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**ILO'S APPROACH TO IMPROVING ACCESS TO BASIC METHODOLOGICAL
INFORMATION**

Submitted by International Labour Office¹

Invited paper

I. BACKGROUND

1. As economies and societies become more interdependent, the need to enhance the level of understanding of the world of work is becoming increasingly drawn into focus. Timely, accurate and well-documented information on the world's labour markets is essential for policy makers, academicians, and members of civil society at national and international levels. At the national level, statistics and methodological information are assembled and analysed by statistical services and labour ministries. At the global level, the International Labour Office (ILO) plays a vital role in assembling, analysing and disseminating information on the labour markets to the world community.

2. In 1996, the Employment Policies Committee of the International Labour Conference, recognizing the need of governments and social partners² for information on the world labour markets, requested that the ILO develop and disseminate an expanded range of up-to-date and relevant labour market indicators. The ILO's Employment Sector, in collaboration with the Bureau of Statistics, was given responsibility for the project, known as the ILO Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

3. The release of the 1999 KILM represented a new contribution intended to aid in the design of more effective employment and labour market policies that were in accordance with the goals set by the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the 1998 Declaration. For the last 80 years, the ILO has actively organized and released statistical series in numerous publications and reports for specific needs and users. The 1999 KILM adds a new dimension to the ILO's statistical information services.

4. The KILM was designed with two overriding objectives: I) develop a set of up-to-date and relevant labour market indicators, and II) widen the availability and understanding of the indicators to monitor new employment trends. In order to achieve these objectives it was vital that the team focus on both the development and dissemination of labour market indicators accompanied by accurate methodological information.

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² "Social partners" refers to employers' and workers' organizations.

5. The KILM Team's initial efforts concentrated on pulling together information directly from international repositories rather than first contacting national agencies.³ In other words, KILM did not directly use national sources as its primary information providers, but rather took advantage of existing compilations of statistics and methodological information held by various international organizations. In turn, the information was commonly drawn from the results of labour force and establishment surveys conducted by the various national statistical sources or compiled from administrative records. In the first production stage of KILM, national and/or territorial sources were sought directly only when information was unavailable from one of the international repositories.

6. Whenever information was available from more than one repository, the team performed a detailed evaluation of the information and methodological documentation in order to select those most suitable for inclusion. Factors used in making the appraisal included general reliability of the sources providing the information, availability of explanatory notes for the estimates and methodological information regarding the type of source, scope of coverage, and availability of gender and age statistics.

7. An important feature of the KILM is the capacity to improve users' ability to compare the indicators for one country to that of another. With labour market information, users – policy makers, researchers, and so on – need to be in a position to take information from a labour market indicator, say youth unemployment (KILM 9), and use it to make statements of comparisons among or between countries or regions. Thus, policy makers and/or researchers faced with high rates of youth unemployment within their country in comparison to a neighbouring country, may wish to focus on studying policies aimed at employing youths that are utilized in countries with similar characteristics. In reality, however, international comparisons are not a simple matter. There are caveats relating to the methodologies of measurement that require time and effort to sort out before reasonable comparisons can be made.

8. Limitations to comparability are often indicator-specific; however, there are standard issues that require attention with every indicator. For example, systematic differences in the type of source that relate to the methodology of collection, definitions, scope of coverage and reference period affect comparisons. In order to minimize misinterpretation, care has been taken in developing detailed notes that identify the repository, type of source (household and labour force surveys, censuses, administrative records, and so on), and changes or deviations in coverage, such as non-standard age group classifications and geographical coverage (national, urban, rural, capital city, and so on).⁴ When analysing or making reference to a particular KILM indicator, users are advised to examine closely the text relating to the "limitations to comparability" sections as well as the notes and methodological information associated with each element of the table.

9. Providing users with uncomplicated access to basic methodological information has been and continues to be a prime consideration. In the 1999 version of the publication, each piece of information was assigned specific links to various methodological elements and notes via a referencing system. The user can locate the note number on the subsequent table in order to find the respective international repository from which the elements of the indicator originated, the type of the source (household survey, official estimate, etc.), coverage of the source (total employment, civilian employment, etc.) and any

³ International repositories include: International Labour Office (headquarters and regional offices), United Nations Statistics Division, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Bank, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Statistical Office of the European Union, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

⁴ Despite best efforts to include concise and informative notes to the KILM tables, the notes are often limited in terms of the level of detail that were available from the various data repositories. As the KILM project evolves, the ILO continues to collect additional notes and methodological information and work in close cooperation with the repositories and national statistical services, with the particular aim of resolving irregularities.

specific remarks which applied to that specific information. The notes tables are specific to each indicator. In certain situations, age groups or a classification system used are also specified. The abbreviations are defined in the notes cover page. This page (see appendix A) not only defines abbreviations but also provides further details on each data repository, listing specific titles of publications, descriptions of the publication and web sites where the user could explore the source in greater detail. The ability for users to explore basic methodological information is also a key component of the information on CD-ROM. The Internet links found on the CD-ROM were developed in order to allow users instant access to up-to-date labour market information released by the ILO, as well as basic methodological information, by merely clicking on the link and connecting via the Internet.

