

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

GENERAL ASSEMBLY





Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the administration team, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the International Labour Organization at the University of Toronto Model United Nations, 2018. The ILO is a key proponent and creator of international conventions and standards that ensure the promotion of social justice, workers' rights, and peace. Although conventions ratified by Member States are legally binding, the role of the ILO is to work with sovereign nations and assist with the process of creating a robust legal framework that benefits workers around the world.

This committee will deal with three pertinent and complex issues: protecting the rights of migrant workers, labour regulation in LEDCs, and safeguarding workers from automation. We hope for fruitful discussions of these topics, and we are looking forward to seeing you. Once again, welcome to UTMUN 2018.

Yours truly,
Mrudul Tummala
Director

Staff

Mrudul Tummala, Director

Vice-Directors:
Arina Dmitrenko, Jack Sun, Ian McAuliffe

Moderator: Michael Morris

**TOPIC ONE: PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS****Introduction:**

The International Labour Organization will be working toward protecting the rights of migrant workers, with a particular emphasis on three particular regions due to their complexity and global relevance: the Middle East, Britain, and US-Mexico. As the latter region gains publicity due to various policies implemented and proposed by the Trump Administration, Britain's haphazard exit from the European Union (EU) has created confusion and uncertainty regarding the issue of continental workers currently in the United Kingdom, and British workers operating on the continent. The Middle East, on the other hand, has a notorious reputation regarding the ill-treatment of migrant workers. The International Labour Organization classified more than 600,000 migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in the region, many of whom are women, as victims of human trafficking. The vast number of Asian and African countries that supply the labour are directly affected by the issue. With the upcoming FIFA World Cup scheduled to take place in Qatar, the question of migrant workers' rights further emerges on the global stage.

The term "migrant worker" refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged, or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990). Today, there are more than 11.5 million migrant workers worldwide, and that number continuous to grow, owing to globalization and technological advancements (ILO). As more and more people cross borders and move abroad to find work, strengthened protections for migrant workers have become increasingly necessary.

The increasing interconnectedness of the global economy has encouraged workers to pursue employment outside of their native countries. In seeking work and stability, many have chosen to relocate. The focus of this issue falls largely onto countries with cheap labour exports.

Many Mexican workers in the United States are undocumented, which excludes them from any migrant worker protection laws, leading to labour exploitation. The Trump administration has expressed their unwelcoming attitude towards these workers by discussing policies which would limit migrant workers and thus force to "hire American" (FT). In Qatar, the construction of new infrastructure for the FIFA World Cup has been conducted with dangerous and life-threatening practices, with more than 600 workers losing their lives, on average, each year since construction began (Stephenson, 2015). Britain's situation with migrant workers, conversely, differs from the others. Rather than endangering and exploiting cheap labour, the United Kingdom, in its decision to leave the EU, has opened complicated questions regarding its citizens right to work in the EU, and vice versa.

**Role of the UN:**

It is the position of the UN that migrant workers are positively contributing the economic growth of the countries they work in, providing an array of skilled and unskilled work, as well as considering the opportunity for migrant workers to improve their standard of living in search of a better life. The UN is also aware that many of these workers do not voluntarily choose to leave their home countries. Many were driven by poverty, food insecurity, climate change, terrorism as well as domestic human rights violations. Because of these extenuating circumstances, the UN stresses the importance of needing to bring about the international protection of the rights of all workers, including members of their families, and globally applying comprehensive norms.

On 1 July 2003, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families entered into force. By 1 October 2005, 33 states had ratified or agreed to ratify. The treaty set out to provide protections on migrant workers rights, emphasizing the individual human rights on migrants.

Recently, The ILO launched its 'Decent Work' agenda, giving workers the rights to protect them from exploitation, believing decent work drives development. It focuses on equality, a fair income and safe working conditions. This agenda is under the larger umbrella of the organizations 2030 agenda for sustainable development. In response to the a non-binding resolution stemming from the 2004 International labour conference, a multi-lateral draft on the framework on labour migration was proposed. This draft firstly recognizes that:

"Labour migration can have many beneficial elements for those countries which send and receive migrant workers, as well as for the workers themselves. It can assist both origin and destination countries in economic growth and development".

