1, 2020, and social and insurance pensions will be increased from 15 to 50 percent.”

In contrast, a quarter of the respondents (33) think it is too early to ascertain the impact of the global pandemic on social protection, whereas 31 respondents expect a negative impact and 20 respondents expect this impact to be neutral (Figure 13). The answers of trade union leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa illustrate the view that impacts will be neutral. While these respondents acknowledge the various efforts made by governments to support

<sup>73</sup> *International Labour Standards on Social security*, ILO, n.d., <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/social-security/lang-en/index.htm> [accessed in August 2020].



workers facing unemployment (for example, by introducing unemployment benefits and cash transfers), factors such as rampant inflation and limited budgets have curtailed the effectiveness of social protection measures.

Moreover, “social protection measures are largely restricted to [the] formal sector and [the] informal economy, which employs 70-80 percent of the workforce, is not covered. Measures such as social cash transfers are limited and impact especially on women remains low due to limited budgets as constrained by external debt.” Where social protection is extended to vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, these efforts come with limitations. In Korea, for example, “the government has also provided free healthcare services for migrant workers. But they excluded them from income measures.”

The key respondents’ opinions align with the survey respondents’ appraisal of the negative impacts of COVID-19 on social protection. In Asia, where there is a serious deficit in social protection, there have been unprecedented stimulus packages to counteract the COVID recession, but these packages do not reach the vulnerable workers, who are largely excluded from the measures. Likewise, lockdown measures disproportionately affect migrant workers who not only face loss of jobs and income but are not eligible for health care services or social benefits.<sup>74</sup>

#### 5.1.4 Social dialogue

According to the ILO, social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.<sup>75</sup> When asked about the likely effects of COVID-19 on this pillar of decent work, over a third of trade union leaders (41 respondents) reported expecting a positive impact. In this context, one trade union leader pointed out that “all sectors are aware that the crisis can only be overcome with social dialogue”, and “tripartite dialogue is advancing to overcome the COVID-19 crisis.”

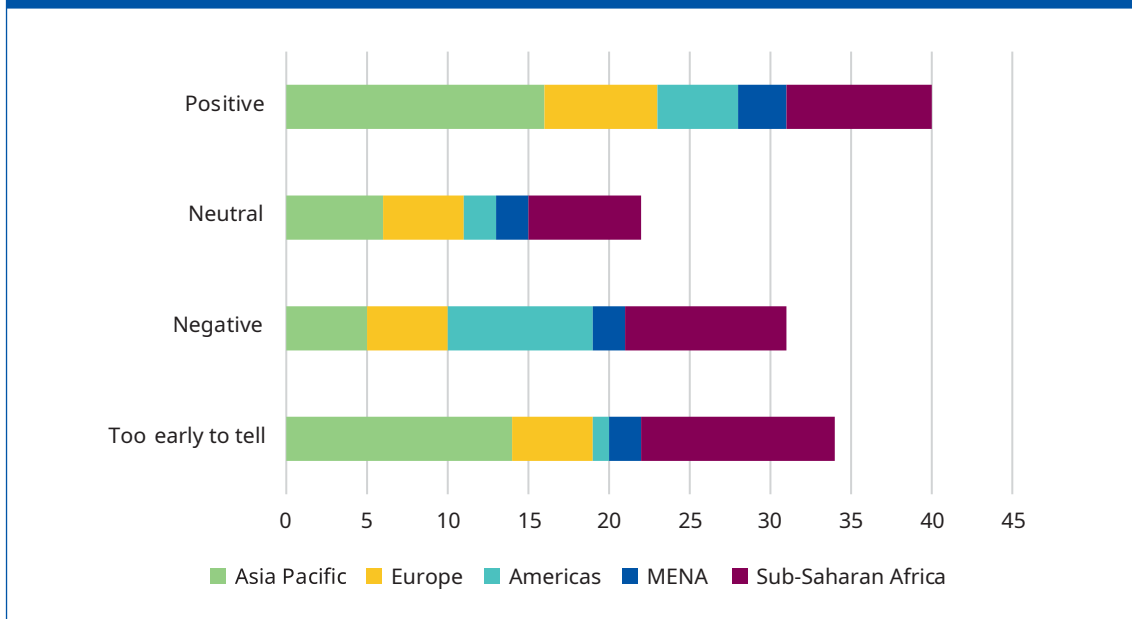
Over a quarter of the respondents (35 respondents) believe it is too early to tell what the impact of the pandemic will be, while twenty-two respondents believe that social dialogue will be neither positively nor negatively impacted (Figure 14). In contrast, less than a quarter of the respondents (32 respondents) foresee a negative impact. Respondents with a negative outlook highlight that many workers have unequal footing when negotiating their working conditions, where “power is skewed in favour of the highly resourced and those