II. ACCESSING BASIC METHODOLOGICAL INFORMATION WITHIN KILM

10. Users can access the basic methodological information via the KILM CD-ROM as follows:

- ◆ Use the main window to select the specific information users wish to explore
- ◆ The specific components used in the display windows can vary by indicator (e.g., sex, age grouping, survey, type of coverage, classification system, etc.). The tools for each indicator display window remain the same. Descriptions of the tools found in the information display window then follow. Each data display window contains between three and six tabs. Each tab is described below.
- ◆ Define the countries on which the user wishes to view information. (e.g., select all countries).

11. Select the indicator(s) the user wishes to view. It is possible to select multiple indicators. (e.g., select KILM 15a. Real manufacturing wage indices (ILO series))

12. Select the years for the indicator the users wishes to view (e.g., select 1980 to 1997).

13. Once the parameters are selected, pressing the view button shows the indicator display window of the requested information.

- ◆ When a query is defined using the tools on the country tab, the indicator tab and the year tab, and the view button is pressed, the program collects the available information matching the parameters the user has described. Information for every country and every year in each of the 33 tables may not always exist. One may have identified countries or years for which there is no information. When the information display window has been created, a small window may appear in the middle of the data display window showing the number of countries and years the user has requested but for which there is no information. A list of specific countries and years for which no information exists appears on the parameters tab of the information display window. Specific background information and notes associated with the indicator are also displayed in the table. Once a country is selected in the table, the user can scroll down the table and the specific note corresponding to the specific indicator for a given country and year will appear (e.g., for Albania 1990, data for CPI "include mining and quarrying" and refer to "state sector". For wages, "data refer to December").
- ◆ The indicator display window also allows users to display specific elements beyond the indicator selected. By clicking the columns tab, one can see the underlying components of the indicator used to construct the estimate as well as relevant specific methodological components. By clicking all the unselected boxes, users are able to view all elements used to construct the indicator as well as the type of source, coverage, industrial scope(ISIC) and the repository.

14. In addition to selecting the basic element, users are provided with the ability to further refine their search based on specific elements. Using the parameters tab, select or deselect countries, years, sex, type of source, type of coverage, type of statistic, industry coverage, and or repositories. After selecting

or deselecting any of the categories mentioned, clicking the Refresh data button will give you the sub-table corresponding to the information selected.

15. The output tab enables users to graph, produce customized reports or save information selected for storage in standard formats. By using the sub-table generated above, users are given the option of graphing the indicators and seeing trends of certain information over time or across countries.

16. A report in a tabular format can also be generated. This option is particularly useful since it can be used as final output to be included in the user's own research.

17. The repositories tab allows users to view the various components and methodological information relating to the indicator. Full information regarding the source of data is provided. This includes the name and official logo of the organization, mailing and web addresses and a description of the function of the organization or the content of a particular publication if the basic elements are published. Clicking on the web address of a certain organization or publication will launch the Internet browser and will navigate users to the source's official website. This tool is useful if the user is interested in investigating further the characteristics of the source organization or needs help to answer some of the inquiries that are necessary to support the data.

18. The definitions tab allows users to review the definitions on the types of sources and coverage of the indicator. Before any comparison or conclusion can be made regarding the information, it is important to pay close attention to the type of sources of the indicator and the coverage, as well as the type of statistics, that are available for some of the indicators.

19. The fourth tab on the original menu, view text, allows users to select a chapter (text). Pressing the view text button launches the Internet browser where the selected pages will be displayed. The topics are organized in chapters.

20. The html pages display detailed information on the use of the indicator, definition and sources, highlights, the limitations to comparability and gender perspective. It also points to specific ILO resolutions that apply to each indicator.

