

About Us

Acknowledging the importance of the family in society, the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) was established in 2006 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF). It was then known as the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD).

DIFI's mandate is based on the Doha Declaration on the family. This Declaration resulted from the Doha International Conference of the Family, which was organized by the State of Qatar to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The Declaration was noted in a United Nations General Assembly resolution. DIFI has a Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

SUMMARY

The Doha Forum on Decent Work and Poverty Reduction, organized on 26 and 27 October 2011 in Doha, fits within the initiatives undertaken by DIFI on a regular basis to provide the region and the world with academic research and knowledge as well as interdisciplinary dialogue aimed at exchange of experiences, best practices, and coherent policy formulation. The forum will contribute towards the preparations of the celebration for the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014.

The forum offered an opportunity for multistakeholder dialogue on the opportunities and challenges of applying a decent work approach to poverty reduction and to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The exchange of experiences and policy lessons from different countries, including from the Arab region, will help consolidate the decent work approach in national development strategies and plans.

The strategic goals set out in the decent work approach to development spearheaded by the ILO are a main component of human rights imperatives, enshrined in the Universal Declaration. In order to achieve the aim of full productive employment and decent work for all, the ILO pursues the Decent Work Agenda, which focuses on four inseparable, inter-related, and mutually supportive objectives:

Employment – The MDG Outcome document adopted in September 2010 clearly reaffirms that work and income are a critical route out of poverty. National reports and research conducted show economic growth alone is insufficient to eradicate poverty unless it is accompanied by policies aimed at creating sustainable jobs. This dimension was initially missing in the MDG Agenda until decent work was explicitly endorsed by the United Nations Summit in September 2005 as an integral part of poverty reduction and development strategy. More recently, in the context of the current economic crisis and its impact on employment and poverty, the ILO adopted in June 2009 a Global Jobs Pact, which offers policy guidance and practical advice on addressing the major challenge of creating decent work for all as a sustainable way out of the crisis;

Rights – Without the effective enforcement of fundamental rights at work people will not be

Decent Work and Poverty Reduction



empowered to escape from poverty. In particular, phenomena such as forced labor, child labor, ethnic, social, and gender discrimination are a product of poverty, but at the same time contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and injustice;

Social protection – It safeguards income and underpins health; ILO research shows how even limited social transfers targeting the poor – affordable even by developing economies – could make a substantial difference in the reduction of poverty levels. The UN Social Protection Floor initiative promotes a basic set of social transfers and access to essential services as a means to alleviate the social impact of the crisis;

Dialogue – The participation of employers’ and workers’ organizations in shaping national development policy in the social sphere and poverty reduction strategies help ensure that they are appropriate and sustainable and that their results will reach out to the final beneficiaries..

Together, these four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda support coherent and gender-sensitive development strategies. The progressive realization of the strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda is recognized as a critical element for a sustainable route out of poverty.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM

The main objective of the forum contributed to a better understanding of the decent work approach and the powerful impact it can have on MDGs, with an emphasis on poverty reduction and to identify policies that have proven their capacity to accelerate progress towards the achievement of MDGs.

More specifically, the forum aimed to:

- 1) Enhance awareness among participants of the Decent Work Agenda, its four strategic objectives, and its relevance to poverty reduction strategies;
- 2) Present relevant and replicable good practice and experiences on innovative approaches in the Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab, and other countries which have had tangible results in terms of poverty reduction;
- 3) Generate a discussion among participants on practical recommendations leading to

the integration of a decent Work approach into National Development Strategies and plans.

KEY FINDINGS & 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 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and strong regional based interventions are needed to support food security in the Horn of Africa. In this regard, Official Development Assistance (ODA) from Arab countries can play a role in the 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 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 the constraints of supply and demand.

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 ongoing 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 level.

Specific measures aimed at easing the impact of the crisis on workers, employers, families, and communities include tested specific measures such as labor intensive

investment in infrastructure, job retention measures, the provision of skills and employment services, the promotion of small and medium enterprises through capacity building, and access to microfinance.

Create decent jobs for all, including our youth

For most countries, the critical constraint for employment creation, including decent work, is mainly on the labor demand side. However, to make labor 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's economic model. For example, the global financial crisis and the public debt crisis in Europe calls 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 social partners on employment policies and programs.
- Establish partnerships and cooperation at national and international level on lessons learned and best practice of what works.
- Develop well-designed active labor market programs to assist with job placements and ensure the monitoring and evaluation of these programs. 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 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.
- Institutionalize lifelong learning in training systems.

- Ensure timely labor 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 microfinance

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 youths.
- 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 of comprehensive services to youths and understand the challenges faced by 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 such as 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 and creating a social climate that is conducive to dialogue and change for improving work and 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 voice in labor 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 labor 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, programs, 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 labor and related legislation to see whether it complies with international standards.