<sup>74</sup> *Social Protection for Migrant Workers: A necessary response to the COVID-19 crisis*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---soc\\_sec/documents/publication/wcms\\_748979.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_748979.pdf) [accessed in May 2020]; *Gulf: Concerns regarding migrant workers’ rights during COVID-19 pandemic*, Amnesty International, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2020/04/gulf-concerns-regarding-migrant-workers-rights-during-covid19-pandemic/> [accessed in May 2020].

<sup>75</sup> *Social dialogue – Different views, one goal*, ILO, 2011, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/download/broch2011e.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].

they support.” Likewise, “because some of the old patterns remain unchanged in terms of the relationship of the worker with the employer and in terms of the implementation of labour laws and international standards, social dialogue will exist, but it is not effective due to the disparity of forces between employers and workers.” One respondent showed concern that “social distancing could be used as an argument to avoid social dialogue.”

**Figure 14 Perceived impact of COVID-19 on social dialogue**



In line with the trade union leaders’ rather positive outlook on the impact of COVID-19 on social dialogue, the key respondents provided several success stories about this pillar of decent work. In Africa, for example, the unions have been very active in fighting and mitigating the impact of the pandemic. About 90 percent of them have been involved in social dialogue with the government, to negotiate salary reductions instead of dismissals, and formulating special regulations to protect workers. The global pandemic has also forced governments traditionally hostile to trade unions to have an open dialogue and to work with them. This, in turn, is regarded as an opportunity for national trade unions to build on a better relationship post-COVID.

In Indonesia, social dialogue was used by workers of a garment factory that was due to shut down because of a reduced number of orders. The workers negotiated the production of PPE to retain their jobs. In some parts of Asia, national social dialogue is generally weak. However, because of the pandemic some dialogue has developed, for example Myanmar and Korea have launched discussions on protection and post COVID-recovery. Likewise, numerous examples exist in Europe where proper consultation of social partners and respect for their autonomy has resulted in timely, comprehensive, effective and fair measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on decent work.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> COVID-19: Social Dialogue Developments, ETUC, 2020, <https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/publication/file/2020-05/COVID-19%20Watch%20Briefing%20Note%20Social%20Dialogue%283%29.pdf> [accessed in August 2020].

