



FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Thematic evaluation report:
Strengthening institutions, processes,
legal frameworks and capacity of
tripartite constituents for tripartism
and social dialogue****Contents**

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I. Introduction

1. In selecting this theme for discussion, the Officers of the Committee on Technical Cooperation have focused on a subject that is not only of profound importance for the ILO as a whole, but underpins, or should underpin, its work in all fields throughout its technical cooperation programme, as reaffirmed in the resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue adopted at the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2002. In recent years, the importance of social dialogue has also been emphasized for the achievement of social inclusion and the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda.
2. Since the introduction of strategic budgeting in 2000-01, one of the ILO's four strategic objectives has been to "strengthen tripartism and social dialogue". The framework of the present evaluation therefore falls within the two operational objectives defined under this strategic objective:¹
 - operational objective 4a: The representation, services and influence of the social partners are strengthened;
 - operational objective 4b: The legal frameworks, institutions, machinery and processes for social dialogue are strengthened and used.
3. The ILO's activities in this field are led by the Social Dialogue Sector, commonly known as Sector IV. This Sector includes the Bureaux for Employers' and Workers' Activities, the Sectoral Activities Department and the InFocus Programme on Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration.
4. While the core of this thematic evaluation necessarily concerns technical cooperation projects carried out under the supervision of Sector IV, discussion of this theme also offers a welcome opportunity to address more strategic issues relating to technical cooperation in the field of tripartism and social dialogue. These include the development of a more unified and proactive approach to technical cooperation within the Social Dialogue Sector itself and the efforts that are being made to achieve the integration of tripartism and social dialogue throughout the various technical fields in which the ILO is active. It is important to bear in mind in this respect that most of the technical cooperation projects relating to tripartism and social dialogue for which evaluations are available were designed before the commencement of these integration efforts, both Office-wide and at the level of Sector IV.
5. The resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue has provided important guidance to the Office in its efforts to renew and reinvigorate its work in this field. It will be recalled that the Office reported to the Governing Body at its 285th Session (November 2002) on the effect to be given to the resolution.² It should also be recalled that a recent thematic evaluation report covered one of the aspects of the present subject, namely ILO projects on labour administration.³

¹ ILO: Programme and Budget proposals for 2004-05, in Governing Body doc. GB.286/PFA/9, 286th Session, Geneva, March 2003.

² Doc. GB.285/7/1.

³ Doc. GB.283/TC/3.

II. ILO projects on tripartism and social dialogue

6. This section of the thematic evaluation is based on the findings of evaluations of technical cooperation projects carried out within the context of the Social Dialogue Sector. These include 12 external evaluations conducted by independent consultants and/or donors and nine internal evaluations undertaken by ILO officials or technical advisers. While the evaluations were generally carried out towards the end of the lifetime of the projects, four mid-term evaluations have been included.
7. In selecting the projects for review, attention has been paid to achieving a balance in terms of the social partners covered, geographical regions, socio-economic and political contexts, as well as a broad representation of fields of activity and donors. Projects of different sizes and durations have also been chosen. The appendix contains a list of the main programmes and projects considered in this thematic evaluation.

A. Projects principally aimed at institutional development and the enhancement of constituents' capacities

8. This section begins by examining projects to strengthen two critical building blocks of social dialogue, namely employers' and workers' organizations, and then goes on to projects which focus on strengthening labour administrations as well as fostering dialogue involving all the tripartite constituents.

Capacity-building projects for employers' organizations

9. The central element of ILO technical cooperation activities to enhance the capacities of employers and their organizations over recent years has been the interregional project for developing countries funded by Denmark through the Danish Agency for Development Assistance (DANIDA) (1998-2003), which is designed to address the priorities agreed to in consultation with employers' organizations in the respective countries. The bulk of the activities under this project consist of workshops and other capacity-building activities covering a broad range of subjects, including social dialogue, collective bargaining, industrial relations, productivity improvement and entrepreneurship promotion, as well as occupational safety and health, child labour, HIV/AIDS and gender issues, with specific reference to the promotion of women's entrepreneurship. One component of the DANIDA project, relating to occupational safety and health, is examined in the next section of this report, together with a project for employers' organizations financed by Norway on action to combat child labour.
10. A project, financed by the Netherlands and covering employers' organizations in the Visegrad Group countries, was carried out to promote private sector development and reinforce the relevance of tripartite dialogue in the transition process. Assistance was provided to employers' organizations to carry out membership surveys and formulate strategic plans for their development. One of the most significant achievements of the project was the establishment of the South-Eastern European Employers' Forum (SEEEF), which provides employers' organizations in the Balkan region with the opportunity to exchange information concerning the Balkan Stability Pact and to represent the interests of employers in relation to international institutions, which are playing an important role in the reconstruction of the area. An informal network of employers' organizations in European Union applicant countries in the area was also created to help them coordinate

their preparation for the accession process. The lessons highlighted by the Visegrad project include the need for projects to be demand-driven and the difficulty of pursuing an ambitious long-term approach to institutional development in a rapidly changing environment with weak counterpart organizations. Greater impact is achieved where support is targeted at organizations that are ready and able to use the assistance provided to develop their organizations.

