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FOR INFORMATION

FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

United Nations Policy for post-conflict employment creation, income generation and reintegration

The role of employment in post-conflict settings

1. In post-conflict situations, employment is vital to ensure stability, reintegration, socio-economic growth and sustainable peace. Job creation provides communities and individuals with the means for survival and recovery. The crucial link between employment and peacebuilding was fully recognized at the end of a three-year inter-agency consultation process, co-led by the ILO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which culminated, in May 2008, with the approval by the UN Secretary-General of the United Nations Policy for post-conflict employment creation, income generation and reintegration [1] (hereinafter referred to as "the Policy"). This new UN Policy, accompanied by an operational guidance note adopted by the United Nations Development Group in September 2009, contributes to a common understanding of, and approach to, employment creation and reintegration in post-conflict scenarios at country level.

2. The Policy aims to help scale up and maximize the impact, coherence and efficiency of employment support provided by UN agencies to post-conflict countries. Specific attention is paid to the needs and capacities of conflict-affected groups, in particular unemployed women and young people.

3. The unprecedented success of achieving consensus on a policy with such a wide impact was the result of the committed effort of 20 UN agencies, funds and programmes, which participated in the consultative process, and an ad hoc task force established in November 2006 by the UN Secretary-General. [2] In parallel, an ILO Office-wide task force was set up in January 2007, chaired by the Executive Director of the Employment Sector, to support the drafting of the policy paper. The Crisis Response and Reconstruction Programme coordinated this process internally and vis-à-vis the other UN agencies.

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[1] www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2008/108B09_310_engl.pdf.

[2] United Nations Secretary-General Decision No. 2006/50, 28 Nov. 2006.

4. The UN Secretary-General also requested the ILO and the UNDP to develop internal capacity to support the implementation of decent work programmes in post-conflict settings. By means of a decision [3] that accompanied his endorsement of the Policy, the Secretary-General gave the ILO and the UNDP the mandate to establish a time-bound joint support team, hosted by the International Labour Office, which will focus on rolling out the Policy and addressing the remaining gaps in the implementation process at the country level.

5. As a result of these new developments, the Decent Work Agenda has become a key instrument for post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding at country level, within the UN system and beyond. Through this achievement, the ILO will gain an increased policy/advisory role and will influence recovery and reconstruction operations, ensuring improved UN coherence. As highlighted in the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15, [4] the world of work is a major contributor to socio-economic progress and political stability. The implementation of this Policy will contribute effectively to achieving decent work outcomes in countries emerging from conflict.

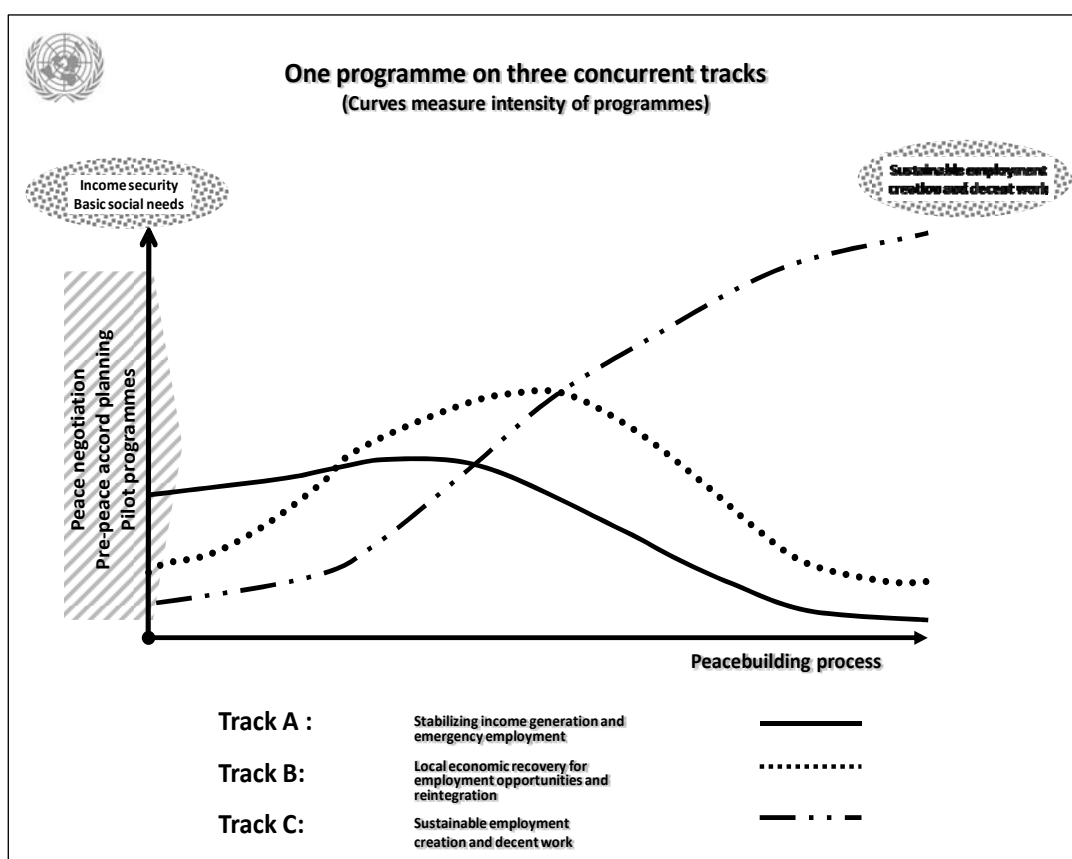# Employment challenges and opportunities in post-conflict settings

6. Promoting employment growth is difficult in peacetime, and significantly more so in post-conflict situations. Creating employment that taps into the positive energy and skills of young people is a particularly difficult challenge, as these groups often find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of violence, poverty, illiteracy and social exclusion. There should be a balance between priority security concerns and equity considerations, especially when targeting specific individuals or groups, such as ex-combatants. Although it is essential to recognize the needs of specific groups, this kind of focus can fuel resentment in communities if it is not part of an overall strategy that respects community-based needs and equity. The root causes of conflict, such as inequitable access to land and natural resources, need to be addressed to facilitate long-term reconciliation.