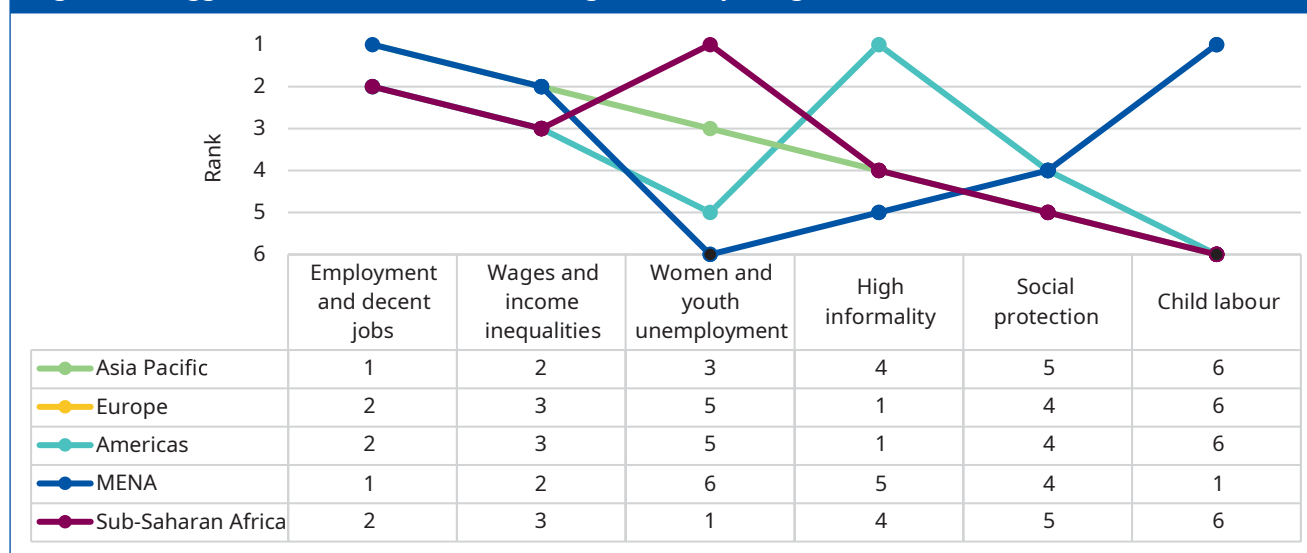
## 5.2 SDG transformation challenges

For the ILO, the implementation of SDG 8 requires a thorough examination of the challenges faced by countries in establishing a growth trajectory to 2030 that generates sufficient decent work and enables an inclusive pattern of development to take hold.<sup>77</sup>

With this in mind, the trade union leaders were asked to rank the biggest SDG transformation challenges in their countries. Generally, the survey respondents considered employment and decent jobs as one of the top two most pressing SDG transformation challenges, except in the MENA region, where child labour is considered equally important. In contrast, in all other regions, child labour was ranked by the trade union leaders who responded to the survey as the least important challenge.

Respondents from Europe and the Americas regard high work informality as most pressing, whereas women and youth unemployment is the biggest challenge for respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa. Wages and income inequalities were ranked either second or third in importance in all regions. Social protection tended to be considered less challenging in all regions as well (Figure 15).

**Figure 15 Biggest SDG transformation challenges ranked per region**



These views are largely in line with the observations of the ILO and other UN agencies. Even before the global outbreak of COVID-19, economic growth and employment were not on track, and the economic crisis following the pandemic will cause the biggest increase in global unemployment since World War II.<sup>78</sup> Depending on how the pandemic and economic

<sup>77</sup> ILO Implementation Plan - 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ILO, 2016, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---webdev/documents/publication/wcms\\_510122.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---webdev/documents/publication/wcms_510122.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>78</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, UN, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/> [accessed in September 2020].

crisis further develop, the total loss of work hours could be equal to 400 million full-time workers, though this will further depend on government policies in the coming months.<sup>79</sup> Limiting unemployment rates and ensuring new job creation in the formal economy will also impact informality – another major concern of unions. According to ILO estimates, 1.6 billion informal workers among the 2 billion informal workers worldwide faced a significant loss of income due to lockdown measures.<sup>80</sup>

While most respondents to the survey, except for unions from Sub-Saharan Africa, did not emphasize women and youth unemployment as a top priority, the ILO in fact estimates that the crisis will have a disproportionate impact on women and young people. Not only are women overrepresented in the most affected sectors, they also face higher rates of unemployment and informality.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, young people are also overrepresented in the hardest hit sectors and were already facing the highest rates of unemployment.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the biggest rise in unemployment during the first quarter of 2020 was observed among women and young people aged between 15 and 24.<sup>83</sup>

Since the SDGs were launched, the area where the most progress has been made is in combating forced and child labour, which explains why most unions – except those in the MENA region – do not list child labour as a pressing transformation challenge in this crisis. However, it is crucial not to lose sight of the continued risks faced by children, particularly in the context of the global pandemic, as schools have closed and families have lost parts of their income. According to estimates by UNICEF and ILO, millions of children are currently at risk of falling into child labour, and the 152 million children that already are in labour now face longer working hours under worsening conditions.<sup>84</sup>

A common note from the respondents on the implementation of the SDGs was the need for an integrated approach since the different targets and indicators do not function in isolation. The union leaders emphasized that decent work needs to be at the core of the policy responses to COVID-19, particularly to prevent job protection and creation from coming at the expense of labour rights. One respondent stated that the ILO and other UN agencies need to better align and integrate the SDGs in their policy responses, and several other respondents indicated they have been disappointed that “the SDGs have not been met in actions.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> *COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743623.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743623.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>81</sup> *The COVID-19 response: getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work*, ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_744685.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744685.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>82</sup> *COVID-19 and the world of work, ILO Monitor*, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_745963.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].