11. Based on a general assessment of these and other technical cooperation projects, including the evaluation of the DANIDA project, the Bureau for Employers' Activities updated its technical cooperation strategy in 2002. In this context, activities are being focused more closely on the development needs, prospects and commitment of employers' organizations, and are supported by an integrated evaluation strategy so as to improve project design, implementation and impact. Themes are being further developed to improve the cohesion of programmes and their impact at the national level. These include productivity and competitiveness, social dialogue, HIV/AIDS at the workplace, corporate social responsibility, linkages with the informal economy, enterprise development (especially SMEs), combating child labour, promoting decent work and building alliances between employers' organizations and other local and national organizations.

Capacity-building projects for workers' organizations

12. The Bureau for Workers' Activities carries out an extensive programme of workers' education activities, both general and addressing specific topical issues, such as poverty alleviation and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), HIV/AIDS, child labour and gender issues. Of the range of projects implemented, this paper covers three, namely:
 - the interregional project financed by Denmark, focusing on workers' education, which for many years now has been the main component of the assistance provided to workers' organizations;
 - a project (1999-2003), financed by the United Kingdom, to provide assistance to workers and their organizations in Indonesia; and
 - a project (1997-2001), financed by Norway, for the implementation of a new concept of trade union education in the Russian Federation.
13. These activities are aimed at strengthening the capacity of workers' organizations to contribute to the national development process through, for example, participation in country-wide programmes, such as PRSPs. They also seek to achieve specific decent work priorities at the national, regional and sectoral levels. Good progress has been achieved in the countries covered by the projects in improving the capability of workers' organizations to strengthen existing and develop new services for their membership.
14. The Danish-funded project has brought together all previous and new workers' education activities funded by DANIDA within a simplified overall managerial arrangement with a more programmatic approach. In this way, activities are more closely coordinated with the assistance provided by the Bureau for Workers' Activities and projects supported by other donors, thereby offering greater cohesion, enhanced delivery and rapid, flexible and sometimes non-traditional responses to requests by worker constituents. In this context, greater emphasis is being placed on a number of themes, one of the most important of which is reaching out to workers in the informal economy through the establishment of relations with associations of these workers, including women's associations in rural areas, and through initiatives to improve the conditions and opportunities of these workers, such as the development of social protection and health-care schemes and small-scale financing mechanisms, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation.

- 15.** Within the DANIDA project, training activities have constituted the main means of action (nearly 150 training events with almost 4,000 participants in 2002). In addition, information sessions were organized for over 4,000 rural women in Madhya Pradesh, India. The target groups for these activities include: non-organized workers (potential members); rank-and-file members, shop stewards and union representatives; union officials at the federal, regional and local levels; trade union leaders; educators/trainers; and specific groups, such as women and persons responsible for developing training materials and curricula. The subjects dealt with range from broad basic themes to specialized topics (collective bargaining, grievance handling, organizing techniques, labour legislation, organizational development, occupational safety and health, HIV/AIDS information, international labour standards, child labour, PRSPs). In 2002, of the participants in mainstream training activities, 34 per cent were women.
- 16.** The results of the assistance provided include, for example, the strengthening of trade union structures for workers' education in Mozambique, Uganda and Yemen, an increase in the number of recognition agreements and collective agreements in Cambodia, Uganda and Yemen and a rise in the number of disputes brought to the labour courts in Yemen. Trade union membership has risen in Cambodia, Uganda and in rural workers' organizations in India, where nearly 3,000 rural women have joined rural workers' organizations and have been organized in self-help groups at the village level. In Cambodia, over half the workers in the textile sector are now organized. In the same country, five joint trade union committees have been set up covering child labour, the PRSP, wage surveys, HIV/AIDS and women's issues, and joint action has been taken by the unions in these areas. They have also persuaded the Government to accept the check-off system for the payment of members' dues, which has greatly improved their financial situation.
- 17.** The project in Indonesia pursued a strategy of building the capacity of unions from the bottom up, focusing on emerging union groups and democratic structures at the grass-roots level. Until the political changes in 1998, workers in the country were denied the right to freedom of association, military and police involvement in labour issues was common and little attention was paid to the issues of labour rights and conditions of employment. But the new Government ratified Convention No. 87 in 1998 and adopted new legislation providing for the right to organize.
- 18.** The project, which commenced in January 1999, was therefore in the right place at the right time and was able to be of considerable assistance in the changing environment. By strengthening trade union education capacity and developing the skills of a substantial number of local workplace union representatives in major industrial areas, it has given a strong impetus to a new style of trade unionism in Indonesia and has encouraged better industrial relations. In so doing, the project has sought to develop a new generation of union representatives. Of the nearly 6,000 persons trained, over 70 per cent are below the age of 35 and over 30 per cent are women. The final evaluation found that the number of people trained has made a significant difference to the situation, which is a real achievement, especially in a country as big as Indonesia. It also points out that a host of workers at grass-roots level (especially many women and young people) are now engaged in constructive social dialogue and in union development in a number of sectors. Through the preparation of training methods and materials, translated into Bahasa Indonesia, the project training activities should be sustainable.
- 19.** The specific characteristic of the project in the Russian Federation is that it was designed and carried out in very close cooperation between the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), with the ILO acting as executing agency. The purpose of the project was to modernize the trade union education provided at some of the largest trade union training facilities and adapt

