From Jobs to Decent and Sustainable Work

Directing development efforts and expanding opportunities to the billions who do not benefit equally from development gains will be critical to the advancement of equitable and sustainable development. Those currently being left behind include 60 per cent of all workers who lack any kind of employment contract, often engaged in own-account or family work, women largely dependent on part-time employment and young people who comprise a significant share of the unemployed. For some, informal work offers flexibility, control over income flows and more manageable working conditions especially where labour laws are weak and/or not enforced. Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals addresses this issue, with specific targets calling for full and productive employment for all men and women by 2030 (8.5), and the significant reduction of youth unemployment by 2020 (8.6).

Barriers to Sustainable Jobs and Decent Work

In developing countries, disasters and conflicts shatter people’s already precarious livelihoods, exacerbating poverty, and stalling or reversing gains due to many factors including a lack of planning. Moreover,

- Some jobs do not provide a “living” wage and are unsafe and insecure e.g. domestic workers. Some also do not create positive development impacts, are low-paid and low-skilled with few transferable skills. A report by IMF economists notes “…..weaker trade unions, globalisation and tax policies that favoured the wealthy had all played their part in widening inequality….” 2
- Farmers, producers, traders, manufacturers, artisans, other small-scale actors and often informal workers, are often ignored in policy-making, including macro-economic policy. A focus on traditional jobs also often excludes creative work, fails to account for unpaid care work and under-values voluntary work.
- Changing rainfall patterns, disasters and a changing climate threaten to undermine livelihoods and income from traditional sectors and also increase demands on meagre incomes.
- In 16 developing countries 3 it takes more than 50 days to start a new business.
- Some workers face discrimination and limited mobility due to their gender, race or ethnicity and their country of origin (e.g. immigrants and migrant workers).

TRENDS AND FIGURES

Three-fourths of workers are employed on temporary or short-term contracts, in informal jobs without any contract, under own-account arrangements or in unpaid family jobs.

Globally, women’s earnings are 24 per cent less than men’s, earning half as much income as men over their lifetimes and across most professional grades.

Between 2012 and 2020, almost 1.1 billion young job seekers are expected to enter the job market, many of them in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.


3 Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Cambodia, Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Haiti, Lao PDR, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Suriname, Venezuela, Zimbabwe. This is based on the latest data (2015) from the World Bank Development Indicators Database, available from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.REG.DURS/countries
- Significant unemployment, lack of opportunities and persistent deprivations are underlying drivers of conflict and massive migrations from the South to the North, often in perilous conditions and with significant loss of life.
Policy Recommendations:

- **Reform growth and development models to promote a sustainable pace of job creation and jobs with positive impact that meet considerations of sustainability, inclusion and resilience.** Work schemes in reforestation, agro food-processing, skills building, rainwater harvesting, cultivation of high value crops, improved agriculture practices and improved irrigation systems can be part of such structural transformations as they have been shown to expand jobs, boost incomes, include those often left out of employment opportunities and create environmental benefits at the same time. Poverty reduction through engineering employment in the natural resource dependent sectors will not be sustainable without efforts to ensure that the resource base itself is conserved.

- **Entrench legitimate, credible and effective governance arrangements for improving the quality of existing employment, making it more secure, decent and viable.** Trade unions and the private sector are key partners with government in making existing jobs a more secure and safer ladder to prosperity through reforms and enforcement of labour laws and protections, skills enhancement, improved access to social security and social protection, eliminating discrimination barriers faced by migrants and immigrants and maximizing the capacity of Information Communication Technology to revolutionize work.

- **Rethink the notion of work to give value to the social economy** especially the significant social capital created in non-traditional activities. This can bring millions more formally into the economy without sacrificing what they create for more traditional work, and the flexibility and creativity that allow them to flourish. A comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis must include proper accounting for this sector which can in turn incentivize public and private investments leading to new business opportunities for young people and women.

- **Countries need integrated policy frameworks and planning that can anticipate market shifts and mitigate risks** driven by development dynamics such as urbanization, citizen insecurity and natural resource scarcity. Allocating budgetary resources for innovation e.g. foresight planning can help to generate new ideas and anticipate the investments needs to make them viable.

- **Bridge humanitarian action with long-term development** is essential for tackling the root causes of inequality and vulnerability. South-South Cooperation can facilitate access to strategies that work and models for North-South investment that provide viable employment opportunities.

Growing Demand for UNDP Support

**Policy advice and advocacy**
- In **Sierra Leone**, UNDP provided upstream technical and policy support to advance youth empowerment and employment goals including committed budget allocations on an annual basis.
- With UNDP support, the Ministry of Employment of **Colombia** collaborated with an initial group of 20 private companies to develop action plans to reduce gender gaps in recruitment, address salary differentials and career development.

**Capacity development**
- In **Bangladesh**, 90,000 underserved citizens (70 per cent of whom are women) were able to access mobile financial services through 2,000 digital centres.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP supported the government in mobilizing and coordinating financial resources for an integrated recovery intervention, including reconstruction of over 1,000 homes, 74 public institutions, and 32 infrastructure facilities, resulting in the retention and creation of 2,000 jobs.

**Knowledge & South-South cooperation**
- In response to the crisis in **Syria**, UNDP established the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), an innovative approach to harnesses the capacities, knowledge and resources of the most affected neighboring countries, namely, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.
- The RIO+ Centre in collaboration with FANRPAN established a Community of Practice for Climate-Smart Agriculture in Eastern and Southern Africa engaging 500+ people across 20+ countries to support the exchange of knowledge and best practices for resilient and sustainable agriculture-based livelihoods.
Achieving Goal No. 8 of the SDGs on employment\textsuperscript{4} calls for greater and more convergent and coherent efforts to ensure positives also for SDG Goal 1 (poverty), SDG Goal 5 (gender inequality) and SDG Goal 10 (inequality between countries). UNDP works with national and international partners to (i) take the first steps towards development after crisis, (ii) promote decent work particularly for women and youth; (iii) identify strategies and pathways for livelihood substitution), (iv) strengthen data collection and analysis to better link policies to underserved groups; (v) promote entrepreneurship and scalable business opportunities; and (vi) to ensure its projects foster healthy and safe working environments. The number of country offices that were implementing employment-related programming rose from 55 in 2012 to 129 in 2013. UNDP has delivered in multiple settings and contexts:

\textsuperscript{4} Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.