<sup>83</sup> *Unemployment Rates April 2020*, OECD, 2020, <http://www.oecd.org/sdd/labour-stats/unemployment-rates-oecd-06-2020.pdf> [accessed in June 2020].

<sup>84</sup> *COVID-19 may push millions more into child labour*, Unicef & ILO, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---ipecc/documents/publication/wcms\\_747421.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipecc/documents/publication/wcms_747421.pdf) [accessed in August 2020].



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# 6. Conclusions and recommendations

The structural issues for which the SDGs had championed limited progress, combined with the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, call for bolder actions by the labour movement and for more support from the ILO. This section summarizes the main findings of this study and presents recommendations intended to reinforce the work of ILO-ACTRAV on Agenda 2030. These recommendations are aligned with the challenges and opportunities brought about by COVID-19 that emerged from this baseline study.

## 6.1 Conclusions

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This research set out to collect trade unions' opinions worldwide about COVID-19 and how it is shaping the achievement of SDG 8 and the Decent Work Agenda. The result has been a mixed picture of positive and negative prospects.

There is consensus amongst survey respondents, key respondents, and written sources that progress towards SDG 8 was already lagging even before the COVID-19 global outbreak. In this context, according to the survey respondents, the COVID-19 pandemic will relegate the implementation of SDG 8. At the same time, however, aspects such as securing safer working environments and stimulating employment creation will be prioritised. Against this background, most trade union leaders expect their organizations' SDG work to gain more prominence in the future.

Looking at the trade union leaders' perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on different SDG 8 targets and indicators, the overall opinion on the achievement of SDG 8.5 (*Full and productive employment and decent work by 2030*), SDG 8.5.1 (*Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation, and persons with disabilities*), SDG 8.5.2 (*Unemployment rate, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities*), and SDG 8.8 (*Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers*) oscillates between moderate progress and little to no progress. On the other hand, the respondents' outlook on the achievements so far on SDG 8.7 (*Eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, worst forms of child labour by 2025*) were more positive. Most trade union leaders opined that progress on the implementation of SDG 8.6 (*Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2020*) is rather not on track or off-track and that less than half of the objectives will be achieved.

Regarding the Decent Work Agenda, the most prevalent opinion amongst trade union leaders is that COVID-19 will positively impact employment creation. However, this perspective is met with the opinion that, globally, governments have focused more on keeping big corporations afloat rather than protecting and creating jobs, particularly for vulnerable workers such as those in the informal sector and migrants. Likewise, the survey respondents primarily opined that COVID-19 will have a positive impact on social protection and social dialogue. In contrast, the respondents' expectations on rights at work is mixed, albeit skewing towards a negative outlook.

Lastly, trade union leaders worldwide regard employment and decent jobs as the two biggest SDG transformation challenges, except in the MENA region, where child labour is most pressing. In contrast, in all other regions, child labour was ranked as the least important challenge. Respondents from Europe and the Americas regard high work informality as most pressing, while women and youth unemployment was regarded as most challenging in Sub-Saharan Africa. Wages and income inequalities ranked either second or third in importance in all regions. Social protection appears to be less challenging in all regions as well.

## 6.2 Recommendations

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The main recommendations arising out of the findings and conclusions of the study are presented in this section. The recommendations are structured as follows: implementation of SDG 8, its targets and indicators, and the decent work agenda.

### 6.2.1 Implementation of SDG 8

- ▶ **Broader networking:** National trade union organizations should engage in closer collaboration with like-minded organizations at the country level and with GUFs to streamline SDG work in general, and in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience in particular.
- ▶ **Social dialogue:** Trade unions and workers' organizations should ensure that they are consulted and actively involved in the shaping of national policy responses to COVID, taking into account national realities and aligning them with the ILO policy framework response.
- ▶ **Monitoring and evaluation:** Trade unions should periodically monitor and timely report on developments concerning the global pandemic and how it affects the implementation of SDG 8, as well as propose strategies to overcome the negative impacts and take advantage of the positive prospects.

### 6.2.2 SDG 8 targets and indicators

#### **Full and productive employment and decent work by 2030 (SDG 8.5)**

- ▶ Trade unions should advocate for policies that give countries the necessary fiscal space to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in a more holistic manner. They should also advocate for system-wide recovery and resilience measures targeting primarily informal workers, women, youths, migrant workers, and workers with disabilities.

