

Key Findings and Recommendations

Progress of the Arab region on MDG1

Poverty and hunger is remarkably less widespread in the Arab region compared to other developing regions however it is still prevalent in LDCs and strong regional based interventions are needed to support food security in horn of Africa region. In this regard, ODA from Arab countries can have a major role in reduction of extreme poverty and hunger.

Poverty is shallow in the Arab region – many are vulnerable to economic shocks and other crises. This suggests that social protection mechanisms in Arab countries are of prime relevance.

Decent work – work that encompasses rights, income, voice, and protection as defined by the ILO remains a major challenge throughout the Arab region, particularly for women and youth. Arab countries have experienced a systemic expansion of informal employment, which constitutes a powerful sign of increased vulnerability and exclusion from decent work. This calls for a set of integrated interventions to address both demand and supply side constraints.

Globally, there is a need to accelerate progress towards the achievement of MDG1 through the implementation of job-rich recovery policies.

It is crucial for the region to take an active part in the on going global debate on the post-2015 development agenda framework; and in so doing, advocate for decent work as a central way of achieving sustainable development.

Policy choices and poverty reduction strategies through decent work should be supported by greater policy coherence at national, regional, and international levels.

Specific measures aimed at easing the impact of the crisis on workers, employers, families and communities include tested specific measures such as labour intensive investment in infrastructure, job retention measures, the provision of skills and employment services and the promotion of small and medium enterprises through capacity building and access to microfinance.

Create decent jobs for all, including the youth

For most countries, the critical constraint for employment creation, including decent work, is mainly on the labour demand side. However, to make labour demand more employment friendly, one usually needs not just to change incentives here and there (e.g. through taxes and subsidies) but to rethink the

country economic model. For example, the global financial crisis and the public debt crisis in Europe call for a reconsideration of the role of financial markets as well as the need for greater employment creation and more effective social protection

Specific recommendations for the Arab region

- Ensure the synergies between public and private sectors
- Improve social dialogue among the social partners on employment policies and programmes.
- Establish partnerships and cooperation at national and international levels on lessons learnt and best practice of what works
- Develop well designed active labour market programmes to assist with job placement and ensure the monitoring and evaluation of these programmes. Examples are efficient employment services.

Enhance skills and employability

Education, vocational training and lifelong learning are central pillars of employability, employment of workers and sustainable enterprise development within the Decent Work Agenda, and thus contribute to achieving the MDGs

Specific recommendations:

- Facilitate access to training and skills development to persons and groups hindered by various barriers such as low income groups and people with disabilities etc.
- Institutionalize lifelong learning in training systems.
- Ensure timely labour market information to enable the match between the supply of skills and the demand.
- Undertake further research to assess the continued relevance and quality of training. Tools and methods can be further developed.

Developing inclusive financial markets for youth through micro finance

Poor people need a variety of financial services, not just loans. Like everyone else, the poor need a range of financial services that are convenient, flexible, and affordable.

Specific recommendations for the Arab region:

- Expand access to financial and non-financial services for low-income youth.
- Provide comprehensive youth services by building up the institutional capacity, knowledge and awareness of stakeholders and service providers,.
- Conduct youth inclusive market research to improve the delivery comprehensive services to youth and understand the challenges faced by the young people
- Expand access to and mobilize knowledge of youth financial services, by convening and facilitating interaction among stakeholders.

Social protection

There is a need to extend social protection beyond the workers in the formal economy to those in the informal economy through the social protection floor. It was found that means in the region for establishing social protection floors exist.

Even in GCC countries, there are groups like the disabled who need social protection through introducing broader mechanisms. This is equally important for migrant workers who are mostly excluded from existing social protection schemes.

The human rights based approach was underlined as one of the key principles of social protection.

Work and family policies

Few governments have set up comprehensive policy frameworks in line with Convention No. 156

Unpaid family responsibilities continue to undermine the achievement of decent work and gender equality

Government has a leadership role to play in setting policy orientation and creating a social climate that is conducive to dialogue and change for improving work–family reconciliation

Comprehensive work-family policies have to become a key component of employment and social national strategies

Specific recommendations

- To make paid work more family compatible
- To make family responsibilities more compatible with work
- To promote a more equal sharing between women and men

Promoting Decent Work for Women

- Improving women's agency and voice in labour market governance institutions including workers' organizations, cooperatives, business associations, employers organizations as founders, members and leaders.
- Widen occupational choices to eliminate occupational segregation both horizontal and vertical through workplace policies
- Increase training opportunities for women in non-traditional sectors
- Enhance demand for women workers among employers through research
- End the exclusion of domestic workers from labour and social security legislation
- Promote/support women enterprise development (individual and collective):
 - Training in entrepreneurship development, cooperative management,
 - Access to productive resources and credit
 - Access to markets

Ratification and Application of Gender Equality Conventions

- Ratification of Convention 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) and Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration
- Harmonization of national legislation, development of national policies, programmes and allocation of necessary institutional, human and financial resources

Social dialogue

- Increase dialogue with sectors of the population on social affairs.
- Begin moving towards the right to organize and bargain. This will take time, but start dialogue with organizations that already exist
- Dialogue with both workers and employers, together if possible.
- Involve nationals as well as migrants, and women's groups

Rights

- Examine (with ILO help if desired) the unratified fundamental conventions – where exactly are the gaps promoting ratification? Are they well understood? What would be required to change?
- Examine labour and related legislation to see whether it complies with international standards