III. SUMMARY AND FUTURE REFINEMENTS

21. In the initial stage of development, the focus of the KILM was placed on the selection, refinement, documentation and dissemination of the initial set of 18 indicators. Since the first KILM release, the ILO has begun the task of: a) updating and widening the availability of the indicators and b) strengthening the link between the KILM and the sources of national and international labour market information.⁵

22. It is important to recognize that the 1999 KILM is a work in progress; improvements and expansions of the current indicators, as well as in country coverage, remain a top priority for the ILO. The KILM programme will continue to refine the current set of indicators and methodological information in collaboration with international, regional and national repositories. In addition, the KILM Team (ILO Geneva) is working closely with its regional and field offices in order to gather additional national data through projects such as the Labour Market Information Library (LMIL) (see Paragraph 17), while expanding the geographical coverage of the indicators, reducing the time lag between the

⁵ Information regarding current work on the KILM and the release of future updates can be found on the KILM website at: <http://www.ilo.org/kilm>

collection of information and its release as part of KILM and strengthening the link between indicator and methodological information.

23. A statistical implication of the globalization of the world economy is the requirement for more precise and comparable information among countries. The 18 key indicators of the labour market constitute a first response to this need. The ILO acknowledges that several labour market indicators of potential interest to researchers, policy makers and so on, are not yet covered. As KILM evolves, it is hoped that additional indicators – covering topics such as occupational wage indices, migration, detailed industry breakdowns of employment, service sector productivity and others yet to be identified – may be included in future issues of KILM.

24. One of the main aims of the ILO in disseminating a volume of labour market indicators and methodological information such as KILM is to educate constituents, particularly those responsible for labour information on a national level, on how to build capacity for appropriate collection and use of labour market information. The ILO Bureau of Statistics works to develop international statistical standards and provides advice to member States to assist them in the application of these standards and the dissemination of key labour statistics and methodological information through publications and on-line information systems.⁶ The KILM team works in a complimentary manner by flagging and drawing attention to international standards and statistical concepts in the "sources and methods" section, which accompanies each indicator, and by attempting to release only the country-level information which meets current international standards.

25. In addition, the KILM team hopes to support the ILO field staff in the collection of accurate information as well with a recently implemented project known as the Labour Market Information Library (LMIL). Current procedures for collecting and disseminating labour market indicators and methodological information are split within the ILO. This has different results on the quality and quantity of labour market indicators and methodological information that the ILO is currently in a position to disseminate. To improve the overall quality of labour market information and the coordination between the field and ILO headquarter regarding the collection of information, the KILM team, in collaboration with the ILO Bureau of Statistics, are piloting the LMIL, which contains specific labour market indicators and methodological requirements. National information entered into the LMIL will allow the KILM team to supplement current indicators and methodological information from international repositories with that assembled by the field structure from national sources where gaps exist.

26. It is hoped that this system will enhance the overall quality of information disseminated by the ILO by providing timely and simple access to labour market indicators and methodological information while also reducing the time lag by improving the coordination of information collection. Perhaps the greatest advantage of the programme will be in the improved flow of methodological information with adequate definitions, sources and notes since the electronic system for data entry will prompt the entrant to fill in all necessary accompanying methodological information before a statistical entry will be accepted.

27. The next KILM is scheduled for released in fall of 2001 in three versions - publication, CD-ROM and an Internet version. The existing KILM indicators and explanatory documentation will be refined in collaboration with international, regional and national providers and analysts of labour market information. Additional indicators will help to expand the capacity of proper labour market knowledge to better analyse trends in the global labour market thus providing a better basis for policy-making by constituents. Improving the scope and accuracy of methodological information for the current and future indicators will certainly remain a main focus of the programme.

⁶ See the ILO Bureau of Statistics website at:
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/index.htm>

28. Finally, the KILM team has the potential to inspire users, particularly policy-makers, to use labour market information as the basis for the formulation of good labour market policies. The KILM team will continue to develop the link between the labour market policy and labour market information, drawing out policy concerns on a region-specific basis, focussing on how labour market information can be used to formulate and evaluate policies in response to specific concerns.

Appendix A

Table 4. Employment by sector - notes

1. Data repository

LABORSTA - *Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 1998*

Bureau of Labour Statistics, International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland

ISBN 92-2-007357-9

Website: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/120stat/actrep/yearbook.htm>

This new edition contains 31 tables corresponding to nine major substantive chapters on the following: economically active population; employment; unemployment; hours of work; wages; labour cost; consumer prices; occupational injuries; and strikes and lockouts.

