



BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

United States Department of Labor

ILAB Assistance to AGOA Nations

June 2011



“Providing good and safe jobs for everyone is our goal at the United States Department of Labor. It is my hope that our goal is one that we can all strive for in this global community and in this integrated global economy. This is our challenge and I know that working together, we will meet this challenge.” Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis

Background

- The U. S. Department of Labor works with the Department of State, the United States Trade Representative and other United States government agencies to implement the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).
- The Labor Department’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) leads the Department’s efforts to ensure that workers in participating AGOA countries, are treated fairly and are able to share in the benefits of the global economy.
- ILAB’s mission is to help improve working conditions, raise living standards, protect workers’ ability to exercise their rights, and address the workplace exploitation of children and other vulnerable populations.

U.S. Department of Labor Efforts to Assist AGOA Nations

- The Labor Department assists in the annual AGOA eligibility review process and funds technical assistance programs to protect and improve workers’ rights in AGOA countries.
- As part of the AGOA annual review, the Labor Department examines each country’s efforts to implement and enforce internationally recognized workers’ rights. These rights include the right of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, prohibitions on forced and compulsory labor, a minimum age for the employment of children, and acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work and occupational safety and health. The Department also assesses each government’s efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Technical Cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Since 1999, ILAB has provided \$221 million to support projects in 36 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that protect workers by reducing the worst forms of child labor. ILAB is currently managing \$64 million in projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. This work runs from rescuing children working in mines and prostitution to helping governments develop plans and policies to tackle exploitive child labor.

- ILAB's child labor elimination funding is used to conduct child labor research, develop child labor monitoring systems, train community activists, standardize and enhance curriculum and vocational education training, integrate child labor issues into national poverty reduction strategies, and improve household livelihoods through skills building and functional literacy.
- ILAB also supports country specific efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. In Zambia, ILAB has provided more than \$8 million of funding since 1999, supporting the development of a framework to counter child labor, as well as the rehabilitation and integration of children into Zambia's educational system.
- In Ghana, ILAB supports efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor through the 2010 *Declaration of Joint Action to Support the Implementation of the Harkin-Engel Protocol* and its accompanying Framework of Action. It seeks to reduce the worst forms of child labor in the cocoa producing regions of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana by 70 percent in the aggregate by the year 2020. Signatories include representatives of the International Chocolate and Cocoa Industry, and the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and the United States. USDOL has committed \$10 million and the International Chocolate and Cocoa Industry is funding \$7 million to this initiative. The project aims to reduce the worst forms of child labor in the cocoa sector in West Africa by, for example, implementing a child labor monitoring system in cocoa growing regions; working with farmers to increase their incomes; and working with communities to withdraw and prevent children from being engaged in harmful work on cocoa farms.
- To protect the basic rights of workers in Lesotho and to help ensure the future of their garment industry, ILAB is funding a project to increase decent work in Lesotho's manufacturing sector. Research is also being conducted to promote the expansion of the Better Work Project on a regional basis.
- Since 2003, ILAB has provided technical assistance to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland as part of an HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Program. The program assists governments, employers and trade unions develop and disseminate a national work place policy to address the stigma and discrimination against workers with HIV/AIDS.
- In Tanzania and Zanzibar, ILAB is strengthening labor law compliance by providing necessary training to the governments, employers and workers and their organizations.
- In these technical cooperation programs, ILAB works closely with implementing partners such as the International Labor Organization, Sub-Saharan African Governments and Ministries, Health Organizations, Institutes of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, Local Employers' and Workers' Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community-Based Groups, UNICEF, and many other international organizations.

Contact Information

Visit ILAB's website at www.dol.gov/ilab for additional information.