In this draft, there was a specific focus on maximizing the benefit of both origin and destination. With this in mind, the ILO set out the following four guidelines that should be taken into consideration The first is integrating and mainstreaming labour migration in employment, labour market and development policy. Second is expanding analyses of the contribution of labour migration and migrant workers to the economies of destination countries, including employment creation, capital formation, social security coverage and social welfare. Next is promoting the positive role of labour migration in advancing or deepening regional integration. Finally, they suggest promoting and providing incentives for enterprise creation and development, including transnational business initiatives and micro-enterprise development by men and women migrant workers in origin and destination countries.



Snapshot of Human Mobility

- In 2015 there were 244 million international migrants representing 3.3 per cent of the global population – over 150 million of these were migrant workers;
- 72.7 per cent of all migrants are of working age (15 years or older);
- There are 67 million domestic workers worldwide. 11.5 million domestic workers are international migrants and over 70 per cent of these are women;
- Migrants sent \$US 601 billion in remittances in 2015 to their home countries;
- There are over 65 million people forcibly displaced by conflict, violence and human rights violations.

Case Studies:

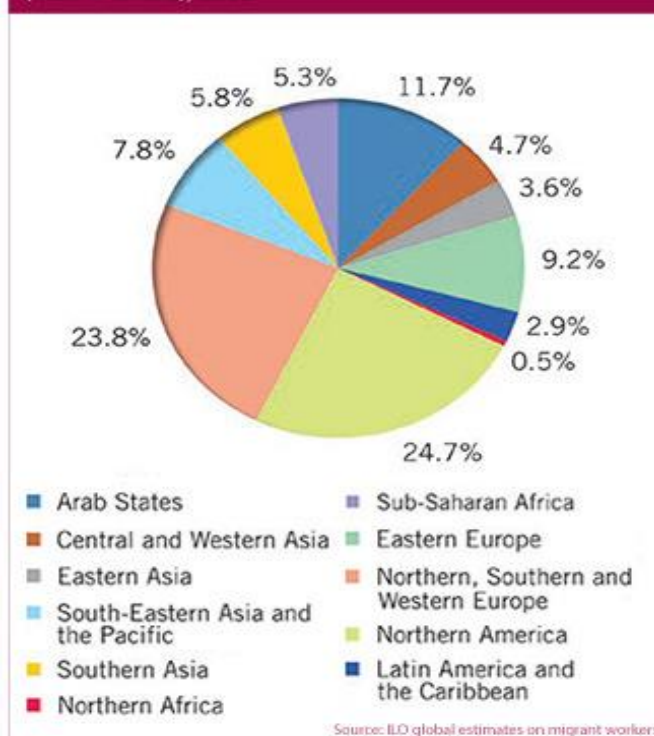
The United States:

The United States has historically relied on migrant workers to carry out skilled and unskilled labour. Many of these workers are Mexican born. The number of Mexican migrants in the United States labour force “nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000 and by 2000, almost four percent of the civilian labour force age 16 and over was born in Mexico, compared to just two percent in 1990”. Slightly over half of these workers are undocumented and unauthorized to work in the United States. Quite often, these workers make considerable sacrifices and expose themselves to serious risk in order to work in America, leaving behind their families, country and culture. Migrant workers often work in impoverished settings that do not mirror those of most of the nation’s working population. With “61 percent of U.S. farm workers’ income falling below the poverty level” and a “median income of less than \$7500 a year” many feel trapped with no other viable options, along with the shame and indignity of returning to their homelands with less than what they came (Migrant Immigrants in the US Labour Force). As many of these workers are undocumented, they are not protected under law as there is little protection for undocumented workers, leaving them susceptible to all kinds of exploitation.

Qatar:

The 2022 FIFA World Cup is scheduled to be held in Qatar. The first five proposed Qatari venues for the World Cup were unveiled at the beginning of March 2010. Migrant

Distribution of migrant workers, by broad subregion, totals (male + female), 2013





labour in Qatar accounts for 95% of Qatar's total construction workforce, who are unable to leave without an exit visa. Furthermore, the conditions of the migrants working on these stadiums has been heavily criticized by international organizations. Workers are being forced to work long hours under the crippling heat, in what has been described as "life threatening conditions" (Stephenson, 2015). It is estimated that hundreds of people have died since construction began in 2010, many of which are due to unexplained causes, raising concerns and questions about workers' rights and safety in the region.

