

The Decent Work Pilot Programme in Morocco

A vital industry under restructuring

Textiles and clothing (TC) are at the forefront of export-led industrial growth in Morocco. The sector contributes to 15 per cent of the value added of the industrial sector and generates 36 per cent of foreign export earnings. It is also at the origin of 23 per cent of enterprise creation. It remains a key source of employment. With over 201.000 workers employed in 1,607 enterprises, the sector contributes to 43 per cent of overall employment, three-quarters of which is female employment. Given its national strategic importance, both in social and economic terms, the sector has been the subject of a long-standing upgrading strategy (mise à niveau). The programmed end of quotas, the forecasted entering into force of the free trade zone with the European Union in 2010, and the signing of the free-trade agreement with the United States in 2004 has put additional pressure on the industry to accelerate its redeployment process. The national actors have decided to be proactive and to anticipate the impact of these trade agreements on Morocco's global TC market. The initial strategy to upgrade the sector was developed in 2002 when the employers and the Government signed a Framework Agreement aimed at boosting the TC industry from a conventional standpoint of the economic determinants of competitiveness. In parallel, the employers' association of the TC industries, the Moroccan Textile and Apparel Manufacturers Association (AMITH) developed specific upgrading strategies. These strategies addressed the following key factors: competitiveness; responsiveness; creativity; commercial assertiveness; skills development; networking and clustering, vertical integration.

Moving towards an integrated economic and social strategy, with ILO support

At the same period, the ILO and the Government of Morocco decided to launch a Decent Work Pilot Programme (DWPP). There was a consensus that the programme should be sectoral, and focusing on TC, with the objective of improving competitiveness through the promotion of decent work. In doing so, the ILO and the Government of Morocco launched the only purely sectoral DWPP. It was recognized that the TC redeployment strategy would gain from improved social dialogue and better integration of the economic and social determinants of competitiveness. The first phase of the DWPP focused on the establishment of a National Tripartite Steering Committee involving all the stakeholders (the Ministry of Employment and Vocation Training, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Economic Upgrading, the National agency for the Promotion of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, the TC employers, the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises and the three most representative trade unions), and the facilitation of tripartite dialogue around the challenges faced by the industry in terms of competitiveness and decent work. The outcome was the adoption, in December 2003, of a "*National Tripartite Action Plan to promote the competitiveness of the TC industry through the promotion of decent work*". The action plan had two major components: the improvement of social dialogue at enterprise and industry level; practical measures to boost competitiveness through enhancing the quality of employment, and one common goal, the full integration of the gender dimension.

From political consensus to action: The social partners join forces with the support of the ILO

In its second phase (2004-05), the DWPP provided support to the implementation of the priority components of the tripartite action plan: promotion of social dialogue at the industry and enterprise levels; capacity-building among the social partners; social upgrading of enterprises and strengthening of their role in the design and implementation of on-the-job vocational training; promotion of gender equality.

More recently, with the support of a Spanish funded project, the programme implemented the priorities of the National Action Plan at the enterprise level. Training package for the social upgrading of textile and clothing enterprises and for the strengthening of human resource management and of enterprises' role in training is being adapted to the sectoral and national context. The social upgrading is based on a bipartite approach facilitated by national trainers who will help workers and managers to identify actions that they could do at their workplace to improve working conditions, productivity and labour-management relations. In order to secure sustainability, the training at the enterprise level is undertaken by national training institutions trained by the ILO. This approach is being tested on a pilot group of voluntary enterprises.

DWPP Major Achievements

One of the major achievements of the DWPP is certainly the move from a conflictual approach of social dialogue to a more collaborative one. Not only has this led to the adoption of the tripartite action plan, but it also gave a new impetus to national, sectoral and regional social dialogue. The social partners decided in January 2004 to establish a bipartite TC committee to deal in a socially responsible way with the new challenges of globalization. In addition, in the recent past, some trade unions have established TC national federations to strengthen their representation.

The programme has improved the understanding, by the social partners of the challenges and opportunities of the globalization of the TC industry. It has put the social dimension of globalization and the decent work agenda as a key factor of competitiveness for the Moroccan TC industry. As a result, the new strategy of the employers' association AMITH puts the human dimension at the heart of the restructuring process, recognizing the importance of integrating the social dimension with the search for economic efficiency. National trade unions have also better integrated the international dimension in their TC sectoral strategy. Because of the tripartite structure of the National Steering Committee, and due to the involvement of several government agencies, it has contributed to a better policy coherence at the national level on socio-economic issues relating to the TC industry.

The sustainability of the programme seems guaranteed both by the establishment of the bipartite TC Committee and by the fact that the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training has used the assets of the methodology developed by the ILO to undertake a national action to ensure the social "conformité" of the enterprises in Morocco. At the same time, other sectoral employers associations (tourism and construction) also expressed interest in following the same approach. Finally, the replication of the experience has started on other highly TC dependent countries, namely Tunisia and Egypt.

From an ILO point of view, this programme is being implemented by a core team (SRO Cairo, SECTOR, DIALOGUE, Skills and Employment Policy) with support from other departments/units (ACTRAV, ACT/EMP, GENDER, TRAVAIL, ENTERPRISE, IPEC), thus demonstrating the efficiency of interdepartmental cooperation.