#### **Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation, and persons with disabilities (SDG 8.5.1)**

- ▶ Trade unions should promote the recognition of care work and household chores as work and promote the four pillars of decent work in this sector.

**Unemployment rate, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities (SDG 8.5.2)**

- ▶ Trade unions should lobby governments to extend their efforts to protect existing jobs while ensuring that new jobs are created in the formal economy, particularly in the hardest hit industries and sectors, with particular attention to the disproportionate impact on women, young people and migrant workers.
- ▶ Trade unions should promote lifelong learning (re-training, reskilling, upskilling) programmes to ensure that laid-off workers can be redeployed and absorbed in sectors where there is a labour shortage, but also ensuring that the labour force is well equipped skills-wise should a pandemic of this nature and scale re-occur in the future.

**Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2020 (SDG 8.6)**

- ▶ Trade unions should lobby governments for increased funding to ensure that young people can gain good-quality employment within a short period after becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. These measures should emphasize vulnerable groups such as women, youths, migrants, rural workers and people with disabilities.
- ▶ Trade unions should promote the safeguarding of training and work-based learning opportunities for young people to prevent labour shortages and skill gaps in the near future.
- ▶ Trade unions should lobby governments to ensure that young workers are adequately covered by existing social security and unemployment schemes, and coverage gaps should be addressed within the shortest possible time frame.

**Eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, worst forms of child labour by 2025 (SDG 8.7)**

- ▶ Trade unions should emphasize the promotion of decent work as a measure to prevent child labour and exploitation in the context of economic recovery activities during and post-COVID-19.
- ▶ Trade unions should emphasize the importance of continued efforts against modern day slavery and child labour to ensure that progress made on the eradication of child labour in the last decade does not get reversed.

**Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers (SDG 8.8)**

- ▶ Trade unions should work together with governments and employers' organizations to take protective health and safety measures for their employees that are effective and fit for purpose.
- ▶ Trade unions should advocate a post-COVID-19 green economic recovery that recognizes the climate emergency as a threat to better work and an OSH hazard.
- ▶ Trade unions should facilitate social dialogue to ensure a safe working environment and access to social protection for migrant workers, especially in sectors where COVID measures are not easily implementable (such as construction, food and agriculture).



- ▶ Trade unions should promote and ensure the representation of women, youth, migrants, and workers with disabilities in health and safety committees or other bodies at all levels that define measures to protect workers from COVID-19, as these groups are disproportionately affected and their voice often neglected in such decision making spaces.
- ▶ Trade unions should engage in social dialogue with governments and employers' organizations to develop and implement OSH policies and procedures for remote work.

### 6.2.3 Decent Work Agenda

#### **Employment creation**

- ▶ Trade unions should ensure that governments extend efforts to create decent employment in the formal economy across larger corporations as well as among SMEs, with particular attention for employment creation at all levels for women, young people and migrant workers.

#### **Rights at work**

- ▶ Trade unions should advocate for legislation that protects the labour rights of subcontracted workers.
- ▶ Trade unions should lobby governments to ensure that workers' rights are not withdrawn or negatively impacted by COVID- related policy reforms.
- ▶ Trade unions should promote the continued importance of labour inspections and ensure that inspections are conducted safely and timely without unnecessary interruptions.

#### **Social protection**

- ▶ Trade unions should work with governments, as part of their COVID-19 containment efforts, but also in the long-term, towards legislation that guarantees workers the right to paid sick leave and free access to health care for all workers regardless of their employment or migratory status.
- ▶ Trade unions should advocate for living conditions for migrant workers that enable social distancing measures in the short term and that improve the quality of life of these workers in the long term.

#### **Social dialogue**

- ▶ Trade unions should advocate for the use of tripartite consultative mechanisms at the national level to embed consultation of social partners in planning and implementing post-COVID-19 recovery measures, including tripartite recovery councils.
- ▶ Trade unions should encourage and guide governments and other social partners in creating an enabling environment for social dialogue where social partners can share their experience and freely express their needs to address the social and economic impacts of the global pandemic.



