



**SDG 8 AS A
NEW SOCIAL
CONTRACT FOR
A JOB-RICH
RECOVERY AND
RESILIENCE**

#TIME FOR



**THE CLOCK IS TICKING
FOR A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT**



#TIME FOR



**THE CLOCK IS TICKING FOR
A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT**



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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has triggered an extraordinary wave of destruction across the world of work. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that over 250 million jobs have been destroyed thus far and more than 1.6 billion informal workers are facing deprivation without any social protection to fall back on. The ILO also estimates that the number of workers living in moderate or extreme poverty increased by 108 million in 2020, reversing five years of continuous progress.

As highlighted by the ITUC SDG 8 Monitor, the world entered the pandemic already with a “sustainability debt”. The serious SDGs underperformance, in particular regarding the world of work and its endemic pre-existing labour market deficiencies, resulted in making those who are most vulnerable even more exposed to the impact of the crises: low-skilled workers, migrant workers, informal workers, women, and youth, to name a few. It is now imperative to focus on a **human-centred recovery** from the unprecedented crisis that is afflicting the world of work.

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are helping us in this respect. **They are more relevant today than ever** because they provide the vision and show the path towards resilient economies and just societies. Recovery measures and investments must be in line with the SDGs to be lasting.

SDG 8 is key to addressing the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and to driving the 2030 Agenda forward.¹ Through its targets on decent work, social

¹International Trade Union Confederation, [SDG decade of action - trade union policy responses, 2020](#)

protection and sustainable growth, SDG 8 plays a fundamental role in the trade union call for a **New Social Contract** on:

1. Jobs: climate-friendly jobs with Just Transition, decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

2. Rights: the promise of the ILO Centenary Declaration for rights and protections for all workers, irrespective of employment arrangements.

3. Universal Social Protection: social protection for all, with the fight for a global social protection fund for the poorest countries.

4. Equality: Progress has stalled, and in some nations, it has been set back by the pandemic. Workers demand equality of income and equality of gender and race.

5. Inclusion: Working people want a peaceful world and a just, rights-based development model with the promise of the SDGs.

Ensuring access to vaccines is a moral imperative and the first step for economic recovery, considering the devastating consequences of the pandemic, especially in developing countries. Trade unions call for universal access to free testing, treatment, and vaccines and for the removal of intellectual property barriers and for a massive scaling up of production of vaccines, tests and treatments in developing countries in particular.²

Recovery and resilience measures must be funded by debt relief and increased public development assistance for developing countries, enabling them to manage crisis responses. Resource mobilisation efforts through progressive taxation at national level should be complemented by strengthening international cooperation in ending tax evasion and illicit financial flows. This would also need to include a minimum tax floor for all corporations, a billionaires' or wealth tax, and a financial transactions tax.

To be sustainable, crisis response measures must be built on the engagement of social partners. Social dialogue and industrial relations help to rebuild trust in institutions and assist in crafting equitable policies. This is true within countries, but also across nations. We need a new model of global governance to redress the current imbalance of power and uneven distribution of wealth at international level. A truly inclusive multilateral system where social partners are on board and have a say will make the difference and pave the way to global resilience.³

² International Trade Union Confederation, [Translating commitments into action: supporting the TRIPS waiver is essential to end the COVID 19 pandemic, C20-L20 statement, 2021](#)

³ International Trade Union Confederation, [Trade unions set out demands for UN Financing for Development Forum, 2021](#)

EVIDENCE ON SDG 8 PROGRESS PERFORMANCE

Policies and actions are urgently needed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. Focusing on key SDGs will be fundamental over the next nine years. SDG 8 is one of these key goals, having a strong leverage effect on other targets and goals, thanks to its multidimensional nature.

The ITUC SDG 8 composite indicator⁴ covers 145 countries corresponding to more than 97% of the world population and is calculated on the basis of four sub-domains related to the following dimensions: Economic Well-Being, Employment Quality, Labour Vulnerability and Labour Rights.

These sub-domains were chosen to effectively show the centrality of the social and labour dimension of the 2030 Agenda. The final SDG 8 composite indicator is the geometric mean of the four sub-domains. The rating ranges between 70-130 and the world average is set to 100.⁵

⁴ The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) developed an innovative approach related to SDG 8 progress assessment thanks to the partnerships and expertise of ASviS (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development). See chapter "Methodology of SDG 8 Global Indicator" on p.27-29 in [SDG decade of action - trade union policy responses](#).

⁵ Value 100 represents the world average, with no value-based connotation. This method was chosen because it does not need the definition of quantitative targets, especially when not explicitly included within the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, the whole rating system aims at showing if countries are progressing or not towards a balanced and inclusive sustainable development path based on the four sub-domains which will lead to the realisation of SDG 8 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

2020 RESULTS SDG 8 COMPOSITE INDICATOR AND SUB-DOMAINS⁶

	n. countries	Economic well - being	Employment Quality	Labour Vulnerability	Labour rights	SDG8 Composite Indicator
Un Regions						
Asia	21	100,65	101,25	97,65	90,41	97,18
Europe	36	106,17	102,86	110,20	115,32	108,38
Latin America and the Caribbean	23	98,45	99,54	98,41	101,00	99,18
Northern Africa	6	97,42	88,74	95,56	84,41	91,26
North America	2	109,06	104,73	111,76	104,63	107,35
Oceania	3	106,65	103,72	107,25	107,67	106,25
Sub-Saharan Africa	38	90,04	97,57	87,93	96,87	92,80
Western Asia	15	101,46	91,91	98,31	87,15	94,38
Income groups						
Low	27	89,06	96,84	84,42	93,86	90,70
Lower middle	33	95,25	97,56	93,14	92,38	94,35
Upper middle	37	99,39	96,95	100,89	96,70	98,28
High	47	107,25	102,90	109,15	111,48	107,39

FIGURE 1  ASVIS SDG Alliance for Sustainable Investment

Considering the UN regions, North America and Europe are the regions with the best SDG 8 composite indicator score and the highest level in all four sub-composites. Africa is the continent with the lowest scores, but while sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest score in economic well-being and labour vulnerability, northern Africa has the lowest score in employment quality and in labour rights. On this last domain, western Asia also performs very poorly, with the second lowest score.

Considering the countries income groups, the results show huge differences between low-income countries and high-income countries with the low-income countries having an average score of 90.70 while the average score of the high-income countries is 107.39.

Although this certainly depicts a North-South divide, it does not necessarily mean that richer countries are doing well. In fact, high-income countries are performing slightly above the world average (100), thus still having a long way ahead towards sustainability.

The analysis of the results of each of the four sub-domains helps to highlight additional trends.

⁶ These results do not yet reflect the impact of the crisis because the most recent data available arrived until the beginning of 2020. Final estimates of the economic and social damage cannot yet be made. These will be integrated in this report as soon as they will be available.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING BY INCOME GROUPS

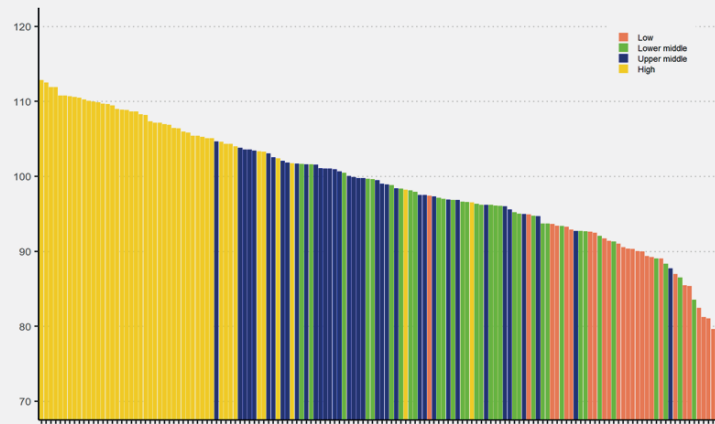


FIGURE 2  ASVIS Alliance for Sustainable Development

The **economic well-being** sub-domain looks at countries' economic performance, but including poverty and inequality indicators as growth is not an aim per se. It tries to catch the presence of formal vs. informal economy and a tendency to develop small businesses that are the main driver of development worldwide.

Although, as expected, high-income countries present a better performance compared to the other income groups, they still score slightly above the world average (107.25). This seems to be connected to considerable levels of poverty and inequality that persist also in wealthy countries, such as high-income and upper-middle-income countries.

The examples below seem to support these findings.⁷ Both Germany and Mexico score respectively 109.7 and 96.8 in the economic well-being sub-domain, which could suggest that the inequality indicators counterbalance the good performance related to gross domestic product (GDP) growth:

⁷ See Trade unions' country reports on SDGs <https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda>. For Germany the challenges are directly related to the volume of informal employment: in 2013, 10.1 per cent of workers were in informal employment, with a tendency for informality particularly high in non-standard forms of employment, such as marginal employment, live-in private care, temporary agency work, work in subcontracting chains, posted employment, self-employment, etc. Migrant workers with no residence or working permit are also highly vulnerable to informality.

GERMANY
A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs
#HLPF2021

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the German government introduced measures designed to preserve jobs, compensate wage losses and provide easier access to apprenticeships and training programs. There were further measures supporting enterprises and the self-employed, improvements in remuneration and working conditions in specific sectors, an introduction of new regulations on occupational health and safety and a simplification of access to basic social security. A loan moratorium and deferral scheme was introduced for a period of three months in 2020, which trade unions consider to have been too short, calling for an extension.

Trade unions note that as a result of the crisis, there has been a re-orientation of the German federal state's budgetary policy and the European Union's fiscal policy away from the logic of austerity policies. However, in order to ensure a just economic recovery, trade unions stressed the need for a long-term public investment programme to support the social-ecological transformation, a key element of which should be support for higher wage growth through a higher statutory minimum wage and measures strengthening collective bargaining.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

In its 2017 revision of its National Sustainable Development Strategy, the German government committed to the implementation of all 17 SDGs and set out concrete measures for how to achieve them, including through the selection of indicators.

