



Janet Asherson
Adviser
International Organisation of Employers

I would like to touch on some of the business analysis of the huge range of issues surrounding the current crisis and the long term predictions for people, money, health and environment that the panel has explored today.

Looking first at business and public health, as we have heard, it is far too simplistic to consider that public sector health care services are the only ones that have an impact on public health. Apart from private sector healthcare services that complement the public provision in many countries, many other business sectors such as food and agriculture, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, water companies and communications are major contributors in the public health supply chain. But all businesses have an interest in and impact on public health, its just they often don't recognise it like that.

There is a close correlation between health status and poverty, the access to work and income. Up to a point - health and wealth go hand in hand.

And it is the task of the private sector enterprises – who are the wealth creation engines of most nations - to continue and expand as sustainable businesses to provide wealth, jobs and business taxes that go towards the funding of health and social services.

People employed by those enterprises earn incomes and also pay taxes to contribute to the publicly-funded health and social systems. Generally people employed in work make fewer demands on the healthcare and social systems. They are taps rather than drains into the basin of health and social care.

The workplace is also an ideal venue where information can be shared and cascaded to families and communities. This works, in the best interests of public health and the vulnerable, when the messages are aligned with national campaigns to provide information on limiting the spread of infectious diseases, information on the causes and preventive measures of non communicable diseases, information and training about hygiene.

Then there are, the sung and unsung, altruistic companies that directly provide resources for supporting vulnerable people and communities.

But the real purpose of business is wealth and job creation. So to tackle the immediate challenge of the global economic and jobs crisis and the longer term demographic and migration challenges facing many countries, the most appropriate contribution from business to help the vulnerable has to be to generate job growth.

The current crisis has focused thinking in this area – and encouraged a re-examination of what is required to create and maintain jobs and enterprises in all parts of the world. So business wholeheartedly endorses the international initiatives of the ‘Global Jobs Pact’ and the ‘New Green Deal’ that will provide the opportunities to access funding to stimulate growth and focus innovation on sustainable development

Tackling unemployment is one of the best things any country can do to support its public health systems.

- Whilst avoiding, in particular, a flight to informality which robs business of employees and skills, workers of dignity and governments of revenue.

- With public working alongside private provision, building on the strengths of each.

Health and jobs are closely linked because for businesses to be innovative and productive they rely on employees being happy, healthy and here.

Jobs follow money so it is essential that stimulus funding gives the right signals to business.

Businesses look to government to have the right framework in place to help them achieve growth.

- Where legislation is needed it should be objective-focused so that it does not quickly become obsolete and it can be applied in rapidly changing situations.
- Business needs the right incentives for research and development of new products for sustainability and resource management
- And it needs the right incentives for employing people – support with languages, transferable skills, social housing, travel to work and integrated health systems that recognize the work life continuum and are not siloed into occupational and public health. After all a person only has one health

status whether they are applying it in economic or social activity.

Janet L Asherson, 9th July 2009