Britain:

In 2016, Britain voted to leave the European Union through a public referendum. Currently, negotiations are underway regarding Britain's exit, causing much chaos and disarray among the workforce. British citizens could potentially lose the EU right of free movement, settlement, and employment across the Union, while EU migrants in Britain could lose rights to travel, work, and access to healthcare, among others. As such the outcome of the Brexit decision will have significant effects across Europe as EU migrants account for a considerable amount of the British workforce, providing skilled and unskilled labour.

Guiding Questions:

1. How are migrant workers and their families currently protected under the convention? Are these methods effective? Why or why not?
2. How do migrant workers contribute to the global economy? What is their role?
3. What motivated migrant workers? What conditions are they exposed to? Why do they remain undocumented? What are some of the legal challenges they face in obtaining documentation? If they are documented, what challenges do they face from their native country as well as their currently country of employment?
4. What kind of mechanisms are necessary to be put in place to prevent exploitation?
5. What is labour abuse? What rights are the workers entitled to?
6. Consider the ILO and their actions with regards to this topic: which actions that they have taken should be repeated, and what improvements could be made by the members of the United Nation?

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TOPIC TWO: LABOUR REGULATION IN LEDCS

Introduction:

Increasing globalization over the last few decades has encouraged many multinational corporations (MNCs) to offshore production to less economically developed countries (LEDs) in order to minimize labour costs and maximize profit. While the practice of offshoring offers a range of advantages to host countries, including economic stimulation and job creation, the cost of these benefits is a serious slashing of labour regulations and exploitation of cheap labour in LEDs.

Although consumers in more economically developed countries (MEDCs) benefit from low prices and MNCs by higher profit margins, globalization has led to a “race to the bottom” in global standards for labour regulation, as states, aiming to stay competitive, minimize their labour laws in order to be desirable for MNCs. The lack of corporate

accountability and lackluster supply chain management by MNCs has further exacerbated the issue (Feingold, 2016). As such, MEDCs will have to work with LEDs to appropriately address this ongoing issue. This committee will discuss prevention of the exploitation of labour, establishing robust regulations protecting workers, and measures to hold corporations accountable for abusing these rights.

Current situation:

The textile industry continues to be plagued by MNCs exploiting cheap labour. In 1990, 50% of all clothing sold in the US was produced inshore. Today, that number is a mere 2%. Clothing companies moved production to countries where they can mass-produce at much cheaper rates, including Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Honduras, and Mexico. Although offshoring empowers local businesses and contractors, growing demand by MNCs to maintain high levels of cheap production results in long working hours with low wages and an unsafe environment for workers.