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# Appendix 1

## Survey questions

## COVID-19 and SDG 8

### The ILO-ACTRAV Trade Union Opinion Survey

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The ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) is launching a survey to collect the views of trade unions on the likely impact of COVID-19 on the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. The survey will only focus on SDG 8 and specifically on **four** of the **nine** indicators for which the ILO is a custodian agency.<sup>85</sup>

The purpose of the survey is to provide Workers' Organisations with the space to articulate their views on how they foresee the impact of COVID 19 on economic growth and decent jobs and to share how they intend to ensure that SDGs remain an integral part of government response measures to COVID-19 in the short and long-term.

The survey shall provide the ILO-ACTRAV with the necessary information on trade union responses, gaps and opportunities for political and technical support. The outcomes will be useful in informing ACTRAV's work on Agenda 2030 in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

- ▶ The survey comprises **six** questions (including organisational information) and should take +/-10 minutes to complete;
- ▶ All respondents will remain anonymous. The survey will run for 14 days with a possibility of extension.

**1. Trade Union Organisational level. Please select only the most appropriate answer.**

- National
- Regiona
- Sub-regional
- Global

**2. In your view, overall, what will be the likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDG 8 in your country? Please select only the most appropriate answer.**

- Positive: it shall be prioritised
- Negative: it shall not get priority at all
- Mixed: Neither here nor there
- Too early to tell

**3. In your view, overall, what is the most likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work on SDGs in your organisation? Please select only the most appropriate answer.**

- Will gain more prominence

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<sup>85</sup> Custodian agencies assume responsibility for the collection of data from member States, the compilation of internationally comparable data and the strengthening of national statistical capacities.

- Will be relegated and become less important
- Will remain the same
- Too early to tell

**4. In your view, how will the achievement of following indicators likely be impacted by COVID-19? Please select only the most appropriate answer.**

*Target 8.5. By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.*

- On track and will be achieved
- Rather on track and will be achieved
- Moderately on track and will achieve about half of the targets
- Rather not on track and will achieve less than half of the targets
- Off track and may not achieve any of the targets
- No opinion

*Indicator 8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities*

- On track and will be achieved
- Rather on track and will be achieved
- Moderately on track and will achieve about half of the target
- Rather not on track and will achieve less than half of the targets
- Off track and may not achieve any of the targets
- No opinion

*Indicator 8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities*

- On track and will be achieved
- Rather on track and will be achieved
- Moderately on track and will achieve about half of the targets
- Rather not on track and will achieve less than half of the targets
- Off track and may not achieve any of the targets
- No opinion

*Target 8.6. By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training*

- On track and will be achieved
- Rather on track and will be achieved

- Moderately on track and will achieve about half of the targets
- Rather not on track and will achieve less than half of the targets
- Off track and may not achieve any of the targets
- No opinion

*Target 8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms*

- On track and will be achieved
- Rather on track and will be achieved
- Moderately on track and will achieve about half of the targets
- Rather not on track and will achieve less than half of the targets
- Off track and may not achieve any of the targets
- No opinion

*Target 8.8. Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment*

- On track and will be achieved
- Rather on track and will be achieved
- Moderately on track and will achieve about half of the targets
- Rather not on track and will achieve less than half of the targets
- Off track and may not achieve any of the targets
- No opinion

**5. In your view, where do the biggest SDG Transformation challenges lie in your country? Please rank these from the most challenging to the least.**

- Employment and decent jobs
- Wages and Income inequalities
- Women and Youth unemployment
- High informality
- Social Protection
- Child labour
- All of the above
- None of the above (please elaborate below)

**6. Overall, what are the likely impact of COVID-19 on the following decent work pillars? Please elaborate on your response.**

**6.2. Employment promotion**

- Positive: it shall be prioritised
- Negative: it shall not get priority at all
- Mixed: Neither here nor there
- No opinion/Too early to tell

**6.2. Rights at work**

- Positive: it shall be prioritised
- Negative: it shall not get priority at all
- Mixed: Neither here nor there
- No opinion/Too early to tell

**6.3. Social Protection**

- Positive: it shall be prioritised
- Negative: it shall not get priority at all
- Mixed: Neither here nor there
- No opinion/Too early to tell

**6.4. Social Dialogue**

- Positive: it shall be prioritised
- Negative: it shall not get priority at all
- Mixed: Neither here nor there
- No opinion/Too early to tell



ISBN: 978-92-2-033829-2



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