



## WHAT IS DECENT WORK?

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – a United Nations designated agency that deals with labour issues<sup>1</sup> – “decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for productive work that delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, equality of

opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”<sup>2</sup>

The widespread lack of opportunities to access work with these qualities means that, **for a large proportion of the population in all parts of the world, having a job does not mean having dignified living conditions nor an escape from poverty.** In particular, women, migrants and other vulnerable groups that do not have other opportunities, are forced to accept employment with informal conditions. **The informal economy generates between half and three quarters of all non-agricultural employment in the Southern**

<sup>1</sup> More information about the UN and its specialised agencies: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-and-others/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> ILO Decent Work Programme



**countries<sup>3</sup>**. In general, informal working involves poor employment conditions and is **related to increased poverty**. Informal working is usually characterised by issues such as: a lack of security and hygiene in the workplace; the obligation to work overtime; dismissals without notice or compensation; and a complete lack of any kind of work-rights related benefits (pensions, holidays and paid public holidays, sick leave, etc.).

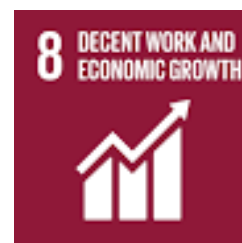
## THE RIGHT TO WORK AND LABOUR RIGHTS

Article 23 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration explicitly acknowledges the **right of all people to work, to the free choice of this employment, to just and favourable working conditions and to a fair wage**. It is just as important to guarantee this right to work as to that acknowledged in Article 24 of the aforementioned declaration, which states that **“everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay”**. To ensure that everyone can exercise this right, **the States are required to guarantee the availability of technical and professional training** for everyone in equal conditions, as well as to take the necessary measures to create a suitable environment so that there are **opportunities to**

**access productive employment positions**. Likewise, the States must guarantee a lack of **discrimination** in all aspects of employment, **“in particular, women must be guaranteed work conditions that are not inferior to those of men, with equal pay for equal work.”<sup>4</sup>**

The right to work is directly related to union rights to defend labour interests. **Collective labour rights (the right to strike, the right to join a trade union, etc.) cannot be restricted by the States** other than limitations governed by the law, and that are deemed necessary within a democratic society.

**In order for economic growth to take place, the States must fulfil their duties to respect, protect and guarantee the right to quality work**. Sustainable Development Goal 8 specifically calls upon States to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.



<sup>3</sup> *Informal Economy*, ILO

<sup>4</sup> Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



## ECONOMIC GROWTH CENTRED ON PEOPLE

Backing **sustainable and inclusive economic growth** supports more full and productive employment opportunities, which in turn **translates as more people managing to escape all forms of poverty**.

The concept of sustainability is particularly important in SDG 8, as **achieving economic growth is not worth anything if it is gained by using up all natural resources and damaging the environment for future generations**.

Based on this premise, the first of the SDG 8's 12 targets<sup>5</sup> insists upon "sustaining per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances", and **driving forward accelerated progress for the least developed countries to allow them to reach the target of at least 7% real GDP growth per annum**.



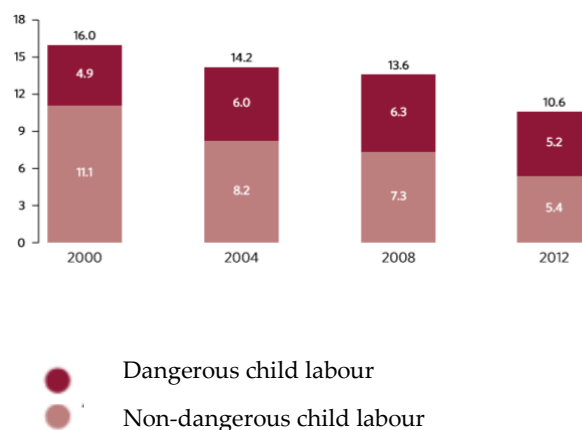
Achieving this sustainable and inclusive economic growth entails **eradicating three of the main global challenges: youth unemployment (target 8.6), forced labour and child labour (target 8.7)**.

Youth unemployment: in 2016, over 25% of young people (aged between 15 and 24 years) in Northern Africa and Western Asia, and over 15% of young people in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America were unemployed.

Forced labour, modern-day slavery: **in 2016, 24.9 million people were trapped in forced labour**. Some 16 million of these people were exploited in the private sector, for example in domestic work, construction or agriculture; **4.9 million people** – the vast majority being women – **were victims of forced sexual exploitation**; and 4 million people were in State-imposed forced labour. One in every four victims of modern-day slavery are children.

Child labour: according to the latest figures available from 2012, one in every ten children is subjected to child labour (168 million).

Proportion of children aged between 5 and 17 years that carry out child labour, by type of work, 2000-2012 (percentage). SDG 2017 Report.



<sup>5</sup> Consult the 12 targets of SDG 8 [here](#).



## WHO CAN DO WHAT?

### ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL



Target 8.b reminds governments, companies, unions, local authorities and multilateral bodies of the urgency to apply the ILO Global Job Pact, approved in 2009. Its cornerstones are: greater investment to create decent employment positions; social protection; social dialogue; and respect for labour regulations.

### ON A NATIONAL LEVEL



The success of SDG 8 depends on the political decisions adopted in the States: they should promote creativity and the growth of micro-enterprises (target 8.3) and encourage sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (target 8.9).

### ON A LOCAL LEVEL



To achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth, it is necessary to change the economic model. A group of teachers in Navarre, aware that an alternative economy is achievable, produced a book entitled “*Economía Solidaria*” (Solidarity-Based Economy). Get to know one of its creators, teacher **Clara Salanueva**, on the [FABRE testimony - SDG 8](#).

### AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?



*“Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.” Malcolm X*

#### Infant and Primary Pupils

Traditional Disney films show princesses whose main task is housework. This work is not valued and is always associated with the princess, who is rescued by the prince. It is important that, from an early age, unpaid housework is acknowledged, and that shared household responsibilities are encouraged. This issue could be covered using Cinderella’s “*Work song*”.

#### Secondary and Baccalaureate Students

With Secondary students you can cover the serious global issue of forced child labour and domestic child slavery. You can find video testimonies from victims of child labour, and as a starting point you can show them [this video](#) and raise their awareness with [this handbook for ILO students about child labour](#). For Baccalaureate students, you can download the [Solidarity-Based Economy book](#) and hold a class debate about different perspectives of economic issues.

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