2016 A.T. Kearney Global Services Location Index™

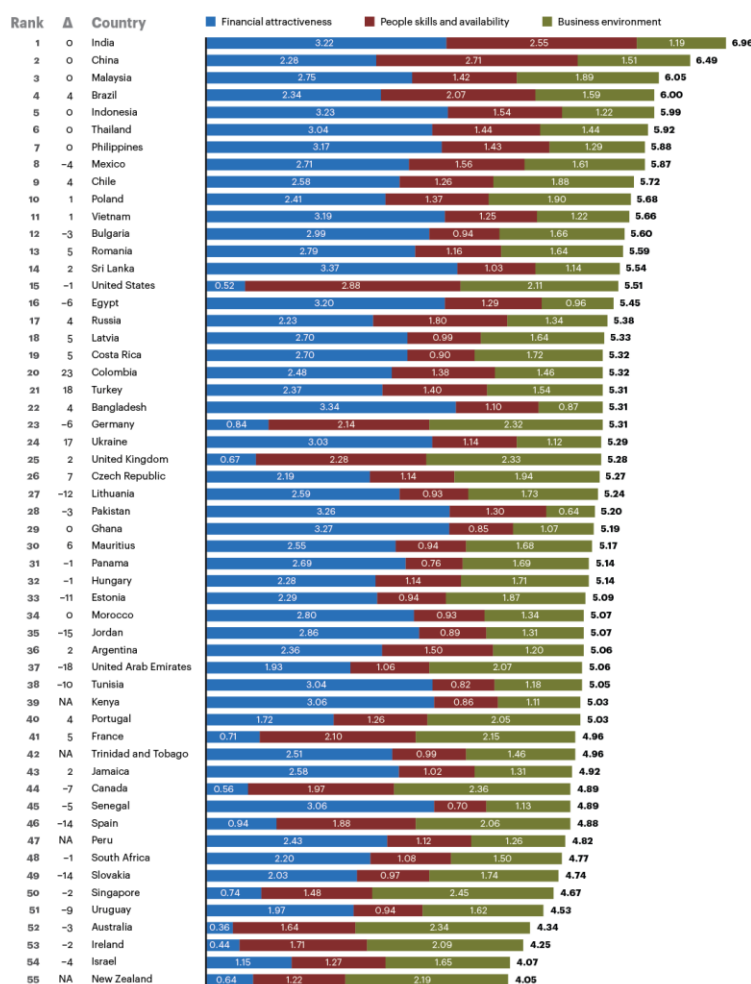


Figure 1: Top 55 countries to outsource to



Furthermore, the “race to the bottom” for labour regulations in LEDCs leads to unemployment and job insecurity for workers in MEDCs, as jobs that are offshored often do not return to the host country. This relationship has been suggested as leading to protectionist economic measures, such as the Trump administration’s “America First” policy. Offshoring, additionally, undermines the bargaining power of unions, as the threat of losing jobs altogether looms over negotiations and removes any leverage workers in MEDCs might have had. Moreover, as offshoring production in a sector increases, reliance on positive foreign relations and economic wellbeing of foreign markets also increases. As such, workers in MEDCs would be affected indirectly by the performance of overseas markets or changes in geopolitical landscapes, such as increased U.S.-China economic tensions, further adding to job insecurity and stagnant economic growth which may lead to unemployment (Amadeo, 2017).

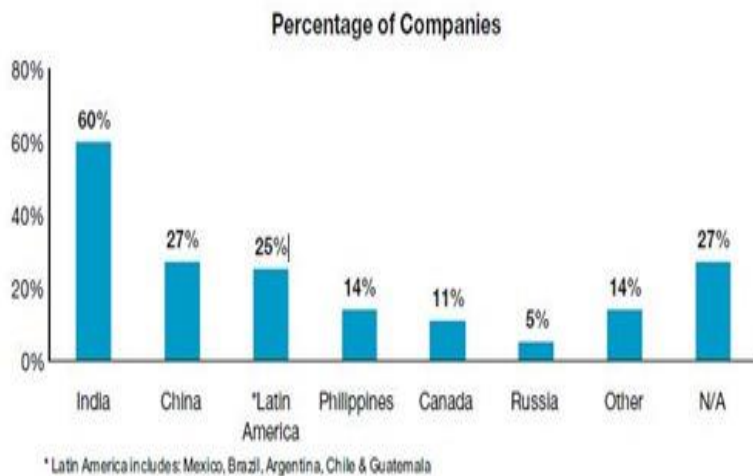


Figure 2: Top outsourcing countries for US companies

A prominent example of exploitation in this industry is the continued use of child labour. Many of the 170 million child labourers in the world are involved in the production of garments. Though recent trends have suggested a decrease in the employment of children due to increasing awareness and tougher regulation, the issue persists. Major brands such as Forever 21, H&M, Walmart, and GAP, among others, have been found guilty of using child labour to produce their clothing (McDougall, 2007).

Other labour violations by the aforementioned brands include the ill-treatment of workers and unsafe working environments that lack fire and building safety. Corporations, however, divert blame by pleading ignorance. In 2012, after a fire broke out and killed over 100 people in a Bangladesh factory which supplied clothes to Walmart, they claimed that “the factory wasn’t authorized to make its clothes”. Instead, it alleges that its contractors engaged in sub-contracting production to other factories that did not meet Walmart’s safety regulations. This common trend among MNCs further complicates the issue of compelling corporations to take the initiative and responsibility to ensure the safety of its workers (Telegraph, 2013).

