



## United Nations Economic and Social Council

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### Informal Preparatory Meeting on the Theme of the 2006 High-Level Segment of ECOSOC

**"Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development"**

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#### **Issues Notes for Roundtable 4 on: "Working out of crisis: Creating opportunities for crisis affected women and men"**

According to the "2004 Global Refugee Trends" report, the world numbered 9.2 million refugees at the end of 2004. Worst affected countries are Afghanistan, Sudan, Burundi, DRC and Somalia. Not only are they removed from income generating opportunities, life as a refugee also tears away the social fabric and economic networks that stimulate earnings and community cohesion. Likewise, the Emergency Disasters Data Base figures of 2005 report how all but one of the ten deadliest disasters of the year affected developing countries. Often cruelly, natural disasters hit hardest those who are least able to cope.

Armed conflicts and natural disasters affect people in many ways. So recovery strategies are different too. But the need for decent work, income and social cohesion is always fundamental. Once basic survival needs are met, men and women want to rebuild their lives. Access to jobs and income will boost their prospects for socio-economic recovery and set them on a path to sustainable development. And yet, livelihood and employment recovery are often treated as an afterthought, assuming that it will simply follow the reconstruction process. It often does not. So livelihood and job creation must be placed at the centre of post crisis recovery strategies from the start, and should be demonstrated by a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach that brings together all relevant actors, with predictable financing.

## **The central place of employment and livelihood recovery**

If post conflict and post disaster policies are formulated with the sole purpose of short term economic stabilization, infrastructure rehabilitation prospects for generating employment and livelihoods may flounder. These policies will easily generate competition over access to scarce livelihoods and may - in cases of conflict - rekindle it. New measures have to be sensitive to the characteristics of a post crisis situation, including the disabling socio economic environment. They must accommodate the characteristics of (often) fragile states: low quality of governance, high level of insecurity, institutional weakness, social disintegration, policy deficits and conflicts' root causes.

Past approaches tended to compartmentalize assistance, either for specific target groups ( i.e. IDP's or ex- combatants) or by the types of interventions provided. Where interventions have been integrated, the focus has been on the supply side, discounting the “disabling environment” that needs to be revived.

Building on lessons learned, sustainability will be enhanced when employment is a key concern from the early start. Jobs do not come as an automatic result of reconstruction and economic recovery. While recovery and reconstruction generate demand for labour this is not always geared towards local labour. Immediate responses are needed within the first few months to integrate the local labour force, and hence generate at least temporary means of income. There is a risk of a major humanitarian tragedy if people do not get access to incomes. Moreover, while some of the employment interventions will start only later, a longer planning time frame does not necessarily imply a later start of some labour intensive recovery activities.

Second, intervention policies and strategies should span the supply – as well as the demand side, making active labour market policies and programmes vital to the response. Of particular importance is the recognition that reintegration takes place within a collapsed local economy.

Typically, the following measures<sup>1</sup> help address this important constraint: (i) increasing local demand capacity through cash for work programmes and labour intensive investments; (ii) rehabilitating basic economic support infrastructures and services; (iii) rehabilitating local trade networks; (iv) reducing transaction costs and business efficiencies (such as high security costs), (v) rebuilding trust between local business community and potential investors; (vi) where appropriate, attracting diaspora as a source of business innovation, knowledge transfer, market brokers and source of investments; (vii) monitoring aid supply to promote the use of local manpower, (viii) early promotion of self reliance through participation of people in local economic development/community driven development; (ix) promoting private sector investment and expand CSR <sup>2</sup>practice.

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<sup>1</sup> See also [www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/recon/crisis](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/recon/crisis) for more details on intervention strategies

<sup>2</sup> corporate social responsibility

Issue 1: While economic recovery and sustained growth cannot be maintained in the absence of appropriate macro economic policies, labour market policies can help ease the transition and contribute to early recovery in employment and reduction in poverty. How do we make employment, and other socio economic concerns, central to recovery from crisis? How do we promote coherence between policy and action to ensure the desired outcome in terms of job promotion and social economic recovery?

### **Decent Work as a crisis response strategy**

While on the whole, conflict and disasters' impact are negative as they cause suffering and death as well as other socio economic costs, such tragedies can be turned into a window of opportunity to build back better, reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities, address needs for disaster risk reduction, and tackle root causes of conflict that are frequently based on inter regional inequalities and social exclusion<sup>3</sup>. Measures should be underpinned by concern for the quality of development, including consideration of how the reconstruction process should be used to promote the socio-economic well being, basic rights, human security and voice and equal participation of the vulnerable crisis affected men and women - particularly young women and widows - that help build a better future. The promotion of the decent work agenda is the ILO's key contribution to this process.