them to the new conditions arising out of the transition to a market economy and the political upheavals in the country. Comprehensive training was provided for trade union leaders from various regions and for trainers, information technology was introduced and training materials prepared. Training was provided for almost 3,000 trade union members, with the courses focusing on such areas as collective bargaining, recruitment of new members, labour law, conflict resolution and wage-fixing.

20. The achievement of the objectives of these projects was greatly facilitated by their strong ownership by beneficiaries, with national, industrial and sometimes local trade unions not only participating directly in project design and implementation, but also contributing significantly with their own resource persons and training facilities. Another important factor of success was the very active involvement of trade unions in donor countries at all stages of the projects. However, in certain cases where open-ended objectives are set, such as the project in the Russian Federation, it may be difficult to make a quantifiable assessment of their achievement.

Projects on social dialogue

21. The InFocus Programme on Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration has come to play an increasingly important role, frequently with the involvement of specialists on employers' and workers' activities from headquarters or in the regions, in the design and implementation of technical cooperation projects to establish and strengthen institutions of social dialogue and enhance the capacities of the tripartite constituents to engage in dialogue. These include:

- the “ILO/Swiss” project (1999-2003) to advance social partnership in the promotion of labour peace in southern Africa;
- the “SLAREA” project (2001-05), financed by the United States, to strengthen labour relations in East Africa;
- the “PRODIAF” regional programme (1999-2003), financed by Belgium and France, to promote social dialogue in the countries of French-speaking Africa;
- the “SAVPOT” project (1999-2003), financed by Norway, to promote tripartism and sound industrial relations in Asia, covering Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam;
- the “MATAC” project (1997-2003), financed by Spain, to modernize labour administrations in the countries of Central America and in Belize and the Dominican Republic;
- the “PRODIAC” project (1999-2003), financed by Norway, to strengthen processes for the consolidation of democracy through tripartism and social dialogue in the countries of Central America;
- the “RELACENTRO” project (2000-03), financed by the United States, to strengthen collective bargaining and industrial relations in the countries of Central America and in Belize and the Dominican Republic; and
- two national projects financed by Italy to promote social dialogue and the revision of labour legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2000-04) and to promote social dialogue and tripartism and build the capacities of the social partners in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (2001-04).

