

PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION
WORKING GROUP ON LESSONS LEARNED

Concept Note

The PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned –
Youth Employment in Peacebuilding

Conference Room 2 NLB
14 July 2010, 10:00a.m. – 01:00p.m.

I. Introduction

Youth unemployment has been widely recognized as a threat to durable peace and it is accorded high priority in the peace consolidation effort by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Youth can be a potential source of instability or a contributor to peace and stability. Youth unemployment in many post-conflict countries has the potential to act as a conflict driver. The Peacebuilding Cooperation framework for Sierra Leone¹ and the outcome document adopted by the PBC on 4 July 2009 identified youth unemployment as a key priority for peacebuilding, especially in its fragile post-conflict economic context. As part of its support for post-conflict economic recovery, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has funded programs to tackle youth unemployment.

The size of youth population is significant in the countries which are on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda. Youth could be transformed as an agent of change and economic development if their potentials are harnessed with timely intervention. Targeted youth employment and empowerment programs are essential in the post-conflict situation but, more importantly; this could also be used as preventive measures. The Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) will devote the next session to examining the experiences and lessons learned by governments and national / international partners in addressing the issue of youth employment in post-conflict situations. Particular attention will be given to youth, defined here as persons aged between 15 to 25 and especially those at greater risk of triggering armed conflict. This WGLL is the first in a series of suggested meetings on the subject of youth employment. In that sense, an attempt at narrowing the subject down to a more focused agenda has been made².

The countries on the PBC agenda will benefit from drawing on experiences and lessons learned in addressing youth employment and empowerment in countries facing high youth unemployment rates and that can be adapted to their respective situations. The

¹A PBC Sierra Leone informal Country-Specific Meeting on the subject brought a number of actors around the table on 21 May 2007 which led to a series of lessons learned "Peacebuilding Commission Sierra Leone Informal Country-Specific Meeting Discussion on Youth Employment and Empowerment: Summary Note of the Chair", 21 May 2007, <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/Country-Specific%20Configurations/Sierra%20Leone/May%2021%20summary.pdf> The subject at stake was also part of the agenda of a recent Sierra Leone Country Specific Meeting that took place on 26 March 2010.

² Participants are invited to organize research activities and discussion forums so as to explore all aspects related to youth employment.

growing interest in addressing the issue of youth unemployment both in post-conflict and non-conflict contexts is reflected in a number of recent reports by international and regional institutions.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) jointly drafted the “UN Policy and Operational Guidance on Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration in Post-Conflict Settings”³ in May 2008. The document was prepared in consultation with the rest of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, and provides a comprehensive approach made of a set of guiding principles and programmatic tracks.

A World Bank report published in 2008-2009 suggests the most effective approaches to fight urban migration are: “expanding job and education alternatives in rural areas – where most youth live; promoting and encouraging mobility; creating a conducive business environment; encouraging the private sector; improving the access and quality of skills formation; taking care of demographic issues that more directly affects the youth; and reducing child labour”.⁴ It links the high youth unemployment to demographic change in Africa, which explains the importance of urban migration.

Regional institutions have also contributed to this issue by focusing their resources on making youth a productive force leading to peace rather than potential agents for conflict. The African Union, for instance, has developed strategies to revitalize Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Africa.⁵ Local initiatives with the support of international organisations and of bilateral donors have established networks such as the Youth Entrepreneurship and Sustainability⁶, or the Youth Employment Network⁷ to support youth and entrepreneurship. The impact of all these initiatives and policies on youth has yet to be seen, however, and the issue of youth employment therefore remains high on the agenda.

II. Challenges:

A number of challenges have been identified concerning how best to design and implement effective programs to tackle youth unemployment. These include:

- The lack of identification of those youth most at risk of entering into conflict.

³ “UN Policy and Operational Guidance on Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration in Post-Conflict Settings”, United Nations, Geneva, 2009, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---ifp_crisis/documents/publication/wcms_117576.pdf

⁴ “Youth and Employment in Africa: The Potential, the Problem, the Promise”, The World Bank, 2008-2009, p.3, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSTATINAFR/Resources/ADI-200809-essay-EN.pdf>

⁵ “Strategy to Revitalize Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Africa”, African Union, Addis Ababa, January 2007, http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Conferences/2007/May/HRST/29-31/TVET_Strategy_english.doc

⁶ <http://www.yesweb.org/>

⁷ <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yen/>

- Existing programs sometimes fail to address the need for a change of mentality and creation of a vision for future. In a post-conflict situation, youth whose past predisposition may be based on conflict need to change it to one based on employment.
- The lack of integration of youth in post-conflict reconstruction processes.
- The insufficient linking of Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programs to sustainable employment (which should be part of the reintegration phase) and inadequate attention to youth in reintegration strategies.
- A lack of continuity from skills training initiatives to employment. The labour market is a challenging environment, particularly for youth; there is a need to prepare youth for that challenge and diversify opportunities once youth has received adequate training.
- The absence of an environment that is friendly to youth entrepreneurship and business at large.
- Insufficient cooperation and understanding between international partners and governments in terms of knowledge-sharing and advising but also in developing strategies to attract private sector investments.

III. Key issues for consideration

- What are the specific challenges and lessons at a local, national, regional and international level regarding youth employment and empowerment initiatives in post-conflict situations?
- Which practical initiatives were successful or unsuccessful when addressing youth employment and their socio-economic reintegration? Why? What can be done to improve initiatives on the ground and avoid past errors?
- Have there been any successful experiences orienting youth towards economic integration as an alternative to conflict? Have these strategies involved a change in attitude and perceptions?
- How can we intensify youth employment programs with a view to engage them productively with quick delivery packages including development of their entrepreneurial capability so that the programs would work as a preventive measure in such countries. Are there experiences from countries in the south which have successfully used such programs, whether emerging from conflict or not, as preventive measures or development support measures?
- What existing programs have taken into account the importance of differentiating and bridging between the need for early post-conflict period initiatives that could involve labour-intensive reconstruction work, and longer term economic integration interventions?
- How can we best ensure a continuation between the DDR and youth employment strategies to provide the youth with tools to support themselves and their families and thus make conflict a less attractive coping strategy?
- Should youth from vulnerable groups such as demobilised combatants, internally displaced persons or refugees be incorporated in general youth employment programs or should there be group specific programs?

- What tools can a government put in place to create a business friendly environment and employment opportunities for youth?

IV. Format and Structure

This open meeting will be held from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 14 July 2010.

Chair:

Ambassador Gyan Chandra Acharya, Chairperson of the Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) and Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations

Panelists:

Alfredo Lazarte Hoyle, Director of the International Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction at the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Mr. Jule Ramazani, Coordinator of the Youth Employment Summit Network for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, National Coordinator of Young Entrepreneurs' Mentorship Pilot Project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Founder and President of APEC- NGO (Action for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship in Congo)

Mr. Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima is a youth development researcher, advocate and policy consultant. His previous experiences include assignments for United Nations Institutions, the African Union and the Commonwealth Youth Programme both in policy development and on the ground in Nigeria.

V. Outcome

Following the meeting, the PBSO will prepare a Chair's Summary of relevant lessons drawn from the presentations and discussions. The document will be distributed to the PBC Chair and the chairs of the various country specific configurations.

Furthermore, discussions with the chairs of the country configurations will follow the meeting in order to identify the lessons learned that could best be applied and carried forward in the specific PBC countries.