Knowing that those who suffer most from crisis situations are in the informal economy, policies and programmes should strike a balance between recovering informal jobs and improving working conditions through formalization of jobs lost.

Recovery strategies must connect to local social institutions as well as government bodies. Business associations and trade unions are particularly important local partners for employment recovery with valuable local knowledge. Other civil society groups such as women's organizations, cooperatives and farmers' associations should also be involved in recovery planning and implementation. Ensuring the ownership of recovery strategies and simultaneously rebuilding the social infrastructure of crisis hit areas should be built in.

Working out of crisis is not a homogeneous task<sup>4</sup>, and this is to be considered in the design of response strategies, including the resources and time allocated for implementation. Some examples are (i) the dichotomy between rural versus urban employment strategies, with the former helping people to recover their jobs, and the latter creating new opportunities; (ii) different needs of new entrants to the labour market such as youth, particularly women, opposed to "re" entrants to the labour market; (iii) the need for conflict sensitivity when dealing with job creation in post conflict situations ; addressing also how this will help in consolidating peace.

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<sup>3</sup> Working out of disaster; improving employment and livelihood in countries affected by the Tsunami, ILO, Bangkok 2005

<sup>4</sup> Promoting Livelihood and coping strategies of groups affected by conflicts and natural disasters; HEI-ILO research programme on strengthening employment in response to crisis, Geneva October 2005

Issue 2: How do we promote “Building back better”? How do we strike the balance between quick and sustainable responses? How do we build capacity to promote sustainability? How do we balance the targeting of the most vulnerable groups without creating new inequalities and new risks for conflict?

### **Jobs as a key to building peace**

Jobs and socio economic opportunities are integral to consolidating peace. The reconstruction process must be handled in such a way that it promotes reconciliation and cohesion and provides people with a stake in their country. If the “peace dividend” means “jobs for people”, they will not want to return to conflict, as they are busy creating new opportunities for themselves, their families and communities. While this is so for all war affected men and women, it applies particularly for ex-combatants<sup>5</sup>. The process of “disarmament, demobilization and reintegration”, acknowledged to be complex and expensive, is one of the urgent problems to be addressed in the immediate post conflict environment to avoid recurrence to conflict<sup>6</sup>.

High levels of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion are known to contribute to the emergence of conflicts. Youth are a particularly vulnerable group. The Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan, identified youth employment as a bridge between the development and security agenda's of the Millennium Declaration<sup>7</sup> because a poor economic and social environment is one of the root causes of poverty, which in turn breeds instability and conflict, and easily tempts people into recruitment for armed conflict. A recent report of the UNOWA, building on the Youth Employment Network, elaborates on the policy options to consider.<sup>8</sup>

Issue 3: How do we promote a powerful agenda for employment promotion as a preventive measure? Can we take forward the importance of addressing reintegration needs for ex combatants early on and in an integrated and coherent manner? Can we build commitment that ensures appropriate resourcing for the reintegration process?

### **An integrated response requires strong coordination and adequate resources**

Post conflict- and post disaster contexts require much more than the “business as usual” approach and conventional solutions applicable in stable settings. Innovative and coherent strategies, modes of action, and policies, are needed from the local to the international levels and by the full spectrum of actors. Coordination is of critical importance, given the multiplicity of interventions and players. Likewise there must be a level of predictable financing for early recovery activities.

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<sup>5</sup> See also Guide on the Socio Economic Reintegration for Ex combatants (forthcoming by ILO). Updated from “framework of guidelines for the reintegration of demobilized combatants through training and employment, vocational training systems management branch, ILO, Geneva 1996

<sup>6</sup> Jobs for rebels and soldiers, Specht in Jobs after War, E Date-Bah, ILO Geneva, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Global Analysis and Evaluation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment, Report of the Secretary General to the General Assembly, 2005

<sup>8</sup> See also report of UNOWA on Youth unemployment and regional insecurity in West Africa)

Acknowledging the key role of employment in peace building and recovery, it is essential to candidly acknowledge and collectively address, the reintegration challenge posed by a depleted economy. Close synchronization of responses, promoting employment friendly processes, will help foster an economic environment that is conducive to new job opportunities. This in turn will facilitate peace building, reconciliation, reintegration, recovery and reconstruction

Issue 4: In addition to the UN Reform process, the peace building commission has been set up with the main purpose of “bringing together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post conflict peace building and recovery”<sup>9</sup>. This has been recognized to be of key importance not only for post conflict situations, but also for recovery from major disasters. How is this being put to practice? And how will we ensure that livelihood and employment feature strongly in these mechanisms?

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<sup>9</sup> A/RES/60/1 p 24