22. An important component of all these projects is the training of tripartite constituents in social dialogue, industrial relations, conflict management and negotiation techniques. In most cases, this consists of tripartite training, which favours the emergence of a climate of trust among the participants and quickly enables them to appreciate the advantages of tripartism and social dialogue. In support of these activities, a new training manual has been prepared on capacity-building activities in the field of social dialogue.⁴
23. Through these projects and programmes, a series of important results have been achieved which are having a major impact on the quality of industrial relations and the resolution of long-lasting problems. For example, in southern Africa, against a background of high levels of unemployment, adversarial labour relations and underdeveloped institutional capacity to prevent and resolve conflict, the ILO/Swiss project has made a significant contribution to enabling governments, workers' and employers' representatives to work together in a climate of trust, thereby providing the bedrock for sustained labour peace, regional stability and economic development.
24. In South Africa, by providing technical assistance to the social partners for the establishment of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) and promoting their participation in the Commission, the project has contributed to the virtual elimination of unlawful industrial action as a feature of labour relations in the country. Over the past five years, South Africa has experienced its lowest levels of industrial action in three decades. In the CCMA's first year of operation, the number of days lost through industrial action fell by 65 per cent. The project also helped to establish, and currently furnishes technical assistance to, the Millennium Labour Council (MLC), a bipartite body comprising senior business and labour leaders committed to addressing South Africa's deepening crisis of unemployment through social dialogue. The interventions of the MLC have helped stave off major strikes, and it offers a trusted forum for reaching agreement on measures to boost economic recovery and job creation. Similar results have been achieved in other countries in the region, including Lesotho, where the Directorate for Dispute Prevention and Dispute Resolution is now operational, and Swaziland, where the Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration Commission (CMAC), a tripartite Industrial Relations Council, a Labour Court and a Labour Appeal Court have all been established.
25. In several countries in East Africa, with the assistance of the SLAREA project, there has been a remarkable reduction in the number of labour disputes going to industrial courts. The United Republic of Tanzania, for instance, after experiencing a spate of industrial unrest, is now enjoying relative industrial peace as a result of the sensitization of the social partners as to the importance of social dialogue. In Uganda, following a seminar for labour court judges held in Kampala in May 2001, the Industrial Court resumed work after several years of hiatus and has since issued rulings on a number of key cases. In Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, tripartite labour advisory boards have been reconstituted or reinvigorated after years of being inoperative. A Joint Committee of the Federation of Ugandan Employers and the National Organization of Trade Unions of Uganda was established following the holding of workshops on the strengthening of labour relations, including a round table on social dialogue. A draft national tripartite Social Charter was adopted in Uganda and submitted to the President in May 2003 for final adoption.
26. Significant results have also been achieved in Central America with the assistance of the MATAAC, RELACENTRO and PRODIAC projects. For example, new regulations on labour inspection have been adopted in Costa Rica, establishing national and regional

⁴ ILO: *Promoting national social dialogue: An ILO training manual* (forthcoming).

consultative tripartite labour inspection councils, which has led to an improvement in the performance of the labour inspection system. Tripartite meetings held in the Dominican Republic in the context of the MATAAC project agreed on a workplan for the reform of the labour administration, involving the reduction and concentration of units and the application of the civil service statute to the employees of the labour administration. Tripartite social and economic councils have been launched in Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Honduras. At the same time, in a number of Central American countries, sound labour management relations systems have been introduced at the enterprise level with a view to boosting productivity.

- 27.** The PRODIAF project has contributed to the reinforcement of consultation structures in many of the countries of French-speaking Africa. In the 19 countries covered by the project, ministers of labour and the social partners have indicated their agreement on the importance of social dialogue in the present economic and social context. The improved social climate has led to the adoption of a Social Charter in Senegal, a Social Pact in Mali, the approval of plans of action for promoting social dialogue in Burundi and Rwanda and the establishment of a Social and Economic Council, with the involvement of civil society, in Niger. In general terms, experience in these countries confirms that where efforts are made to increase the awareness of the social partners as to the value of social dialogue, the number of tripartite agreements concluded rises, with a consequent improvement in social peace. This in turn has a direct bearing on the economic performance of the countries concerned, as can be seen, for example, in the improved economic situation in Niger and Senegal.
- 28.** In South Asia, the 23 enterprises participating in the SAVPOT project have not only experienced no strikes, but there has also been a significant change in the attitudes of their managers and workers, based on greater mutual trust. Social dialogue has become a key element in addressing the important changes in production, industrial relations, communication and enterprise culture that they are currently facing in view of the need to be competitive in the globalized market economy. Positive results include: the signing of collective agreements; the development of social security schemes; improvements in working conditions and health and safety; increased product quality and productivity, which are having a positive impact on wages; and an improvement in workers' welfare.
- 29.** The evaluations of these projects offer important elements for reflection and guidance. In the first place, they show that a protracted effort is normally required to achieve the full impact of project activities and to consolidate the results obtained. For example, the evaluation of the PRODIAC project covering the countries of Central America suggests that its relatively short duration (three years) means that its outcomes may not be sustainable without further assistance. In contrast, the MATAAC project, which has been operating in the same region for over five years, has had an important impact on labour legislation and institutions with sustainable and replicable results. In general, longer-term commitment is therefore required, backed up by strategic planning and the continued monitoring and evaluation of projects over time.
- 30.** One of the main features of successful projects in the field of social dialogue is a high degree of flexibility so that they can respond more effectively to the varying circumstances and specific demands of participating countries. The ownership of projects by the constituents that are their direct beneficiaries is a key factor in their sustainability. Moreover, the impact of dialogue can be further reinforced by its extension beyond the traditional partners, for example to include other key ministries, and through stronger relations between social dialogue and specific economic, developmental and social issues. Similarly, effectiveness and results can be greatly increased by linking various projects in related areas. The experience of the SAVPOT project has also demonstrated the value of enterprise-based social dialogue as a means of improving working conditions and welfare,

product quality, productivity and competitiveness, and of raising awareness in relation to collective bargaining, workers' rights and gender issues.

