Peacebuilding Commission
Working Group on Lessons Learned

"Youth Employment in Peacebuilding", 14 July 2010

Chairperson's Summary

I.   Introduction

1. The Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) Working Group on Lessons Learned
    (WGLL) held a meeting on the topic of "Youth Employment in Peacebuilding" on
    14 July 2010 in New York. The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Gyan
    Chandra Acharya, Chairperson of the WGLL and Permanent Representative of
    Nepal to the United Nations. The panel was composed of three speakers:

    *   Mr. Alfredo Lazarte Hoyle, Director of the International Programme on
        Crisis Response and Reconstruction at the International Labour
        Organization (ILO) who presented the ILO/UNDP "UN Policy and
        Operational Guidance on Employment Creation, Income Generation and
        Reintegration in Post-Conflict Settings".

    *   Mr. Jules Ramazani, Coordinator of the Youth Employment Summit
        Network for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Founder and
        President of APEC-NGO (Action for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship
        in Congo) who emphasised the importance of youth entrepreneurship in
        our support to actors on the ground.

    *   Mr. Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima, a youth development researcher, advocate
        and policy consultant, who shared his personal experience as a young man
        growing up in Nigeria and as a consultant to the Commonwealth
        Secretariat in Zambia and to the African Union in Ethiopia working on
        Liberia.

II.   Lessons Learned from presentations and discussions:

2. In his opening remarks, the Chair of the WGLL highlighted the importance of
    youth employment and empowerment and stressed that post-conflict countries,
    including those on the PBC agenda, face enormous challenges in providing
    economic and social opportunities to their youth, which constitute a significant
    part of their population. Youth could be transformed as an agent of change,
    economic development and conflict prevention if their potentials were harnessed
    and maximized through appropriate and timely interventions. Alternatively youth
    unemployment in many post-conflict countries has the potential to act as a
    conflict trigger thus a source of insecurity and instability. He further stressed the
    need for a coordinated and focused approach to youth employment and for
    programmes to be applied early on in post-conflict countries in order to ensure

sustainable peace and development. Youth employment has also been highlighted as an important issue by the chairs of CSM, wider membership of the UN as well as IFIs and MDBs.

3. ILO's expertise both in post-conflict settings and in the sector of youth employment is based on its experience in a number of countries across the world. ILO's experience also draws on the lessons learned from the implementation of the UN Policy and Operational Guidance on Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration in Post-Conflict Settings around the globe. Liberia and Somalia were used as case studies to exemplify the challenges and obstacles an organisation faces when dealing with youth employment on the ground.

4. Typically, a high proportion of the conflict affected population is between the ages of 15-24 years. In some countries, youth is defined as persons aged 15-35 years. Even in peacetime, youth unemployment is often triple the average rates in post-conflict countries, and it is young underemployed workers who find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of violence, poverty, illiteracy, and social exclusion.

5. The problem is particularly acute in Africa. Post-conflict local economies, in particular, are already depleted and limited in scope, but the trauma caused by war, separation from families and communities and the missed opportunities for education and vocational skills acquisition, make it all the more difficult for youth to access the few business or employment opportunities that emerge.

6. As new competitors to the labour force, young workers are the first to feel the effects of downturns, which characterize post-conflict scenarios. If youth is not successfully inserted into labour markets, education, and community life; they could easily become "spoilers" of the peace process. Organized crime, "gangs" or street crime may be less destructive than open conflict, but their slow recovery, affects youth's reputation, and consequently makes employers less willing to hire them. This then, leads to a vicious circle of exclusion.

7. Communities need fiscal incentives and donor support to encourage them to develop employment programmes targeted at youth, young ex-combatants, returnees or IDPs. Where reintegration into a family context is not feasible, communities should be encouraged to provide accommodation, guidance and access to education or training for young workers and ex-combatants. The delicate process of reintegrating youth into communities as an alternative to "life on streets" requires careful monitoring and capacity building at the community level.

8. Policies need to engage the private sector with special incentives that make it more attractive for them to hire and coach youth into sustainable jobs or self employment initiatives, including apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship mentoring programmes. The young entrepreneurs in particular would benefit from

less cumbersome administrative procedures to develop new businesses and be able to access formal sector business opportunities. In the case of the DRC, only 5 to 10% of the total number of school graduates has found wage employment. This argues for more effort in small business development programmes for and by youth.

9. The lack of real macroeconomic growth policies generating wealth and employment and the lack of youth development and employment policies both at the local and national level is common in most post-conflict countries. Forums could help create a policy environment to promote self-employment and youth entrepreneurship which could in turn feed into defining youth development and employment policies.

10. The gap between the educational system curricula and labour market highlights a need to integrate entrepreneurship in technical and vocational programs and incorporate it in the educational curricula. The next step will involve linking entrepreneurship to youth employment and address challenges pertaining to the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship.

11. In the DRC, for instance, the youth sector is allocated less than 1% of the annual total national budget and it is not a priority of donors' investment. The lack of financial support both for the continued implementation of entrepreneurship programs and to provide start-up capital and credit for youth to consolidate and develop their business activities is a serious obstacle. Moreover the lack of funding prevents businesses from moving from the survivalist stage to growth-oriented enterprises which have greater potential of being integrated into the formal sector. Many of the youth-run businesses are small survivalist enterprises, often single-person enterprises which are operating solely to enable the economic growth of the young entrepreneur, but are not likely to lead to significant changes in economic or class positions. The creation of a national youth fund and public-private partnerships could promote, support and sustain youth entrepreneurship.

12. There is a need to sensitize and mentor youth to overcome negative attitudes towards entrepreneurship and self-employment, through training and apprenticeship programmes. Sensitization should also reach alternative sectors of employment such as the security sector reform and agriculture. Post-conflict countries are usually characterised by a marked deterioration of agricultural activities in rural areas (where 70% of youth live) and in urban suburbs. Youth agricultural cooperative programs can be adapted to the needs of the reintegration of youth from vulnerable groups such as internally displaced or refugees.