Due to the high political significance of the commitments made and a cross-policy area approach, the responsibility for steering is under the direct leadership of the Federal Chancellery, through the Committee of State Secretaries for Sustainable Development. In addition, all ministries hold primary responsibility for their contributions to the implementation of the strategy and Agenda 2030 in their respective policy fields. The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development and the German Council for Sustainable Development also play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the strategy. Regulations within the HLPF are led by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Natural Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Information on the data collected by the Federal Statistics Office to meet indicators set out by the government is freely available, and trade unions have full access to it. Trade unions are also part of a regular forum for dialogue within which the implementation of the sustainability strategy is discussed with the federal government, providing trade unions with a space to negotiate a greater focus on their priorities. Trade unions are further part of the official German delegation to the HLPF.

Nevertheless, trade unions are critical of the fact that key indicators for monitoring decent work are missing among those selected by the German government. In addition, a discussion on the SDGs among social partners as part of an official tripartite dialogue is lacking, aside from a just sustainability initiative of social partners in the chemical industry.

TRANSPARENCY
Complete access to information

CONSULTATION
Structured multi-stakeholder platform

SOCIAL DIALOGUE
Social partners submit joint contributions to the government's SDG national plan

UDCC-ISC DGB SYNDICAT TRADE UNION

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Despite being the sixth most developed country in the world according to the Human Development Index, **Germany** faces challenges in fighting both poverty and inequality. Poverty indicators show that in 2019, 8 per cent of workers above the age of 18 were living under the nationally defined income line, with part-time and fixed-term employees most at risk. Progress remains to be made in terms of inequalities too, as the share of the bottom 20 per cent income earners in overall GDP in 2016 was 7.6 per cent, compared to the 24.6 per cent share of the top 10 per cent income earners, whose share has been continuously increasing.

MEXICO
A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs
#HLPF2021

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

Trade unions report that the Mexican government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been inadequate. The only social protection measure implemented was advancing the payment of programmes for the elderly and people with disabilities in March and June 2020 and the provision of financial support for the formal registers of people who died from COVID-19. There has been no financial support provided for nurses, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and those for larger companies. Support for family microenterprises and freelance workers has come in the shape of a programme facilitating the provision of loans, however, access to the programme is overly bureaucratic. The government has also introduced a 'Solidarity Market', a virtual platform for SMEs, artists and providers of non-essential services to find potential consumers for their products and services.

Trade unions call on the Mexican government to respond to the crisis caused by the pandemic by ensuring wage protection, universal social protection and implementing moratoriums on the payment of mortgages, rents and loans.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

Mexico's National Development Plan 2019-2024 links federal policies to the SDGs and budgetary programmes. The progress of SDG implementation can thus be evaluated through performance evaluation indicators within the national planning system. To facilitate access to the indicators set and the progress achieved under them, the government created a website with open access data. However, trade unions report that there is currently no access to up-to-date official information reflecting the situation under the pandemic.

The implementation of the SDGs is overseen by a technical committee within the Office of the Presidency of the Republic, which coordinates efforts of all 29 units of the federal government. In addition, a National Council for Agenda 2030 was created, and a working group for the legislative follow-up on the SDGs formed in the Senate. Over the last two years, SDG monitoring and implementation bodies have been created at state and municipal level.

The Mexican government works on all 17 SDGs, integrating them through the work of four multistakeholder committees: healthy, safe and free people; prepared, productive and innovative people; committed citizens, nature and the environment; and united people working to leave no one behind.

While a consultation and monitoring mechanism exists, there is no effective participation of different actors, including trade unions. Trade unions report that there is also no genuine and structured social dialogue and that they have few opportunities to interact with government representatives outside of ad hoc presentations from the state on planned labour law reforms. Despite this, trade unions have made contributions on key SDGs and topics: gender equality, regulation of remote work, elimination of non-working and fair pay sharing.

Trade unions report that the budgetary allocations towards the implementation of the SDGs in Mexico is not sufficient.

TRANSPARENCY
Irregular access to limited information

CONSULTATION
Informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE
Social partners contribute individually to the government's SDG national plan

UDCC-ISC UNW SYNDICAT TRADE UNION

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Mexico is one of the world's largest economies based on its GDP. However, this wealth is not evenly distributed, as the country has one of the highest inequality rates in the world: in 2018 the top 10 per cent of income earners had a 36.4 per cent share of GDP, with the bottom 20 per cent of income earners holding a 5.4 per cent share.

Poverty rates are equally worrisome: in 2018 41.9 per cent of the Mexican population lived under the national poverty line, a reduction of only 2.5 per cent compared to 2008, which suggests that the eradication of extreme poverty is far from being reached. This is in stark contrast to the fact that Mexico is classified as a country with a high level of human development (Human Development Index of 0.779 in 2019).

The example of Germany also points out that informality is a cross-cutting issue relevant in advanced economies as well if we think of the growth of non-standard forms of work, including “platform” businesses.⁸ In fact, according to the ILO, already prior to the pandemic, the informal employment share was 60.2 per cent of global employment.

Therefore, **economic growth alone cannot provide countries with the sufficient means to ensure well-being to all.** Inclusive social and labour market policies – backed by appropriate investments⁹ – are essential to counter the current huge levels of poverty and inequalities violently brought back by the pandemic crisis.¹⁰

The **2021 Porto Declaration of the European Council**¹¹ endorses the European Social Partners joint proposal for an alternative set of indicators to measure economic, social and environmental progress, supplementing GDP as a measure of welfare for inclusive and sustainable growth.¹²

This is fundamental to push for a step up in quantitative and qualitative data to support SDG indicators, improving the monitoring of SDGS and ultimately

contributing to strengthening global governance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the already urgent need of adapting methods of labour data collection. This concerns revising the statistical framework for measuring informality and the inclusion of an actual measurement for inequality, which is lacking in the current 2030 Agenda global indicator framework.

⁸ Informality can pose a major challenge to economic and social development as well as to the stability of public finances, as informal workers often do not contribute to the general tax base nor do they have access to contributory social security arrangements.

⁹ International Trade Union Confederation, [Trade unions set out demands for UN Financing for Development Forum](#), 2021

¹⁰ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, [Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals](#), Report of the Secretary General, 2021

¹¹ European Council, [The Porto Declaration](#), Press release, 2021

¹² European Trade Union Confederation, [EU Social Partners on Beyond GDP](#), 2021

EMPLOYMENT QUALITY BY INCOME GROUPS

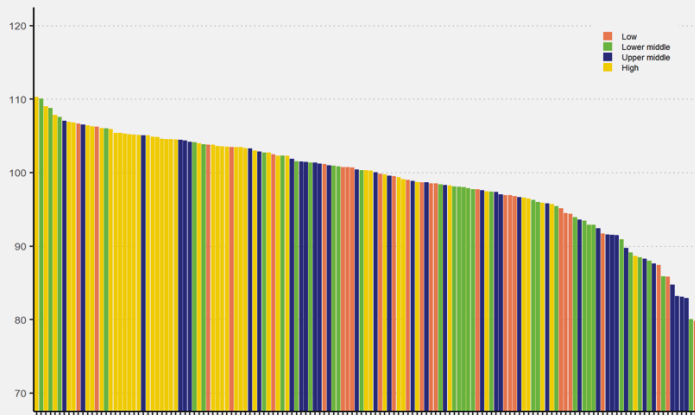


FIGURE 3  ASVIS Asian Alliance
for Value
Chain
Sustainability

The **employment quality** sub-domain captures performance of labour market features, labour income share and working poverty. It includes employment/unemployment rates and productivity performances. It covers proxies for quality of employment, such as women's participation in the labour market and if jobs proposed are able to fairly maintain purchasing power of salaries to keep wage earners far from poverty.

Here the difference between North and South is much less marked. The distribution of countries by income level and employment quality performance seems to show that the **correlation between gross national income (GNI) per capita and employment quality is weak.**

Gender gaps in labour force participation rates have narrowed slightly over recent decades, but the global gap was still estimated at 27 percentage points in 2019. Among wage workers, gender pay gaps persist at around 20 per cent globally.¹³

The examples below seem to support these findings:¹⁴

¹³ International Labour Organization, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work – Updated estimates and analysis, Fifth edition, 2020](#)

¹⁴ See Trade unions' country reports on the SDGs <https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda>

SPAIN
A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs
#HLPF2021

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE
COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

The Spanish government has adopted a range of policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The labour measures include a new regulation on the temporary suspension of workers' (Expediente Temporal de Regulación de Empleo - ERE), adapted to collective jobs and cover all affected workers; the automatic extension of existing benefits; a ban on dismissals and the interruption of temporary contracts to extend their duration; and the extension of unemployment protection coverage. Other measures include the introduction of a minimum living income (IMI); the suspension of evictions; a moratorium on rent and mortgage debt payments; temporary rent deferrals, together with aid for the payment of rent; a guaranteed supply of electricity, gas and water for vulnerable groups; and special measures to support the self-employed and SMEs.

Trade unions are calling on the Spanish government to further support workers by increasing the minimum wage and adopting measures to reduce the differential impact of the pandemic and the gaps between women and men, ensuring that companies comply with the obligation to negotiate equality plans and measures, and to promote a work-life balance and more equal responsibility sharing between men and women by increasing investments in the public provision of care services and by ensuring economic, social and labour rights that increase inequality and poverty. They are also calling for better management of unemployment benefits and the minimum living income (IMI) as well as government measures to restore the balance in collective bargaining, mainly through the repeal of the Labour Reform.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Spanish government has aligned its general budgetary plan with the SDGs and has stated that it aims to ensure that all of its policies contribute to the 2030 Agenda. A comprehensive approach has been taken, presenting all 17 SDGs. The implementation of the SDGs is overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the 2030 Agenda and the State Secretariat for the 2030 Agenda.

