

# GLOBAL MULTI-SCALAR DIALOGUE: A NEW MODEL OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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## Effective labour laws for sustainable development

The Decent Work Regulation project at Durham University responds to [UN Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 8](#): inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. It recognises that effective labour regulation is essential to achieve decent work. Strong labour laws are a vital component of development policies, capable of supporting inclusive growth, sustainable prosperity, and the well-being of workers and their families.

The Project supports a set of linked research and policy activities towards understanding and improving labour market regulation across the world. To this end, it contends that international dialogue can identify solutions to complex and globally-shared challenges to effective labour regulation. In particular, the project supports an inter-regional dialogue between the global North and South.

## The Global Multi-Scalar Dialogue model

Since 2017 we have designed and tested a novel approach to stakeholder engagement. This is a global multi-scalar model of research design (GMD) that is grounded in interdisciplinary research dialogue and stakeholder engagement.

## Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement of a conventional kind is confined primarily to prior consultation and sharing of outcomes.

In contrast, the GMD model includes stakeholders from the outset as co-producers of knowledge. Stakeholders are directly involved in determining priorities for policy intervention and research design.

This model encompasses researchers from multiple disciplines and a wide range of non-academic stakeholders.

## Multi-scalar dialogue

Rather than centring on a single scalar focus, the model involves intersecting multi-scalar engagement that encompasses the international-, regional-, and national-levels (Figure 1).

This scaling innovation in stakeholder engagement is also intended to advance the understanding of multi-scalar interactions – for example by involving international organisations and buyers at the apex of global value chains – and to explore the potential for upscaling of research findings.



# The GMD model in action: Decent Work Regulation in Africa (2017-19)

The *Decent Work Regulation in Africa* project (DWR-Africa) tested the GMD model across 2017-19 (Figure 1).

## Our stakeholders

The project involved key stakeholders in labour law and policy. The notion of ‘stakeholder’ was broadly defined to encompass actors with involvement, experience or interest in labour market regulation, including government ministries and agencies, trade unions, employers’ associations, buyers, the International Labour Organization and other United Nations agencies, national development institutes, compliance auditors, international and local NGOs, and industry bodies.

## International dialogue: the Global Regulatory Challenges (Phases 1 to 5)

Phases 1 to 5 of the project involved assembling a global Strategic Network of stakeholders (Phase 1; see also Table 1 - International Stakeholders). An international-level dialogue identified a set of nine Global Regulatory Challenges (GRCs) to ensuring effective labour regulation that are shared among countries at a range of income-levels (Phase 2).[1]



Unacceptable Forms of Work: Global Dialogue II, 14-15 September 2017, Durham Law School

**Lesotho and South Africa** were identified as countries in which constraints on enforcement of labour standards were worth investigating and in which solutions might be identified, with a focus on the garment sector.

### International

January 2017 - June 2019



- **Phase 1:**  
ESRC/GCRF Strategic Network
- **Phase 2:**  
Global Regulatory Challenges (GRCs)
- **Phase 3:**  
Research Agenda on *Enforcing Labour Laws*
- **Phases 4 & 5:**  
Stakeholder input and Research Agenda revision

### Regional

April 2018 - June 2019



- **Phase 6:**  
Regional Meeting on *Decent Work Regulation in Africa*
- The Regional Meeting agreed a set of *Findings and Recommendations on Decent Work Regulation in Africa*

### National

April 2018 - June 2019



- **Phase 7:**  
Consultation on research design
- Interviews
- Trade union national dialogues (Lesotho)
- Labour Code Reform National Meeting (Lesotho)

Figure 1: Stakeholder engagement in *DWR-Africa*

[1] The Global Regulatory Challenges (GRCs) are: (1) casual work; (2) extending forced labour initiatives; (3) recruitment in global value chains; (4) enforcing labour laws; (5) labour rights in ‘the precarious economy’; (6) law’s dynamic effects; (7) innovative collective representation; (8) violence and harassment in the care economy; and (9) informal work and labour regulation. See further McCann, D. (ed) (2018). *Unacceptable Forms of Work: Global Dialogue/Local Innovation*. Durham: University of Durham.

**Network Teams** were then assembled to propose linked research/impact agendas on each of the GRCs (Phase 3). One Team designed a Research Agenda on Enforcing Labour Laws that is centred on lower-income countries.[2] The Agenda has a focus on hybrid models of enforcement, which involve co-ordination or collaboration between labour market actors towards the implementation of formal legal norms, public or private.

The international-level stakeholders met in cross-regional groupings to consider the Research Agendas – including on Enforcing Labour Laws – and contribute ideas on research and policy reform activities (Phase 4)[3]. Finally, the Agendas were revised to incorporate the stakeholders' suggestions (Phase 5).



### Regional/local dialogue: decent work regulation in sub-Saharan Africa (Phases 6 and 7)

The stakeholder-engagement process then shifted to the regional- and local-levels (Table 2). Planning meetings were organised by the research team convening key government, industry and trade unions representatives in South Africa and Lesotho. This discussion informed the design of the research and selection of interviewees.

The preliminary research was presented to stakeholders from across southern Africa at a Regional Meeting on Decent Work Regulation in Africa held in Cape Town in June 2018 (Phase 6).[4]



Regional Meeting on Decent Work Regulation in Africa, University of Cape Town, 18 June 2018

The Regional Meeting generated a set of *Findings and Recommendations* that were an input to the research, covering pressures on the garment sector, concerns about conditions of work in the region, the key challenges to effective regulation, and the benefits and limitations of enforcement models.[5]

The research team also consulted with national stakeholders in both countries to refine the research objectives, questions, and survey design of the research project.

Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with stakeholders in each country. In Lesotho, consultations with stakeholders were conducted as part of national-level trade union dialogues and through participation by a member of the research team in a Labour Code Reform National Meeting (Phase 7).[6]

[2] Godfrey, S., Pike, K., Pinheiro, M. and Posthuma, A. (2017). *Enforcing Labour Laws. Research Agenda for the ESRC Strategic Network on Legal Regulation of Unacceptable Work*. A summary of the Research Agenda is available at <<https://www.dur.ac.uk/law/policyengagement/ufw/challenges/enforcing/>>.

[3] Global Dialogues were held in the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok, Thailand (3-4 August 2017) (participants from Australia, Asia and UK) and Durham University, Durham, UK (14-15 September 2017) (participants from Europe, Latin America, North America, and Africa). The Research Agenda on Enforcing Labour Laws was considered at the Durham event – see the participating stakeholders in Godfrey, S., Collier, D., McCann, D., Pike, K., Ronnie, R., and Osiki, A., 'Developmental Enforcement? Challenges to public and private enforcement of labour standards in the South African and Lesotho garment sectors' (Durham University 2019) p. 95 (List 2).

[4] See *Ibid*, 96 (List 4).

[5] The Findings and Recommendations are available at <<https://www.dur.ac.uk/law/policyengagement/ufw/regionalmeeting/>>.

[6] See Godfrey et al (2019), n 2 above, p. 97 (List 5) and 'September 2018: DWR-Africa Lesotho Trade Unions Workshop' (28 September 2018); 'December 2018: National-Level Meeting on Decent Work Regulation in Lesotho' (6-7 Dec 2018) available at <<https://www.dur.ac.uk/law/policyengagement/ufw/news/>>.



# Lessons from the DWR-Africa Project

The benefits of stakeholder involvement in DWR-Africa were significant in all phases of the project.

Combined with analyses of the available data on working life, stakeholder-input allowed the project to identify:

- enforcement as a global challenge;
- southern Africa as a rich site of enquiry, in particular the garment sector;
- and hybrid regulation as a promising mode for effective regulatory reform.

These benefits were confirmed at the stage of research design, at which stakeholder-input revealed a range of research topics that might otherwise have been overlooked.



Unacceptable Forms of Work: Global Dialogue II, 14-15 September 2017, Durham Law School

These were issues that are rapidly evolving or subordinate in the policy debates and regulation research on southern Africa. They include pressures from the latest shifts of the garment industry into low-wage environments; the evolutions of the trading environment; the prominence of work/life issues; widespread concern about risks encountered beyond the workplace, notably unsafe or unreliable transport; the myriad intersections of the formal and informal economies; the challenges posed by fragmented regulatory frameworks; the use of cooperative legal forms to circumvent labour laws; and complexities that stem from the presence of multiple public and private standards, including uncertainty on the role of, and relationships between, public and private enforcement actors such as compliance auditors.

The process also generated significant collaborations and continuing dialogue among stakeholders in the region, including creating new pairings of stakeholders, such as dialogue between buyers and trade union representatives.



National-Level Meeting on Decent Work Regulation in Lesotho, Maseru, 6-7 December 2018

Global multi-scalar dialogue could be extended to other globally-shared problems of contemporary labour market regulation e.g. the rise of casual work/day labour, the need for new models of collective representation, the protection of workers in the 'informal economy.' Multiple scale-selection contributes towards identifying novel challenges and potential solutions and can support fruitful research/policy-dialogues between the global North and South. Cross-regional projects would be particularly valuable, including South-South dialogue and research. Lessons learned from the DWR-Africa project could usefully be included in research on comparable regulatory problems in other regions.



Garment factory, Cape Town, 19 June 2018

# DWR-Africa Project Stakeholders

**Table 1: International Stakeholders**

Brazilian Labour Inspectorate  
Cardiff University, UK  
Durham University, UK  
Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX), UK  
Fundação Getúlio Vargas (Rio de Janeiro), Brazil  
International Labour Organization (ILO), Brazil  
International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva  
Newcastle University, UK  
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)  
University of Kent, UK  
WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing)  
York University, Canada

**Table 2: Southern Africa Stakeholders**

African Cotton and Textile Industries Federation (ACTIF)  
Amalgamated Trade Union of Swaziland (ATUSWA)  
Apparel Manufacturers of South Africa (AMSA)  
Association of Lesotho Employers and Business (ALEB)  
Department of Labour, South Africa  
Ethical Trade Initiative, South Africa  
Ethiopian Textile Industry Development Institute (ETIDI)  
Gatsby Africa Textile Development Unit, Tanzania  
ILO Country Office for Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, and for the Special Representative to the AU and the ECA  
ILO DWT for Eastern and Southern Africa and Country Office for South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland  
Independent Democratic Union of Lesotho (IDUL)  
IndustriALL Global Union, South Africa  
International Labour Organization, Pretoria Office  
Jacques Hau Clothing, South Africa  
Lentsoe La Sechaba, Lesotho  
Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC)  
Lesotho Trade Exporters Association (LTEA)  
Ministry of Labour and Employment, Lesotho  
Ministry of Trade and Industry, Lesotho  
Mr Price Group, South Africa  
National Clothing Bargaining Council, South Africa  
National Clothing Textile and Allied Workers Union (NACTWU), Lesotho  
National Union of Manufacturing and Allied Workers (NUMAW), Lesotho  
National University of Lesotho  
North-West University, South Africa  
ReMmoho Compliance Solutions, Lesotho  
Social Capital, South Africa  
Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU), South Africa  
United Textile Employees (UNITE), Lesotho  
University of Cape Town, South Africa  
University of the Western Cape, South Africa

# Decent Work Regulation Project

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