B. Projects focusing on cross-cutting issues

- 31.** While it is often necessary to concentrate first on establishing basic institutions and capacities as the building blocks for effective social dialogue, a direct focus on substantive issues can offer constructive opportunities for developing tripartism and dialogue. Almost all of the projects reviewed have addressed cross-cutting issues. For example, many of the capacity-building activities for workers' organizations and employers have included a component on HIV/AIDS. A case in point is Uganda, where sessions on HIV/AIDS were included in all training activities for workers' organizations as part of the concerted national effort which currently appears to be arresting the increase in new cases of HIV/AIDS in the country. Project activities focusing more particularly on specific cross-cutting issues are examined in this section.

International labour standards and labour legislation

- 32.** The strengthening of social dialogue and capacity-building activities for constituents often facilitate the ratification of international labour standards and the reform of labour legislation. In addition to Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, emphasis is placed on the ratification and implementation of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), the Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154). International labour standards are a regular feature of workers' education activities and many of the project activities covering the maritime sector, reviewed in the next section, are also related to the promotion of maritime labour standards.
- 33.** Following the recommendations of the reconstituted tripartite Labour Advisory Boards in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, referred to in the previous section, both countries ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Kenya also ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). In Uganda, the reactivated Labour Advisory Board met in February 2003 to approve the ratification of the remaining fundamental ILO Conventions Nos. 87, 100 and 111.
- 34.** New labour laws on dispute settlement have been introduced in Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, with bills being prepared in Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia. In Niger, legislation has been introduced to establish a new consultation framework and a permanent secretariat for its operation. In the Balkan States, several new laws have been approved relating to individual and collective labour relations, and a new Labour Code was adopted in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in December 2001, which reflects ILO comments and recommendations.

Gender

- 35.** There is growing recognition of the important role to be played by social dialogue in enhancing gender equality, eliminating gender discrimination at work and in society, as well as in creating new opportunities for the personal and social development of both men and women. This is progressively being reflected in the design and implementation of ILO projects in the field of social dialogue and tripartism, not only by promoting awareness and concern for gender issues, but also by addressing gender as a strategic issue and mainstreaming it in all key project objectives.

36. By way of illustration, one of the principal objectives of the projects to promote social dialogue in the poverty reduction strategy (PRS) process, as well as the PRODIAC project, is to increase awareness of the importance of women's participation in tripartite consultation and social dialogue, and their representation on the relevant bodies, as a means of consolidating democratic processes and participation structures. Similarly, the strategy of the SAVPOT project includes increasing the participation of women in dialogue in the enterprises covered by the project. The sensitization training carried out under the SLAREA project has contributed to an improvement in the gender balance in trade union membership in the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, with a target of 33 per cent being achieved in the former. This type of approach has also achieved greater gender sensitivity in industrial courts in project countries. The inclusion of gender issues as an important part of all the ILO's workers' education activities has contributed, for example, to the adoption of a special policy on women by the major trade union centre in the Russian Federation.
37. Despite significant progress and some encouraging results in this area, it is recognized that it is still often a challenge to involve women more fully in project activities and to address gender issues in a more comprehensive manner. The linkage of gender issues with promotional activities in the field of tripartism and social dialogue is, however, gaining momentum. With a view to further encouraging this approach, a manual for trainers has recently been produced on gender, social dialogue and participation in the PRS process.⁵