In 2021, the government will press ahead with its 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy based on a road map to guide its progress with the Decade of Action leading up to 2030. These documents have been developed in consultation with civil society actors, including social movements and the business sector. No specific dialogue has, however, been held with the trade unions.

The trade unions feel that the transparency on the current level of SDG implementation should be improved, with the presentation of reports on the spending allocated to the SDGs in the general budget and the inclusion of indicators required to ensure adequate accountability and impact reporting.

There is no bilateral social dialogue between the government and trade unions on the implementation of the SDGs. Some central discussions are, however, in place on areas related to SDGs 5, 8 and 12. Trade unions are calling for the establishment of a specific social dialogue on the implementation of the SDGs in Spain.

TRANSPARENCY
No access to information at all

CONSULTATION
Informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE
Social partners contribute individually to the government's SDG national plan

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Progress has to be made in **Spain** to reduce both unemployment and the working poverty rate. Unemployment reached 15.5 per cent in 2020, affecting more women (17.4 per cent) than men (13.9 per cent). Young workers below the age of 25 were particularly hard hit, with unemployment rates of 37.1 per cent among young men and 39.7 per cent among young women.

As far as working poverty is concerned, 12.8 per cent of people in employment were at risk of poverty in 2019, and the number of working poor increased by 16 per cent between 2010 and 2019. Greater efforts remain also in terms of ensuring women's equal opportunities in the labour market. Although more women than men have the highest level of education, their work is generally much more precarious, with high rates of part-time employment, temporary contracts, reduced working hours, lower pay, etc. Likewise, women's access to managerial and leadership positions is still limited.

INDONESIA
A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs
#HLPF2021

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE
COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government introduced a series of stimulus packages. In total, 43.45 billion were allocated to health (health workers' protection, purchase of medical devices, repair of health facilities, and incentives for doctors), social subsidies, fiscal and tax incentives, export import simplification, support to SMEs, physical and social distancing policy, and compensation.

According to trade unions, these stimulus packages should have come earlier in time. Moreover, they have been rolled out too slowly and not adequately targeted to address the problems associated with the pandemic. Trade unions complain about government's approach, prioritising a business and economic recovery over public health. The Omnibus Law on Job Creation passed in late 2020 introduces labour market flexibility by allowing hourly pay, decreasing overtime pay, liberalising flexible work, lowering minimum wages as well as making it easier to hire and fire workers, falling short of ILO standards and failing to sustain existing workplaces or improving the quality of employment. Trade unions are seeking a judicial review of this law, arguing that its contents and the way in which it was passed contravenes the Indonesian Constitution.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The government of Indonesia has incorporated the SDGs into the current Long-Term Development Plan for 2019-2024 and the National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020-2024. The SDGs are also set to be included into the upcoming Long-Term Development Plan for 2025-2045.

The Ministry of National Development Planning oversees the implementation of the SDGs, and a National SDG Coordination Team has been established to formulate a road map for implementing the SDGs over 2017-2030. The team ensures coordination at both horizontal (between ministries/agencies and non-state actors) and vertical levels (between the national and local governmental levels). The Indonesian government is working on all 17 SDGs. In the 2020-2024 period, the focus is on sustainability, economic resilience and growth, narrowing the income gap, improving public services, infrastructure, and competitiveness.

While civil society is usually consulted annually on the SDG implementation process, in 2020, due to the pandemic, this only took the form of online information provision.

While trade unions are usually invited to participate in consultations, their input is scarcely taken into consideration by the government, whose action seems not to go beyond reporting to consultations records.

Trade unions are involved by the government in the implementation of the SDGs through the National SDG Coordination Team and its task force for the economy, which deals with SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17.

Trade unions report that the budgetary allocation towards the implementation of the SDGs is not sufficient. Even though the government introduced innovative financing instruments such as green bonds, the SDG financing gap remains problematic. With Indonesia's graduation to middle-income country status and the subsequent decrease in official development assistance (ODA) received, greater efforts are needed through domestic resource mobilisation to address the resulting financing gap. However, no fiscal reform has so far been undertaken to generate this through progressive taxation.

TRANSPARENCY
Complete access to information

CONSULTATION
Informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE
Social partners submit joint contributions to the government's SDG national plan

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Despite a relatively low total unemployment rate, **Indonesia** faces challenges in terms of employment quality: in 2020, underemployment stood at 7.8 per cent and at 21.5 per cent among those between 15 and 24 years of age. Moreover, salaries often do not allow for a dignified life, considering that over 15 million domestic workers in Indonesia in 2018 were paid under minimum wage.

Progress has to be made also in terms of the proportion of women in skilled employment, which declined from 47.59 per cent in 2016 to 46.31 per cent in 2017. Moreover, the gender pay gap remains a challenge, as women workers with tertiary education degrees earn substantially less than male counterparts. Advancing towards equality in Indonesia also implies increasing the labour income share of GDP, which it had dropped from 38.6 per cent in 2015 and 2016 to 38.1 per cent in 2017.

The positive recent trends related to global employment levels¹⁵ are being dramatically vanished by the crisis, fiercely translating into job losses. The latest ILO estimate figures¹⁶ on the impact of the crisis are frightening, such as:

- An estimated 8.8 per cent of total working hours were lost for the whole of last year, the equivalent of the equivalent of the hours worked in one year by 255 million full-time workers. This is approximately four times greater than the number lost during the 2009 global financial crisis.
- Women have been more affected than men by the pandemic's labour market disruptions. Globally, employment losses for women stand at 5 per cent, versus 3.9 per cent for men. Additionally, 90 per cent of women who lost their jobs in 2020 exited the labour force, which suggests that their working lives are likely to be disrupted over an extended period unless appropriate measures are adopted.
- There has been an 8.3 per cent decline in global labour income (before support measures are included), equivalent to US\$3.7 trillion, or 4.4 per cent of global GDP.

Investments in job creation in strategic sectors will need to be on the top of governments' agendas in order to reverse the economic and social consequences of this crisis. The economic and employment consequences of the COVID-19 crisis are exerting massive downward pressure on workers' wages. The implementation of statutory minimum wages – that guarantee dignity for all workers and their families – will be key to restoring aggregate demand and to fostering economic recovery. Minimum wages should take into account the cost of living, be evidence based and regularly reviewed by social partners through collective bargaining and adjusted for inflation.

¹⁵ United Nations, Statistic Division, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2019*

¹⁶ ILO World Employment and Social Outlook 2021, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_795453.pdf

LABOUR VULNERABILITY BY INCOME GROUPS

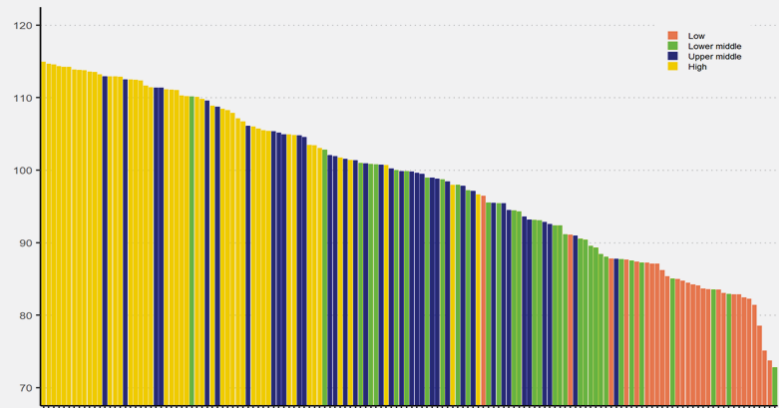


FIGURE 4  ASVS
2018-2020
Sustainable
Development

The **labour vulnerability** sub-domain reflects the exposure of workers to risks, under-protection and exclusion. It includes indicators on health and safety, youth who are NEET. It catches the vulnerability of the worker at the end of the professional career, observing if the worker will accrue the right to receive a pension income.

High-income countries show a better performance on labour vulnerability. However, it is crucial to note that they slightly overcome (109.15) the world average, while almost all of the countries are under it. Upper-middle-income countries then score exactly on the world average 100.89.

Therefore, it is clear to say that **labour vulnerability is still a challenge globally**, meaning that workers are vulnerable in all regions of the world.

This is not surprising if we think that nowadays 70 per cent of the world's people cannot count on the security of full social protection.

The example below seems to support these findings:¹⁷



With only 9.2 per cent of the total population covered by at least one social protection benefit, no unemployment schemes and only 2 per cent of people in pensionable age receiving a pension, **Pakistan** is an example of labour vulnerability. This is the result of extremely low levels of spending on social protection in the country, at less than 2 per cent, an extremely high level of vulnerable employment, at 55.5 per cent in 2019, and an underemployment rate of 5.2 per cent.

63 per cent of the population in Pakistan is below the age of 30 and suffers great levels of vulnerability. In 2020, 31.2 percent of youth were not in employment, education or training (NEET). This burden falls mainly on women, for which NEET rates stood at 56.2 percent compared to 8 per cent for young Pakistani men. This inequality has aggravated and perpetuated gender inequality in the labour market as well as the society as a whole.

This is also the reason why the crisis has had an enormous impact on those countries that did not have appropriate social protection systems in place.¹⁸ Social protection – an essential pillar of the decent work agenda – is crucial in order to trigger recovery and to create resilient societies. It is time for governments to support the implementation of universal social protection systems and floors.