13. The examples of skills acquisition in the Niger Delta in Nigeria and African Union Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) in Liberia highlighted the importance of taking into account what skills, resources and opportunities exist within communities. It is equally important to link education to market and reconstruction efforts as well as to take socio-economic setting

considerations into account. For instance, globalisation has accelerated the growth of such sectors as telecommunications, with the mobile phone revolution, taking place in Nigeria. But the environmental context also needs to be analysed.

14. The importance of involving youth in the discussions on employment policies and in the design of vocational training was emphasised. Programmes that train, grant and mentor youth have proven to be most successful. However, there is a need to ensure progress is monitored and projects are designed in a way that allows sustainability. Youth requires training not only to acquire vocational skills but skills that will enable them to sustain their business such as accounting and management skills. Governments and the private sector need to cooperate to ensure these skills are acquired and utilised. Young people who are professionally successful are more likely to be active members in their societies, including in the political arena.

15. PBC country specific configurations have recognised youth employment as an issue needing attention for peacebuilding, regardless of whether it is part of the priorities in the individual strategic framework or not. Unemployed youth is a group vulnerable to drug dealers and violence in general. Hence the link between youth unemployment and economy as well as security. And youth is needed for an economic revitalisation in a post-conflict setting.

16. The discussion highlighted a series of challenges that have yet to be addressed namely in terms of developing (1) mechanisms to reach grassroots people, (2) a defined role for civil society, (3) a clear perspective on how the gender dimension can be incorporated in economic activities, (4) strategies on how to ameliorate integration programs particularly following the DDR processes and on how to increase local organisations' involvement, (5) approaches on how best to sensitise youth mentality to economic integration, (6) schemes to involve corporate responsibility to multiply outreach, (7) projects that deal with youth's need for inclusiveness, sense of belonging and of importance – as a contributor to economy, (8) dealing with economic revitalisation as it is close to impossible to engage youth if there is no economic environment, (9) security situation as the private sector will not invest in an unstable environment, (10) how to bring actors together, in other words, how to coordinate aid and resources. In that sense, there is a need for engagement from the government to pool information and bring actors around a common table to centralise action.

17. It was noted that the Peacebuilding Fund already provided financial assistance to youth employment under its Priority on supporting early recovery and providing immediate peace dividends. To date, it has funded eight youth programs in seven countries to the tune of $14.64 million USD.

18. The participants agreed that youth employment needs to be dealt with in a holistic manner involving a partnership between youth, the community, the business sector, the government, international and local organisations. Youth needs to

become part of the country's solution rather than being viewed as part of the problem.

19. The annex to this report distils suggested steps in developing a strategy on youth employment. It draws on the presentations of the panellists.

ANNEXE[1]: Suggested Steps in Developing a Strategy on Youth Employment in Peacebuilding

Step 1:

Ensure youth employment is regarded as a national priority in all post-conflict countries in their development plans and strategies. Define policies for employment creation and reintegration according to the stage in post-conflict context. As shown in the ILO graph below, short term employment programmes should be complementary to economic recovery employment opportunities and sustainable employment creation in the medium and long term respectively.

Step 2:

Participants' identification: Factors for consideration in order to establish a sense of priority:
- Age (15-25?)
- Groups most vulnerable (urban and rural youth / teenage and young adults / displaced- refugees / risks linked to access to drugs, arms, and other violent activities…)
- Gender factor

Step 3:

Training: Factors for consideration:
- Who provides training?
- What types of training are available?
- What types of skills need to be developed?
  - The types of skills should be linked to the development of vocational and technical trainings and to the needs of the context, ie. whether the situation requires business, agriculture technique or enterprise minded professionals.
- Continuity of training and skill development programs.

Step 4: Apprenticeship: Who can provide these training opportunities? How can apprenticeship be intrinsically linked with local businesses as well as reconstruction and development work?

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[1] This annex has been developed by PBSO drawing on the presentations by the three panelists.
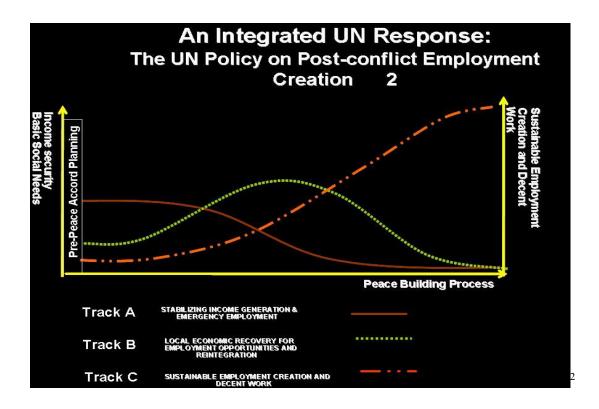
Step 5: Start up grants and credits to create enterprises: Who provides grants? Government / International organisations / Foreign governments / Local organisations / Banks and Financial Institutions / Cooperatives should equally be encouraged and supported to provide credits on a concessional and easy access basis.

Step 6: Public-Private partnership: What types of partnerships are feasible? How could Governments encourage the business sector to engage in long term partnerships?

Step 7: Monitoring and Evaluation of Youth Enterprise trainings, skill development programmes and their effective implementation.

Step 8 : **Sustained Support for Programs in terms of Resources and Capacity Building**
Development partners and international financial institutions need to support national efforts on a long term basis to ensure effective and continuous delivery on the ground.

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[2] Alfredo Lazarte of ILO (2010): promoting Youth Employment in Peacebuilding Environments; learning from the experience of the International Labour Organisation.