Child labour

38. As part of the ILO's PPC Package (Integrated Programme for Building Partnerships and Capacity against Child Labour), a project (1998-2001), funded by Norway, was carried out to assist employers to combat child labour in Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and Zimbabwe and in Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala and Peru. The new emphasis placed on promoting social dialogue to combat child labour also included a project for workers' organizations covering Cambodia, India, Mozambique and Yemen. Further activities in other countries are at the planning stage, including joint activities for employers' and workers' organizations in several countries.
39. The project for employers' organizations involved the establishment of child labour units in each organization and succeeded in raising awareness among employers' organizations in these countries concerning child labour. For example, the Federation of Ugandan Employers (FUE) carried out a countrywide survey of the prevalence of child labour in the formal commercial agricultural sector which found that, contrary to initial beliefs, child labour exists in the tea sector. An awareness campaign was therefore undertaken in this sector in collaboration with the Uganda Tea Board. These activities contributed to greater cooperation between stakeholders in the sector. During the same period, a substantial increase in tea production was registered in Uganda attributable, according to the FUE and the Uganda Tea Board, to the productivity gains resulting in part from the gradual elimination of child labour and in part from the activities of another project to address occupational safety and health issues in the sector. In Costa Rica, the national employers' organization has focused on the child labour issue in terms of the interest of employers in having a well-educated workforce, continued social stability and a good image in export markets. It has engaged in lobbying on these issues at the national level. Its collaboration with the trade unions in the country in some of these activities led to the realization that, in

⁵ ILO: *Social dialogue and poverty reduction strategies: A guide to the integration of gender equality* (forthcoming).

addition to child labour, it shares perspectives and interests with the unions in a number of areas, including youth employment and flexible working hours.

40. The action taken by employers' organizations on child labour increased their visibility in society and offered an area in which they could build up a cooperative relationship with trade unions. The project was successful in providing employers' organizations with an opportunity to discover that combating child labour is in their interests. Nevertheless, the employers' organizations concerned indicated that, although the private sector plays an essential role in social and economic development, it should not take over the responsibilities of the State.

Poverty alleviation

41. In pursuance of the ILO's objective of reducing poverty and promoting economic development and social progress in developing countries through the generation of decent work, two projects have been launched over the past two years, financed respectively by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, to enhance capacity building for effective social dialogue in the development of poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) in selected low-income countries (Cambodia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Peru, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam). The projects are intended to promote social dialogue through tripartite and bipartite relations and to strengthen consultative machinery so as to enable the social partners and ministries of labour to play a substantive role in the PRS process.
42. The assistance provided through these projects has focused on technical advisory services and training workshops for the tripartite constituents on the development and implementation of PRSs, combined with tripartite meetings to assess poverty reduction policies. Still in their early phases, the projects have already shown positive results. They have helped the social partners to understand how the PRSs work and to develop a coherent rationale for their participation in the process. They have focused their attention on key components of poverty reduction strategies, such as the importance of employment policies and the role of Decent Work Agendas in fostering better living and working conditions for the poor in both the formal and the informal economy. It is envisaged that a new subcommittee on poverty reduction strategies will be established in the National Labour Advisory Board in Ethiopia, while in Cambodia, the Ministry of Labour and workers' and employers' organizations have been included in the national consultation process organized by the Government on the PRS.
43. Capacity-building activities for the social partners and labour administrations have therefore proven their worth as a principal tool through which their participation in the PRS process can become effective and productive. However, the projects have also confirmed the complexities and difficulties encountered in enhancing the impact of social dialogue and tripartism in this area. Overcoming these obstacles will require not only the strengthening of capacities among the social partners and labour administrations, but also a change in attitudes and approaches to the problem.

Occupational safety and health

44. The capacity-building activities carried out in support of both employers' and workers' organizations often focus on occupational safety and health matters as an area in which their members' interests can be furthered and as a field for promoting social dialogue on concerns that are of mutual interest to both employers and workers.

45. Starting in 2001, as part of the Danish-financed project for employers' organizations, a programme was carried out on occupational safety and health covering Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Paraguay. The objective of the programme was to raise awareness of occupational safety and health issues and strengthen the capacity of employers' organizations to provide services to their members on this issue. In Bolivia, the national employers' organization has carried out analyses of the national occupational safety and health situation, designated focal points on this subject at the national and branch levels, produced promotional and information materials and established a special occupational safety and health committee at the national level. In the Dominican Republic, the national employers' organization established an occupational safety and health unit, adopted a policy document for employers on the subject and held its first congress on safety and health at work in November 2003.

C. Projects covering specific sectors of activity

46. While the ILO's technical cooperation activities undertaken as part of its programme of sectoral activities have declined in recent years, several projects on social dialogue and strengthening the capacity of the constituents include components focusing on specific sectors of activity. Reference may be made, for example, to the activities undertaken to improve social dialogue, conditions of work and productivity in the apparel sector in Cambodia, Indonesia and Morocco. It is also intended, as part of the ILO's new sectoral approach to labour and social issues, to give greater priority to more practical forms of assistance to constituents in various sectors, including the promotion of decent work in agriculture and the footwear, textiles and clothing sector, and through a multi-sectoral action programme on HIV/AIDS. It may be added that sectoral activities often involve the promotion of social dialogue on issues such as working conditions and safety and health.