In 2019, more than one in five of the world's youth were NEET. This has remained almost unchanged since 2005. Since young women were already twice as likely to be jobless and not in education nor training than young men, and as women have been disproportionately pushed into inactivity during the pandemic, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to worsen the NEET gender gap among youth.¹⁹

¹⁷ See Trade unions' country reports on SDGs <https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda>

¹⁸ See as examples the case studies in Colombia and Chile in *The SDGs for recovery and resilience – Case studies from Argentina, Chile and Colombia, 2021*, p. 17 to 25, and in Zambia in *The SDGs for recovery and resilience – Case studies from Ghana, Nigeria and Zambia, 2021*, p. 18

¹⁹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, Report of the Secretary General, 2021*

The picture is challenging also when we consider occupational health and safety (OHS). Each year 2.78 million people die from work-related illness and injury – this even before the pandemic. With the pandemic, the situation is now bleaker than at any time before.

Reversing this trend requires a strong commitment from governments and employers to promote decent working conditions, including effective occupational health and safety measures for all workers, fulfilling the promise of [the ILO Centenary Declaration](#).

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

ARGENTINA
A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs
#HLPF2021

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

The government of Argentina responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with policies to prevent the growth of poverty, loss of jobs and the closure of SMEs. A fiscal package of 1.5 billion US dollars (equivalent to 3 per cent the country's GDP) was introduced, and all negotiation channels with social partners were opened to ensure that the social and labour needs resulting from the crisis were met.

Argentina was one of the few countries which recognised COVID-19 as an occupational disease and took measures to address it as such: supporting companies and SMEs in maintaining employment by providing a minimum living wage for each employee by the state and banning dismissals and suspensions from work without just cause or due to the lack of or reduction in work volume or force majeure. Furthermore, the government introduced social measures such as the emergency family income: an occupational monetary benefit for all residents between 18-65 who are unemployed, who work in the informal economy, or who are freelance or domestic workers. Measures designed to minimise the cost of living were also adopted, notably the fixing of maximum prices for a set of essential goods, such as food, medicines and personal hygiene products, which was in place for eight months from March 2020.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

In November 2020, the government adopted the UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework with Argentina for 2021-2025 (MECNUD), which recognises the importance of the SDGs for public policy and their close relationship with the country's human rights priorities. The MECNUD outlines four dimensions for action: economic, social, environmental and governance. These dimensions are intersected by six thematic priorities: the human rights approach, the gender approach, leaving no one behind, equality, environmental sustainability and the impact of COVID-19. In November 2020, Argentina reported progress on over 200 indicators and the achievement of 80 targets, with clear links to governmental objectives and the national budget.

The National Council for the Coordination of Social Policy (CNCP) oversees the monitoring and follow-up on Agenda 2030. The CNCP is in charge of adapting the SDG implementation process to the national level and technically accompanying the provincial and municipal governments that express their interest in participating in it. It further develops actions with trade unions and with civil society.

The MECNUD takes a participatory approach based on a dialogue with trade unions, civil society, the private sector, and other strategic actors. The government has consulted trade unions on several dimensions of the national SDG plan, notably the programme against hunger, the 2020 WFP, and preparedness and response to COVID-19. Furthermore, the government has created the Economic and Social Council, a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform, with a strong participation from trade unions, for the elaboration of National Development Programmes. While they welcome the greater transparency than under previous governments, trade unions call for better reporting mechanisms on the implementation of the SDGs in the provinces and for the construction of a centralised repository gathering relevant information of this kind.

TRANSPARENCY
Regular access to limited information

CONSULTATION
Informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE
Social partners submit joint contributions to the government's SDG national plan

Logos: UNCTAD, ILO, OIT, CTA, CTA, CTA, CTA, CTA

Argentina is surely a promising example in this sense. The Argentinian government has recognised COVID-19 as an occupational disease and measures have been taken to address it as such: supporting companies and SMEs in maintaining employment by providing a minimum living wage for each employee by the state and banning dismissals and suspensions from work without just cause or due to the lack of or reduction in work volume or due to force majeure.

Unfortunately, the monitoring of “safe and secure working environments for all workers” is extremely challenging, as official data is only available for 83 countries. This is particularly problematic, as OHS has been recognised by the Centenary Declaration as fundamental to decent work, setting out a pathway for this to be given formal recognition in the framework of ILO Fundamental Rights.

This represents another challenging area when it comes to the data gap (very much linked to informality contexts) that hampers global governance.

LABOUR RIGHTS BY INCOME GROUPS

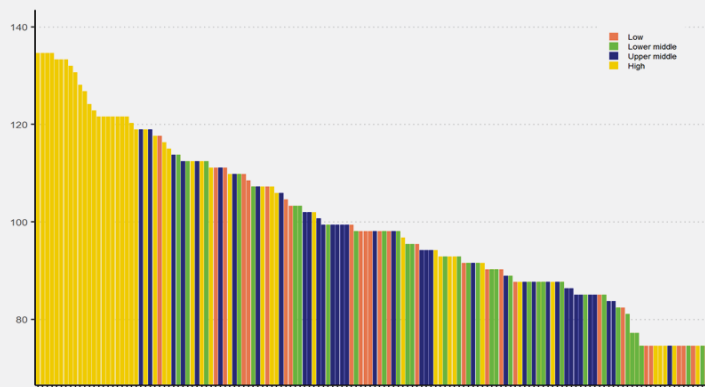


FIGURE 5  ASVIS Asian, African, Latin American Sustainable Development

The **labour rights** sub-domain reflects the violation of fundamental rights at work as reported by the ITUC Global Rights Index.

The histogram above mirrors the findings of the ITUC Global Rights Index.²⁰ It shows very similar results for the first three income groups (low, lower-middle and upper-middle-income countries), which are all below the world average. Only high-income countries show a higher score (111,48).

At the same time, we can also observe a significant degree of variability in the low- and high-income groups (different labour rights performances among income groups is the main source of variability). This means that good economic performances of countries (high-income) do not put them necessarily in a good position towards the full achievement of SDG 8.

Therefore, the respect of rights of workers is not necessarily related to the good economic performance of the country.

²⁰ International Trade Union Confederation, [Global Rights Index 2020](#)

This finding is confirmed when we observe the consequences of the pandemic. The economic crisis brought along restrictions of freedoms and violations of labour rights worldwide. An increase of violations of workers and trade union rights across the world is a result of the measures adopted by governments in many countries.²¹ These violations concern, in particular, international labour standards, non-compliance with labour regulations regarding layoffs, working hours and the payment of wages, and a disregard of OHS regulations.²²

Upholding the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as, supporting social dialogue should become key priorities for countries governments. Countries where democratic institutions, collective bargaining rights and social dialogue are well in place, they are the ones coping better with the crisis and recovering faster.²³ According to the ILO,²⁴ social dialogue outcomes concerned support enterprises, jobs and incomes, and protect workers in the workplace.

Therefore, social dialogue is an effective tool to put in place socioeconomic reforms that guarantee ownership and ensure greater levels of transparency and accountability. Here, the link between SDG 8 and SDG 16 is clear: rights, fundamental freedoms and social dialogue are strongly interrelated with effective and accountable institutions.

SDG 8.7 target on the elimination of child labour is relevant more than ever. As stated in the UN Secretary General Progress report, “two in three students worldwide are still affected by full or partial school closures. The most vulnerable children and those unable to access remote learning are at an increased risk of never returning to school, and even being forced into child marriage or child labor”.²⁵



The 14 remaining governments that have not ratified ILO Convention 138 on the minimum age should do so this year, and all governments should resolve not to allow the world to slide back into 19th-century exploitation. A new social contract will provide the hope and the pathway to realising the aim of the UN Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.” Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary.

²¹International Labour Organization, ACTRAV, [Social Dialogue remains vital to build sustainable recovery from COVID-19](#), 2021

²²International Trade Union Confederation, [COVID-19: 98% of world's workers not getting the basic support they need](#), 2021

²³The Guardian, [Social Dialogue vital to post-COVID-19 recovery](#), 2021

²⁴International Labour Organization, [COVID-19 and social dialogue](#)

²⁵United Nations, Economic and Social Council, [Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, Report of the Secretary General](#), 2021

Also, when it comes to monitoring this important target, the data gap is striking, especially if we consider the data from developed countries:

Proportion and number of children aged 5 -17 years engaged in child labour	Total no. of countries	No. of missing countries where data is available
Low-income	34	6
Lower-middle-income	47	8
Upper-middle-income	56	21
High-income	80	72



ACCELERATING ACTION: SDG 8 STRATEGIC INTERLINKAGES ACROSS THE 2030 AGENDA

The estimation of a composite indicator for SDG 8 gives the opportunity to address the interactions between the economic and decent work dimensions of the 2030 Agenda with other indicators used as proxies of sustainable development domains.

In this chapter, interactions are estimated through a linear regression model which puts the SDG 8 indicator in relation to other variables:

- Poverty headcount ratio (proxy of SDG 1).
- Prevalence of undernourishment (SDG 2).
- Under-five mortality rate (SDG 3).
- Level of secondary education enrolment (SDG 4).
- Proportion of women in managerial positions (SDG 5).
- Energy share in the total final energy consumption (SDG 7).
- Manufacturing value added as a proportion of gross domestic product (SDG 9).
- Income inequality (SDG 10).
- Mortality caused by road traffic injury per 100,000 people (SDG 11).
- Material consumption per capita (SDG 12).
- CO2 emissions per capita (SDG 13).
- Social dialogue (SDG 16).

The interlinkage between SDG 8 and SDG 16 is not calculated through a statistical model. The general lack of data related to almost all SDG 16 target indicators hampers this approach. Moreover, most importantly, there is no indicator within the official indicators framework of the 2030 Agenda referring to the existence and implementation in practice of social dialogue (dialogue between workers and employers' representatives, and governments). This is certainly a weakness, as where social dialogue is genuinely implemented, it provides a contribution to the development of effective, accountable and transparent

institutions, which is a key target of SDG 16. It is essential for trade unions that this interrelation be highlighted and valued. Therefore, it has been included in the table below, on the grounds of a qualitative analysis of practice.