7. Transition from conflict to peace creates windows of opportunity for social and economic change. Socio-economic recovery should be managed to benefit the entire population. Employment should deliver peace dividends and improve the rights of the whole conflict-affected population, such as displaced people, returnees and ex-combatants, paying particular attention to reducing inequalities towards women and young people. Substantial investments in infrastructure should optimize the use of employment-intensive and employment-friendly techniques, where this is economically and technically feasible.

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[3] United Nations Secretary-General Decision No. 2008/19, 23 May 2008.

[4] GB.304/PFA/2(Rev.).

A comprehensive approach and analogous programmes – The Policy and implementation arrangements

8. The Policy highlights the need for coherent and comprehensive strategies for promoting post-conflict employment and reintegration, and includes three sets of programmes, defined as programming tracks. All three tracks promote employment, but their focus is different as, respectively, they target: (a) stabilization; (b) recovery and reintegration opportunities; and (c) sustainable employment creation and decent work. The three tracks should be implemented simultaneously during peace negotiations, but are of varying intensity and duration, depending on the local situation.

One programme on three concurrent tracks
(Curves measure intensity of programmes)

Income security
Basic social needs

Sustainable employment creation and decent work

Peace negotiation
Pre-peace accord planning
Pilot programmes

Peacebuilding process

Track A :	Stabilizing income generation and emergency employment	———
Track B:	Local economic recovery for employment opportunities and reintegration	··············
Track C:	Sustainable employment creation and decent work	—·—·—

9. Programmes in track A include emergency temporary jobs, such as cash-for-work and public employment services, as well as basic livelihood and start-up grants (including cash aid). This track aims to consolidate security and stability through programmes providing quick peace dividends to targeted female-headed households, ex-combatants, youth, returnees, displaced people and those at high risk of exploitation or abuse, particularly women. These programmes can help to kick-start socio-economic recovery and restore livelihoods.

10. Programmes in track B include capacity development of local governments, authorities and providers of business services; community-driven development programmes comprising participatory investments in local socio-economic infrastructure; and local economic recovery programmes, developed in consultation with community groups and which aim to expand the private sector and direct employment support services, such as microfinance programmes.

11. Programmes in track C include providing support to macroeconomic and fiscal policies, active labour market, labour law and investment policies, support for financial sector and business development services, and the promotion of labour-related institutions that enhance employability, social protection and other aspects of labour administration. Programmes should be supported and vetted within the framework of social dialogue between tripartite constituents (government, employers and workers) and other relevant stakeholders, in order to promote consensus on labour market policy, as well as legal and institutional reforms. The ultimate goal is to promote sustainable, long-term development that supports productive employment and decent work, while respecting fundamental human rights and promoting gender equality and a focus on marginalized groups.

12. By following this comprehensive approach, the UN should be better placed to scale up and maximize the impact of employment and reintegration support. A UN task force involving operational agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund has been established by the UN Secretary-General under the co-leadership of the ILO and the UNDP, to oversee the roll-out process. The ILO and the UNDP are establishing a UN joint support team, to be hosted by the International Labour Office, which will spearhead the roll-out of the Policy in a number of countries emerging from conflict.

13. The primary role of the joint support team will be to support UN country teams in implementing and scaling up post-conflict employment and reintegration programmes covering the three tracks of the Policy, initially for two years. The first roll-out countries, selected in consultation with the Peacebuilding Support Office are: Timor-Leste, Nepal, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Funds for this temporary joint support team will be mobilized from up to US$3.5 million of extra-budgetary resources. The UNDP has already allocated US$120,000 to support the inception phase, from October 2009 to February 2010, and the ILO is expected to contribute an additional US$45,000. At the end of this phase, the UN system's capacity to promote and develop harmonized plans for employment and reintegration programmes, and to sustain their implementation with secured funding, will be scaled up.

Conclusions: Future prospects for the promotion of decent work

14. The Policy should be regarded as a milestone in terms of implementing decent work principles in conflict-affected countries. The view that livelihood security – through decent work initiatives – is a crucial step towards achieving enduring peace has finally been confirmed. Employment generation strategies should be at the core of any peacebuilding effort.

15. The UN task force will propose a resource mobilization strategy to the United Nations Development Group and the Peacebuilding Support Office, in line with the Policy. UN country teams should be primarily responsible for the subsequent action plans. The ILO will be called upon to play its part, and un-earmarked contributions may be used to enhance the institutional capacity of member States as well as of employers' and workers' organizations in countries emerging from conflict. The Office may be asked to identify this activity as a funding gap to be considered in its priorities for further technical cooperation programmes.

16. The Policy's objectives are closely aligned with the first strategic objective of the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15. Action taken by the ILO and the UN agencies, within the framework of the Policy, will make a significant contribution to achieving the goals of the Strategic Policy Framework, especially outcome 1 and indicator 1.4. The aim of achieving social justice and establishing lasting peace will require strong commitment and unwavering ILO support.

Geneva, 19 October 2009.

Submitted for information.