Maritime sector

47. The ILO's activities to promote decent work in the maritime sector have been undertaken in a context of increased attention to the development and implementation of maritime labour standards, and particularly the preparation of a consolidated maritime labour instrument bringing together 68 maritime standards in a simplified instrument. The ILO's activities in this area have been supplemented by an international programme (2000-05), financed by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), and a project to promote decent work in the maritime industry (2003-04), financed by France.
48. The activities carried out have consisted in the organization of regional and national meetings to promote tripartite discussion of maritime labour standards, supplemented by technical assistance, the production of promotional and training materials and the provision of training for ship inspectors and other maritime officials, mainly in cooperation with other organizations. Since the beginning of 2001, there has been a significant rise in the ratification rate of maritime labour Conventions, including four ratifications of the Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 147), which is the ILO's principal maritime standard, and ten ratifications of the Seafarers' Hours of Work and the Manning of Ships Convention, 1996 (No. 180). It has also been decided to include the 1996 Protocol to Convention No. 147 as a relevant Convention for port state control under the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control. This constitutes considerable progress, as the Paris Memorandum of Understanding covers all the major European ports and is seen as a precursor for other regions. The project activities have also helped in achieving a high level of tripartite participation in the preparation of the new consolidated Convention. Future activities will include helping in the establishment of national tripartite maritime committees and the promotion of the new Convention.

Portworkers

49. An important sectoral technical cooperation programme, initially financed by the Netherlands, is the Portworker Development Programme, which is intended to promote decent work in the port sector. Assistance is provided for the development of portworker training structures with a view to enabling governments and port authorities in developing countries to establish effective and systematic training schemes to improve cargo-handling performance, working conditions, safety and the status and welfare of portworkers. Current activities are self-sustaining through the sale of the training materials produced, although further financing is being sought to expand the programme to other countries.

Forestry sector

50. Forestry is an area in which the ILO has acquired experience over a number of years in providing assistance to constituents, particularly through the development of national codes of forest practices. The process of preparing these codes is instrumental in developing social dialogue in the sector, and the codes make a significant contribution to improving conditions of work, safety and health, productivity and the sustainable management of forest resources at the national level. Such codes have become important policy tools in several countries, and have been given legislative effect, for example, in Fiji.
51. A project (1998-2003), financed by Finland, has been undertaken to develop national codes of best forest practices in China, Mongolia, Philippines and Uruguay. Project activities, which in certain countries benefited from support by the FAO and UNDP, have included the organization of a series of local workshops for the development of the codes, followed by national workshops for their adoption. The Governments of China, Mongolia and the Philippines have expressed the intention of incorporating the codes into national legislation, and training has started in China for the implementation of the national code. The project evaluation found that the development of the codes had had a considerable impact in terms of raising general awareness, knowledge and interest in forestry industry issues in official circles and among the population as a whole. As a result of the ILO's work in this area, there is continuing demand from constituents for assistance in developing and implementing national codes of forest practice, and funding is being sought for further technical cooperation activities in this field.

III. The way forward

52. Experience gained from the projects described above and from the Office's work in general shows the major strategic impact that can be achieved, in return for a relatively modest investment of resources, through the strengthening of the tripartite constituents and the reinforcement of social dialogue and tripartism. The benefits can be perceived in terms of the fostering of industrial peace and the creation of a new climate conducive to social cohesion, economic development and reinforced democracy. This in turn normally makes a significant contribution to unlocking situations of stalemate, developing new relationships based on goodwill and mutual understanding and resolving social and economic problems. There appears to be sufficient evidence to suggest that the strengthening of social dialogue and tripartism is capable of activating a virtuous circle in which the building up of confidence and trust among the social partners can become a catalyst for social development, economic growth and good governance.
53. Clearly it is necessary, where these elements do not exist, to put in place the building blocks of social dialogue, in the form of institutions, capacities and, very basically,

awareness of the need for and potential of social dialogue, based on the ratification and implementation of the relevant international labour standards. But the projects reviewed also serve to reaffirm the value of social dialogue as an instrument for addressing other strategic issues, such as poverty reduction and gender. This important aspect is highlighted in the resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue of 2002, which calls for the enhancement of “the role of tripartism and social dialogue in the Organization, both as one of its four strategic objectives and as a tool to make operational all strategic objectives, as well as the cross-cutting issues of gender and development”.