Correlation analysis can be used to identify the direction of links among SDGs. There are reinforcing links when improvements in SDG 8 lead to higher performance in other indicators, while there is evidence of trade-off when good performances in SDG 8 are correlated with a deterioration on another indicator (see figure 6).

Interlinkages between SDG 8 and other SDGs


	1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
INDICATOR	Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90/day	Prevalence of undernourishment % of pop	Under five mortality rate	Secondary school enrolment	Proportion of women in managerial positions (%)	Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption (%)	Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP	S80/s20 income quintile share ratio	Mortality caudes by road traffic injury per 1000,000 people	Domestic material consump. per capita (tonnes)	CO2 emissions per capita	Social dialogue
 REINFORCING	↑↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑	↑		↑↑	↑	↑↑	↑		↑↑
TRADE-OFF						↓					↓↓	

FIGURE 6  ASVS Asociación Nacional de Sindicatos

The magnitude of the interlinkages varies among indicators. The number of arrows refers to the estimation of the slope in the linear regression (log-log transformation). Three arrows [$>10\%$]; two arrows [$10\text{--}5\%$]; one arrow [$5\text{--}0\%$].

Good performances in SDG 8 are correlated with a low poverty headcount rate, low under-five mortality rate, lower percentage of undernourishment in the population, low-income inequality, higher secondary education enrolment, higher proportion of women in managerial positions, lower mortality level caused by road traffic, lower domestic consumption, and higher levels of social dialogue.

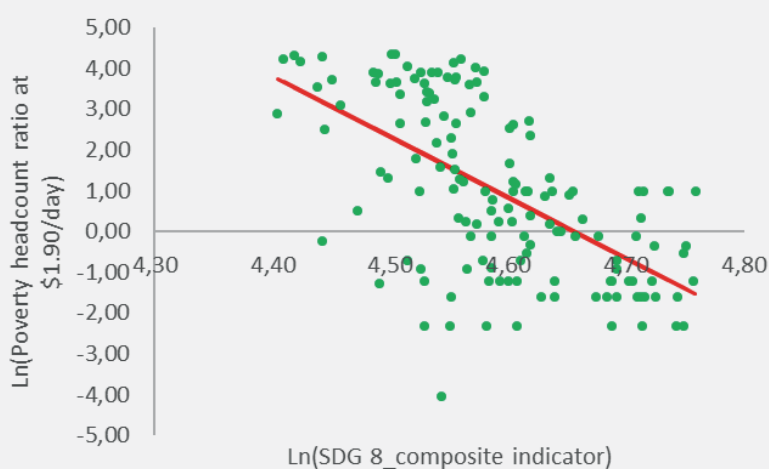
Therefore, the achievement of one goal (SDG 8) seems to reinforce the country's ability to achieve the other ones described above.

The magnitude of the interlinkages between SDG 8 and SDG 1 is the strongest one.

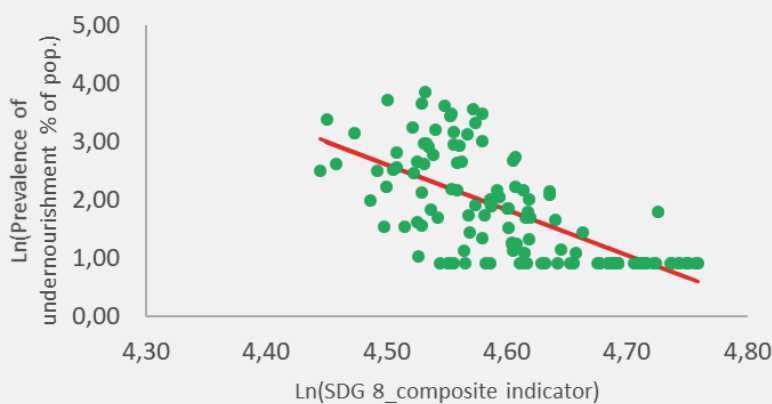
Get on track to end poverty and hunger, and transform towards inclusive and sustainable economies:

INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN SDG 8 AND SDG 1 AND SDG 2

SDG 8 is positively correlated with low poverty headcount rates (SDG 1 on ending poverty) and with low prevalence of undernourishment (SDG 2 on ending hunger).



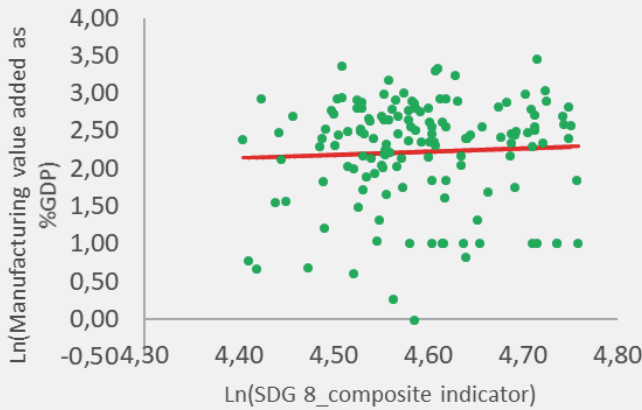
The social dimension of SDG 8 (employment levels, wages and social protection coverage, in particular) is key to fight poverty and hunger.



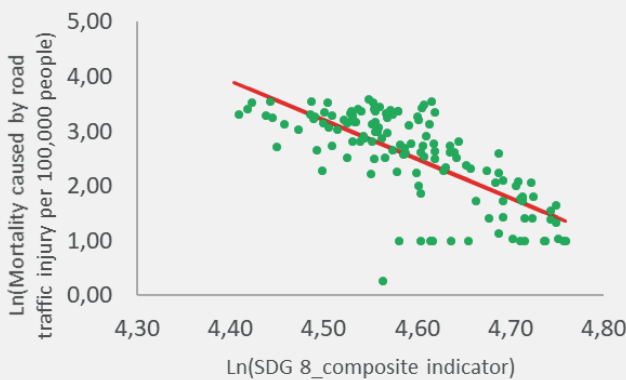
Minimum living wages can set a threshold that would effectively limit income poverty. Likewise, expanding social protection systems and floors will increase resilience and act as an economic and social stabiliser to promote a stronger recovery.

INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN SDG 8 AND SDG 9, 11, 12 AND SDG 7 AND 13

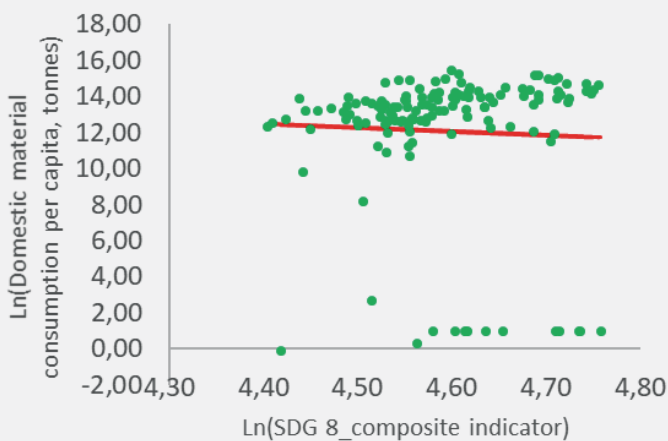
SDG 8 is positively correlated with increased levels of manufacturing value added (SDG 9 on resilient infrastructure), lower levels of mortality caused by road traffic (SDG 11 on sustainable cities) and domestic material consumption (SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production).



Higher levels of productivity (manufacturing value added) are brought about by progress on SDG 8.

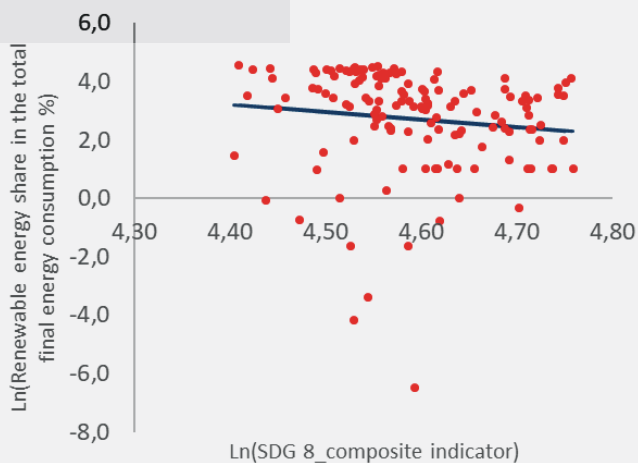


Improvements of SDG 8 also favour more inclusive urban contexts, to the extent that both the economic and social conditions of families are better and reflect on the well-being of the cities. In the specific case of the indicator, this can be translated in cities with a greater balance in the management of services, for example in local public transport or in contexts in which the quality of work also brings with it an increased share of social capital.

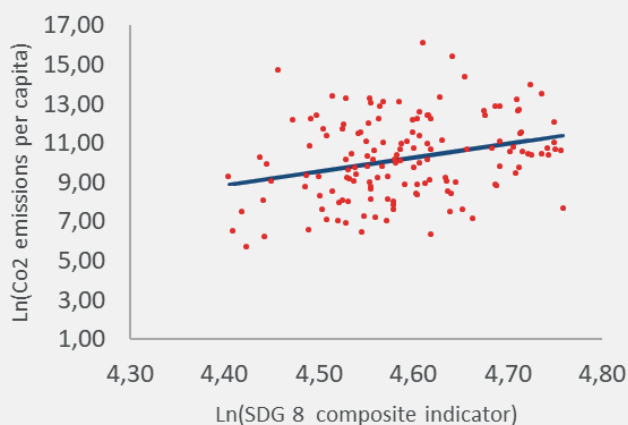


Restructuring national economies and production/consumption systems will be vital to build resilience. Data show a positive correlation between SDG 8 and lower levels of material consumption per capita. This is a positive trend that will need to be reinforced and supported by sustainable industrial policies.

