The ILO PRSP Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference:

a) To facilitate exchange of information and experience on ILO’s involvement with PRSP processes, across the house (HQ and regions)
b) To foster a coherent ILO strategy vis-à-vis the PRSP by integrating a complete and consistent Decent Work Agenda (all elements) in the PRSP process.

Meetings will aim at discussing specific country experiences, as well as thematic review of technical and conceptual issues. The participation of the field offices and colleagues will be encouraged through video conferencing.

Proposals for topics to be considered by the Committee are welcome.

Résumé of meetings:

4 March 2003
Meeting devoted to consultations with Sector 1: Decent Work, Poverty Reduction and Rights

➢ International Labour Standards are part of the equation:
  o International Labour Standards (ILS) establish minimum levels of safety which indeed work against poverty and insecurity. However, there is a need to look at the concepts and words more thoroughly, unless it would only be an exercise of “lip service”, to repackage and say that ILS and Sector 1 are about poverty reduction.
  o If we are to link ILS to the Millennium Development Goals, we have to go beyond the words, unpack and go deeper and look at the basic rights lying behind the goals and targets.
  o The rights embedded in ILS are one necessary element among others to tackle poverty and insecurity.
  o The challenge is to find the right mix with the other elements of Decent Work and to look at the ways in which they interact. It then becomes a question of content and packaging.

29 April 2003
Meeting devoted to consultations with Sector 4: Decent Work, Poverty Reduction and Social Dialogue

➢ The “Social Dialogue Model”, based on 6 country experiences, was presented:
  o To start with, a mission is undertaken to identify the situation and the issues involved. Consultations are undertaken with the Constituents to assess their needs and concerns, and to ensure their commitment and buy-in. Efforts are also undertaken to ensure that they are included at the table of the PRSP discussions. The important issues identified by the Constituents, in relation to the PRSP, are studied and often position papers are prepared by each partner or collectively. Separate meetings are held with the Constituents before a tripartite meeting would try to come up with an agreed action plan. It should be noted that missions and work undertaken in the respective countries involved specialists from different ILO sectors.
29 May 2003
Meeting devoted to consultations with Sector 2: Decent Work, Poverty Reduction and Employment

- Employment and Poverty has been in the focus of the “Employment Sector” activities for a long time. They were especially looking at how the Global Employment Agenda could form a component within PRSPs. Four presentations were provided, on research under a joint ILO/UNDP programme, on Jobs in Africa, on Youth Employment, and on Specific country experiences.

11 May 2004
Meeting devoted to updates and information sharing – Issues covered:

- Ms. Berar Awad updated the committee on a number of developments since the last meeting. The ESP Committee had been provided with a joint update on the Global Employment Agenda and the PRSPs. INTEGRATION had undertaken a number of consultations with specific units on the PRSPs. Country level support was moving into a new round of PRSP based on demand from the AOs.

- Messrs. Buckley, Sziracki and Akpokavie briefed the Committee on ILO’s contribution to the PRSP in Indonesia which had just concluded with a large, well attended seminar in Jakarta. The presentations emphasised the collaborative nature of the exercise, with the AO Jakarta, SRO Manila, RO Bangkok, EMPLOI, INTEGRATION, Social Protection and DIALOGUE working together to provide the inputs. The ILO report based on four chapters on opportunity, empowerment, capacity building and vulnerability had been submitted to the Government’s PRSP Committee. A number of comments were made on the substance of the report, on the importance of the HIPC initiative for funding, on the space for generating growth, on linkages between ethnicity and poverty, and on donor coherence.

- The meeting concluded with Mr. Rodgers proposing to the Committee a plan to undertake an assessment of the PRSPs, especially in the light of comments from the ESP Committee. The Committee was invited to put this paper together coordinated by Ms. Berar-Awad and NPG.

31 May 2005
Meeting devoted to updates and information sharing – Issues covered:

- Updates on ILO/PRSP engagement by technical units
  - Overview of the Methodology and Synopsis Table of the Country Support
  - (INTEGRATION/NPG)
  - Decent Work and PRS Manual (INTEGRATION/NPG)
  - Ethnic audit of PRSPs (DECLARATION)
  - Symposium on “The role of trade unions in the Global Economy and the Fights against Poverty” and Meetings with IFIs and TUs (ACTRAV)
  - Mission to the World Bank and Guide for Employers (ACT/EMP)
  - Macroeconomic framework, growth and PRSPs (EMP/STRAT)
  - Disability and Poverty Reduction (IFP/SKILLS)
  - MDGs and PRSPs (Larry Kohler)

- Information on reviews and evaluations:
  - World Bank and IMF joint mid-term review
  - ILO/PRSP Impact Evaluation: progress

- GB/ESP discussion on PRSPs (November 2005)
- Better use of the ILO Website on PRS
- Proposals for future meetings of the Committee
22 September 2005
Meeting devoted to the report of the independent evaluation of ILO’s participation in PRSPs by Dharam Ghai:

Main findings:

a) Before ILO participation, the role of ILO constituents in PRSP processes were rather marginal. There was a big change in their participation subsequently. Constituents everywhere remarked on the crucial role played by the ILO secretariat in bringing this about.

b) ILO assistance in facilitating constituent participation: in all countries, workshops and seminars either separately for workers and employers or jointly; workshops designed to enhance constituent understanding of the purpose, process and content of PRSPs; their links with the decent work agenda, the role that the constituents can play in influencing the process and substance of PRSPs; identification of areas where ILO can make a contribution to PRSP process and content: provision of documentation, training; technical backstopping.

c) Role played by constituents: identifying areas where ILO can make a contribution e.g. informal economy, small and medium enterprises development, productivity enhancement, minimum wages, incomes policy, child labour, protection of core rights, equal opportunities for women workers, skill formation, improvement of social dialogue; participation in thematic groups set up for preparation, evaluation or monitoring of PRSs; submission of papers by unions and employers organizations; participation in projects and programmes included in PRSs e.g. child labour, small and medium enterprises development, gender equality, tripartite agreements, HIV/AIDS and workplace, training, promotion of core rights at work etc.

d) The constituent participation in thematic groups, development forums and national policy dialogues brought them in contact with other ministries, especially ministries of finance and planning; NGOs; community groups; local authorities; multilateral and bilateral development agencies, and research workers. These discussions improved their understanding of the relationships between issues of employment, wages, productivity and social security, on the one hand, and national policies on macroeconomic stability, sectoral development plans, and trade and investment, on the other hand.

e) PRSP participation sometimes led to improved social dialogue, as in Nepal, Indonesia and Mali (solidarity pact); also among different trade unions e.g. in Indonesia (network among trade union federations extended to issues beyond PRSP); and in Nepal.

f) Some difficulties encountered: feeling among trade unions (Ghana, Mali, Indonesia) that the consultative process did not allow time for adequate discussions; papers were not received in time, or that their views were largely ignored; PRSPs contained an undue emphasis on macroeconomic stability and trade liberalization and were biased against state enterprises. Often the discussions too technical, especially on the relationship between decent work issues and macro-economic, trade, credit and exchange rate policies.

Recommendations:

a) Efforts should continue to further enhance the capability of constituents to participate more effectively in all phases of PRSP activities. The need is especially acute for trade unions. Apart from improved flows of documents and information, there is scope for organization of courses on specific themes of interest to the constituents. In the longer run, the greatest contribution in enhancing their capability can come from endowing them with facilities for technical and analytical work on issues such as employment planning, labour markets and the impact on employment and other decent work objectives of macroeconomic, trade, financial and foreign exchange policies. One way of doing this is through the establishment or strengthening of research institutes on labour and social issues.
b) Scarcity of technical resources has prevented ILO from drawing full benefits from its participation in PRSP activities. Greater priority to PRSP and allocation of more technical resources can contribute in several areas. First, there is need for fully integrating employment into growth and poverty reduction strategies. There is even greater need to evaluate the impact of PRSP policies and programmes. In particular, it would be enlightening to determine to what extent the implementation of macroeconomic, trade, investment, financial and private sector stimulation policies have contributed to employment generation and poverty reduction.

c) More resources to PRSP activities should be accompanied by their concentration in some priority areas to achieve a minimum critical mass of capability and develop world-class expertise.

d) With regard to monitoring, ILO can assist the countries to collect data and on a more regular basis on employment, labour markets, social protection, gender, child labour and other aspects of decent work. It can also share with them its work on decent work indicators and assist them in developing indicators and data for monitoring employment, social protection and core labour rights. It can also collaborate with national institutions in evaluation of policies and programmes of interest to ILO. This would be one way of ensuring that annual progress reports provide a greater coverage of areas of ILO interest.

e) PRSP participation should become even more of an Office wide activity. The technical departments should allocate more resources to participation in PRSP activities. The global programmes might reflect better PRSP priorities. The field offices should dispose of more consultancy and technical cooperation credits to respond better and in a timely fashion to opportunities for developing ILO programmes in the context of PRSP priorities. The Advisory Committee should meet more frequently and play a more active role in information exchange, policy advice and review of experience. There should be greater exchange of experiences and interaction between PRSP activities and programmes and policies in other countries. A high level seminar should be organized to review experience with PRSP participation, focusing on successes and setbacks and the lessons that might be drawn for future activities in this area. Consideration might be given to generalizing and universalizing the positive experiences gained from ILO’s contributions to poverty reduction, employment generation and improvement of socio-economic security. Drawing also upon the experience with DWPPs, the proposed seminar could link up with the preparatory work underway on DWCPs. Some of the critical issues raised in this evaluation might also be usefully discussed in the seminar.

➢ Discussion:

Following the presentation of the report the discussion was focused around operational and policy issues relating to the following points:

a) Links to Decent Work Country Programming
b) Measuring the impact
c) Improving the dialogue with the Bretton Woods Institutions
d) The need for country specific policy briefs
e) The need for some convincing and user friendly documents on rights and social protection
f) Sustainability of the work undertaken?
g) The need to examine policy space and public finance