LABPROJ - *Economically Active Population 1950-2010*

Bureau of Labour Statistics, International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland

ISBN 92-2-110474-5

Website: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/120stat/actrep/ecacpop.htm>

This database contains estimates and projections of the total population, the activity rates and the economically active population (labour force) by sex and five-year age groups (from 10 to 64 years and 65 years and over) for the period 1950-2010 at ten-year intervals plus 1995, and estimates of the distribution of the labour force by sex and major sector of economic activity (i.e. agriculture, industry and services) for the period 1950-90. The data cover all countries and territories of the world which had at least 200,000 inhabitants in 1990 (178 countries and territories), plus their aggregations into regions, major areas and the world, for a total of 207 geographical units.

CARIBBEAN - *Digest of Caribbean Labour Statistics, 1997*

Caribbean Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, International Labour Organization, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

ISBN: 92-2-111041-9

Website: <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/>

This 1997 publication is the second in the annual series on labour market information in Caribbean countries prepared by the ILO's Caribbean Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (CAMAT). It contains 25 tables covering such topics as employment, unemployment, wages, hours of work, occupational accidents, social security, industrial disputes, and so on.

OECDLFS - *Labour Force Statistics, 1976-1996*

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, France

ISBN 92-64-05536-3

Website: <http://www.oecd.org/std/lfs.htm>

This publication gives detailed statistics on population, labour force, employment and unemployment, broken down by sex, employment status and kind of activity. It also provides participation and unemployment rates by sex and detailed age groups, and comparable tables for the main components of the labour force. Data are available for each OECD member country and for all OECD, OECD-Europe and the European Union. Additional data were gathered from the 1976-97 data set provided by the OECD.

ESCAP - *Statistical Yearbook of Asia and the Pacific, 1997*

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand

ISBN: 92-1-119737-6

Website: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/statdata/statpub.htm>

This yearbook provides a comprehensive compilation of statistical tables related to the ESCAP region. It comprises 665 pages of statistical information concerning population, manpower, national accounts, agriculture, forestry and fishing, industry, energy, transport and communications, external trade, wages, prices, consumption, finance and social statistics, covering 11 years of annual figures.

APO - Productivity Statistics, 1997

Asian Productivity Organization, Tokyo, Japan

ISBN-92-833-1619-3

Website: <http://www.apo-tokyo.com>

These labour productivity statistics relate to the period from 1986 to 1995. The current publication is the ninth edition and comprises three parts. Part I presents a comparison of productivity indexes; Part II, an article on the analysis of productivity performance of APO members; and Part III, a country-wise compilation.

Additional data repositories (national)

CBSE Central Bureau of Statistics: *National Report of the 1994 Population and Housing Census* (Ethiopia)

CHIYB State Statistical Bureau: *China Statistical Yearbook 1997* (China)

MOLISA Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, October 1997 (Viet Nam)

NIHS Ministry of Planning and Economic Planning: *National Integrated Household Survey 1992-93* (Uganda)

SESC Ministry of Planning: *Socio-Economic Survey of Cambodia 1993/94* (Cambodia)

SLIN National Statistical Office: *Subregional Labour Information Network* (Thailand)

STATABS96 Central Bureau of Statistics: *Statistical Abstract 1996* (Kenya)

STYBCHI *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of China 1998* (Taiwan, China)

THNSO97 National Statistical Office: *Labour Force Survey, Round 3, 1997* (Thailand)

2. Type of source

DA Labour-related establishments survey

EP ILO estimates and projections

HS Household or labour force survey

FA Insurance records

OE Official estimates

PC Population census

3. Coverage

CE Civilian employment

CEM Civilian employees

EM Employees (wage earners and salaried employees)

LF Total labour force

PG All persons engaged (all persons who worked in or for the establishment during the reference period; definition can include employees, proprietors, active business partners and unpaid family workers)

PGE All persons engaged (civilian)

TE Total employment (employees, employers, own-account workers, members of producers' cooperatives, contributing family members and workers not classifiable by status)

4. Classification used

ISIC1 International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC-1958)

ISIC2 International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC-Rev. 2, 1968)

ISIC3 International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC-Rev. 3, 1989)

5. Symbols

M	Male
F	Female
MF	Male and female
B	Break in series, country specific beginning in the year where the symbol appears
b	Break in series, resulting from a change in data repository beginning in the year where the symbol appears
...	Not available
.	Not applicable

6. Additional notes

The residual category refers to “workers not classifiable by sector”.

The data in KILM 4 will not always sum to exactly 100 per cent. When this occurs, the main reason is that some countries were unable to classify all workers into the three employment by sector categories (a fourth category, "workers not classifiable by sector", is not presented in the table). Another fairly common reason stems from rounding, in which percentages sum just short of, or just above, 100.