SDG 8 presents a trade-off with SDG 7 (sustainable energy) and 13 (climate change).



This implies energy decarbonisation and industrial transformations leading to zero CO₂ emissions. Proactive policies will be required to implement a Just Transition towards sustainable economies in which workers and their communities are not left behind.

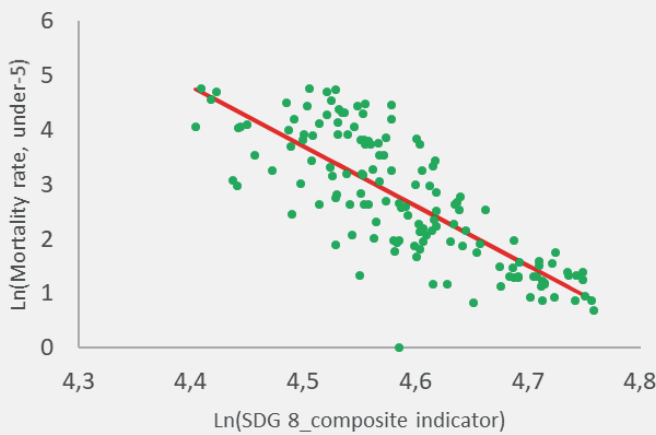


SDG 8 itself includes the target on decoupling GDP growth from environmental degradation. Therefore, a trade-off arises for the relations between economic growth, currently primarily carbon-based, and the environmental dimension of the SDG 8 itself and other goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Promote more peaceful, equal and inclusive societies:

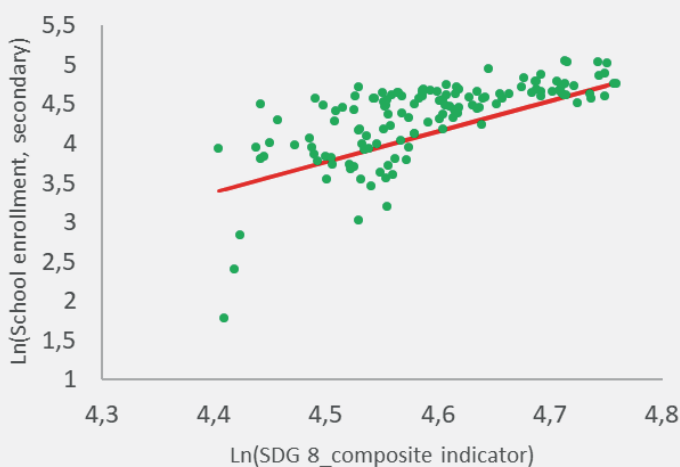
Interrelations between SDG 8 and SDG 3, 4, 5, 10,16

SDG 8 is positively correlated with low levels of mortality rates under 5 years (SDG 3 on health), with increasing levels of schooling (SDG 4 on education), women in managerial positions (SDG 5 on gender equality), with less inequality (SDG 10) and with increased social partners dialogue with institutions (SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies).

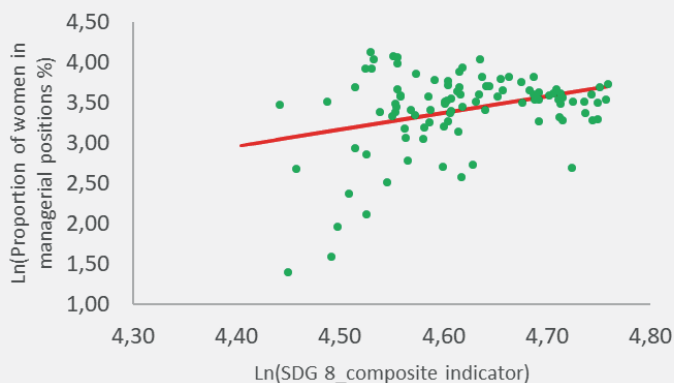


The social dimension of SDG 8 shows the way towards resilient societies, with health and education being a fundamental pillar of progress, as well as gender equality and redistribution policies.

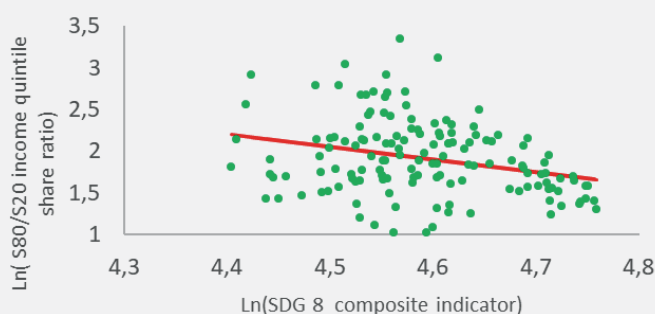
Universal access to basic services through the implementation of social protection floors is a way to grant access to health.



Investments in education, skills training and life-long learning are also crucial if we think of measures for integrating young people in the labour market.



The promotion of equal pay for work of equal value, including active labour markets fostering women’s access to higher-paying jobs, remains a key precondition to gender equality.



Minimum wages not only help protect workers against unduly low pay but also contribute to reducing inequality.²⁶



Finally, practice demonstrates²⁷ that meaningful participation and interactions between social partners and institutions (social dialogue) bring along inclusive and transparent decision-making processes that contribute to accountability and good governance. Moreover, social dialogue, as a collective problem-solving process, delivers policies that are the fruit of consensus and work for the actors involved. This contributes to facilitating policy implementation in key socio-economic areas.²⁸

²⁶ International Labour Organization, *Global Wage Report 2020-21 – Wages and minimum wages in the time of COVID-19, Executive Summary, 2021*

²⁷ International Trade Union Confederation, *Social dialogue as a driver and governance instrument for sustainable development, 2017 and The Global Deal, Social Dialogue in the 2030 Agenda, 2020*

²⁸ International Labour Organization, *The contribution of social dialogue to the 2030 Agenda - Promoting a Just Transition towards sustainable economies and societies for all, 2019 and The contribution of social dialogue to the 2030 Agenda: Formalising the informal economy, 2019*

CRISIS IMPACT - CURRENT TRENDS

Looking at the impact of the crisis, we can highlight major trends related to SDG 8.²⁹

Divergent recoveries

The response and measures taken to respond to the needs of the population during the pandemic have been very uneven, with high-income countries spending heavily on their pandemic response. The ILO has estimated the “stimulus gap” between the stimulus measures in low- and lower-middle-income countries and high-income countries to be around US\$982 billion.³⁰ As reported in the UN World Economic Situation Prospects 2021³¹, stimulus spending per capita averaged nearly US\$10,000 in the developed countries, while it amounted to less than US\$20 per capita in the least developed countries. That is, for every additional dollar per capita of stimulus that the LDCs managed to spend, the developed countries spent nearly US\$580 per capita on stimulus”.

This results in advanced economies countries moving more quickly towards economic recovery than others.

²⁹ International Labour Organization, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work – Updated estimates and analysis, Seventh edition, 2020](#)

³⁰ World Bank / International Monetary Fund, Development Committee, [Statement by Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO at the 102nd Meeting of the Development Committee, 2020](#)

³¹ World Economic Situation Prospects 2021 https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP_2021_Executive-Summary_E.pdf, p. IX.

According to IMF estimates, emerging markets and developing economies would be those with the stronger recovery in 2021-2022.³² However, the “projected recovery follows a severe contraction bearing adverse employment and earnings impacts on certain groups” and **income inequality is likely to increase significantly because of the pandemic.**³³ Close to 95 million more people are estimated to have fallen below the threshold of extreme poverty in 2020 compared with pre-pandemic projections, **reversing a long trend of global poverty reduction.**

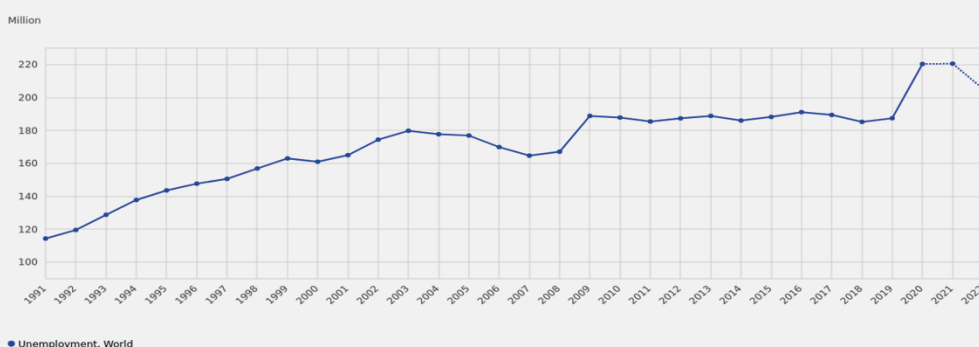


“Emerging market economies and low-income developing countries are expected to suffer more significant medium-term losses” and lasting divergences across countries are going to persist in the absence of strong international cooperation to beat the pandemic everywhere and to ensure policy and fiscal space to trigger recovery and resilience.³⁴

Weakened landscape on employment

According to the ILO World Employment and Social Outlook 2021:³⁵

- An estimated 8.8 per cent of global total working hours were lost for the whole of last year (relative to the fourth quarter of 2019), the equivalent of the hours worked in one year by 255 million full-time workers.