- 54.** In November 2002, the Governing Body approved the proposal that a plan of action should be prepared on the effect to be given to the resolution. The Social Dialogue Sector has primary responsibility for developing this plan of action and coordinating the implementation of the resolution. For this purpose, it has embarked upon a process of informal consultations within the Office and with constituents. Preliminary findings from the consultations show, at one level, very broad acceptance of the principle that tripartism is the ILO’s bedrock and that tripartism and social dialogue are integral components of the Decent Work Agenda and essential instruments for achieving it. At the same time, a more critical perspective emerges suggesting that, in advancing a specific social dialogue agenda, too great a reliance has been placed on the form and processes of dialogue, while giving insufficient attention to its role as an essential instrument of policy formulation and implementation. This may in turn explain why, at least in certain cases, social dialogue is at times treated as being somewhat marginal to the ILO’s work in other fields, an afterthought rather than an essential component of projects and other activities.
- 55.** In response to this situation, and with a view to implementing the resolution more fully, it is necessary to advance the case for social dialogue and tripartism more forcefully, for example by highlighting and disseminating instances, including technical cooperation projects, which prove the validity of social dialogue as a tool for achieving other outcomes. Based on successful examples of the integration of social dialogue, and reference may be made in this respect to certain projects for the promotion of the ILO Declaration and the elimination of child labour, as well as certain sectoral activities and the decent work pilot programmes that are currently being launched, it is also important to develop methodologies and guidelines, based on tried and tested experience, on how social dialogue and tripartism can best be integrated as essential elements in the delivery of ILO activities. To this end, it is proposed to work both within the Office and with constituents.
- 56.** Within the Office, collaboration will be strengthened with a number of headquarters units for the development and dissemination of the necessary practical experience and guidance for Office-wide implementation. At the national level, it is intended to focus on a small number of countries, with an appropriate regional balance, and possibly a subregion. In the countries concerned, an appropriate course of action might involve the development, through a process of dialogue with the national tripartite constituents, of an analysis of the national situation with regard to tripartism. Based on this assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and practices of social dialogue, the envisaged outcome could be the adoption of a national plan addressing perceived weaknesses and identifying substantive issues to be covered through dialogue, with the dual objective of strengthening tripartism and finding solutions to the issues concerned. Ideally, such plans should provide an effective basis for the development of the sort of commitment that is required by the partners involved, including donors, over a sufficient period to make a substantial impact.

Geneva, 26 January 2004.

Appendix

Employers

INT/98/M08/NOR	Assisting Employers to Combat Child Labour
RER/97/M04/NET	Private Sector Development through Employers' Organizations in Visegrad Countries
INT/98/M23/DAN) INT/99/M18/DAN) INT/00/M35/DAN) INT/01/M27/DAN)	Programme of Assistance to Employers' Organizations, 2000 and 2001

Workers

INT/00/M27/DAN	Workers' Education Programme
INS/01/98/UKM	Workers' Education Assistance to Workers and their Organizations in Indonesia
RUS/99/M02/NLO	Implementation and Further development of the New Concept of Trade Union Education in Russia

IFP/DIALOGUE

BIH/00/M03/ITA	Promotion of Social Dialogue and Revision of Labour Legislation
YUG/01/M01/ITA	Promotion of Social Dialogue and Tripartism and Capacity Building of the Social Partners in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
RAF/99/M10/SW1	Project to Advance Social Partnership in Promoting Labour Peace in Southern Africa
RAF/00/M50/USA – SLAREA	Strengthening Labour Relations in East Africa
RAF/97/M14/BEL – PRODIAF	Programme Régional de Promotion du Dialogue Social en Afrique Francophone
RAS/97/M01/NOR – SAVPOT	Promoting Tripartism and Sound Industrial Relations in Asia
RAF/00/M03/FRA – PRODIAF	Programme de Promotion du Dialogue Social en Afrique Francophone
RLA/97/M04-05/SPA	Strengthening Labour Administrations in Central America
RLA/98/M02/NOR – PRODIAC	Tripartism and Social Dialogue in Central America: Strengthening the Processes of Consolidating Democracy
INT/02/M79/UKM	Capacity building for effective social dialogue in PRS and PRSP in selected low-income countries
RLA/00/M50/USA – RELACENTRO	Collective bargaining and labour/industrial relations
INT/02/M64/NET	Capacity building for effective social dialogue in the PRSP in selected low-income countries

Sectoral activities

INT/00/21/ITF	International Programme for the Promotion of Decent Work in the Maritime Industry
INT/02/03/FRA	Soutien au Programme pour le travail décent dans le secteur maritime
INT/98/06/FIN	Promotion of National Codes of best Forest Practices