Host countries face a Catch-22 – on one hand, implementing strict regulations would discourage MNCs from operating in their country due to consequential increases in production costs. On the other hand, the lack of these basic laws leads to large-scale human rights abuses and labour exploitation. The dependence upon MNCs removes any bargaining



power LEDCs might have in the situation; stronger labour laws could lead to economic catastrophe. However, pressure and willingness to address the issue from MEDCs could initiate progress, as it did with Bangladesh after some horrific tragedies over the last five years.

These issues are, by no means, exclusive either to the textile industry or the specific companies and countries outlined previously. Instead, it is a troubling pattern that emerges in almost all industries as an indirect consequence of globalization. As such, the global community must continue to work together to mitigate this issue and support workers around the world.

Role of the UN:

The International Labour Organization (ILO) aims to “promote the rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection, and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.” The ILO constructs legally binding conventions which must be ratified by Member States. To date, the ILO has adopted 205 conventions spanning over 20 topics. However, most States ratified only a small fraction of these conventions. The United States, for example, ratified a mere 14 conventions, of which only 12 are in force currently (“About the ILO”, 2017). As such, while the effectiveness of the Organization is debatable, the framework it sets is only the fundamental steps countries must take to protect their respective citizens. Respecting the sovereignty of States rather than imposing legal guidelines makes the issue increasingly convoluted.

Case studies:

Continuing with the example of the textile industry, we will explore the case of Bangladesh and the horrific tragedies that unfolded in the recent past. Most notable was the collapse of the garment factory, Rana Plaza, in 2013. The disaster killed more than 1100 workers. Managers’ and supervisors’ disregard of fire and building safety in the factory caused uproar around the world.

Still, Bangladesh continues to be a popular choice for MNCs to outsource to, mainly due to its cheap labour and “duty-free access to western markets”. The textile industry earns the nation more than \$28 billion annually, and is by far the country’s largest export. Factories are under constant pressure to keep costs cheap whilst increasing production levels. Unfortunately, this resulted in widespread disregard for the working conditions and safety of employees (Associated Press, 2013).

The Rana Plaza, for example, was built on swampy ground, and was not designed to accommodate heavy machinery. Moreover, the owners of the building illegally added three storeys to the factory to bypass safety regulations and “used extremely poor quality” materials to construct the Plaza. The government was also blamed for failing to inspect buildings that blatantly disregarded regulations. In fact, government inspections of



garment factories are rare and “easily subverted by corruption”, given the importance of the industry in Bangladesh’s economy. As a result, lobbyists and businesspeople in the garment industry have a strong influence on the government, weakening the bargaining position of workers and labour unions as they attempt to protest for better working conditions (Associated Press, 2013).

The international attention that the Rana Plaza collapse received, however, put sufficient pressure on the US, Bangladesh’s largest exporter, to reevaluate trade policies. Following the tragedy, President Obama admonished Bangladesh for “not taking steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights to workers” and revoked tariffs on imports, which was one of Bangladesh’s key competitive factors (Greenhouse, 2013). The move prompted Bangladeshi lawmakers to introduce legislation to protect workers’ rights, attempting to make unionization easier and add protections for fire safety. However, the Human Rights Watch criticized the new law for being counterproductive and making it harder for employees to join labour unions, further claiming that the legislation still fell short of international framework (Reuters, 2016).

Today, advocates for workers’ rights fear large corporations simply have too much power and control over the lawmaking process to ensure the protection of workers in countries like Bangladesh (Chandran, 2016). Despite this, individual MEDCs are taking steps in putting pressure, albeit minimal, on LEDCs to improve working conditions.