This dataset includes both real and imputed data from 1991-2019, as well as projections from 2020-21. Estimates may differ from official national sources. Source: International Labour Organization, ILO modelled estimates (ilo.org/wesodata)

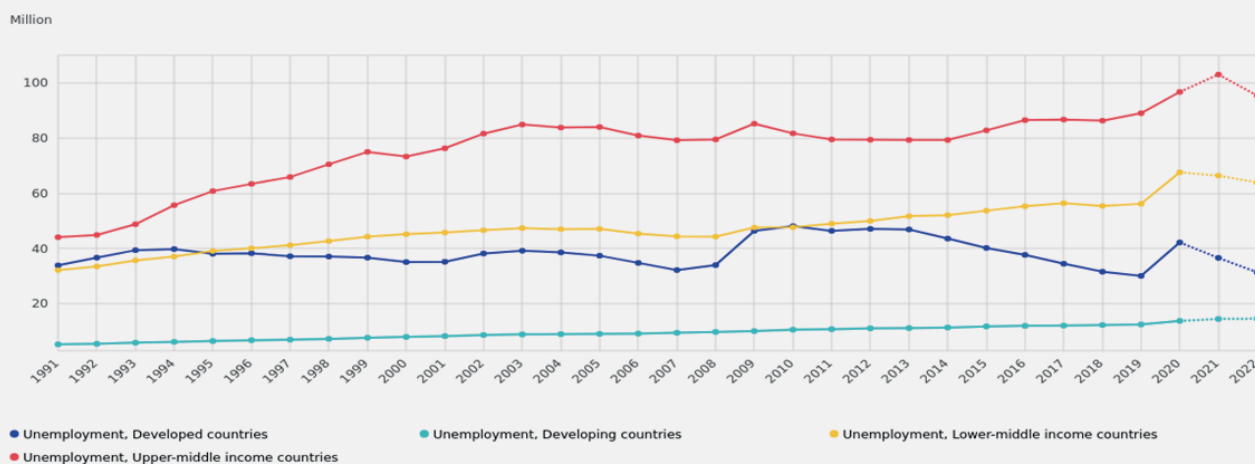
³²The countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia experienced the sharpest declines. In contrast, the economies in East Asia fared relatively better than those in all other developing regions, with GDP expanding by 1 per cent in 2020. On the back of China’s quick - and robust - recovery, the East Asian economies are forecast to grow by 6.4 per cent in 2021. See World Economic Situation Prospects 2021 https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP_2021_Executive-Summary_E.pdf

³³IMF World Economic Outlook 2021, April <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2021/03/23/world-economic-outlook-april-2021>


³⁴Ibid.

³⁵ILO World Employment and Social Outlook 2021, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_795453.pdf

- Global labour income, which does not include government transfers and benefits, was US\$3.7 trillion (8.3 per cent) lower in 2020 than it would have been in the absence of the pandemic. For the first two quarters of 2021, this shortfall amounts to a reduction in global labour income of 5.3 per cent, or US\$1.3 trillion.
- Relative to 2019, an estimated additional 108 million workers are now extremely or moderately poor, meaning that they and their family members are having to live on less than US\$3.20 per day in purchasing power parity terms. Five years of progress towards the eradication of working poverty have been undone, as working poverty rates have now reverted to those of 2015.
- The impact has been more severe for women, youth, migrant workers and vulnerable groups, such as informal workers. For women, this is due to their presence in particular hard-hit sectors (such as services, manufacturing, and care) and in the informal economy. A cross-cutting issue affecting women in all countries is that the burden of childcare has disproportionately fallen on them, leading to a rise in unpaid working time. Moreover, women often work in frontline occupations, facing elevated health risks and difficult working conditions. Setbacks in the advancement of gender equality are especially problematic in those regions where gender gaps were already extensive before the crisis.
- Globally, the recovery is projected to result in the net creation of 100 million jobs in 2021 and an additional 80 million jobs in 2022. Projected employment in 2021, however, will still fall short of its pre-crisis level.
- Unemployment is projected to be high in countries at all income levels in 2022, with middle-income countries being the most affected. Indeed, the recovery will be relatively faster in high-income countries. In low- and middle-income countries, the more limited access to vaccines and greater constraints on fiscal spending will dampen the employment recovery.



This dataset includes both real and imputed data from 1991-2019, as well as projections from 2020-21. Estimates may differ from official national sources.
 Source: International Labour Organization, ILO modelled estimates (ilo.org/wesodata)



Growing concerns for fiscal deficits and debt sustainability are likely to push governments towards austerity, making devastating cuts in fiscal spending to reduce deficit and debt and cutting back social sector spending on health and education and public services.³⁶ Austerity will inevitably weaken the speed and quality of the recovery and undermine resilience to future shocks, with dire consequences for SDG 8 and sustainable development.

Therefore, it is crucial now that policymakers priorities long-term vision strategies and policies, such as those pointed out by the IMF: “strengthening social protection with wider eligibility for unemployment insurance to cover the self-employed and informally employed; ensuring adequate resources for health care, early childhood development programs, education, and vocational training; and investing in green infrastructure to hasten the transition to lower carbon dependence”.³⁷

³⁶ World Economic Situation Prospects 2021 https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP_2021_Executive-Summary_E.pdf.

³⁷ IMF, World Economic Outlook 2021, April: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/23/03/2021/world-economic-outlook-april2021->

POLICY RECOMMEN- DATIONS

According to the numerous and significant interlinkages of SDG 8 with other goals described above, the negative impact of the crisis on SDG 8 implementation will entail a heavy challenge for the whole 2030 Agenda. The policy recommendations below are meant to offer a vision linking both urgent and long-term recovery measures, granting resilience, promoting societal well-being, and supporting governance modalities to push back power imbalances and inequalities.

An SDG8 driven recovery and resilience requires:

- **Just and climate-friendly jobs with just transition – decoupling gdp growth from environmental degradation**
- **Scaling up universal social protection**
- **Upholding equality and fighting vulnerability**
- **Financing recovery and resilience**
- **Inclusive governance and social dialogue**

JUST AND CLIMATE-FRIENDLY JOBS WITH JUST TRANSITION – DECOUPLING GDP GROWTH FROM ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION



The pandemic has destroyed over 250 million jobs worldwide and left 1.6 billion informal workers in desperation. We need to create 575 million jobs to reach full employment and formalise at least one billion informal jobs.”Sharan Burrow.

The [ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#) will be key for repairing a broken labour market where the despair of informal and insecure work dominates. Job creation strategies should put SDG 8 at the forefront, accompanied by measures for the formalisation of the informal economy in line with ILO Recommendation 204. They should also guarantee the application of a **labour protection floor** that ensures that fundamental workers’ rights are respected, an adequate minimum wage is applied, maximum limits on working time are guaranteed, and safety and health at work is upheld.

Data from the IMF shows the direct job creation potential of an additional one

million US dollars of investment in a range of different infrastructure sectors. Stepping up **public investment** can have a significant impact on job creation and overall employment levels – especially when public investment is concentrated in labour-intensive sectors such as infrastructure and care.

Millions of jobs can be created with investments in **green infrastructure**, renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has estimated that renewable energy could employ more than 40 million people by 2050 and that total employment in the energy sector could reach 100 million by 2050, up from around 58 million today, if renewable energy were to be pursued to its full potential.

The transition to **green and more sustainable farming practices** could also lead to the creation of 200 million jobs by 2050.³⁸ The agriculture sector already accounts for around one billion jobs worldwide, and around three per cent of global GDP. It is forecasted that global food production will need to be increased by 70 per cent to feed the expected world population in 2050, highlighting the potential for further growth of the sector as well as the importance of improving efficiency and productivity.

³⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization, [Green Jobs for a Revitalized Food and Agriculture Sector, 2011](#)

Governments should urgently put in place national plans for climate friendly jobs creation, with **Just Transition measures** to support workers in industrial transformation processes. Just Transition measures – negotiated with social partners, linked to both climate and technological shifts, and rooted in social protection, education, training and skills development – will guarantee that no one is left behind.

The ILO has estimated that spending an additional 3.5 per cent of GDP in the **care economy** would lead to the creation of 269 million extra jobs by 2030 (compared to 2015). ITUC analysis has also shown that if an extra two percent of GDP were invested in the health and care sector within developing economies, it would generate increases in overall employment ranging from 1.2 per cent to 3.2 per cent, depending on the country.³⁹

JUST TRANSITION

The government of Spain has adopted a climate law that provides for a comprehensive **Just Transition** strategy in a participatory manner. In March 2021, the social partners reached a general **“Agreement for Just Transition for Coal Power Plants: Jobs, Industry and Territories”** which serves as a basis for the regional agreements.

KEY COMPONENTS OF A JOB CREATION PLAN

- ✓ **Strengthened industrial policy** to support domestic industries **and public investment**, especially in climate-friendly industries and sectors that directly benefit people (e.g. infrastructure development and care).
- ✓ **Direct creation of jobs**, including public sector jobs and public works programmes.
- ✓ **Promoting decent work**, through regulation, incentives and procurement practices.
- ✓ **Formalising the informal economy** through incentive and enforcement measures.
- ✓ **Investment in training and skills development** to support workers adapting to new jobs.
- ✓ **Full involvement of unions** in the development of jobs plans.

WHAT DOES NOT BELONG IN A JOB CREATION PLAN

- X **Using low wages and weak labour standards as a mean to attract foreign direct investment.**
- X **Deregulation and weakening of workers' rights**, including on employment protection legislation.
- X **Reduction of labour costs**, in particular on wages and social security contributions.
- X **Weakening of collective bargaining**, including through allowing deviations from collective bargaining agreements and decentralisation of negotiations.
- X Providing **unconditional tax cuts/subsidies** for businesses that don't require retaining/creating jobs.

Source: ITUC Forthcoming

³⁹ International Trade Union Confederation, [Investing in the care economy - Simulating employment effects by gender in countries in emerging economies, 2017](#)

SCALING UP UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

Governments should strive to **expand social protection systems and floors**, according to ILO Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors and Convention 102 on Social Security. Universal social protection should ensure that all people have access to basic social security guarantees.

