

decent **work** & labour **standards** forum

Terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) for the Decent Work and Labour Standards Forum (DWLSF) provide background information about the focus on decent work and labour standards, and set out the purpose of the Forum, its membership, and the core principles that members are asked to work towards. Governance structures and mechanisms for reaching consensus among members are specified, and details about the Forum's key objectives and activities it will undertake to achieve these are cited.

Section 1- Background

According to the ILO (2001) "Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives – their aspirations for opportunity and income; rights, voice and recognition; family stability and personal development; and fairness and gender equality."

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda aims to increase both the quality and quantity of employment globally, through the achievement of four strategic objectives or 'pillars' (1) employment creation; (2) social protection; (3) labour standards; and (4) social dialogue. These are understood as being integrated and indivisible.

Decent Work is now recognised as a key tool in combating poverty and as a result has been incorporated into Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 with the target of achieving "full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people" by 2015.

In view of the significant role that decent work can play in eradicating poverty, the Forum adopts the concept as a primary focus. By focusing on the four pillars of decent work, stakeholders can examine the broader factors affecting labour markets in relation to eliminating poverty.

Within these pillars, labour standards will retain a special emphasis for the DWLSF. This reflects the rights based approach which cuts across all four pillars, and aims to ensure a focus is maintained on interventions which create more *and better quality* jobs.

Section 2

2.1- Who we are & what we do

The DWLSF is a multi-stakeholder body of labour rights and development NGOs, trade unions, businesses, academics and labour standards specialists. Forum members work together to assist the UK government in strengthening its efforts to secure decent work, eradicate poverty in the global south, and deliver on MDG 1.

The Forum is a place to share ideas, learn, debate, explore new areas of collaboration and enable members to speak with a collective voice to government and other stakeholders.

The DWLSF explicitly focuses on alleviating poverty of working people in the global South. However, it is recognised that securing decent work in the UK is also a critical issue, and

where appropriate, activities may include consideration of the UK context, but this is not its primary concern.

There will be an emphasis on seeing results delivered on the ground. This therefore involves a focus on improving government policy, activity, effectiveness and evaluation of the Decent Work Agenda.

The UK government will not be formal members of the Forum, but to ensure its active participation and commitment to follow up on Forum activities, it will be closely consulted in developing the Forum's annual work plan.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) leads on the international development dimensions of Decent Work within the government, but Decent Work also has relevance to the work of other departments including the Department of Business Innovation and Skills; The Office of Government Commerce, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of Work and Pensions. Consequently, the DWLSF seeks to engage all relevant parts of government in its activities.

2.2 Key objectives

- Share information and learning on key decent work and labour rights issues in order to build collaboration, strengthen networking and promote alliances between stakeholders.
- Influence DFID and other governments, and engage in policy development which promotes decent work and labour rights - in particular the role that government can play in achieving decent work.
- Help stakeholders improve implementation of the Decent Work Agenda in relation to specific issues (e.g. deficits in decent work) and/or specific sectors. And improve the profile and understanding of decent work and labour rights issues amongst wider stakeholders.
- Link actors in the global south and the UK in order to strengthen advocacy on government policies and inform corporate practices which support decent work.

Section 3 - Core principles

Forum members will work towards the following core principles:

- A shared understanding that decent work and a focus on workers' rights and labour conditions is a key approach in combating poverty.
- A commitment to promote decent work in own sphere of influence.
- The main focus of the Forum will be on workers in the South, while acknowledging the right to decent work of workers in the North. .
- A commitment to participate actively in the Forum.
- Support for the principle that there should be no trade-off between the quality of jobs and job creation.

Section 4 – Governance

NB. Governance systems will be reviewed at the end of the current funding cycle in March 2010.

The DWLSF is currently governed by a steering group made up of trade unions, businesses, NGOs and labour standards specialists. The Forum strives to ensure a fair balance of representatives from its four stakeholder groups on the steering group.

The steering group will be responsible for overseeing delivery of the Forum work plan, strategic direction and the budget, and will meet four times per year.

The TUC hosts a Forum secretariat, which is responsible for carrying out the Forum's work plan and is directly accountable to the Forum steering group and broader membership.

Section 5 - Forum activities

To achieve the objectives outlined, the Forum has a work plan agreed by the steering group, and to facilitate joint working, a wider group of organisations will be invited to participate in the activities.

Activities include:

- (i) Seminars: public events, which will bring together wider stakeholders and interested parties to discuss and debate a particular issue. Input may include new research findings and/or speakers from the global South.
- ii) Round tables: small, high level events focussed on a particular subject area and organised by interested Forum members with the specific aim of influencing government policy and practice. Invitations may be extended to government officials and experts.
- (iii) Working groups: made up of self-selected Forum members, who wish to share experiences and ideas, and increase collaborative work on a particular issue on an on-going basis. Working group members will set their own terms of reference.

Section 6 - Mechanism for consensus making

The Forum will seek to reach consensus among members in its positions, statements and submissions. This will be achieved through the following process:

- 1) A draft statement/position/submission will be circulated to all Forum members.
- 2) A timeline for contributing comments/amendments; redrafting; and agreement on a final position will also be circulated to members.
- 3) Where there are no clear disagreements, amendments will be incorporated into the draft in track changes.
- 4) Where there are differences of opinion on a particular issue, these will be summarised, and a draft compromise position circulated to members for comment/feedback. Based on feedback, an amended position will be circulated for comment/agreement. It is likely that this process will be time bound and influenced by external deadlines, but every effort will be made to reach agreement and for the final wording to be inclusive of differing views. The final version of a position/statement will be circulated with a request for sign off from members.

Inevitably, there will be occasions when consensus cannot be reached given the broad membership of the Forum. Where this is the case, positions/submissions will include a disclaimer stating: *The views presented here cover a range of opinions expressed by Forum members but not necessarily the views of every member of the Forum, Furthermore, particular views are not attributed to any particular person or organisation, and no listed person or organisation should be regarded as endorsing all the views put forward in this position/submission.*