Guiding Questions:

1. How rigid are your country’s laws on workers’ rights?
2. How has globalization impacted your country with respect to offshoring and outsourcing?
3. Has your country ratified any major International Labour Organization Conventions? Why/why not?
4. What are your country’s major imports/exports and what measures is that industry taking to regulate workers’ safety?
5. How can the international community start holding corporations accountable?
6. What further measures can sovereign nations take to prevent tragedies like the Rana Plaza collapse?
7. To what extent do re-shoring policies such as “America First” help in mitigating the issue of labour exploitation?
8. How can the ILO ensure that LEDCs are not forced to slash their labour regulations to remain competitive?



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**TOPIC THREE: SAFEGUARDING WORKERS FROM AUTOMATION****Introduction:**

The seeming inevitability of automation raises serious concerns for workers in industries with high automation potential. Over the past two decades, automation has transformed factories and the very nature of employment in the manufacturing industry. Rapid advancements in areas such as robotics, artificial intelligence and machine learning have enabled machines to routinely match or even outperform humans in a wide range of work activities (Chui, George, Manyika & Miremadi, 2017). Other contributing factors include an ever-increasing level of computing power and the advent of Big Data (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016).

Given the inevitability of the automation era, the debate will revolve around the response to the increasing presence of automation and the various issues it presents, from a workers' interests perspective. Delegates should focus specifically on the socioeconomic implications of imposing various policy frameworks as a response to automation including, but not limited to, universal basic income, job security regulations, and education for displaced workers.

While there is little disagreement regarding the likelihood of widespread automation in the future, the opposite holds true for the exact severity of automation's effects on society. Several prominent figures within society, namely Bill Gates and Elon Musk, have championed policy measures such as universal basic income as necessary to combat the incoming wave of automation. Others are sceptical that automation will cause long-term unemployment, arguing that economic history suggests that major technological innovations will only be disruptive and result in substantial job loss in the short-term, and will be subsequently offset by the creation of more productive and rewarding jobs in the long-term. To these people, the fear of job loss as a result of technological innovation is an example of what's called the "Luddite Fallacy" (OECD, 2016).

Current situation:

Based on research from McKinsey & Company, 478 of the 749 billion working hours (64%), spent on manufacturing-related activities globally were automatable with currently demonstrable technology. This portion of working hours represents the monetary equivalent of \$2.7 trillion out of the \$5.1 trillion of labor that could theoretically be eliminated or repurposed. These numbers suggest that despite already being an industry where automation is highly pervasive, there is significant potential for further automation. McKinsey states that the manufacturing industry is second only to the accommodation and food services industry in terms of automation potential (Chui et al., 2017).

The immediate future of automation lies in the use and integration of machines, robots and computers in the production process. For example, Mercedes-Benz factories are



replacing heavy industrial robots with smaller and more flexible robots in the production of their 2018 S-Class. BMW and Audi are testing similar mechanisms, also to respond to the demand for individualized products. The services sector is applying new sensor and Big Data technologies at an increasing rate, which is slowly eroding the number of jobs in the logistic sector (Nübler, 2016).