Social protection systems have contributed to limiting the impacts of the pandemic in many countries, ensuring access to healthcare and supporting job and income security. Putting social protection at the centre of government responses to the crisis will increase resilience and act as an economic and social stabiliser to promote a stronger recovery. Social spending increases are consistently accompanied with reductions of poverty and inequality, increased employment (especially women's employment), increased productivity, increased tax revenues stemming from higher and better-quality labour force participation, and overall higher GDP.⁴⁰ In short, social protection must be recognised as a key factor for social and economic development and is an investment for robust and inclusive economies.

If these are feasible options for many countries, where only political will seems to be the real determinant, this is not the case for the poorest ones. The proposal of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights for the establishment of a **Global Fund for Social Protection** is crucial to upholding the implementation of social protection floors in this respect.⁴¹

Donor governments need to fulfill and exceed the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance (ODA) and for increasing ODA levels allocated to social protection (currently 0.69 per cent of bilateral ODA). Around US\$78 billion would be needed annually to fund social protection floors in the world's lowest-income countries. This amount represents a fraction of a percent of global GDP, but it amounts to around 16 per cent of the collective GDP of these countries – an unsurmountable financial burden. Global mechanisms, such as the Global Fund for Social Protection,⁴² could help catalyse such financing for low-income countries.

UPHOLDING EQUALITY AND FIGHTING VULNERABILITY

Particular attention needs to be paid to adopting measures to reboot labour market access and equal economic participation for women and youth. As seen above, women and youth are amongst the ones mostly hit by the crisis, as they are more exposed already

to informality, undervaluation of work, occupational segregation and care demands.

For example, women make up the largest proportion of domestic workers (often migrants) at risk of losing their job,

⁴⁰ International Trade Union Confederation, [New Social Contract: ITUC report makes economic case for social protection](#), 2021

⁴¹ Olivier de Schutter, [Global fund for social protection: international solidarity in the service of poverty eradication](#), 2021

⁴² International Trade Union Confederation, [A global social protection fund is possible](#), Campaign brief, 2020

ranging from 58.2 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 69.7 per cent in Africa, to 86 per cent in Europe and Central Asia and 88.5 per cent in the Americas.⁴³ Moreover, unequal distribution of increased care demands affects women disproportionately. The bigger their losses in employment during the lockdown phase and the greater the scarcity of jobs in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, the harder it will be for women's employment to recover.⁴⁴

BUDGETING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The Canadian government adopted progressive economic policies in the fiscal framework, such as "universal high quality early learning and childcare" measures to drive job creation and regain women participation to the labour market, as well as measures to expand support to low-wage workers – where women are a vast majority – lifting them out of poverty.

Investing in care is a priority if we are to raise women's labour force participation and access to decent jobs. **Investments**

in quality public care services and social protection, the promotion of equal pay for work of equal value, and the introduction of minimum living wages with stronger collective bargaining remain the preconditions to gender equality. The **elimination of gender-based violence** in the world of work is also key in this respect.

Legislating, monitoring and enforcing the implementation of the ILO principle of "equal pay for work of equal value" between women and men and ratifying ILO Convention 190 to eliminate violence in the workplace are the way forward. Specific attention should be given to LGBTI+ workers.⁴⁵

The European Union Directive on reconciliation of family and professional life of parents and careers is certainly an excellent example,⁴⁶ together with the recent proposal of the European Commission on pay transparency to ensure that women and men in the EU get equal pay for equal work.⁴⁷

Investments in **education, skills training and life-long learning** are also crucial if we think of measures for integrating **young people in the labour market**. Due to changing technologies recently boosted also by the pandemic, the number of entry-level jobs posted in the USA – most

⁴³ International Labour Organization, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work – Updated estimates and analysis, Fifth edition, 2020](#)

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ LGBTI+ workers are particularly exposed to sexual harassment at work, particularly where LGBTI+ rights are not recognised by state laws. See the report of the ITUC [Global Unions Statement: LGBTI rights are a union issue and the ILO's Fundamental principles and rights at work: From challenges to opportunities, 2017](#).

⁴⁶ [Directive \(EU\) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 20, 2019, on the reconciliation of family and professional life of parents and careers, 2019](#)

⁴⁷ The proposal sets out pay transparency measures, such as pay information for job seekers, a right to know the pay levels for workers doing the same work, as well as gender pay gap reporting obligations for big companies. The proposal also strengthens the tools for workers to claim their rights and facilitates access to justice. Employers will not be allowed to ask job seekers for their pay history, and they will have to provide pay-related anonymised data upon employee request. Employees will also have the right to compensation for discrimination in pay. See the European Commission's [Proposal for binding pay transparency measures, 2021](#)

suited for workers just starting their careers – decreased by 68 per cent.⁴⁸ This means that these jobs do not exist anymore (companies reducing the number of low-level positions) and that “today’s graduates are expected to arrive on the job with a range of in-demand skills they would have once developed in the early years of their career”.⁴⁹ Consequently, educational paths need to be adapted to equipping young people to find a job.

In general, for “workers set to remain in their roles over the next five years, nearly half will need retraining for their core skills”.⁵⁰ Transformations in the labour market put heavy pressure on workers to build and adapt their skills to new realities: governments and employers have the duty to provide life-long learning paths throughout workers’ lives so that more young people can find jobs and displaced workers are protected during job transitions.

FINANCING RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE⁵¹

Investment capacity will be central in order to bring forward job creation plans. Recovery and resilience measures must be funded by transparent debt relief, restructuring and cancellations – including middle-income countries and with the participation of private creditors.⁵² The G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) should be extended to successfully ease countries’ debt burdens, and larger special drawing rights (SDR) issuance will provide a much-needed debt-free liquidity to boost many countries in need.⁵³

Structural reforms, such as domestic resource mobilisation through progressive taxation, will be crucial to grant resilience, together with ending tax evasion and illicit financial flows. For the latter, international cooperation on tax matters will be crucial, including a minimum tax

floor for all corporations, a billionaires’ or wealth tax, and a financial transactions tax.

The uneven capacity of countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of increased international solidarity through strengthened ODA. With current liquidity injections in the developed world, ODA can and should be increased to help developing countries in restoring public goods (such as social protection and capacity building for taxation system implementation). We need to scale up and meet the ODA 0.7 per cent commitment, with 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for least-developed countries.

Increased concessional finance will need to do the heavy lifting for the recovery and resilience needs ahead: multilateral, regional and national development

⁴⁸ World Economic Forum, [Is the entry-level job going extinct?](#), 2021

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Saadia Zahidi, [The Jobs of Tomorrow](#), IMF Blog, 2021

⁵¹ International Trade Union Confederation, [Trade unions set out demands for UN Financing for Development Forum](#), 2021

⁵² Trade unions support the recommendation of the UN Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights to incorporate human rights obligations into frameworks for debt sustainability analysis. See the [ITUC’s positions on L20/G20 Italy 2021](#) and the [Note by the UN Secretary General at the General Assembly of 5th August 2016](#).

⁵³ International Trade Union Confederation, [Responding to urgent global needs: IMF Special Drawing Rights](#), 2020

banks and other development finance institutions have an important role to play in offering long-term and counter-cyclical financing to developing countries. They should better support national country needs in strategic sectors and systematically integrate employment into results measurement frameworks, measuring the quality and quantity of job creation.

Central banks should be more developmental in the way they create and

guide capital, integrating other objectives, including employment and climate, in their frameworks and mandates.

To secure the rights-based approach, private sector actors and private finance should be in alignment with SDG 8 so that investments can ensure the application of ILO standards and be guided by responsible business-conduct principles and due diligence, integrating quality of employment and Just Transition in their mandates and operations.

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Trade unions welcome the UN Secretary-General's call for a **new model for global governance** based on a reinvigorated and **inclusive multilateralism**.


As seen above, without international cooperation the world would have been in a much worse position. However, the recovery is still uneven and unbalanced, and this is not compatible with the sustainability model that the 2030 Agenda wants to promote.

Ensuring access to vaccines is a moral imperative and the first step for economic recovery, considering the devastating consequences of the pandemic, especially in developing countries. Trade unions call for universal access to free testing, treatment, and vaccines; the removal of intellectual property barriers; and a massive scaling up of production of vaccines, tests and treatments in developing countries in particular.

There is still a significant lack of comparable data among countries for several dimensions of the SDGs. This includes SDG 8, especially regarding the indicators on informal economy, social protection, occupational health and safety, and child labour, amongst others. There is also a need to improve indicators to better describe inequalities.

Producing and measuring data is a matter of political choice that directly affects global policy responses and governance. Governments and international institutions need to do more in terms of concrete efforts to improve the availability and the comparability of statistical data (especially for less-developed countries) in order to ensure more comprehensive, robust and precise analyses of progress made.

A crucial multistakeholder partnership for a sustainable recovery from the pandemic is the one between workers' and employers' organisations with their



governments through social dialogue and tripartism. More sustainable responses to the crisis are delivered when social partners are engaged.⁵⁴ Social dialogue and industrial relations are key in crafting equitable policies and grant greater levels of transparency and increase trust in institutions (accountability).

This is true not only within countries, but also across nations. We need a new model of global governance to redress the current imbalance of power and uneven distribution of wealth at international level.

A truly inclusive multilateral system where social partners are on board and have a say will make the difference and pave the way to global resilience.

⁵⁴ [International Trade Union Confederation, *SDGs for recovery and resilience - Case studies: Argentina, Chile and Colombia, 2021*](#)

TRADE UNIONS¹ SDG COUNTRY REPORTS 2021

ARGENTINA

CHAD

COLOMBIA

GERMANY

INDONESIA

MEXICO

NAMIBIA

NORWAY

PAKISTAN

SPAIN

SWEDEN

THAILAND

ZIMBABWE

ARGENTINA

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