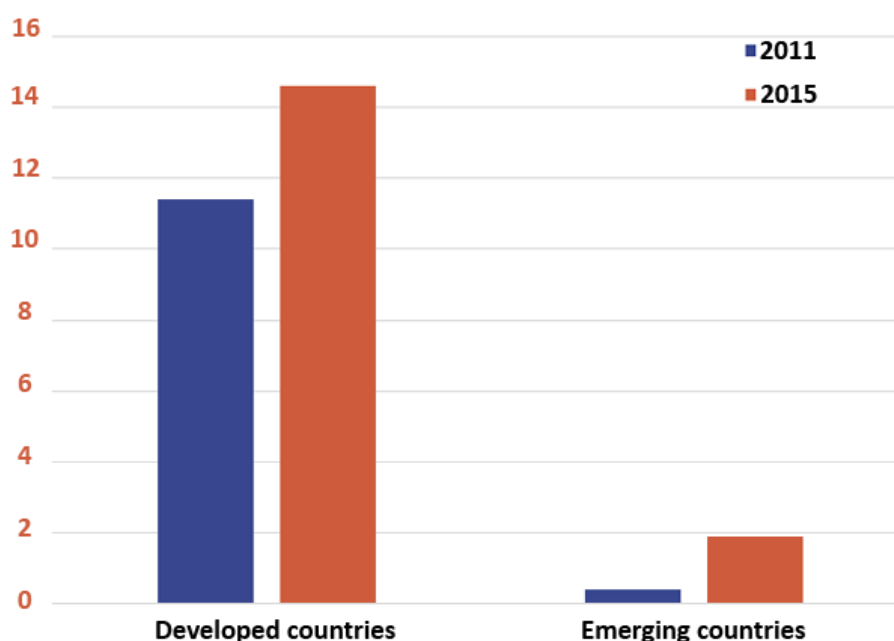


Figure: Robot density in manufacturing (number of multipurpose industrial robots per 1,000 person employed in the manufacturing sector). Source: ILO Trend Econometric Model November, 2016; World Robotics Industrial Robots Database, International Federation of Robotics

Role of the UN:

Today the role of the International Labour Organization (ILO) regarding protecting workers rights from automation is largely advisory, as Employment Protection Legislation (EPL) is left to individual nations. However, the ILO does keep an EPL database, and can make recommendations regarding how countries can protect workers at risk of losing their jobs to automation. The key question is how this goal can be best achieved without hindering technological advancement or economic growth.

Universal Basic Income:

With the rise in automation in industries such as manufacturing making the further loss of jobs seem almost inevitable, it is possible that eventually there will simply be insufficient jobs to keep everyone employed. In such a scenario, one suggested method to stave off poverty is a Universal Basic Income (UBI), a set stipend received by everyone to



cover living expenses such as housing, food, and utilities. Such a concept has been highly controversial, with concerns raised regarding its sustainability, influence on inflation, and effectiveness at keeping people motivated to work. It is the task of the ILO to answer these concerns, and to make recommendations on the future of work to member states.

Case Study:

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations:

In July 2016 the ILO published a case study regarding the risks workers face regarding automation. The study had five key findings:

1. Approximately 56 per cent of all employment in the ASEAN-5 is at high risk of displacement due to technology over the next decade or two.
2. Across the ASEAN-5 countries, prominent industries with high capacity for automation are hotels and restaurants; wholesale and retail trade; and construction and manufacturing.
3. Industries with low automation risk across the ASEAN-5 include education and training, as well as human health and social work.
4. Prominent occupations in certain countries face extreme risks of automation. For example, in Cambodia, where garment production dominates the manufacturing sector, close to half a million sewing machine operators face a high automation risk. In Thailand, automation risk is particularly acute for approximately 1 million shop sales assistants. In Indonesia, about 1.7 million office clerks are highly vulnerable to automation.
5. In each of the ASEAN-5, women are more likely than men to be employed in an occupation at high risk of automation. Moreover, less educated workers and employees earning lower wages face higher automation risk.

It is clear from the study that the risks of human workers being replaced by machines in this region is high. It is of particular importance to the ILO to protect the rights of these workers, and ensure that any replacement that does occur does not severely impact their livelihood in the long term.

UBI in Finland:

The first country to implement Universal Basic Income on a large scale was Finland at the start of 2017, as a part of a two-year pilot study. The participants are 2000 individuals between the ages of 25 and 58 who were receiving unemployment assistance at the end of 2016. Since the start of the year, they have been receiving monthly payments of €560, with no conditions attached. The focus of the study is labour market effects, and whether receiving UBI effects employment rates.



So as to not influence the behavior of the participants, Kela, the organization running the study, will take no surveys of the participants during the study. In addition, no results will be published until the study has concluded at the end of 2018, for the same reason. For this reason, it is important to take caution when analysing its effects, as any published data is unofficial, and incomplete. However, the impact of this study could be of extreme importance to the future of UBI, since participants will be followed for 10 years after the experiment's conclusion to examine its long-term effects.

Guiding Questions:

1. To what extent has automation affected your country?
2. Will automation actually cause large-scale job loss, or is this another example of the 'Luddite Fallacy'?
3. What kind of policy measures regarding mitigating automation's effects can/has your country consider or begin to implement?
4. Under what circumstances can a universal basic income be economically sustainable?
5. How can workers be protected from automation without stifling technological advancement?
6. Could automation ultimately harm your country's economy due to job loss?

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